

Murano, Behind the Glass



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Since the late thirteenth century, the glass of Murano, manufactured by master artisans on the Venetian archipelago of that name, has been collected voraciously by connoisseurs, royalty and museums worldwide. Murano's glassmakers invented and defined so many of the craft's best-known effects--crystalline, enameled, gold-threaded, multicolored and milk glass--that it is impossible to conceive of it without their labors. Today's Murano craftsmen still use these ancient techniques, and in this photographic study, photographer Henry Thoreau takes us behind the scenes to offer a peek at their studios, factories and showrooms. Happily, his images are not at all of the gift shop brochure stripe, for they document not only the racks and trays of exquisite glassware, the workshops, furnaces, etc., but also their more lived-in recesses, giving the reader a palpable whiff of a working atmosphere. Thoreau's eye is matter-of-fact, characterized by a strong perspectival detachment and an unwillingness to overplay the obvious appeal of these intriguing studios, which speak for themselves of the wonders that are wrought there.

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