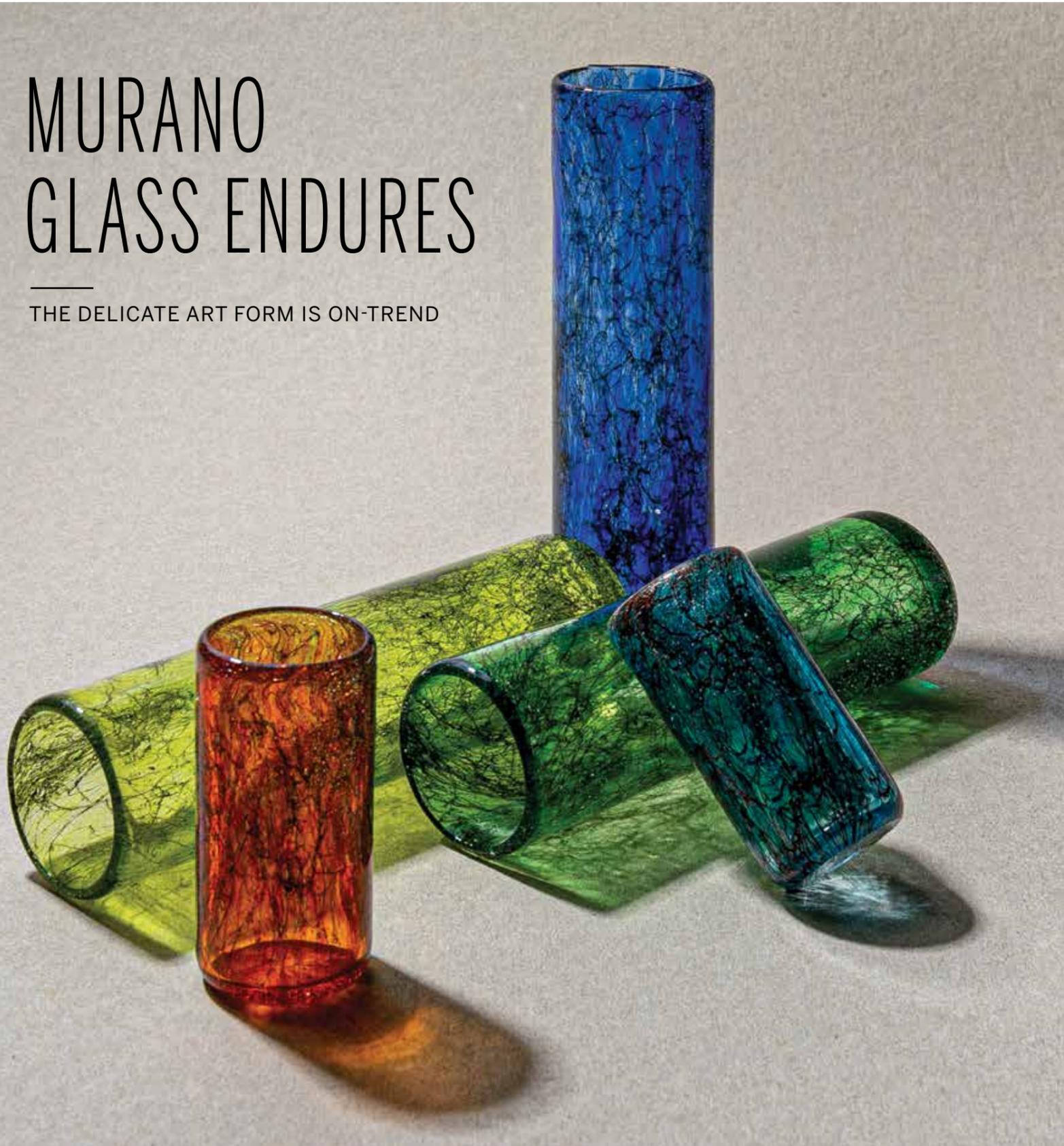


MURANO GLASS ENDURES

THE DELICATE ART FORM IS ON-TREND



Opposite page: Romain Bassemer; this page, top: Tessa Sakhi; bottom: Adam Kuehl
 Opposite page: The Tasting Threads collection from Polish-Lebanese sister duo Tessa and Tara. This page: Tessa and Tara's Nomad collection, shown at top. Designer Rebecca Gardner's collection of Murano glass, shown below.

Murano glass had its heyday from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, when the Venetian island of Murano became Europe's glassmaking capital, but its popularity has ebbed and flowed over the years. Some may even believe the allure of this delicate art form has faded in the 21st century, but trends suggest otherwise. In 2018, popular design site Remodelista selected Murano glass—with items ranging from elaborate chandeliers to simpler drinking sets—as one of the top 18 design trends of the year.

Celebrated for its rich colors and unique shapes, Murano glass was developed in Venice in the 8th century before production shifted to the island of Murano in 1291 due to the threat of fires in the city. Though design sensibilities have evolved hundreds of years later, the elegance, mystique, and unmatched beauty of the ancient art glass remain. These days, designers and the design-minded are including the age-old tradition in their work, but from a fresh perspective.

Rebecca Gardner, a Savannah, Ga., and New York-based events and interior designer, explains that Murano glass is “fine and delicate in form, but wild and confident in color.”

Gardner regularly mixes Murano pieces like Salviati and Laguna B glassware in her tablescapes. “There is something mysterious and fairy-tale about the island and its art,” she says of Murano. By introducing Murano glass into living spaces—such as dressing up a dining table or glamming up an entranceway—you can add color and texture, elevating the experience.

As much as this striking art glass shines on its own, it's also successful when blended with other materials. T. Sakhi, a Beirut-based multidisciplinary architecture and design studio owned by Polish-Lebanese sisters Tessa and Tara, infuses Murano glass into several accessory lines.

“Tasting Threads” is a tableware collection of glasses, plates, bowls, and flasks, marrying customary Lebanese shapes with Venetian tradition. The unusual blend consists of Murano glass and metal wire sourced from factories in Beirut. The duo takes aluminum, copper, brass, and other metal debris, and embeds it into the glass while it's still hot.

“We have been working with Murano for the past four

years and are fascinated by the material, its malleability, how it changes from fluid to solid, and the expertise and high precision that is required by the mouth blowers to execute such a craft,” Tessa Sakhi says.

In the lighting collection “I Hear You Tremble,” the sisters combine recycled metal with Murano glass to create a stonelike texture for chandeliers and modular floor lamps. And in “Nomad,” they transform brass—a metal with deep roots in Lebanon—and the iconic Italian glass into a collection of alcohol flasks, proving the diversity of Murano and how it can be contemporary as well as traditional.

“We wanted to create functional objects for everyday use that bring people together and allow people to interact and share moments over food and alcohol, thus the tableware and flasks collections,” Sakhi explains.

When it comes to integrating Murano glass into one's lifestyle, there are countless ways to appreciate and show off this fine Venetian art form. “Drop a tea light in tumblers for a beautiful glow, or serve cold soups in finger bowls,” Gardner advises. Or try placing a Murano tumbler next to a Georgian crystal goblet for a whimsical touch. “It doesn't behave,” she adds. “That makes it fun.”

