Attributed to Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Vase with Dolphins and Flowers
ca. 1880s–90s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

This tall vase showcases many glassmaking techniques and decorative features admired by American tourists in the late nineteenth century. Its trumpetlike form suggests the action of glassblowing, with the artist’s breath extending molten material into an elegant, fluted cone. A trio of dolphins and chrysanthemums rings the stem, each meticulously constructed, attached, and shaped over an open flame. Flowers and sea creatures were favorite decorative elements in Venetian glassware of the seventeenth century, when the island city reigned as Queen of the Adriatic with a strong navy and trading empire.

By replicating complicated and fragile historical designs on a large scale, the creator of this vase declares that a new generation of glassmakers is determined to revive Venice’s signature craft tradition, matching and perhaps surpassing earlier success. Their creations soon caught the eyes of American collectors.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.469.1

Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano

Between 1860 and 1915, the renowned glassmaking industry on the Venetian island of Murano experienced intense growth. This Venetian glass revival coincided with a surge in Venice’s popularity as a destination for American tourists, many of whom visited the glass furnaces and
eagerly collected ornate handblown goblets decorated with floral and animal motifs. As its fame and quality grew, Venetian glass became more than a travel souvenir; patrons saw these as museum-quality works of fine art. Collector interest led to frequent depictions of Italian glassmakers and glass objects by prominent American artists of that era, including John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler.

Despite this prestige, shifts in tastes have shrouded the allure of Venetian glassware. Using individual works of glass with long histories in American hands—objects that crossed the Atlantic more than a century ago—this exhibition takes us inside the minds of past artists and collectors. These travelers often passed through Venice while making a grand tour, an extended trip through Europe’s great cities and museums in search of education and pleasure. We invite you to see Venice through their eyes and explore how they preserved memories of this fairytale city, including appreciation for its revival in glassmaking and other famed local crafts, through paintings, etchings, drawings, and finely made works of decorative art. Consider also the individuality of these glass vessels, mosaics, and lace. Such works—often more affordable than paintings—expanded the ways in which American collectors could demonstrate their refined tastes based on respect for the past as well as their openness to new, original designs. Within this diverse assortment of colors and concepts, which works would you study, copy, or collect? Which visions of Venice do you find most magical?

*Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano* is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Generous support has been provided by:

The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation
Embassy of Italy in Washington, D.C.
Chris G. Harris
Raymond J. and Margaret Horowitz Endowment
Janet and William Ellery James
William R. Kenan Jr. Endowment Fund
Maureen and Gene Kim
The Lunder Foundation—Peter and Paula Lunder Family
Lucy S. Rhame
Holly and Nick Ruffin
Smithsonian Scholarly Studies Awards
Rick and Lucille Spagnuolo
Myra and Harold Weiss

The accompanying catalogue is supported in part by Jane Joel Knox.

This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

In-kind support has been provided by Christie’s.
Frank Duveneck

*Water Carriers, Venice*

1884

oil on canvas

Welcome to modern Venice, a living city where local fishermen and families proudly perform their everyday chores, like fetching fresh water from communal cisterns, against a magnificent maritime backdrop. You stand on the Riva degli Schiavoni, the waterfront promenade adjacent to St. Mark’s Basilica, the Ducal Palace, and other renowned attractions, but this is not a pristine, souvenir-style view of famous monuments. It recognizes instead the economic reality of Italy in the late nineteenth century, when the newly self-governing nation was in the midst of a dramatic transformation to greater economic productivity. The dragging shoulder of the young girl on the far right signals the contributions of all ages to this recovery and growth. These children are dreamers and workers, poised to restore Venice’s leadership in trade, manufacturing, and the visual arts.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of Reverend F. Ward Denys, 1943.11.1

Hermann Herzog

*Along the Grand Canal, Venice*

ca. 1890s

oil on canvas

Gondoliers and deliverymen rest by the docks in this vignette of daily life in Venice. The painter Hermann Herzog stands among these working-class residents, giving a canal-level view. Ornate Gothic facades line the opposite embankment, including the Ca’ d’Oro on the left, called the “House of Gold” due to its colorfully decorated exterior. English critic John Ruskin praised its lacelike arches and prickly parapet, features often re-created by foreign architects. Herzog’s crisp painting style and realistic individuals help set the palazzo (newly restored around the time of this painting) within a bustling and prosperous city.

Woodmere Art Museum, Bequest of Charles Knox Smith
Thomas Moran
_A View of Venice_
1891
oil on canvas

With rich colors and calligraphic brushstrokes, Thomas Moran dissolves the clouds, architecture, and reflections of Venice into a tapestry of swirls and scribbles. Moran built his reputation by painting dramatic records of the mountains and waterfalls of the American West. He then traveled to Italy to renew his creative spirit, first visiting in 1886. In this vista of the entrance to the Grand Canal, he takes artistic license with architecture and topography, making subtle adjustments so that other favorite sights, such as the Bridge of Sighs, are inaccurately visible. In 1890 Moran purchased an antique gondola so that he could continue indulging in this favorite Venetian experience on the pond near his home on Long Island, New York.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1968.120.1

Walter Launt Palmer
_Wing and Wing_
1890
oil on canvas

Spread wide in opposite directions, the sails of this fishing boat showcase traditional Venetian red and orange painted designs. This sail configuration, known as “wing and wing,” harnesses a strong tailwind and helps this small craft race across the lagoons. During the 1890s, when Walter Launt Palmer and other American painters flocked to Venice, the pace of modernization there was brisk. The full sails and warm sunlight in Palmer’s painting present an optimistic view of the speed of these changes.

Private collection
Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano
Smithsonian American Art Museum | 10/5/21 KH
The printed wall designs in this exhibition reproduce a woven cotton *Furnishing Textile Length* created ca. 1920 by Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo (1871–1949), an influential Venice-based designer and decorator. Image courtesy of the RISD Museum (Gift of Barbara Deering Danielson, 82.308.48G).

**Text Panel, Gallery 1:**

**Modern Venice**

In the early nineteenth century, Venice was not prosperous. Following its capture by Napoleon in 1797, the city, previously the capital of an independent republic, underwent six decades of rule by distant powers: first France, then Austria. Taxation and censorship discouraged local commerce, construction, and creativity, prompting an exodus of wealthy citizens and would-be artists. Most glassmaking furnaces closed. Americans visited briefly to admire Venice’s architecture, setting, and art collections, but few lingered; travelers preferred Rome, Florence, and Paris.

Changes came rapidly at mid-century, many captured on this map, published in 1882 in an American magazine. These included a railroad connection to the mainland, completed in 1846; a state-of-the-art iron girder bridge over the Grand Canal near the Accademia Galleries, added in 1854; and after Italy's unification and independence in the 1860s, expansion of the Arsenal shipyards in service of trade and the new Italian navy. British and American elites filled luxury hotels and rented palaces for long-term stays. As visitors explored a wide array of churches, cafés, and shops across the modernizing island city, the range of spaces and subjects depicted by artists multiplied. The epicenter of the Venetian glass revival, the island of Murano, is marked with a “C” below.

