

Barbano in Murano

CONTEMPORARY ART MEETING TADITIONAL TECHNIQUES



by Elizabeth Barbano

A new technique in the glassblowing industry has been introduced to Murano, Italy. Anthony Barbano, director and curator of Barbano Glass, specializes in fumed glassblowing, a process during which gold and silver are melted into molten glass on a torch. Barbano took this technique to the Glass Island just off of Venice in March 2016.

As an artist of Italian ancestry, Barbano looked forward to walking in the footsteps of his ancestors. But unlike the glassblowers who have created in the place of his family's heritage, he also anticipated sharing everything he knows about fumed glassblowing. "I will share everything I've learned. I don't have any secrets."

Murano Traditions

Glass fuming was discovered by accident nearly thirty years ago in the United States. While it grew momentum in America, fumed glass had yet to debut abroad until Barbano demonstrated the technique in Murano.

Rumor has it that the ancient craft of glassblowing is a dying art in Italy. Once a highly prized profession, glassblowing artisans were afforded special privileges such as being allowed to marry into Venetian aristocracy or wearing a sword. However, the rewards came with consequences. In the event that glassblowers attempted to leave the Glass Island of Murano, they would have their hands cut off.

While this hefty punishment has been abolished, the sentiment remains. Many Murano glassblowers pass down skills and secrets through their bloodlines. It takes fifteen years to be called a master glassblower there. Glass art has been a tradition since the 13th

century on the island, yet it is becoming more and more frequent for sons to forge their own professional paths outside of the glassblowing business. This fact, along with the ever-increasing number of Chinese knockoffs, has resulted in a declining number of Muranese glassblowing masters.

The Passion and Profession of Blowing Glass

Barbano has been blowing glass for nearly a decade, and it is his passion and profession. The artist specializes in handblown gold- and silver-fumed glass memorial pendants and collector's marbles. Each piece is a one-of-a-kind original created from his favorite materials, which include borosilicate glass, gold, pure silver, opals, precious gems, metal, copper, and clay.

When the artist returned from the land of his Italian heritage back to his home in the American Intermountain West, he once again began teaching glassblowing classes and workshops to students of all levels and abilities. Look for him this summer at the Utah Arts Festival and the Park Silly Sunday Market in Park City, Utah. His gold and silver glass pendants and collector marbles are available at several galleries in Salt Lake City, Utah, including 15th Street Gallery, Art Access Gallery, and Urban Arts Gallery. Barbano's work can also be found at Lunds Fine Art Gallery in Park City and Gallery 873 in Ivins, both in Utah.

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