

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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SLEEPOVER » TACOMA BEAUTY DOUBLES AS GLASSWORK EXHIBIT » BY SAM BUFALINI

## A glowing medium in high-end digs

### HOTEL MURANO

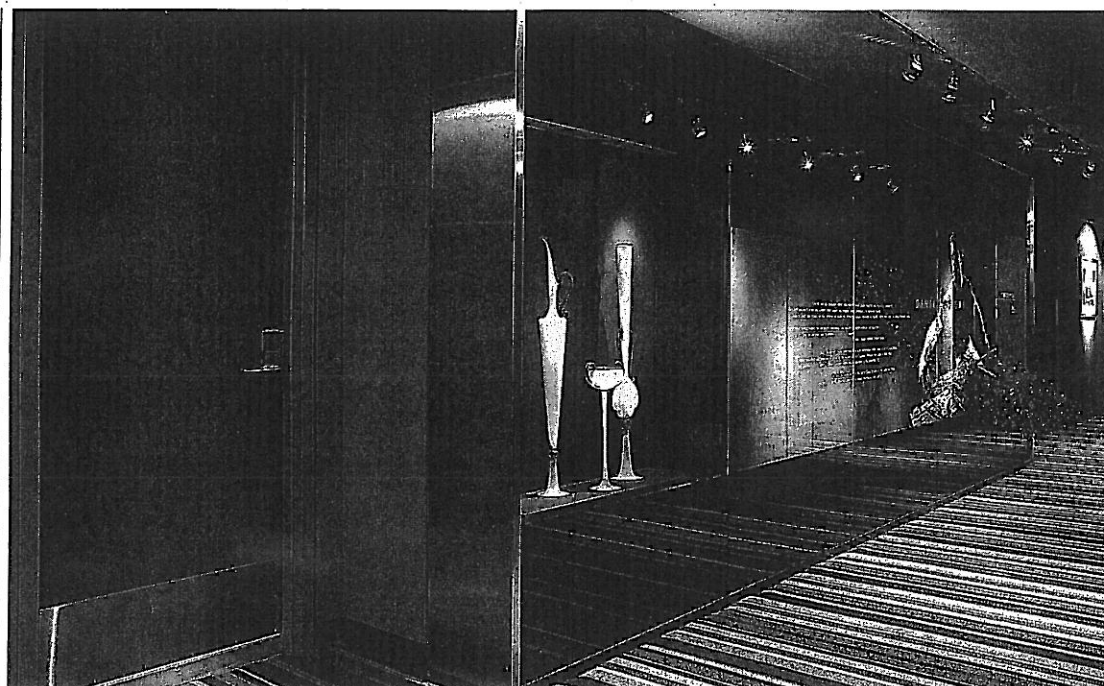
1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, Wash.; 1-888-862-3255; www.hotelmuranotacoma.com.

### ROOMS AND RATES

The hotel offers 320 rooms ranging from \$189 to \$489 (U.S.).

As a kind of tribute to the Washington state city famous for glass, Tacoma's Hotel Murano literally shimmers. Opened March 1, the former Sheraton property is the latest addition to the Portland, Ore.-based Provenance Hotels chain. When Provenance decided to buy and refurbish the property - at a cost of more than \$22-million, according to manager Mark Matthews - using glass art in the redesign was a natural choice: Provenance had used this artistic approach with great success in its hotels in Portland, Seattle and Nashville, Tenn.; and of course it "was an opportunity to pay homage" to internationally renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly in his hometown, said curator Tessa Papas in a recent interview, who travelled to Europe and Asia to commission original artworks for the hotel.

**LOCATION** The hotel is cut into one of the hills overlooking the Tideflats, Tacoma's bustling international port and industrial area. On a clear day, the view of Mount Rainier, the 4,200-metre dormant volcano that is the jewel of the Cascade mountain range, is simply breathtaking. The bustling metropolis of Seattle, with its multitude of cultural, entertainment and shopping attractions, is just a half-hour drive north.



Each floor of the Hotel Murano is dedicated to a specific artist. Exit an elevator and you find yourself in front of a showcase of original works.

**DESIGN** Each of the Murano's 22 floors is dedicated to a specific artist. Exit an elevator and you find yourself in front of a showcase of original works, as well as a brief biography of the artist - etched in the glass of the showcase - and photographs of them at work. The theme is carried into the rooms, where the walls are decorated with sketches of the design process for each piece. (Provenance is planning a book to showcase the work.)

**ROOMS** The hotel offers a wide

range of accommodations, from single rooms with king-sized beds to corner suites with two bathrooms. Rooms on the Premier Level include an exclusive evening wine hour, continental breakfast and complimentary espresso, as well as suites outfitted with Jacuzzi tubs, wet bars and Bose audio systems.

The rooms have been completely refurbished, with carpets and textured wallpaper that mimic the look of glass. Bedside lamps commissioned from a Portland firm feature

blown-glass bases that can provide a reddish "night light," while colourful pillows add a bright accent to the spare, modern look.

The rooms also feature high-speed Internet access, a wall-mounted high-definition television and an iPod docking station.

**SERVICE** Don't have one of the ubiquitous music machines? Just hit the "Help me" button and the desk will lend you an iPod programmed with your favourite kind of music.

### Hotel vitals

#### TOP DRAW

A perfect introduction to Tacoma's signature works of art.

#### NEEDS WORK

Better not bring the kids.

The same button also brings all kinds of comforts. Not crazy about the pillows on your bed? Hit the button and the choices range from soft to extra firm; whole body and U-neck pillows are also available.

And the days when a Gideon Bible was the only source of spiritual comfort for travellers are over: Murano staff will happily provide you with a copy of the Bhagavad Gita, the Torah, the Koran and the Book of Mormon.

Other services include 24-hour room service, valet parking and round-the-clock fitness and business centres.

**CLIENTELE** The Murano expects to serve a wide range of customers. Its proximity to the city's convention centre and 20-minute travel time to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport make it a natural for business and convention travellers, while its unique design is sure to attract visitors planning to spend time at the Museum of Glass in the nearby museum district.

**FOOD AND DRINK** The hotel features a lobby bar and a fourth-floor restaurant, the economically named Bite, which offers plenty of Pacific Northwest specialties and homey staples you might not expect in such a sophisticated location - meat loaf, anyone?

**THINGS TO DO** There is a gallery in the hotel featuring displays from the local Traver Gallery. In fact, one of the hotel's primary aims, according to Matthews, is to provide guests with a truly "educational experience."

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