**Object labels, Gallery 1:**

Herman Armour Webster  
*To the Caffetteria—Capuccino's Time, Venice Zattere*  
1935  
carbon pencil on paper

Cafés and bars were key gathering places for Americans in Venice, Rome, Paris, and other European cultural capitals. In addition to the fashionable venues around St. Mark’s Square, including Caffè Florian and Caffè Quadri, many artists and writers frequented Caffè La Calcina on the Zattere embankment, likely the site of this informal sketch. Over coffee or wine, artists might trade gossip, compare works, befriend potential clients, or organize joint ventures, such...
as hiring a model or making a day trip to outer lagoon islands. Herman Webster’s drawings from Venice include detailed studies of palaces and churches as well as casual sketches with glimpses of his daily life.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Moune G. H. Webster, 1973.124.21

Bertha Evelyn Jaques
_April Shower, Venice_
1914
etching on paper

“Venice has been painted and described many thousands of times,” stated American writer Henry James in 1882, “and of all the cities of the world is the easiest to visit without going there.” Perhaps heeding James’s warning, many artists turned their attention to its less familiar corners. Here Bertha Jaques explores the fuzzy imprecision of inclement weather, with umbrella-bearing pedestrians passing through an unnamed piazza. Falling rain hides the surrounding structures in a misty haze, with their mushroomlike chimneys serving as the only clue to the Venetian setting. Jaques was a founding member of the Chicago Society of Etchers and an advocate for the unique expressive powers of this medium. The Venetian etchings of James Whistler inspired her printmaking, long before her first visit to Venice in 1912.


Mabel Pugh
_Near the Rialto, Venice_
ca. 1923–26
linoleum cut on paper

Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano
Smithsonian American Art Museum | 10/5/21 KH
By the twentieth century, Venice offered a vibrant tourist industry that was easy for American visitors to navigate, including single young women. Pugh worked in Venice in 1921 while touring Europe on a scholarship from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, filling her sketchbooks with records of the principal sights. She later converted these designs into linoleum block prints that led to commissions for book and magazine illustrations. These travel images cemented her reputation as an innovative printmaker and designer. In this view of the Rialto Bridge, Pugh includes a young female artist at work on the lower left, presumably inserting herself into the scene.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the North Carolina Museum of Art (Gift of the artist, 1977), 2020.4.11

Frank Duveneck
*Bridge of Sighs, Venice*
1885
etching on paper

Painter and printmaker Frank Duveneck was a pivotal figure in the community of American artists working in Venice in the late nineteenth century. After training at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, he moved to Italy, oscillating between Florence and Venice with a tight circle of friends and students. Their group, mostly young men who shared scant financial resources, earned the nickname “the Duveneck Boys,” and they honed their art skills by depicting a range of subjects, including architecture and human figures. This etching of the famed Bridge of Sighs balances these elements to capture the recognizable landmark and the experience of viewing it firsthand, with narrow passageways and embankments crowded with passing residents.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase, 1972.70
Sparks of romance and intrigue enliven a neighborhood café as a fur-clad *lazzagnon* (a stereotype of a Venetian dandy-loafer) conspires with a laughing local maiden. Is John Singer Sargent portraying an innocent flirtation, or is this a prelude to intoxication and seduction, as the overturned bottle, broken wine glass, and precarious angle of the woman’s chair may hint? Though the painter may have witnessed such an episode during his extended visits to Venice, this scene is staged, and this dark-haired model may be the same posing in Sargent’s life-size *A Venetian Woman*, elsewhere in this exhibition. The discarded bottle and shattered glass on the floor suggest the reawakened glassmaking furnaces on Murano, which produced everyday glassware as well as luxury blown glass items.

The Collection of Marie and Hugh Halff

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer or Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer

*Ancient Roman—Style Mosaic Glass Bowl*

ca. 1875–80
hot-worked and slumped mosaic glass with applied glass rim

Toledo Museum of Art, Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1977.12
Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer
or Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer

Ancient Roman—Style Mosaic Glass Bowl
ca. 1875-80
hot worked and slumped mosaic glass with applied glass rim

The Walters Art Museum, Acquired by Henry Walters, 47.298

Compare these patterned glass bowls with their ancient Roman cousins, on view. Though they were made almost two millennia apart, all use an identical casting technique, known as slumping, in which a sheet of glass is placed over a shallow, open mold and heated. If this sheet is a multicolor fusion of bands or pre-made cane slices, the resulting bowls can feature stripes or patterns impossible to create in blown glass. Intact ancient bowls of this type rarely survived, but nineteenth-century Venetian glassmakers re-created slumped mosaic glass pieces. Revival works, like these, are typically larger and have thinner glass walls than their antique counterparts, demonstrating the later glassmakers’ improved tools and high standards of quality.

Vincenzo Moretti, Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer or Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer

Ancient Roman–Style Striped Glass Bowl
ca. 1875–80
hot-worked and slumped glass with applied glass rim

Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1923.1490
This Venetian revival bowl once belonged to American artist Charles Caryl Coleman, some of whose paintings hang elsewhere in this exhibition. During decades of residence in Italy, Coleman collected both ancient and modern glass, as well as other antiques and curious objects, and he used some as props in his paintings. He eventually amassed at least two thousand specimens, which he loaned for exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1893, then later sold to other collectors.

Frank Duveneck  
*Riva degli Schiavoni, No. 2*  
1880  
etching on paper

The Riva degli Schiavoni, pictured in several paintings and prints in this exhibition, was the de facto front porch for Venice: a wide promenade offering views across the lagoon toward the Adriatic Sea. Increased tourism spurred the conversion of many of the Riva’s waterfront tenements into guest houses and elegant hotels. James Whistler, Frank Duveneck, and several of their comrades found affordable rooms here at Casa Jankowitz. From its upper rooms, they made scores of drawings, prints, and paintings. These two views depict the same space, looking west, but they are mirror images. Duveneck created a preliminary drawing and reversed it in his plate, so that the printed view is topographically accurate, whereas Whistler carved his scene directly onto the etching plate, a customary practice for the self-confident printmaker.

