

**INSIDE: The 2009 Glass Industry Forecast**

# US Glass<sup>®</sup> METAL & GLAZING

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## Talking with Leon Silverstein

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JANUSZ WALENTYNO

# Sightseeing

## Glass Serves as the Defining Element of Tacoma's Hotel Murano



**Ellen Rogers** is the editor of **Decorative Glass** magazine.

Planning a trip to the Pacific-Northwest? If so, chances are strong visitors will cross paths with a resounding decorative glass installation or two. After all, with art glass mastermind Dale Chihuly's studio set up in Seattle, there's more than one of his creations in the area—including nearby Tacoma. There, visitors wander the halls of the Museum of Glass and stroll along the Chihuly Glass Bridge that connects the city to the waterfront.

But once the walking is done and it's time to unwind, where can visitors go for a hotel stay that's on par with Tacoma's love of glass? Perhaps the Hotel Murano (part of the Provenance Hotels Group), which opened last spring may fit the bill.

"We used glass as a deeply integrated art concept throughout the hotel for a variety of reasons. The most important reason is Tacoma's historical roots in glass art and its familiar label as the epicenter of glass in the United States," says Howard Jacobs, president and chief operating officer of the hotel. "The area has attracted many glass pioneers for decades and glass art is culturally institutionalized with the Museum of Glass—the only glass museum in the world—in Tacoma and Seattle's Pilchuck Glass School, arguably the most comprehensive educational art glass center in the world. The Hotel Murano features more than 45 glass artists from all over the world, integrated into the international design style of the building's architecture."

Even before entering the hotel's doors, glass demands visitors' attention. Outside, Orizon (Greek for Horizon), a 104-foot glass and steel sculpture created by Greek artist Costas Varotsos, greets guests and visitors as they arrive. The sculpture was created to convey a relationship to the horizon and water to the building's interior where art glass is deeply integrated into form and design. Inside, three colored glass Viking ships created by Danish artist Vibeke Skov hang in the grand corridor of the hotel. The Hotel Murano houses not only an expansive collection of art glass, but its public spaces and 300+ guest rooms are dedicated to world-renowned glass artists. In fact, each of its 21 floors is dedicated to one glass artist. And each



The process used to create the etched glass walls involved screenprinting photographic images onto glass and then sandblasting them. The end result has the same appearance as a black and white photograph.

floor features glass walls intricately sandblasted with photographs, text and graphics, creating a memorable art glass presentation that shares artists' inspirations and techniques through quotes and commentary.

**More than Words**

The hotel's interior design group, CorsoStaicoff of Portland, Ore., didn't have to look far for inspiration when working on the Hotel Murano; it was influenced by the area's flourishing local art community.

"The Chihuly Bridge of Glass and the Tacoma Glass Museum have been a major factor in setting Tacoma apart from other cities," says Denise Corso, a partner with CorsoStaicoff. "In the same manner, the design team wanted

to link the hotel to the community using glass as its vehicle."

The CorsoStaicoff team also came up with the idea for the sandblasted glass walls.

"Each guest floor is dedicated to a single artist, featuring work displayed behind a customized etched glass wall," says Corso. "In addition to the central installation, photographs along the corridor shed light on the artistic process. In the guestrooms are sketches of the artist's inspirations and ideas."

Corso adds, "It was important that we worked with glass suppliers who understood our design intent and paid attention to detail. All the people we worked with had extensive knowledge and experience in their field, as well as patience."

Ditroen, a Portland, Ore.-based graphic designer was brought on by the Provenance Hotel Group to concept and design the hotel's signage and develop branded thematic elements for the hotel interior.

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A glass sculpture created by Greek artist Costas Varotsos greets visitors as they arrive at the Hotel Murano.



## Sightseeing

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— Dardinelle Troen, Ditroen

“Working in tandem with Cor-soStaicoff, we developed the glass display wall concepts for each of the guest floors,” says Dardinelle Troen, Ditroen’s creative director. “We have often used glass as a medium in our project work, but the Murano, by far was the most extensive and complex. Given the complex nature and degree of precision required to execute each of the designs we knew we needed a vendor partner that not only possessed the skill but had the desire to undertake such a challenging project. We had worked with Moon Shadow Etchers on previous large-scale projects and felt that we could trust them to achieve our goal.”

