

GLASS BLOCKS

from 'humble' and 'poor' building material into an artistic expression of light and space

Glass blocks: will architecture decide to definitely abandon glass blocks?

In this article, we take a look at the history of this important and humble material that thanks to Seves has become important for design and for architecture.



Seves Group, a Triton Fund III company, recently sold its Glass Block Division Vitrablok to private equity firm ASC Investment to focus on its core insulator business: “We are delighted to have found a suitable home for this business division, so that it can continue to grow profitably in accordance with its future standalone requirements and developments. Vitrablok has been a very valuable part of the

Seves Group for many years. However, we want to focus in the future on our core insulator business,” said Peter Baumgartner, CEO Seves Group.

“We appreciate the support the Seves Group has given us for many years and we are now looking forward to the next level of development of Vitrablok under the new ownership of ASC Investment,” added Petr Kralik, CEO of Vitrablok.

ASC Investment commented “We are delighted to have acquired Vitrablok and will work closely with the strong management team lead by Petr Kralik on the ongoing rejuvenation and innovation of Vitrablok’s product portfolio, as well as in supporting the company’s international expansion to further underpin Vitrablok’s global leadership in the glass blocks market, both in terms of technology and quality.

“

... from humble and poor building material to artistic expression of light and space ...

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Vitrablok will be the only independent player in the market, 100 per cent focused on the glass block product.”

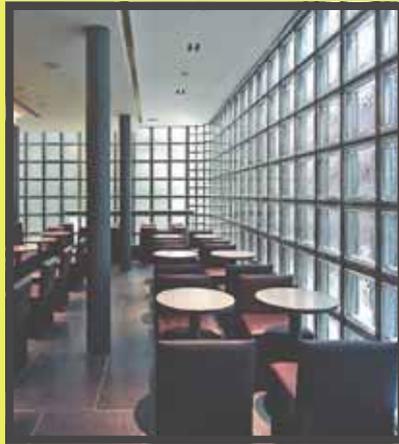
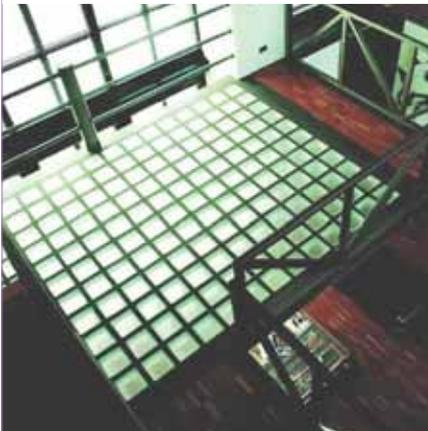
GLASSBLOCK AS A DIVISION

The Seves Group is the world’s leading manufacturer of glass and composite insulators for power transmission and distribution systems, while its glassblock division owned 36 per cent of the world’s glass block production and distribution market. The division grouped together the collective traditions and in-depth expertise of the most prestigious brands in the international glass block segment: Vetroarredo, Vitrablok,



HISTORICAL PRODUCTS

Historical products



Vidromatone, and Sindoco, have been united together under Seves glassblock.

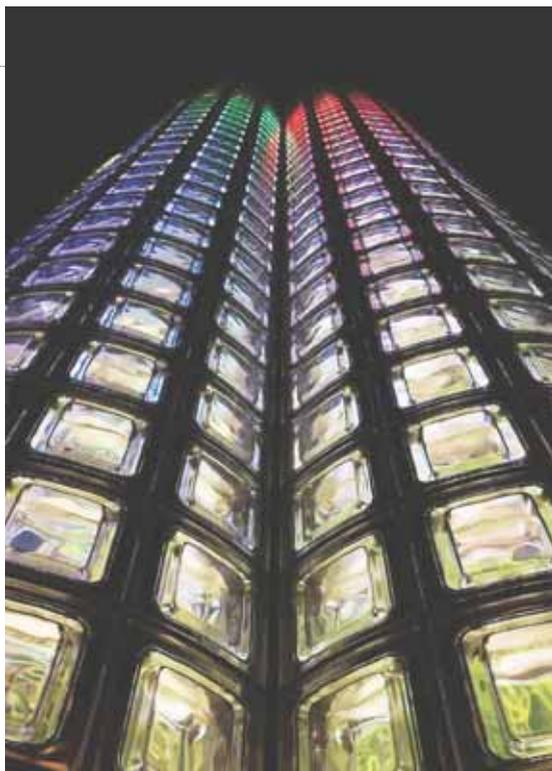
MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF GLASS BLOCKS