The Grand Parlor of the Palazzo Barbaro was a nexus in the intellectual life of American visitors and expatriates in Venice. The fifteenth-century palace on the Grand Canal was occupied and later owned by a wealthy family from Boston, the Curtises, who hosted salons in this magnificent space. Frequent guests included John Singer Sargent (a distant cousin of the Curtises), writers like Henry James and Edith Wharton, and collectors Jack and Isabella Stewart Gardner. James McNeill Whistler attended parties here during his brief visit to Venice, perhaps in the company of Frank Duveneck, another regular visitor. Walter Gay, a specialist in painting furnishings and interior details, here captures the parlor’s opulent décor, including its magnificent Venetian glass chandeliers.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund, 11.1537

Tourists and local Venetians brush elbows in the maze of alleys near the Rialto Bridge, the islands’ chief crossroads and home to scores of boutiques and markets. At the end of this passage, a vendor tempts passersby with a table of glittering glassware, probably a sampling of antique fragments and Renaissance specimens. Shoppers with deep pockets could find...
elaborate examples of contemporary Murano glassware in fine showrooms around St. Mark’s Square, but browsing humble stalls might yield affordable souvenirs and the occasional treasure. As tourism to Venice swelled in the 1880s, the city developed a reputation as a destination for buying art, jewelry, glass, lace, fine fabrics, and a vast range of other luxury goods, many locally made.

Michael and Jean Antonello Family Foundation

Unidentified, Roman Empire  
Mosaic Glass Patella Cup  
1st century BCE–2nd century CE  
slumped, polished, and applied mosaic glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.147.13

Ancient Roman glassmakers invented the decorative technique now commonly known as mosaic glass, seen in the two antique bowls in this case. The first steps in this process are arranging thin threads of glass of varying colors into a long bundle, then fusing these into a single rod. The resulting cane is then sliced into thin discs, and each will bear the same pattern, perhaps a flower design or concentric circles in the shape of an eye. As seen here, the cane slices can then be reworked into a vessel with this pattern repeated across the surface. Mosaic glass fell out of favor until the nineteenth century, when Muranese glassmakers studied ancient vessels and began to make replicas, striving to rival the achievements of their Italian ancestors.
Unidentified, Roman Empire
Mosaic Glass Bowl
1st century BCE–1st century CE
slumped, polished, and applied mosaic glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.147.5

Mosaic glass vessels captivated late-nineteenth-century collectors, who especially sought ancient examples. Intact antique cups and bowls were rare, and even fragments were eagerly purchased. This blue bowl has been reconstructed from surviving shards; plaster has been molded to fill gaps, and these insertions have been painted with rough approximations of the overall patterns. Strong lights reveal which sections are glass (dark but transparent) and which are plaster (completely opaque).

John Singer Sargent
A Venetian Woman
1882
oil on canvas

To personify the seductive charms of Venice, John Singer Sargent created a life-size portrait of a beadworker. This model holds a bundle of long, thin blue glass canes that are soon to be cut and polished into beads, one of Venice’s chief exports in the nineteenth century and a staple of trade in Asia, Africa, and with Native communities in North America. Cradling her cluster of canes, she poses as a cernitrice, a sorter who groups them by color. Like her native city, she is proud and alluring, with the glass canes acknowledging the critical role of Murano within Venice’s identity, economy, and future.
Venetian Revival Glass

Many now call Murano glassware of the late nineteenth century “Venetian revival glass” for two reasons. First, this term acknowledges the reemergence of the glassmaking industry after its decline over the previous century. Also, the name indicates that glassmakers consciously emulated older techniques and copied well-known historical models. In this way they repopularized forms associated with Venice’s Renaissance heyday of wealth and naval power. At the time, however, glassmakers and collectors called these new products “artistic” and “modern,” values that underscored the objects’ status as museum-worthy, luxury items. Revival glassware took many forms, including historically inspired works and original, experimental creations. Some collectors assembled libraries of diverse objects, while others had narrow aesthetic preferences. Fragility, whimsy, color, and size were among many factors used to judge quality. As you explore this exhibition and study the choices of past collectors, consider which elements of Venetian revival glass you find most elegant and appealing.

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer
or Fratelli Barovier, manufacturer
Replica of a Sixteenth-Century Nef (Ewer) in the Form of a Boat
ca. 1870s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Harry Harkness Flagler, 1949.49.166.23

This nineteenth-century boat-shaped ewer was based on a design by the only documented female glassblower of Renaissance Murano, Armenia Vivarini. She patented the form in 1521, and Venetian revival glassmakers studied surviving examples to produce copies and variations, such as this one. Due to their fragility, particularly the lattice rigging, these were coveted by collectors and purchased only for display, never for use during meals.
Attributed to Vittorio Zanetti
Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Fish and Eel Vase
ca. 1890
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.469.2

This vase has no historical precedent. Its entwined sea creatures are masterworks of glassblowing prowess, while its speckled, radiant colors advertise the many formulas developed by Murano’s artisans. Glass fish, seahorses, ships, gondolas, and other maritime subjects were common in revival-era glassware and likely had special appeal as souvenirs of the island city.

Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Kuttrolf-Style Vase
ca. 1880s–90s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.469.4

Notice the twisted, tripartite neck of this slender vase. This divided “kuttrolf” form, used in ancient Roman and medieval German bottles, impeded pouring of the liquid contents,
sometimes producing curious sounds in the process. In this instance the vessel is purely ornamental. It was blown with clear glass to emphasize its complex workmanship and the thinness of the material, a measure of the maker's skill.

Società Anonima per Azioni Salviati & C., manufacturer
Fenicio Goblet with Swans and Initial “S” Stem
ca. 1870
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.469.6

The glassmakers of Murano offered collectors a literal alphabet of forms, colors, and patterns. This goblet builds on historical fancy-stem designs with playful swans, delicate bows, and a candy-cane-striped letter “S.” Its most eye-catching element is the patterned bowl, in which filigree stripes have been lightly hand-brushed to produce an irregular, feathery pattern, a technique named fenicio (Phoenician). The abundance of features ensured that such vessels were one-of-a-kind treasures.

Gallery 1, Section 2 Text Panel:

Intimate Views and Smaller Souvenirs

As tourism in Venice changed, the works of James McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent (both pictured below) were especially influential in reshaping patterns of artmaking and art collecting there. Whistler enjoyed a productive fourteen months in Venice from 1879 to 1880, and Sargent made regular sojourns between the 1880s and the First World War. Through scenes of daily life and views of obscure canals and squares, these two artists redefined how visitors afterwards remembered the light, colors, art, people, pageantry, and other sights of the island city. “I have learned to know a Venice in Venice that the others never seem to have perceived,” wrote Whistler in January of 1880, describing the rewards of his deliberately off-script explorations of this familiar place. Instead of depicting famous monuments from predictable, postcard-style perspectives, this pair separately introduced a new vision of Venice into the popular imagination.
Prints, pastels, and watercolors were the favored media for sharing views of Venice that emphasized intimacy and individuality. Through their small size and gestural style, these convey the immediacy and uniqueness of a visitor's experience. The appeal of Venetian revival glass often rested on similar values: originality and subtle, organic irregularities that confirm hand workmanship. The variety and affordability of smaller souvenirs also encouraged collection building. Just as no one study by Sargent or etching by Whistler could fully convey the many charms of Venice, a dozen examples of Venetian revival glass would illustrate only a fraction of the forms and colors contributing to the magic of Murano.

