

LIQUID LIGHT 500 YEARS OF VENETIAN GLASS

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Liquid Light: 500 Years of Venetian Glass

‘It hath fusion in the fire, and permanencie in it, likewise as the perfect and shining metall of gold.’

ANTONIO NERI IN THE INTRODUCTION TO HIS TREATISE *L'ART VETRARIA*
(*THE ART OF GLASS*) 1612.

Venetian glass, or *cristallo*, as the Venetians referred to it, became famous throughout the Mediterranean region from the thirteenth century onwards, prized for its remarkable clarity, technical facility and transparent watery fineness.

This exhibition draws upon the National Gallery of Victoria's extensive holdings of Venetian glass, ranging from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. The NGV's collection is especially rich in material from the nineteenth-century revival of the glass industry on the Venetian island of Murano. A large collection of Venetian glass was acquired directly from Venice for the NGV in 1871 through the proconsul of the Kingdom of Italy, and a further group of early revivalist works was acquired in 1874. Another large and significant group of nineteenth-century Venetian glass entered the collection from the Italian displays at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81.

The twentieth century saw Venetian-glass artists become key participants in the international Studio Glass movement, and a number of significant examples of such work are represented in the collection.

The Venetian mosaic legacy

Since the founding of the city of Venice, its architecture has revealed deep Eastern influences due to its strategic location and long trading history with Byzantine, Ottoman and Islamic cultures. Its ninth-century cathedral, the Basilica of Saint Mark, is a supreme example of Veneto-Byzantine art. Although eastern Byzantine influences meld with western Romanesque traits and medieval Gothic advances, the rich array of mosaics that cover the walls, vaults and cupolas provide aesthetic cohesion. The mosaics were produced between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, and cover more than 8000 square metres. To this day it remains the most extensive mosaic program ever executed.

Throughout their history, Saint Mark's mosaics have been repaired, replaced and augmented. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the mosaics had once again fallen into disrepair, a situation that prompted Antonio Salviati, the father of the Venetian glass revival, to establish a mosaic firm in 1859. Salviati's mosaic manufactory exhibited at all the major world fairs. In 1880–81, the firm exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition and *The Last Supper, panel* was acquired by the NGV. It was one of two mosaics exhibited on this subject. The other (larger) one was acquired by Saint Peter's Eastern Hill Anglican Church, Melbourne.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

The Last Supper, panel

c. 1880

glass, lead, iron, mortar

Purchased, 1888

401-D1R

The Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition

The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company sent a large collection of its glassware to the Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition held in the Exhibition buildings in the Carlton Gardens. This display of glass by contemporary Murano masters was described in the *Argus* newspaper at the time as ‘one of the most remarkable aspects of the exhibition’. The National Gallery of Victoria purchased a large group of these glasses for £210 at the close of the exhibition. The works in this case are part of this historic purchase. Other works from Melbourne 1880 can be found throughout this exhibition. Many of the forms here are inspired by historical Venetian glass of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and form an interesting comparison with some of the more fanciful creations of the period.

Right to left

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

157-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration, aventurine)

Purchased, 1881

187-D1R

This large chalice-like goblet is inspired by late medieval metalware forms. The applied decoration imitates the stones on jewel-encrusted medieval metal, gold and silver goblets. It is executed in aventurine glass, giving the appearance of metal particles suspended in the glass.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

196-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Kuttrolf

c. 1880
glass

Purchased, 1881

216-D1R

A *kuttrolf* is a form of flask where the neck is divided into two or more tubes. The form has ancient Roman precedents but became popular with German glassblowers in the Middle Ages. *Kuttrolf* flasks were produced in Venetian and *façon de Venise* glass in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This revival piece is an example of the reproduction of historical forms favoured by the Venice and Murano Glass Company.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Wine glass

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

223-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Tazza

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

161-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Tazza

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

202-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Tazza

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

191-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Tazza

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

182-D1R

The Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition

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Left to right

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Jug
c. 1878
glass

Purchased, 1881

170-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Jug
c. 1878
glass

Purchased, 1881

166-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

225-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

189-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Footed bowl

c. 1880
glass

Purchased, 1881

231-D1R

This footed bowl with ornamental handles is decorated with applied moulded lion heads. The shape of the bowl imitates a seventeenth-century Venetian glass form known as a *canevetta*. This form in turn is inspired by the metalware form known as a porringer – a two-handled, lidded cup used for warm dishes like soup, porridge or stew.

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Beaker

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

158-D1R

This beaker is executed in a technique known as ice glass. Invented in Venice during the mid sixteenth century, this technique involves plunging the molten glass into cold water and withdrawing it quickly. Thermal shock creates cracks in the surface, giving the glass a frosted look when it is further worked and shaped.