Thanks to Seves, the humble glass block has become an important design material for architecture. From the start, Seves glassblock aimed to change traditional production rules and ideas regarding glass blocks, which were previously considered 'poor' building materials used only in cases of lack of light. Seves introduced to the humble glass block highly advanced experience and technology thus enhancing its pureness, brilliance, transparency, and resistance, the single most beneficial components of the product. It then went one step further by adding an exclusive characteristic, once reserved only for the most sophisticated glasses: colour. An improved process of production rationalization modified and enlarged the entire product line with models and complementary modules to make customized solutions. Finally, the incorporation of new research and development activities made way for new wall installation methods, new special mortars for laying and finishing, and the progressive reduction of the 'gap' between glass blocks to just 2 millimetres.

COMPANY HISTORY

The origins of Sediver date back to 1898. The first glass insulators were manufactured in





1929 by a specially incorporated company, Electro Verre.

In 1947, the application of the thermal toughening process to glass insulators resulted in a product offering exceptional performance, enabling the company to achieve international success.

Automated production lines were introduced ten years later, in 1957. This was followed in 1959 by the merger of Electro Verre and Charbonneux, which led to the creation of Sediver.

Having established itself in the French insulator market, the 1960s saw the company embark on its first international joint ventures. New products were launched during the 1970s, including a full range of composite insulators for power

transmission lines and railway systems. Its Brazilian subsidiary, Electrovidro, was set up during this period.

The establishment of two joint ventures in China took place in 1993: Sediver Zigong, specialising in the assembly of glass insulators, and the Safam Zigong foundry, manufacturing malleable cast iron components. In October 2002, Sediver was taken over by Vetroarredo, a company with a young-sounding name, but with an equally long and prestigious history. Vetroarredo's origins date back to 1928 when, on the initiative of Prince Pietro Ginori Conti, the Istituto Sperimentale per lo Studio e l'Applicazione dei Prodotti del Boro e del Silicio was established in Florence. This

institute played a leading role in developing one of the most demanding production processes in terms of quality: optical glass.

In 1940, the Institute became part of Italy's most important state-owned industrial group, IRI, which was involved in the manufacturing of optical products for the military on behalf of the Navy, and took on the name S.a.i.v.o., specializing in glass tiles (mosaics), ceramic enamel and tableware.

In 1990, Fidenza Vetraria, a long-established Italian producer of glass insulators, lighting glass and tableware, took the company private. From the 1920s on, Fidenza Vetraria had also begun producing a form of glass brick, better known as 'glass blocks' or



HISTORICAL PRODUCTS



'reinforced cemented glass'. And the glass blocks have been in 1991 at the basis of the Vetrorredo 'entrepreneurial adventure'.

With unreserved determination, the new company achieved constant growth through a series of acquisitions and ongoing innovation.

During the 1990s, Vetrorredo acquired the lighting glass business of Vetrerie Lodi, a company with a hundred-year long history, and the Czech company, Vitrablok, a specialist glass block manufacturer, steeped in the bohemian

glassmaking tradition. In order to broaden its coverage to others technical glass applications, in 2001 the company acquired the Italian firm, Dielve, a world-leading manufacturer of glass insulators for power transmission lines. This was the first step towards gaining leadership in this field too. The acquisition of Sediver, the world's number one producer of glass and composite insulators, led to the birth of the Vetrorredo Sediver Group, the industry leader that subsequently took on the name of Seves. ■

