

Camera dei Sogni

Palazzo Tiepolo Passi, Venice Judi Harvest, 2015

For the *Dialogue of Fire* exhibition, I was invited to create an everyday, universal object. I chose the pillow, where we rest our heads when we dream. I constructed an installation of pillows using handmade Murano glass, the ancient material associated with Venice, together with sound, scent and light evoking beautiful dreams.

In this Venetian Palace bedroom, I have placed eighteen glass pillows made on the island of Murano on a round mattress that echoes the ceiling fresco above the installation. The mattress is filled with lavender from my Murano Honey Garden, where I began a colony of bees, a link to my installation during the last Venice Biennale, "*Denatured: Honeybees + Murano*". Lavender is known to induce a state of relaxation, the prelude to sleep. The installation is an ethereal reminder that while our dreams may be a challenge to realize, nothing is impossible.

The intensely colored glass pillows reference the colors of Venice and the Tiepolo-style fresco on the room's ceiling. Some of the pillows are mirrored Venetian glass that reflect the fresco, others are made of shimmering Murano glass and gold leaf. A few bear the impression of a human head, while others appear to have two impressions -- a pillow shared by lovers or friends. Some have no impression at all, as if waiting for someone to lay down their head.

The pillow has been a part of daily life throughout history. From the day we are born until the moment we pass on, we spend roughly a third of our lives resting upon them. Pillows are the cradles in which we laugh, love, cry, talk, whisper, rest, sleep, travel, plan, study and dream. Here they are re-made in the minerals from the earth from which glass is made, creating different moods and tactile qualities from a soft velvety feeling to a hard shimmering substance.

Because pillows are among our most personal objects, my blown glass sculptures have individual names. Each is different in shape and color. Creating the pillows was a difficult and arduous process of trial and error. The first pillow that came out as I dreamed it would is named *Karma*. As the others were formed and cooled, their names were clear: *Stromboli*, for example, is like black volcanic sand. Some of the other are *Nomad*, *Miele*, *Tango*, *Utopia*, *Onda*, *Narciso*, *Clandestino*, *Favola*, *Nuvola*, *Limoncello*, *Laguna*, *Fenice*, *Nebbia*, *Capri*, *Desideri*, *Luna*, *Erasmus*, *Burano* and *Avventurina*.

All of my work begins with painting. For this series, I made drawings and paintings in my New York studio and then traveled to Murano to create the sculptures in glass. The Murano techniques I've explored with this exhibit include *reticello*, *bollicine*, *murrine*,

iridati, sabbiata and *specchiato*. The results, and the installation itself, were both more difficult to create and ultimately dreamier than I imagined.

The *Room of Dreams* video interweaves the manual creation of the Murano glass pillow sculptures, with a choreographed Pillow Dance. The tossing of the pillows and dancers in motion represent randomness, life-changing chance encounters, and realized dreams.

The video contrasts the working factory where I create the sculptures from untouchable, molten Murano glass, with the feathery bed pillows and romantic pillow dance--exploring the transition from hard to soft, from tough and laborious to beauty and lightness.

All of the pieces for this exhibition are handmade in Murano. I work intimately with the glass master, creating new variations of the process for each piece. I filmed the dialogue between the pillows, myself, the glass master and the fire that culminates in *Camera dei Sogni*. Like all my work, *Camera dei Sogni* investigates fundamental human concerns, the fragility of life and the search for beauty.

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