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

165-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

211-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

193-D1R

Chalices

Extravagant virtuosic drinking vessels were characteristic of both the sixteenth-century Murano glassmakers and the Murano revival in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many of the examples produced by the Murano revival blowers were in fact recreations of famous historical glass goblets and chalices from important private and museum collections. In both the Renaissance and nineteenth-century works, these extraordinary glasses were primarily intended for display, not for use. Rather than being practical items of tableware, they demonstrate the skill and fantasy of the greatest Muranese glass masters.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

198-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

263-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

282-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est.1859

Guggenheim cup

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

156.a-b-D1R

This covered chalice, with its extraordinarily elaborate stem, is a form known as the Guggenheim cup. It reproduces the form of the now lost seventeenth-century model from the collection of Michelangelo Guggenheim. First recreated by the seventeen-year-old Isidoro Seguso in 1875, the model became one of the Salviati firm's most impressive exhibition pieces. The technical bravura of the work lies in the fact that there is no central stem supporting the bowl of the glass; the applied ornament alone provides the support.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Chalice

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

190-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Chalice and cover

c. 1867 designed, c. 1880 manufactured
glass

Purchased, 1881

249.a-b-D1R

This extraordinary covered chalice is executed in the opalescent glass known as *girasole*. This model was exhibited at the Paris 1867 Exposition Universelle and is illustrated in the Salviati & Co. London catalogue (no. 454) for the same year. The design is based on seventeenth-century Bohemian prototypes.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Goblet

c. 1870

glass

Venetian glass in the sixteenth century

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are regarded as the golden age of Venetian glassmaking. Celebrated for its technical virtuosity, ductile propensities and decorative innovation, Venetian glass was the first true luxury glass to be produced since the fall of the Roman Empire. It was prized by royal courts across Europe and exported in quantity to the great Eastern centres of Egypt, Syria and Constantinople. By 1500 Venice was one of the four great cities of Western Europe, alongside Naples, Milan and Paris, and the glassmakers of Murano had become the leading manufacturers in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Evidence indicates that glass was being made in Venice as early as the eighth century and by the mid fifteenth century Angelo Barovier had developed the famous *cristallo body*, a soda-lime glass of extraordinary clarity, weightlessness and viscosity, so-called because of its likeness to rock crystal.

Decorative enamelling and gilding also developed around this time but by the mid sixteenth century a new form of decoration called *vetro a filigrana* (filigree glass) had emerged, employing canes of white glass embedded into the *cristallo*. As Baroque taste developed in the sixteenth century, with its delight for visual trickery and lavish decoration, so Venetian glass was increasingly admired for its technical virtuosity and acquired for the collectors' cabinets of the European elite.

Left to right, top to bottom

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Flask

16th century

glass

Presented by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1973

D204-1973

Italy manufacturer

Wine glass

16th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

58-D1R

Italy, Venice / Spain, Catalonia

manufacturer

Ewer

mid 16th century

glass (*vetro a retorti*)

Purchased through the Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Mrs Margaret Stewart,
Founder Benefactor, 1987

D80-1987

This ewer represents one of the most sophisticated examples of the *vetro a retorti* (glass with twists) technique. The body and pedestal are composed of three different bands of design of varying complexity that alternate around the vessel. The rods of *cristallo* with the embedded decoration would have been laid out side by side and collected by the glassblower on a glass gather (a mass of clear glass on the end of the blow pipe) before being fused in the kiln and blown and shaped into this complex form. The body and the foot would have been blown separately and joined by the clear glass knob.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

mid 16th century

glass

Purchased, 1871

5-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Basket

mid-late 16th century

glass (*vetro a filigrana*)

Purchased, 1871

33-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Footed bowl

early 16th century

glass (applied decoration), gilt

Purchased, 1871

27-D1R

This footed bowl imitates contemporary metalwork forms of silver or pewter and would likely have been used for the serving of fruit, as depicted in paintings of the period. The bowl and the foot were initially formed in a mould to produce the ribbed effect, then blown and worked with jacks (metal blades with sprung handles) to create their final forms. The bowl's ribs were slightly twisted in the blowing process to produce the angled effect. The brilliant sapphire-blue glass is a feature of sixteenth-century works and was often trailed decoratively to offset the clear *cristallo* body.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Footed dish

Coppa

early 16th century

glass, enamel, gilt

Felton Bequest, 1972

D16-1972

A feature of Venetian glass from the Renaissance is the sophistication of enamelled and gilt decoration, which developed during the fifteenth century. Coats of arms appeared regularly on objects that were most likely commissioned to commemorate important events such as marriages among the nobility. This footed dish is a common form of the period, taking its inspiration from metalwork forms and would have been part of a larger dining set. The arms, which occupy only the right-hand side of the shield, are as yet unidentified. The flaming object on the left, also unidentified, is thought to possibly represent an organisation or society.

Venetian glass in the seventeenth century

The seventeenth century saw the beginning of the Venetian glass industry's gradual decline in Europe. This was in part due to the migration of large numbers of Muranese glassblowers throughout Europe in the wake of a financial crisis precipitated by the Italian Plague of 1629–31. The fashion for Venetian glass remained current in Germany, France, the Low Lands (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), Spain and England; however, a new locally manufactured Venetian-style glass (*façon de Venise*) became available at a lower cost than authentic Venetian imports, thus undercuffing the market for Venetian *cristallo*.