Wall labels, Gallery 1, Section 2:

James McNeill Whistler
*The Venetian Mast (First Venice Set)*
1879–80
etching and drypoint on paper

The locals in the foreground of this scene include several seated women whose hunched posture signals their occupation; they are *impiraresse*, bead stringers, with trays of finished beads that they separate by size and color into strands of equal weight—the last stage in the bead production process. Although Venice’s Mediterranean empire had long fallen by this time, the glass industry continued to connect the island city to far corners of the globe. Like the winged Lion of St. Mark atop the pole in the center of the street, glass beads remained conspicuous symbols of the island city.

The Baltimore Museum of Art, Garrett Collection, 1946.112.5970
Alice Pike Barney
*James McNeill Whistler*
1898
pastel on paper mounted to paperboard

The popularity and financial success of Whistler’s Venetian works marked a turning point in his career, and the artist promoted his energetic style with a colorful public persona. His lectures and awards earned respect, while contentious relations with clients and critics garnered less favorable press. Artist and Washington, D.C., socialite Alice Pike Barney captures some of Whistler’s intensity and arrogance in this dynamic pastel. Barney toured Europe at an early age and became a patron and collector as well as a prolific artist in her own right. After her death, her daughters donated her studio and its contents to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Pastels were among her favorite media, and she honed these skills in Paris in the 1890s, counting Whistler (another expert in pastels) among her instructors.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Laura Dreyfus Barney and Natalie Clifford Barney in memory of their mother, Alice Pike Barney, 1951.14.110

James McNeill Whistler
*The Doorway (First Venice Set)*
1879–80
etching, drypoint, and roulette on paper

The iron grills, lattice, and sculpted architectural ornaments of this canal-front entranceway comprise one of Whistler’s most visually complex Venetian views. These elements contrast with...
the smooth surface of the water, which the artist activates through selective wiping. Here he strategically inked and only partially cleaned his plate during printing. Just below the laundress, painterly swirls in the ink reveal this careful process—choices calculated to make each impression a singular work of art.


James McNeill Whistler
*The Beggars (First Venice Set)*
1879–80
etching and drypoint on paper

In 1879 James Whistler traveled to Venice with a commission from the Fine Arts Society of London to create a series of etchings. The gallery knew that views of Venice were popular, and Whistler was in debt and needed work. However, the images he delivered were not traditional views of familiar monuments. Many of the prints instead depict obscure canals and alleys, often with working-class figures who loiter or perform everyday chores. Besides adding local color, these prints provide a sense of scale, conveying the narrowness of the passages that pierce quiet corners of the islands. Whistler’s mode of capturing the character of Venice was instantly popular with critics and collectors.

The Baltimore Museum of Art, The Conrad Collection, 1932.17.16
James McNeill Whistler  
*Old Women*  
1880  
drypoint on paper  

In Venice, Whistler produced about fifty etchings, more than ninety pastel drawings, and roughly a dozen paintings. This fourteen-month sojourn, his only visit, was one of the most productive periods of his career. He exhibited and published twelve of the etchings in London in 1880 (his “First Venice Set”), and a second group of twenty-one were publicly shown in 1886. This depiction of a small group of women and children, including several bead stringers, was not included in either of these published sets, and only five impressions of it are known.

Gift of Samuel Putnam Avery, Prints Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

*Text Panel, Gallery 1, Section 3*  
The Magicians of Murano  

The glass revival on the Venetian island of Murano began around 1860 under the leadership of lawyer-turned-entrepreneur Antonio Salviati (1816–1890), who assembled a team of skilled glass artisans to reignite Murano’s dormant furnaces. At that time the once-bustling island had dwindled in population, and inexpensive glass beads were its sole products. Salviati’s new enterprise first made mosaic tiles, then expanded to offer blown glass luxury goods, principally cups, chalices, and vases: so-called *vetri artistici*.

Many foreign visitors completed their Venetian itineraries with tours of these glass factories, watching a spectacle rarely available in their home countries. In the United States, glassblowing was largely focused on efficiency rather than beauty, making simple objects for everyday use. Salviati’s wares, by contrast, were promoted for their complexity and originality. “The glass-blower of Murano is no mere mechanic or artisan,” announced his son, Giulio, in an 1889 lecture in London. “He is in every respect a true artist . . . who invents and creates daily new forms and colors. The glass is to him what the chisel is to the sculptor, the brush to the painter.”

As Venetian tourism expanded, glassmakers advertised the spectacle of glassblowing to attract tourists and buyers. The entrance ticket pictured here offers a glimpse of the workmen’s actions, tools, and products. Whereas Renaissance-era glassmakers carefully guarded their secret...
formulas and techniques to maintain a monopoly on fine glassware, the revival thrived on visibility and on-the-spot sales.

Ellen Day Hale
*First Night in Venice*
1890
soft-ground etching and aquatint on paper

Ellen Day Hale made several visits to Venice with her partner, fellow artist Gabrielle de Veaux Clements (1858–1948). From their hotel on the Riva degli Schiavoni, the couple enjoyed views across the Grand Canal, as seen in these nocturnes. As twilight melts the domes of Santa Maria della Salute into a grand confection, recently installed gaslights pierce the shadows and create long quivering reflections. This etching design, created from a small sketch, captures the magic of the artist’s first impressions. Like Whistler and others, Hale used Venetian subjects as opportunities for technical experiments with printmaking, depicting the murky darkness and sometimes adding color with controlled hand-inking methods.

John Singer Sargent
Corner of the Church of San Stae
1913
oil on canvas

As John Singer Sargent visited Venice over the decades, the character of both the city and his artmaking gradually evolved. Sargent’s first Venetian paintings explore shadowy interiors to consider the lives of working-class citizens. After 1900, his chief interest became sun-drenched city views, often shown from a low, gondola-level vantage point. This vignette of the Church of San Stae details its exterior pilasters, pediments, and statues. Instead of presenting the full facade, Sargent cropped it and focused on the play of light.

Private collection

Andrew Kay Womrath
Yoshijirō Urushibara, printer
Venice by Day
Venice by Night
both ca. 1920s
color woodblock prints on paper

This pair of prints demonstrates the extent to which Venice became a destination for international artistic exchange and collaboration. American artist Kay Womrath, who worked primarily in Paris and London, presents a view of the rainbow palaces lining the southern end of the Rio de la Fornace in Venice’s Dorsoduro neighborhood. Japanese-born printmaker Yoshijirō Urushibara, also known by his artist’s name Mokuchū, has translated Womrath’s design into woodblock reliefs for color printing in the traditional Japanese mokuhanga method. By alternating the color scheme, the same blocks can be used to show warm Mediterranean sunlight or nocturnal stillness.