### The Writing on the Wall

Moon Shadow Etchers of Sandy, Ore., got involved when Ditroen brought them on.

“They were aware of the work that we could do,” explains Tim Frazier, owner of Moon Shadow Etchers, “so we did a prototype wall of Dante Marioni ... a relatively simple image ... and we based all of our pricing off of that prototype. But then the more work we did on the project the more we realized what all could be done with the glass and then the more complicated the work became and we had to adjust the pricing as time went on.”

Moon Shadow worked closely with Ditroen throughout the process to ensure the best possible results. Troen says “hand-in-hand” best describes the companies’ working relations.

“We were in constant daily contact with Tim and the Moon Shadow team,” says Troen. “Throughout the process there were many unforeseen challenges and issues with software/registration and execution that needed to be problem-solved. Good communication and our ability to work as a team were, in my mind, what made the project ultimately successful.”

Frazier agrees.

“I presented images to [Ditroen] and explained what we were capable of and what we were not capable of, what would work best and what would not work. Then they came back to me with different ideas and we were just able to work really well together,” Frazier says. “I could not have done it without them because we are not designers and they could not have done it without me because they are not sandblasters.”

The process Frazier and his team used to create the etched glass walls involved screenprinting photographic images onto glass and then sandblasting them.

“The image creates the stencil and then we sandblast it,” Frazier explains. In other words, Frazier says, they are reproducing photographs onto the glass. By using a half-tone film stenciling technique, much like that used in the printing industry, the company can create an image on the surface of the glass that reproduces the exact shading and nuance of a black and white photograph.

For Frazier, the Hotel Murano project was the largest one for which he had done any such work. He explained that while in the shop he was so particular about the final result being exactly right that only he and one other person worked on the job.

“At the end of the project we only had to replace six panels out of about 105.” Three of those Frazier simply chose to replace. “As I improved my techniques we replaced those three panels since they looked better than before.”

### Installation Tactics

Sound Glass, also located in Tacoma, did the glass installation work for the Hotel Murano, including the art glass walls, glass elevators, canopies and art displays. When it came to installing the art glass panels, Tom Wright of Sound Glass says the biggest challenge involved handling.

Danish artist Vibeke Skov created three colorful glass Viking ships that hang in the grand corridor of the hotel.



Glass was used extensively inside the hotel, everywhere from walls, room dividers, art pieces and more.

“With all of the different panels, part of the challenge was keeping the sitelines equal and keeping the pictures true [to the intended image],” Wright says. “It was a lot like trying to hang a picture on the wall ... the tolerances were very small. The sitelines and the gaps, everything was designed that way to ensure the pictures were true to themselves and made sense [when you looked at them].”

Wright adds that they also had to be careful handling the glass because they could not put their hands on the back of the glass after setting it, as it might leave smudges.

“Once the glass was installed we were not able to access the back side [so it had to be done right the first time],” says Wright.

Another challenge for the Sound Glass team was getting the channeling to the designated floors.

“Some pieces were too big to go in

the elevator so we had to push them up the stairwell ... there were workers on each floor who would literally pull and push the pieces up to the next floor through the stairwell,” says Wright.

### A Glass Act

For all parties involved, the Hotel Murano proved to be a landmark project.

“I think it showcased the extent to which public spaces can connect visitors to a place in unexpected and relevant ways for interactions that leave long-lasting impressions. We were fortunate to work with a client who had the vision to see that something as simple as an elevator lobby can be a celebration of glass ... and the artists who create with it,” says Troen. “The images and narratives por-



trayed on the display walls along with the studio photos and artist sketches that line the corridors and rooms creates a 360-degree-view of the artist that visitors would not necessarily get in a museum setting.”

Though it's the Italian island of Murano that has been coined the art glass capital of the world, thanks to a Tacoma boutique hotel named for it, it's possible to enjoy a similar glass experience that's perhaps a little closer to home. 