Left to right, top to bottom

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Oil and vinegar cruet

c. 1680

glass

Purchased, 1871

97-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Oil and vinegar cruet

c. 1680

glass

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973

D180-1973

This ingenious cruet, with a reservoir for oil on one side and one for vinegar on the other, closely resembles a surviving drawing in the correspondence between English glass seller John Greene and the Venetian glass dealer Alessio Morelli. Executed in Venice for the English market, these vessels attest to the popularity of salads on elite dining tables in the seventeenth century.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

late 17th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

66-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

c. 1670

glass

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973

D155-1973

This beautifully blown wine goblet is an example of those works referred to as 'Greene-Morelli' glass. Around 1670, John Greene, warden of the Glass Sellers' Company in England, entered into a business relationship with the Venetian glass-dealer Alessio Morelli, whereby Morelli had glasses executed on Murano to designs supplied by Greene to be sold on the English market. The design of the glass – a conical bowl sitting on a short stem with a plain knob – corresponds to surviving drawings in the Greene-Morelli correspondence.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Tazza

late 17th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

17-D1R

This elegant tazza is decorated with a chain motif formed by working the two rods of blue glass with pincers and applying them to the surface of the tazza.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Tazza

17th century

glass (diamond-point engraved)

Purchased, 1871

86-D1R

The diamond-point engraving technique, whereby a diamond-tipped stylus was used to etch lines directly into the surface of the glass, was first used in the Roman period. The technique was especially suited to Venetian *cristallo* glass, which was too brittle to be wheel-engraved (the technique favoured in seventeenth-century Northern Europe). The rich border of floral engraving applied to this tazza is typical of the Baroque ornament employed on Venetian glass in the seventeenth century and is also reminiscent of the lace Venice was renowned for throughout Europe.

***Façon de Venise* (In the Venetian manner)**

The insatiable demand for Venetian glass across Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, coupled with the costs and challenges of transporting such fragile works across vast distances, prompted the development of local glass industries in a number of centres.

Workshops were established in England, France, Tyrol and the Low Countries (Belgium and the Netherlands), where seventeenth-century *façon de Venise* glass reached great heights of sophistication. The products of these workshops varied in the degree to which they imitated Venetian works but many glasses were so closely copied in design and technical bravura that it is still difficult to distinguish the finest imitations from the Venetian originals.

The development of these workshops ultimately contributed to the inexorable decline of the Venetian glass industry from the late seventeenth century onwards. In particular, the development of new glass formulae in England and Bohemia in the 1670s produced glass that was both highly refractive and could be deeply cut and wheel engraved. This was a further devastating blow to the declining supremacy of Venetian *cristallo*.

Left to right, top to bottom

The Netherlands, Holland manufacturer

Flute glass

late 17th century
glass

Felton Bequest, 1966

1461-D5

The Netherlands, Holland manufacturer

Flute glass

late 16th century – early 17th century
glass (applied decoration)

Felton Bequest, 1968

1534-D5

The Netherlands, Holland / Germany manufacturer

Serpent-stem goblet (*Flügelglas*)

early 17th century

glass (red and white threads, *vetro a retorti*, applied and pincer decoration)

Felton Bequest, 1977

D151-1977

This goblet was most likely made in the Netherlands and imitates *vetri a serpenti* (serpent glasses) made by Murano glassmakers during the seventeenth century. The stem of this work is particularly complex. Two intertwined serpents are embellished with wings, fins and crests, made in the *vetro a retorti* technique of twisted coloured canes. It is unusual to include red as well as white threads, indicating that this work is not Venetian. This goblet demonstrates the heights of technical sophistication that workshops in the Netherlands were able to achieve.

The Netherlands manufacturer

Covered goblet

c. 1665

glass

Felton Bequest, 1966

1462.a-b-D5

George Ravenscroft manufacturer

England 1632–1683

Bowl

c. 1677

glass (applied decoration)

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973

D153-1973

In the 1670s, the English entrepreneur George Ravenscroft pioneered a new glass formula containing lead oxide. Ravenscroft spent many years in Venice and is believed to have gained firsthand knowledge of its glass industry. The new lead glass delivered a particularly clear and refractive brilliance and its development was a significant factor in Venetian *cristallo*'s fall from pre-eminence during the eighteenth century. The ornamental ribs on this bowl pay homage to the applied decoration of Venetian glass. Only a very small group of glasses bear Ravenscroft's seal, stamped with a raven's head, located on the base edge.

Germany manufacturer

Covered goblet (*Roemer*)

c. 1630

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Australian Consolidated Industries Limited, Governor, 1982

D77.a-b-1982

Eighteenth-century Venetian glass: engraved, enamelled and coloured

The eighteenth century was a period of continuing difficulty for the Venetian glass industry. Powerful competition came from Bohemian glass, a potash-lime formula that was more brilliant than *cristallo* and cheaper to produce. So successful was this *Weissglas* that Venetian manufacturers like Briati began to imitate the formula. Eighteenth-century Venetian glass often featured decorative treatments like enamelling and gilding in a buoyant late Baroque or Rococo style. The advent of Murano-made Bohemian-style glass also allowed the introduction of wheel engraving as a decorative technique, something impossible on the brittle *cristallo*.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Covered jar

c. 1880

glass (gilt, pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

220.a-b-D1R

Italy manufacturer

Beaker

c. 1800

glass (*calcedonio*, silver, gilt)

Purchased, 1871

15-D1R

This faceted beaker is executed in *calcedonio*, a variegated, opaque glass that imitates hard stones like streaky agate, natural chalcedony, onyx or malachite. Examples of this type of glass are known from Roman times. It is first mentioned in Venice around 1460 where it is said to have been produced by Angelo Barovier. It continued in limited production into the nineteenth century. The surface of this beaker is also decorated with whimsical Rococo decorations in silver and gilt, although the silver has oxidised and now appears grey-black.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Toilet bottle