Urushibara explored Europe during the 1910s and 1920s before the onset of World War II forced his return to Japan. A job as a preparator at the British Museum led to partnerships in which he translated the work of various London artists into Japanese-style color woodblock prints. He also trained some colleagues, including Womrath, in this technique.
Collection of Darrel C. Karl

Attributed to Giuseppe Barovier or Benvenuto Barovier
Salviati Dott. Antonio, manufacturer
Goblet with Thorny Stem
ca. 1870–90s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of the Estate of Miss Agnes Miles Carpenter, 1955, 55.172.6

Attributed to Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Seventeenth Century–Style Long-Stemmed Goblet
ca. 1900
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of the Estate of Miss Agnes Miles Carpenter, 1955, 55.172.9
Attributed to Salviati Dott. Antonio, manufacturer
Replica of a Seventeenth-Century Goblet with Knotted Stem
ca. 1870s–80s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames, 14.294

Unidentified
Seventeenth Century–Style Goblet with Undulating Bowl
ca. 1870s–90s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames, 14.248

These four goblets feature bowls blown in transparent, colorless glass, perched on stems fashioned with hot-worked knot forms or applied decorative protrusions. Judge them by their symmetry, the complexity of their stems, and the thinness of their bowls: key markers of the skill of a master glassblower, or gaffer. This basic structure originated in Murano glassware of the fifteenth century, but such luxury vessels were no longer made by the early 1800s. Murano’s revival glassmakers used these forms as starting points for their work, sometimes replicating earlier vessels precisely and elsewhere varying designs to show their exceptional creativity and talent. In 1861 Murano leaders founded the city’s Glass Museum to display antique glass for study by local artisans and to help lure tourists to the island.
The furnace blazes white hot in the center of this smoky room, surrounded by five workmen, each at a different stage in the glassblowing process. The seated man in the foreground holds a pontil attached to the base of the nearly complete goblet, a lacy-stemmed Venetian revival design like some of the vessels in the adjacent case. Confident in his craft, he flirts with a trio of local women, whose rapt attention directs viewers to the artist’s virtuosity and skill.

This print reproduces Charles Ulrich’s painting Glass Blowers of Murano, pictured below, underscoring the popularity of Venice as a tourist destination and a subject for art. Furthermore, it characterizes glassmakers (and, by extension, all artists) as heroically endowed with both manual skills and creative genius. Ulrich’s picture received top honors in New York at the American Art Association’s 1886 exhibition of contemporary paintings, prompting its immediate purchase and donation to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Private collection
Walter Franklin Lansil
*The Coming Storm*
1908
oil on canvas

Though nicknamed the Most Serene City (*La Serenissima*), Venice offered visiting artists front-row seats to a variety of dramatic weather conditions, easily studied across the open lagoons. Walter Franklin Lansil made such views a specialty after visiting Venice only once, in 1885, subsequently employing a lush, poetic style to re-create visual spectacles like fiery pink sunsets or the radiant orange of local fishing-boat sails. Here he uses a known landmark, the gleaming white domes of Santa Maria della Salute, to establish a setting for an impressionistic exploration of waves and weather. This boat, a traditional Venetian *trabaccolo*, pulls in its sails to wait out the high winds.

Fry Fine Art Gallery

Julius LeBlanc Stewart
*Conversation Vénétienne*
1891
oil on canvas

This is the Fondamente Nove, an embankment stretching along the northern flank of the Venetian islands’ central cluster. Looking across the lagoon, we find the shady cemetery island of San Michele on the right, with late afternoon sunlight washing across the white limestone facade of its chapel. Further in the distance is the skyline of Murano, crowned by its principal church belltowers: San Pietro Martire on the left and Santi Maria e Donato in the center. Escaping the bustle of St. Mark’s Square, Julius Stewart adopted these landmarks as a backdrop in several paintings of leisurely strolls by beautiful women, both fashionable tourists and local Venetians, as seen here. Today this once-quiet promenade bristles with docks for
Here Murphy offers a bold nighttime view across the Venetian lagoon, looking northeast from the Fondamente Nove promenade. Darkness and fog blur architectural detail, with the horizon revealing just a faint profile of the nearby island of Murano, seat of the glassmaking industry. Nocturnes like this were favorite subjects of visiting artists, including James Whistler, whom Murphy emulated. The radical simplification in this painting surpasses even the most experimental works of Whistler, so that color and atmosphere serve as this picture’s sole unifying elements. Murphy was also a noted frame maker and designed the restrained gold setting that amplifies this picture’s electric blues.

Collection of Lisa and Michael Sandman
The location and type of furnace in this image are unclear. The solitary figure may be a glass artist, with his long pontil in hand, toiling into the night in one of the Murano factories. He might also be a blacksmith or baker. In Venice, as he had in London, Whistler explored industrial quarters—docks, warehouses, and factories—selecting subjects that some early critics regarded as distasteful. Here he creates visual drama in the contrast between the firelit interior and the shadowy canal. In this and other Venetian “nocturnes,” Whistler indicates time of day with plate tone, with a copper plate that has been inked and then strategically cleaned so that some areas print more darkly. Notice the broad streaks across the lower third of this image, blurring the distinction between walls and water. This is the artist’s hand at work, inking and pulling prints himself to exaggerate the bright and dim areas of each resulting impression.

The Baltimore Museum of Art, The George A. Lucas Collection, purchased with funds from the State of Maryland, Laurence and Stella Bendann Fund, and contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations throughout the Baltimore community, 1996.48.18102

James McNeill Whistler
*Murano – Glass Furnace*
1879–80
drypoint on paper

When first exhibited in 1883, some critics found this print’s subject unrecognizable. “Vaguely one discerns some oblong things, and some bristly things, of unfamiliar character,” wrote one London reviewer. Instead of rendering the glassmakers’ movements and tools in detail, Whistler gives only outlines of the craftsmen. Yet his print may offer an accurate depiction of a spectator’s experience, with thick clouds of smoke potentially obscuring the action but heightening one’s sense of mystery and wonder. Inside these workrooms the heat and fumes were unpleasant, forcing visitors to choose between fascination and comfort as they elected how much of a glassblowing demonstration to attend. Whistler includes a cluster of spectators at the far left, one of which may be a self-portrait.

Gift of Samuel Putnam Avery, Prints Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations
Between the 1860s and 1920s, Murano’s glassmaking firms expanded and multiplied, spurred by competition and international demand for their wares. When James McBey toured in 1925, he witnessed an active factory, with a dozen workers exhaling into raised pipes or perched on benches to shape half-molten bubbles. In his print, sharp lines of light and heat shoot from the blazing furnace, manifesting the power and energy of the fire. The seated figure in the foreground, spinning his pontil with dizzying speed, is reportedly the maestro Giovanni Seguso (1853–1931), a member of a long-renowned Murano glassmaking family. McBey often created his drypoints on the spot, without preliminary drawings, and one wonders if his metal printing plate grew warm from the furnace’s heat while he worked on this image.

