

Enzo Berti: Murano Rediscovered

Centre of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Torun

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That glass has been known to man since thousands of years has been evidenced by ancient glass beads found in Egypt. First glassworks in Venice, a place still associated with the art of making unusual objects or rather small works of art from coloured glass, appeared in the fourth century, and the main manufacturing centre developed on the small picturesque island of Murano around 1290. Since then, Murano glass has invariably been seen as synonymous with exquisite craftsmanship, exciting and inspiring consecutive generations of artists who keep drawing on the tradition to tell their own stories, uniting the past with the present.

The Murano Rediscovered exhibition hosted by the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń puts on show the work of Italian designer Enzo Berti, a versatile artist and winner of many prestigious design awards. Berti reinterprets the thousand-year-old art of melting and decorating glass, presenting a different point of view and revisiting the conventional approach to artistic production and traditional decorative techniques. In glass, tough as it is, the artist sees the potential for movement and he makes an attempt to cross the limitations of matter and treat glass as though it were as supple as fabric.

Not only has the Italian designer created the works on display, he has also developed the concept for the show and designed the arrangement of space. The exhibition represents multidimensional transformation of matter, craftsmanship, form, purpose, and, lastly, perception. Murano according to Berti triggers surreal synaesthesia in viewers.

The exhibition has two parts. The first takes the form of a ten-metre-long installation with a mirror tunnel and a basic meant to reference the Venetian Lagoon – two pylons fished out from the bay constitute an integral part of it. A passive and inscrutable witness to reality, the mirror is turned in Berti's work into an instrument of transformation, creating a new perspective, an illusionary space where shapes and colours overstep the glass surface, blur the boundaries, while the observer becomes part of a continuous and unavoidable transformation. Another meaningful inspiration comes from water – the natural element that makes Venice so exceptional. The unusual construction completed with a large-format video invites viewers to immerse themselves in a mirage.

Artists on show

Enzo Berti