18th century

glass

Purchased, 1871

13-D1R

The golden flecks on the surface of this perfume flask come from a technique known as aventurine. The method for producing aventurine was already known in the early seventeenth century, having first occurred 'by chance' (*all'avventura*) when metal shavings were accidentally dropped into a glass mixture. To make aventurine, copper oxide is added to the glass metal, followed by strong reducing agents that cause the copper to leach out in metallic form on the surface of the glass.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Beaker

1750–1800

glass (*lattimo*)

Purchased, 1871

100-D1R

This beaker is made of opaque white glass, known as *lattimo*, with spots of blue glass melted in to the exterior surface.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Tazza

late 17th century – early 18th century
glass (*girasole*)

Purchased, 1871

12-D1R

This small tazza is executed in a glass known as *girasole*. The opalescence of the glass is due to the presence of lead hydrogen arsenate crystals in the metal. *Girasole* is the Italian word for 'sunflower' but also refers to a type of opal gemstone whose iridescence this glass recalls. *Girasole* was particularly popular at the end of the seventeenth century and during the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

18th century
glass (*lattimo*)

Lattimo, or milk glass, is an opaque white glass formed by adding tin oxide or lead oxide to the metal. It was first produced in Venice during the fifteenth century. It enjoyed particular popularity in the eighteenth century when it was used to imitate porcelain, providing a less expensive alternative to the still costly ceramic.

Italy manufacturer

Cup and saucer

mid 18th century

glass (*lattimo*)

Purchased, 1871

79.a-b-D1R

Executed in *lattimo* glass, this cup and saucer explicitly exploits *lattimo*'s opaque whiteness to imitate porcelain, still an expensive commodity in the mid eighteenth century. The tall beaker without a handle is a form found in European porcelain of the first half of the eighteenth century and was often associated with the drinking of chocolate.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Candle holder

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1871

99-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

56-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

72-D1R

The dense network of tiny lines that give this cordial glass and the nearby candlestick and toilet bottle an almost opaque appearance is due to 'crizzling'. This glass disease is a result of a faulty chemical formulation of the glass metal, leading to gradual deterioration of the glass. The eighteenth century Muranese glass makers experimented with glass formulae in attempts to create metals closer to Bohemian- and English-style lead crystals. These pieces may be evidence of unsuccessful experiments. The pink colouring is the product of manganese – used to clarify glass metals – leaching to the surface where it oxidises.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1281-D3

This ewer is a tour de force of glass metals and techniques. A *lattimo* form is flashed with mottled red and aventurine glass. The dolphins supporting the base of the vessel are blown in clear and *girasole* glass, while the serpent handle is executed in the *vetro a reticello* filigree technique. A ewer of identical form but executed in different metals and techniques is displayed elsewhere in the exhibition.

Eighteenth-century drinking wares

Left to right, top to bottom

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

c. 1800

glass (wheel-engraved)

Purchased, 1871

52-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Goblet

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

51-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Goblet

c. 1794

glass, silver

Purchased, 1871

88-D1R

This drinking glass features a ruby glass rim applied to the bowl and foot. It has been blown with a silver coin trapped in the foot, which dates to 1794 and the reign of Ludovico Manin, the last Doge of Venice.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

c. 1700–50

glass

Purchased, 1871

39-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

67-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

late 18th century

glass (wheel-engraved)

Purchased, 1871

68-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

18th century

glass, enamel

Purchased, 1871

69-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

1750–75
glass (gilt)

Purchased, 1871

75-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

1750–75

glass

Purchased, 1871

70-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

18th century

glass (diamond-point engraved)

Purchased, 1871

29-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

1750–75

glass

Purchased, 1871

55-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Wine glass

18th century

glass (wheel-engraved, cut, enamel-twist stem)

Purchased, 1871

65-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

18th century
glass (gilt)

Purchased, 1871

19.a-b-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Covered jug

18th century

glass, pewter

Purchased, 1871

42-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

late 18th century
glass (gilt)

Purchased, 1871

9.a-b-D1R

Candelabrum

Spectacular lighting fixtures are some of the pre-eminent creations of the Muranese glass masters. Candlesticks, candelabra and chandeliers exploited the refractive and reflective properties of glass to enhance the effects of candlelight in the dim world of early modern night-time interiors. In the nineteenth century, lighting fixtures became truly extravagant exercises in the Murano glassmakers' craft. This five-armed candelabrum is executed in opalescent *girasole* glass, opaque coloured glass and clear blown glass. With chains, dolphins, naturalistic flowers and curling foliage, the complex forms would have sparkled and glinted under flickering candlelight.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Candelabrum

c. 1880

glass, brass, wire

Purchased, 1881

283A.a-w-D1R

Religious works

The majority of Venetian glass works are secular in nature, created to adorn the dining table or to be displayed as artworks. But as a luxury medium, Venetian glass was also employed to create objects intended for use in churches or in domestic devotions. Ironically, glass was not used to create chalices – the only form of drinking vessel employed in the Mass – as it was deemed too fragile for such a sacred function. But other altar vessels, as well as reliquaries, were created in Venetian glass, exploiting its beauties to enhance the spiritual experience of worshippers.