Gift of Mrs. James McBey, Prints Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

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Gift of Samuel Putnam Avery, Prints Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Possibly Isidoro Seguso or Giuseppe Barovier
Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer
Replica of a Seventeenth-Century Lidded Pokal (Guggenheim Cup)
ca. 1876–1880s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of the Estate of Miss Agnes Miles Carpenter, 55.172.2A, 55.172.3B

A masterpiece of the Murano glass revival, the Guggenheim Cup is a replica of a large seventeenth-century covered goblet. Its bowl, blown of transparent glass, floats atop a delicate stem built with a triple-tiered scaffold of stretched and pinched glass threads. Its lid is capped with a tall finial echoing this airy, lattice design. The resulting cup is impressive in its size, symmetry, complexity, fragility, and seeming defiance of gravity—a bravura demonstration of glassblowing and hot-work sculpting that is suitable for display in a museum collection but virtually impossible to use as a drinking vessel. In the late nineteenth century, the original was owned by Venetian antiques dealer Michelangelo Guggenheim and widely admired as evidence of the sophistication achieved by Venice’s glass industry during the republic’s earlier peak of economic and military power.

In 1875 seventeen-year-old Isidoro Seguso, descendent of a centuries-old Murano glassmaking dynasty, created an astonishing replica of the Guggenheim Cup. A young rival, Giuseppe Barovier, also of distinguished Murano glassmaking lineage, then repeated the feat to demonstrate his equal prowess. Copying the Guggenheim Cup became the supreme test of a glassmaker’s skill, and further replicas, such as this one, were made by the Segusos, Baroviers,
and their colleagues. It is one of two examples once owned by New York heiress Agnes Miles Carpenter (1865–1958), underscoring the seductive power of these vessels among American tourists.

Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer or Fratelli Barovier, manufacturer
Vase with Dolphin and Serpent
ca. 1870s–90s
blown and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames, 14.376

Fratelli Barovier, manufacturer or Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Ewer with Serpent Handle
ca. 1870s–90s
blown, gilded, enameled, and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames 14.362
Attributed to Fratelli Toso, manufacturer
Goblet with Twisted Floral Stem
ca. 1900–1903
blown, gilded, enameled, and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames, 14.364

By the 1880s, Murano’s specialized production of luxury blown glass was a complex enterprise, with competition and collaboration between a cluster of firms with growing reputations. Today the Salviati name remains the best known, thanks to the early leadership of Antonio Salviati in hiring talented glassmakers, recruiting investors, and marketing these wares around Italy and beyond. In 1877 disagreements between Salviati and his foreign backers caused a corporate split and the formation of the Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM). Meanwhile, individual Murano glassmakers began operating independent furnaces, while relying on Salviati’s firms and CVM for sales and marketing. Signatures by glassmakers are rare, and companies often marked objects with stickers, mostly lost today. For these reasons, unequivocal attributions are usually impossible, but this exhibition offers many educated guesses. Thanks to newspaper accounts, prizes awarded at fairs, period photographs, and published catalogues (as illustrated here), many designs are closely connected to specific artisans and firms.

Artisti Barovier, manufacturer or
Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Smelze Glass Vase
ca. 1890–1904
blown and applied hot-worked glass
While some revival glassware impressed critics and collectors with the complexity of its decorative and sculptural flourishes, other pieces beguiled with dazzling colors and patterns. Two of these blown vases are almost identical in size and shape but were formed with multicolored molten glass in order to create distinctive visual effects. The organic irregularities of marbling or feathery combed patterns made each object one of a kind, giving consumers an endless range of choices. Varied production was strategic, and managers of the glass furnaces encouraged the artisans to experiment and develop new formulas and designs.

Attributed to Vincenzo Moretti
Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company Ltd. (Salviati & Co.), manufacturer
Ancient Roman–Style Skyphos (Two-Handled Wine Cup)
ca. 1870s
cast, polished, and applied glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.147.27

This large drinking vessel replicates a design common in ancient Rome, perhaps courting collectors interested in history and archaeology. Its beautiful swirling colors were likewise chosen in imitation of ancient vessels, such as the small trio nearby in this case. However, the Murano makers of this cup surpassed their ancestors by incorporating a recent innovation: they added sparkling, copper-flecked glass (nicknamed “aventurine”) to the molten mixture from which it was cast.
Artisti Barovier, manufacturer
Chalcedony Glass Urn
ca. 1890–1904
blown and applied hot-worked glass

Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Gift of Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., JLS.11064

This large drinking vessel features twin handles whose graceful shapes and delicate loops are formal echoes of its swirling green, gold, and brown glass patterns (resembling the stone chalcedony). The amphora’s wide, smooth body, which mimics a common form in ancient glassware and ceramics, is a fitting vehicle for celebrating this eye-catching glass formula, which Murano glassmakers of the late nineteenth century embraced and perfected.

Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
or Salviati Dott. Antonio, manufacturer
Replica of an Ancient Roman Diatreta or Cage Cup (Disch-Sangiorgi Cantharus)
ca. 1880s–90s
blown, gilded, and applied hot-worked glass

RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Frank Mauran and John O. Ames, 14.252
This vessel form, commonly known as a cage cup due to its lattice shell, was a marvel of glass craftsmanship in both ancient times and the nineteenth century. Here Murano artisans have recreated a famous drinking bowl dating to 200–325 CE, which was discovered in Cologne, Germany, in 1864. While the model (named for its first owners and now located in the Corning Museum of Glass) has fractures and lost sections, this replica shows the vessel in its completed state. Notice the gilt designs beneath the flameworked “cage,” an extra layer of luxury and demonstration of skill by both its original makers and its Venetian revival copyists.

Text Panel, Gallery 1, Section 4: The Pearls of Venice

“The process of making [glass beads] is one of the things that strangers feel they must see in Venice,” reported American writer William Dean Howells while serving as U.S. consul to Venice in the early 1860s. When decades of recession in the early 1800s closed most of Murano’s furnaces, a few manufacturers of glass beads continued to operate, and they became a foundation for the glass revival of the late nineteenth century. Produced almost exclusively for bulk export, beads had the potential to dazzle with their variety of shapes, colors, and patterns, from polychrome spheres with stripes, spirals, and dots, to cylindrical tubes made of fused murrhines (patterned glass cane slices). Despite their diversity and complexity, tourists regarded these as trinkets, not works of fine art.