Left to right

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Reliquary jar

early 17th century

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1871

90.a-b-D1R

This covered jar is a characteristic form created to contain the relics of a saint. In the wake of the reforms promulgated at the Council of Trent (1545–63), the Counter-Reformation church insisted on the use of reliquaries that allowed relics to remain visible to the faithful. The relics also needed to be clearly identified themselves, as well as a label on the jar stating the name of the saint to whom they belonged. The jar was secured by wrapping cords around the finial on the lid and the stem of the jar, preventing tampering with the sacred contents.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Vase

18th century

glass (engraved, gilt)

Purchased, 1871

48-D1R

This urn-shaped vase is engraved with the arms of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor, a mendicant order of the Catholic Church founded in 1209 by Saint Francis of Assisi. With gilt highlights, this was probably one of a pair of vases that would have adorned an altar in a Franciscan church.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Holy water stoup

c. 1750

glass

Purchased, 1871

40-D1R

This decorative glass receptacle is designed to hold holy water – water blessed by a priest – and would have been hung on a wall in a domestic setting, either near the entrance of a house or at the head of a bed. The faithful would dip their fingers in the holy water and cross themselves in the morning or make the sign of the cross over the bed in the evening.

The nineteenth-century revival and early productions

The Venetian Republic fell to Napoleon's forces in 1797. With the abolition of the guild system and crippling taxes imposed on glass exports by the French and Austrian occupations, the Venetian glass industry had all but collapsed by the middle of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the rise of the Risorgimento (resurgence) movement, fed by nationalist sentiment, encouraged the revival of Italy's handcraft industries. The unification of Italy in 1866 was also critical to the resurrection of Venice's glass industry.

A key role in the industry's revival was taken by Antonio Salviati, a lawyer who became interested in glassmaking due to the deplorable state of Saint Mark's mosaics. Founding a mosaic company in 1859, he went into business in 1866 with the British archaeologist and diplomat Austen Henry Layard, establishing The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Limited (Salviati & Co.). The business was focused on reviving the techniques of historical glasses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This interest in antiquarianism coincided with the broader arts and crafts revival at the time, with its concern for hand craftsmanship. The works in this case were purchased in 1874 from the Melbourne retailer Kilpatrick and Co. and represent an important assemblage of early productions by Salviati and Layard's firm.

Left to right, top to bottom

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Decanter

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

286.a-b-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1866

Goblet

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

288-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Vase

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

284-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Ewer

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

290-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Ewer

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

311-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Wine glass

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

293-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Beaker

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

309-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Salt

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

305-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Goblet

c. 1872

glass

Purchased, 1874

301-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Vase

c. 1872

glass

Purchased, 1874

300-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Wine glass

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

294-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Wine glass

c. 1870

glass (air-twist stem)

Purchased, 1874

295-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Wine glass

c. 1872

glass

Purchased, 1874

296-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Bowl

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

302-D1R

**The Venice and Murano Glass and
Mosaic Company (Salviati & Co.),
Venice** manufacturer

Italy est. 1866

Beaker

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1874

308-D1R

***Vetro a filigrana* (filigree glass) decoration**

In the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Venetian glassmakers developed a new decorative technique called *vetro a filigrana* (filigree glass), where fine canes of opaque white (*lattimo*) glass were embedded into the *cristallo* body. This was employed on works destined for the most luxurious end of the market. Three distinct variations emerged, resulting in works of exceptional decorative complexity. *Vetro a fili* was the simplest approach and involved single canes gathered on the parison (a rounded mass of glass on the end of the blow pipe) to form decorative white stripes when blown. The skill of the glassblower is reflected in the evenness of the spacing. *Vetro a retorti* was more complex, involving twisted white threads set into clear *cristallo* canes and used as decorative bands. *Vetro a reticello* was the most complex technique and refers to a net pattern created by combining two *vetro a retorti* forms, one blown inside the other. *Vetro a filigrana* celebrated the exceptionally refined skills of Venetian glassmakers and such virtuosic works were in great demand throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The technique was revived in the nineteenth century and has been practised throughout the twentieth century until the present day.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Covered cup

c. 1880

glass (*vetro a fili*)

Purchased, 1881

224.a-b-D1R

Giuseppe Briati (attributed to)

manufacturer

Italy 1686–1772

Bowl

c. 1736

glass (*vetro a retorti*)

Purchased, 1871

32-D1R

The bravura of the *vetro a retorti* decoration on this bowl is identical to the patterning on the ewer in the case of sixteenth-century glass. The bowl's form is typical of works produced by the Briati workshop during the early eighteenth century. Briati gained a reputation for making complex chandeliers and glass mirror frames decorated with wheel-cut patterning, engraving or enamel painting.

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Wine glass

c. 1880

glass (*vetro a retorti*)

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Decanter

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

267.a-b-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

241-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Jug

18th century

glass

Purchased, 1871

6-D1R

Venini & Co., Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1921

Tyra Lundgren designer

Sweden 1897–1979

Leaf, dish

1938 designed, c. 1950 manufactured
glass (*vetro a fili*)

Felton Bequest, 1952

1245-D4

Tyra Lundgren designed for a number of the leading European ceramic and glass firms throughout her career. In 1937, she began designing for Venini & Co. and her leaf dish is one of her earliest designs for the firm. This example is made with very fine *vetro a fili* (glass thread) decoration in the traditional Venetian style although Lundgren produced numerous variations of the form and its decoration, including coloured versions.

The Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition

The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company sent a large collection of its glassware to the Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition held in the Exhibition buildings in the Carlton Gardens. This display of glass by contemporary Murano masters was described in the *Argus* newspaper at the time as ‘one of the most remarkable aspects of the exhibition’. The National Gallery of Victoria purchased a large group of these glasses for £210 at the close of the exhibition. The works in this case are part of this historic purchase. Other works from Melbourne 1880 can be found throughout this exhibition. Many of the forms here are inspired by historical Venetian glass of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and form an interesting comparison with some of the more fanciful creations of the period.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Covered goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

234.a-b-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

236B-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

236A-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

236A-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Dessert dish

c. 1880

glass (gilt, enamel)

Purchased, 1881

279-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

237-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

246-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1881

233-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Wine glass

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration, gilt, enamel)

Purchased, 1881

273-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

251-D1R

Venetian glass metals

The specific mixture of raw materials for glass melting is called 'batch' or 'metal'. While the fame of Venetian glass was founded upon the remarkable clarity of *cristallo*, Muranese glassmakers also experimented with other glass metals. Opaque metals that imitated hardstones (*calcedonio*) were first created in the fifteenth century and enjoyed renewed popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Opaque white glass (*lattimo*) was also first created in the fifteenth century. The eighteenth century saw Venetian glassmakers experiment with metals containing lead oxide to create Bohemian-style crystal, a type of glass pioneered in the seventeenth century that had eclipsed Venetian *cristallo* in the European market.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Covered jar

c. 1880

glass (gilt, pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

220.a-b-D1R

Italy manufacturer

Beaker

c. 1800

glass (*calcedonio*, silver, gilt)

Purchased, 1871

15-D1R

This faceted beaker is executed in *calcedonio*, a variegated, opaque glass that imitates hard stones like streaky agate, natural chalcedony, onyx or malachite. Examples of this type of glass are known from Roman times. It is first mentioned in Venice around 1460 where it is said to have been produced by Angelo Barovier. It continued in limited production into the nineteenth century. The surface of this beaker is also decorated with whimsical Rococo decorations in silver and gilt, although the silver has oxidised and now appears grey-black.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Toilet bottle

18th century

glass

Purchased, 1871

13-D1R

The golden flecks on the surface of this perfume flask come from a technique known as aventurine. The method for producing aventurine was already known in the early seventeenth century, having first occurred 'by chance' (*all'avventura*) when metal shavings were accidentally dropped into a glass mixture. To make aventurine, copper oxide is added to the glass metal, followed by strong reducing agents that cause the copper to leach out in metallic form on the surface of the glass.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Beaker

1750–1800

glass (*lattimo*)

Purchased, 1871

100-D1R

This beaker is made of opaque white glass, known as *lattimo*, with spots of blue glass melted in to the exterior surface.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Tazza

late 17th century – early 18th century
glass (*girasole*)

Purchased, 1871

12-D1R

This small tazza is executed in a glass known as *girasole*. The opalescence of the glass is due to the presence of lead hydrogen arsenate crystals in the metal. *Girasole* is the Italian word for 'sunflower' but also refers to a type of opal gemstone whose iridescence this glass recalls. *Girasole* was particularly popular at the end of the seventeenth century and during the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

18th century
glass (*lattimo*)

Lattimo, or milk glass, is an opaque white glass formed by adding tin oxide or lead oxide to the metal. It was first produced in Venice during the fifteenth century. It enjoyed particular popularity in the eighteenth century when it was used to imitate porcelain, providing a less expensive alternative to the still costly ceramic.

Italy manufacturer

Cup and saucer

mid 18th century

glass (*lattimo*)

Purchased, 1871

79.a-b-D1R

Executed in *lattimo* glass, this cup and saucer explicitly exploits *lattimo*'s opaque whiteness to imitate porcelain, still an expensive commodity in the mid eighteenth century. The tall beaker without a handle is a form found in European porcelain of the first half of the eighteenth century and was often associated with the drinking of chocolate.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Candle holder

c. 1870

glass

Purchased, 1871

99-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Bottle

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

56-D1R

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Cordial glass

18th century
glass

Purchased, 1871

72-D1R

The dense network of tiny lines that give this cordial glass and the nearby candlestick and toilet bottle an almost opaque appearance is due to 'crizzling'. This glass disease is a result of a faulty chemical formulation of the glass metal, leading to gradual deterioration of the glass. The eighteenth century Muranese glass makers experimented with glass formulae in attempts to create metals closer to Bohemian- and English-style lead crystals. These pieces may be evidence of unsuccessful experiments. The pink colouring is the product of manganese – used to clarify glass metals – leaching to the surface where it oxidises.

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1281-D3

This ewer is a tour de force of glass metals and techniques. A *lattimo* form is flashed with mottled red and aventurine glass. The dolphins supporting the base of the vessel are blown in clear and *girasole* glass, while the serpent handle is executed in the *vetro a reticello* filigree technique. A ewer of identical form but executed in different metals and techniques is displayed elsewhere in the exhibition.

The Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition

The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company sent a large collection of its glassware to the Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition held in the Exhibition buildings in the Carlton Gardens. This display of glass by contemporary Murano masters was described in the *Argus* newspaper at the time as ‘one of the most remarkable aspects of the exhibition’. The National Gallery of Victoria purchased a large group of these glasses for £210 at the close of the exhibition. The works in this case are part of this historic purchase. Other works from Melbourne 1880 can be found throughout this exhibition. Many of the forms here are inspired by historical Venetian glass of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and form an interesting comparison with some of the more fanciful creations of the period.

Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

239-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Flute glass

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

238-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

243-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

186-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Tazza

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

173-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Bottle

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

194-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

278-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

155-D1R

The Melbourne 1880–81 International Exhibition

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Left to right, top to bottom

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Tazza

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

183-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

230-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration) Purchased, 1881

197-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Bell

c. 1878
glass

Purchased, 1881

218-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Vase

c. 1880

glass (pincer and applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

205-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Bowl

c. 1878
glass

Purchased, 1881

162-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Covered tazza and stand

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

153.a-c-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Cup
c. 1880
glass

Purchased, 1881

163-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Bottle

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

154.a-b-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Purchased, 1881

159-D1R

**Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic
Company, Venice** manufacturer
Italy est. 1859

Goblet

c. 1878

glass

Purchased, 1881

177-D1R

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, Venice manufacturer

Italy est. 1859

Ewer

c. 1880

glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1881

169-D1R

The nineteenth-century revival and later inspirations

Right from the establishment of The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Limited (Salviati & Co.), its blown glass and mosaic products were highly successful. The firm exhibited at the world fairs and in 1872 opened a lavish showroom in the Palazzo Barbarigo on the Grand Canal. Despite this success, Salviati's glassblowers became increasingly frustrated at the firm's conservative, historicist approach and were keen to experiment with their newly developed skills. By 1877, a major conflict had developed between Salviati and Layard, with Layard unwilling to adjust the company's direction. Salviati left the business and started his own glassworks – one for mosaic production and one for blown glass – opening his own showroom, the Palazzo Salviati, on the Grand Canal. A year later at the 1878 Paris International Exhibition, all three firms exhibited side by side.

The works in this case show a distinct shift in design aesthetic by Salviati's glassblowers, who were not interested in merely reproducing historical forms. Their technical sophistication and bravura, coupled with profuse ornament and colour, betray their nineteenth-century origins, yet point towards an increasingly confident industry that had risen from the ashes to redefine itself at the cusp of the twentieth century.

Left to right, top to bottom

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Vase

c. 1900

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1280-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1274-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1279-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Dolphin, salt

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1275-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Goblet

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1273-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Vase

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1276-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer

Ewer

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1282-D3

Italy, Venice manufacturer
Giuseppe Barovier (attributed to)
manufacturer
Italian 1853–1942

Tazza

c. 1880

glass

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1278-D3

Twentieth-century art glass

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Murano glass industry was experiencing a period of stagnation. The complex and fanciful creations of the Murano revival, once so exciting, had become formulaic and repetitive. To combat this, beginning in the 1920s, a number of Venetian glass houses took the innovative step of inviting artists to work with the glass masters, opening up Venetian glass to new and original artistic trends. Many Venetian glassmakers abandoned all pretence of producing functional objects. Their work became instead concerned with pure artistic expression using this ancient medium.

Left to right, top to bottom

Seguso Vetri D'Arte, Murano

manufacturer

Italy 1933–92

Flavio Poli designer

Italy 1900–84

Vase

c. 1950

glass

Felton Bequest, 1952

1181-D4

Venini & Co., Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1921

Fulvio Bianconi designer

Italy 1915–96

Patchwork (*Pezzato*) vase

c. 1950

glass

Felton Bequest, 1952

1244-D4

This beautiful bottle vase was made by Fulvio Bianconi, who became director of the Venini firm in 1948. At the time, Venini was at the forefront of avant-garde art glass on Murano. The *pezzato* technique is simple but highly effective. The glassmaker produces strips of coloured glass that are cut into pieces when cool. The pieces of glass are assembled into a flat pattern and fused before the plate is rolled on to a clear glass gather and formed.

Venini & Co., Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1921

Ginette Gignous-Venini designer

Italy 1891–1982

Rain (*Pioggia*), vase

c. 1965 designed, 1980 manufactured
glass

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of The Gualtiero Vaccari
Foundation, Governor, 1997

1997.375

Venini & Co., Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1921

Fulvio Bianconi designer

Italy 1915–96

Handkerchief (*Fazzoletto*) vase

1949 designed, c. 1950–60 manufactured
glass (*vetro a retorti*)

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1989

D29-1989

Created by Fulvio Bianconi, the *Fazzoletto*, or handkerchief vase, is made by blowing a molten glass bubble. The end is then cut open and the glass allowed to flow freely, forming asymmetric peaks before it is shaped further with a palette knife to resemble a handkerchief. This example is further decorated with *vetro a retorti* – alternating rods of clear glass that are embedded with twisted white glass threads.

Toso Vetri D'Arte, Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1981

Mario Zanini designer

Italy born 1954

Memphis, Milan retailer

Italy 1981–88

Regolus, fruit bowl

1982

glass

Purchased with the assistance of the National Gallery Women's Association, 1985

D80-198

Mario Zanini was one of the key designers, along with Michele de Lucchi and Ettore Sottsass, in the Milan-based Memphis Group. Active through the 1980s, the Memphis Group produced postmodern designs for furniture, textiles, glass, ceramics and metalware that drew inspiration from sources as diverse as Art Deco, Pop Art, rock music and 1950s kitsch. To manufacture this eccentric fruit bowl with its spontaneous and intuitive design, Zanini turned to the Muranese glasshouse of Toso Vetri D'Arte founded in 1981, the same year as Memphis, which produced all of the design group's glass works.

Seguso Vetri D'Arte, Murano

manufacturer

Italy 1933–92

Flavio Poli designer

Italy 1900–84

Vase

c. 1950

glass

Felton Bequest, 1952

1182-D4

Venini & Co., Murano manufacturer

Italy est. 1921

Paolo Venini designer

Italy 1895–1959

Bottle

1952 designed

glass

Presented by Mr M. H. Stebbings, 1977

D133.a-b-1977

Vetreria Fratelli Toso, Murano, Venice (attributed to) manufacturer Italy 1854–1901

Vase

c. 1890–1900
glass (*murrine*)

Purchased, 1996

1996.200

This vase is a technical tour de force in the *murrine* technique. *Murrine* are coloured patterns formed in a glass cane that are revealed when the cane is cut into slices. Here the *murrine* have been fused to the exterior of a blown glass vessel, creating what is known as a *millefiori* (thousand flower) pattern.

Seguso Vetri D'Arte, Murano

manufacturer

Italy 1933–92

Archimede Seguso designer

Italy 1909–99

Shell, bowl

c. 1950

glass

Felton Bequest, 1952

1180-D4

Contemporary *façon de Venise* (glass in the Venetian manner)

During the later twentieth century, the focus of traditional Venetian glassmaking practice shifted to the United States. Dale Chihuly was one of the earliest American glassmakers to study in Venice at the Venini workshops and he pioneered a contemporary approach to traditional Venetian glassblowing. In 1969, Chihuly established the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington where he later worked with Toots Zynsky and Richard Marquis. All three artists learned the traditional techniques in Venice and have become internationally renowned for their contemporary approaches that push the boundaries of technical innovation. Collaborations between Muranese workshops and outside artists – a practice that developed in the twentieth century – have continued to this day. However, despite these successful partnerships, the Venetian glass industry has struggled to maintain its identity in the twenty-first century amid the rising tide of cheap imports. Once again, the wheel turns for this great Venetian industry and its future remains an open question.

Dale Chihuly manufacturer

America born 1941

Untitled group, from the Macchia series

1982

glass

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Australian Consolidated Industries Limited, Governor, 1983

D22.a-e-1983

Richard Marquis manufacturer

America born 1945

Marquiscarpa #9

1991

glass (murrine)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Repco Limited, Fellow,
1991 D69-1991

Toots Zynsky manufacturer

America born 1951

Untitled

1990

glass (*filet de verre*)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of
ICI Australia Limited, Fellow, 1990

D22-1990

Toots Zynsky pioneered the technique of slumping fine canes of glass into soft folded forms. Referred to as *filet de verre* (glass thread), the canes, made in Murano workshops, are arranged in layers and heated in a kiln to the point of fusion. While still hot, the slab is gently slumped into rounded metal forms of increasing depth and then hand manipulated into its final abstract form. Zynsky's vessels hold an element of intrigue, inviting the viewer to move around them. The vibrant colours in this work were inspired by the plumage of exotic birds encountered on Zynsky's residency in Africa.

Dale Chihuly manufacturer

American born 1941

Sky blue Macchia with vermilion lip wrap

1993

glass

Presented by the Frank Russell Company Pty Ltd to mark their 10th anniversary in Australia, 1997
1997.86

Dale Chihuly has achieved rock-star status in the glassmaking world for his extraordinary productions of bold sculptural forms that embrace colour, light and fluidity. He has exhibited all over the world and has produced large-scale chandeliers and installations for public and private venues globally. Chihuly began his *Macchia* ('spot') series of shell-like forms with their distinctive coloured lip wraps in the 1980s. Some examples, like his *Untitled group*, have soft spiralling lines that are drawn spontaneously over the surface while others are decorated with a mosaic of colours that move and distort with the fluid glass folds.

Richard Marquis manufacturer

America born 1945

Murrini on white ground bulbous teapot

1974

glass (*murrine*)

Purchased, 1976

D79-1976

Richard Marquis is one of the world's leading practitioners of the *murrine* (mosaic) technique involving fine coloured canes of glass fused into patterned rods. These are then stretched and sliced and the slices are formed into mosaic patterns over the walls of vessels. Marquis first learned this skill by observing the practices of the Italian masters at the Venini workshops on Murano in 1969. Eventually, he was allowed to practise the technique himself. Marquis was fascinated by the endless possibilities of patterning that this technique offers and has been experimenting with the mosaic effects of glass ever since.

Richard Marquis manufacturer

America born 1945

Non-functional teapot

1976

glass (*murrine*)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Terence Lane, Fellow, 1996

1996.552

Oiva Toikka designer

Finland born 1931

Pino Signoretto manufacturer

Italy 1944–2017

Kosketus

2014

glass (*vetro a reticello*)

Private collection, Melbourne

The most recent work in the exhibition is this 2014 collaboration between the leading Finnish glass artist Oiva Toikka and the Venetian glass master Pino Signoretto, who was famous for such international collaborations. Undeniably Venetian with its spun *vetro a reticello*, the soft mass of clear *cristallo* glass enveloping the opalescent netting speaks of an entirely different aesthetic – that of Toikka's bold and amorphous forms. Many of Toikka's works explore the relationship between luminous colour and abstract form. The sculptural nature of *Kosketus* beautifully illustrates the melding of aesthetic sensibilities between these two leading masters of the glass medium.