Paradoxically, workers in Venice’s glass bead industry became favorite artistic subjects. Unlike glassblowing, the production of beads was not confined to Murano, and it depended on mostly female workers throughout the Venetian islands. Visitors to Murano could witness the first half of this process by touring a furnace specializing in bead production, which required a very long room so that laborers could draw out ropes of molten glass into thin canes. These were cut into smaller rods and then into individual beads, whose sharp edges required grinding and polishing. Once smooth, beads were strung and sold in batches of consistent count and weight, and bead stringers were compensated by volume for this final task. Whistler, Sargent, and other foreign artists observed local women at work with trays of beads, often gathered in groups to socialize and relieve the monotony of the task. These became popular artistic subjects because they immediately denoted Venice.
James McNeill Whistler  
*Bead Stringers (Second Venice Set)*  
1880  
etching and drypoint on paper

*Gift of Samuel Putnam Avery, Prints Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations*

Robert Frederick Blum  
*Bead Stringers*  
1886  
etching on paper

What level of artistry did American tourists see in the work of bead cutters, sorters, and stringers? Most paintings and etchings of *impiraresse* (bead stringers) attribute no magical knowledge to the women’s repetitive actions. Often artists leave the beads almost invisible, so that only a raised hand or tray in the lap reveals the activity underway. Is their work akin to factory labor, or is the drudgery mitigated by companionship and the attractive surroundings? Along with street vendors, fishermen, and gondoliers, bead stringers were part of the fabric of the city, beautiful adornments to its alleys and doorways.

*Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Henrietta Haller, 1905.57a*
James McNeill Whistler

_Fruit Stall (Second Venice Set)_

1879–80

etching and drypoint on paper

Female beadworkers populate many of the prints and pastel drawings Whistler made as he ventured beyond famous landmarks such as St. Mark’s Square and the Rialto Market and into side streets and less familiar canals. These uniquely Venetian figures confirm the setting. Did Whistler regard them as fellow contributors to the arts? Here the young women sort beads while managing a small produce stand, perched on the narrow sidewalk above a canal. Water and walls often contribute to a sense of distance between Whistler and his working-class subjects, so that we can observe the activities of the Venetian locals without interrupting their occupations.

The Baltimore Museum of Art, The George A. Lucas Collection, purchased with funds from the State of Maryland, Laurence and Stella Bendann Fund, and contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations throughout the Baltimore community, 1996.48.12298

John Singer Sargent

_Leaving Church, Campo San Canciano, Venice_

ca. 1882

oil on canvas

Here Sargent takes us deep into Venice’s interior maze of alleys and quiet corners, presenting a trio of young women crossing a small _campo_ (local dialect for _square_) outside a modest neighborhood church. He frames the scene with no recognizable landmarks, giving the impression of a random vignette observed in passing. Preparatory sketches and watercolors...
reveal, however, that Sargent carefully planned many of his Venetian subjects and hired models. With purposeful choices, he builds a fantasy of an unscripted stroll beyond the well-trodden sights in guidebooks.

The Collection of Marie and Hugh Halff

John Singer Sargent
*Venetian Glass Workers*
ca. 1880–82
oil on canvas

Many of the bead workers in Sargent’s Venetian pictures may have been models whom he staged within scenes to add local color. But this painting reveals his knowledge of steps in the beadmaking process. Here the glass canes have already been sorted by color and are ready to be cut into individual bead shapes. This subject may have impressed Sargent through the visual effect of the white glass canes, reflecting light within this murky interior. Sargent renders the *canne* (canes) with long, bold strokes, seizing this opportunity to energize the painting with evidence of his handiwork.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1217

Ernest David Roth
*A Quiet Canal*
1905
etching on paper

When Venice launched an international art exposition series in 1895, now called the Venice Biennale, organizers classified prints as a separate category of art. Fine etchings and aquatints
appeared in specially designated “Bianco-Nero” (Black and White) sections of the fair during its early decades. Ernest David Roth exhibited two prints depicting Venice at the 1907 Biennale, burnishing his career and reputation. Like many printmakers of his generation, his etchings express appreciation for the innovative style and subject choices of James Whistler’s Venetian series. Here Roth provides a crisp rendering of the gondola’s reflections to convey the stillness of the water and the silence of Venice’s less-frequented zones.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Katz, 1971.386

Kenyon Cox
Study for Venice
1894
oil and graphite on canvas

Kenyon Cox made this study in preparation for a twenty-four-foot-wide mural painting in the rotunda of the Walker Arts Building at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. To augment the museum’s classical architecture, this room features four lunettes depicting great European cities that contributed to Western civilization. While the other three (Athens, Florence, and Rome) honor past achievements, this allegory also optimistically celebrates Venice’s future as a vibrant and modern port welcoming business (embodied by Mercury, god of commerce) and the arts (with a muse of painting on the right, posing with the Lion of St. Mark). The string of pearls on the far left references the glass bead industry. Perle (Italian for beads) were among Venice’s most lucrative exports.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, Gift of Colonel Leonard Cox, Mrs. Caroline Cox Lansing, and Mr. Allyn Cox, 1959.3.1

Robert Frederick Blum
Venetian Doorway and Gondolas
c.a. 1880
etching and drypoint on paper

Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano 39
Smithsonian American Art Museum | 10/5/21 KH
“The gondola waits at the wave-washed steps,” wrote Henry James, describing the pleasures of touring Venice by boat. In this scene a passenger with an umbrella descends into a slender craft. Is she a tourist, setting out to explore the city’s churches and galleries, or a resident, perhaps en route to mass, a dinner party, or a tryst with a lover? With the identities of their occupants hidden, Venice’s covered gondolas contributed to the city’s air of romance and mystery, noted by many poets, painters, and other visitors. Blum inscribed this print as a gift to his friend and fellow artist John White Alexander (1856–1915), who also worked in Venice.

Collection of Mary Anne Goley

La Società Veneziana per l’Industria delle Conterie

The scale and importance of beads to the Venetian economy are difficult to overestimate. In 1884 a U.S. government report on trade with Venice calculated that two thousand Murano residents worked in the glass industry, and half of these were employed in its various bead factories. In 1898 sixteen of Murano’s independent bead manufacturers banded into a single consortium, the La Società Veneziana per l’Industria delle Conterie (Venetian Bead Industry Society) to consolidate production and pricing.

Attributed to Società Veneziana per l’Industria delle Conterie (SVC)  
Stephen A. Frost & Son

Sample Card with Flameworked Beads  
107 flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card

Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XIII

Sample Card with Flameworked Beads  
late 19th century–1904  
85 flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card

Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XV
Sample Card with Millefiori and Flag Beads
late 19th century–1904
106 mosaic glass and flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card

Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XVI

Stephen A. Frost & Son

During the late nineteenth century, Stephen A. Frost (1820–1907) and his son Dan Frost (1850–1943) expanded their merchant business from direct trade in textiles and beads with American Indians to a large-scale, New York–based importing and wholesale company. Frost & Son sourced glass beads from Venice and Central Europe, and by 1900 their market had grown beyond the United States. Sample cards showed clients the variety of bead colors and designs available. The elaborately decorated cards presented here, featuring the Lion of St. Mark to symbolize Venice, were displayed at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, and may have been specially created for that world’s fair.

Glass Beads beyond Venice

Who purchased glass beads, and how were they used? Unlike ornate revival-style blown glass vessels, beads were not collected as luxury souvenirs. Instead, manufacturers on Murano sold beads in massive quantities to import-export firms for shipment to China, India, Africa, and the Americas. Glass beads could be made inexpensively, and they became key items in exploitative networks of colonial trade, alongside textiles, metal tools, guns, alcohol, salt, and tobacco. Between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, millions of these so-called “trade beads” contributed to trafficking in gold, gems, ivory, furs, and enslaved persons.

Many American Indian and West African communities used Venetian beads to make jewelry and to embellish clothing, domestic objects, and items of ceremonial or spiritual value. While these small glass cylinders and spheres were not regarded as individual works of art, the variety of their patterns and hues was critical to their allure. Exporters of beads observed and responded to demand, finding that styles favored on one continent might receive little interest elsewhere. Those trading in beads also recognized that demand was sometimes fickle and short-lived, a factor that pressured Venetian glassmakers to steadily devise new designs.
Attributed to Società Veneziana per l’Industria delle Conterie (SVC)
Stephen A. Frost & Son

Sample Card with Corkscrew and Lace Beads
36 flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card
Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XVII

Sample Card with Trailed Feather and Eye Beads
116 mosaic glass and flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card
Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XX

Sample Card with Marbleized and Millefiori Beads
100 mosaic glass and flameworked glass beads mounted to printed card
Illinois State Museum, Gift of Dan Frost, 1941-0083-XXII

Wall Text, Gallery 1, Section 5

The Lace Revival

In the 1870s the success of the glass revival on Murano inspired the revitalization of other Venetian craft traditions. Across the lagoons, the village of Burano had once been famous throughout Europe as a center of lacemaking, but as with glass, demand and production virtually ceased in the early nineteenth century. Visitors noted the island’s poverty, which became especially acute during harsh winters when fishing yields were low. Observing the success of the glass revival on Murano, two Italian noblewomen, Countess Adriana Marcello and Princess Maria Giovanelli, resolved to reintroduce lacemaking on Burano. Finding only one lacemaker who recalled the local punto burano technique, seventy-year-old Cencia Scarpagliola, they organized a new Lace School in 1872 so that younger generations could...
Burano’s successful lace revival spurred the island’s economy, produced a generation of literate and industrious young women, and soon caught foreign attention. Welsh-born Lady Enid Layard (whose family had already invested in Murano’s glass and mosaic enterprises) translated an Italian treatise on lacemaking into English in 1888. American expatriate Katharine de Kay Bronson had earlier penned a colorful article about the revival for *Century Magazine* in 1882, relaying popular tales that added to Burano’s charm—that its lace was inspired by the patterns of seaweed and that its female lacemakers were redeploying textile-working skills originally used to mend fishing nets. Like Murano and its glass furnaces, Burano and its Lace School soon became a destination for tourists and a subject for American artists.

William Henry Holmes
*Bead Stringer, Venice*
*Venice, Mending Sails*
both 1880
watercolor and graphite on paper

Traveling in Europe from 1879 to 1880, William Henry Holmes filled his notebooks with drawings and watercolor sketches recording the occupations and distinctive attire of the local residents, as well as vignettes of flora, rock formations, and other landscape features. Differing from James Whistler, Frank Duveneck, and most American artists abroad at that time, Holmes paints with careful attention to the costumes, colors, and actions of his subjects, revealing his earlier training in both art and science at the Smithsonian Institution. Following service as a sketch artist with geological survey teams in the American West, he worked for Smithsonian museums in various roles, curating anthropology, ethnography, and fine art.
Visitors to Venice respected the glass and lace revivals not only for the quality of their products, but also for their benefits to the local economy and society. Here Blum’s scene of hardworking lacemakers is a rebuttal to the Italian stereotype of dolce far niente, the sweetness of doing nothing. The saying suggests that in a beautiful setting like Venice, residents might be tempted to idleness, but these women are nonetheless diligent. Their energy and the excellence of their handiwork might further rebuke visiting American artists who pause from sketching to indulge in lazy evenings in cafés, romance with locals, and other famed temptations of Venice, as depicted by Sargent, Parrish, and other artists.

Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Henrietta Haller, 1905.47

The Lace School (Scuola dei Merletti) on Burano was a very social place, and its workers were admirable artistic subjects due to their skill and the economic benefits lace brought to the island. Blum and other artists studied the interactions of lacemakers, who gossip, conspire, and laugh as they hand stitch their delicate treasures. Bright sunlight spills in through large windows, perhaps signaling the success of this newly reestablished craft industry. Also facilitating this convivial atmosphere was the School’s use of division of labor, with specialization at different steps in the process to increase production speed and volume. For Blum, artmaking in Venice was also a pleasurable group activity, lodging in the company of fellow “Duveneck Boys,” then
sketching together by day and dining at favorite trattorie. This cheerful painting invites viewers to visit or imaginatively join the happy and productive world of modern Venice.

Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Elizabeth S. Potter, 1905.8

Pinckney Marcius-Simons
The Child Canova Modeling a Lion out of Butter
ca. 1885
oil on canvas

This painting conjures a fabled scene from the 1760s, where preparations for a feast are underway in the kitchen of a palace near Venice. One of the servants, a ten-year-old boy, has volunteered to carve a butter sculpture of a lion as the centerpiece for the banquet table. The cooks marvel at his lifelike creation, clearly the work of a child prodigy. This little artist grew up to be the world’s leading sculptor, Antonio Canova (1757–1822), creator of statues of warriors, nymphs, and lions in the neoclassical style. Canova remains celebrated in Venice as a local artistic hero, and in the late nineteenth century his extraordinary talent was an inspiration to ambitious artists, promising that the city’s contributions to the arts had not ended with the High Renaissance. The story of Canova’s first masterpiece was recounted in books and works of art, as seen in this imagining by American painter Pinckney Marcius-Simons. Guidebooks directed tourists in Venice to Canova’s works on display in the city’s museums, to the Ca’ Farsetti where he trained as a boy, to the house where he died in 1822, and to his pyramidal memorial (shown below) in the Basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, one of the city’s grandest churches.

Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, Gift of the Mowbray Arch Society, 2014.14

Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano
Smithsonian American Art Museum | 10/5/21 KH
Frank Duveneck  
*Gypsy Boy*  
1885  
pastel on paper

Duveneck’s studies of daily life in modern Venice give portrait-like attention to his Italian models. In this pastel drawing, the child’s face fills the frame with dignity and monumentality. He is most likely a local Venetian (not Roma), and American viewers of this work might have associated him with frequent depictions of “Young Italy” in the foreign press, images rallying international support for the newly united Italian peninsula to become a successful, self-governing nation-state. Like many American travelers, Duveneck believed that creativity and artistic talent came naturally to the people of Italy, thanks to their upbringing in beautiful surroundings. Even though tousled hair and grubby clothes identify this boy as working class, viewers might also perceive sparks of ambition: perhaps a future career as a painter, sculptor, or glassblower?

Collection of Jane Joel Knox, promised gift to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, in loving memory of Irving Joe

Attributed to Leopoldo Bearzotti, enamelist  
Società Anonima per Azioni Salviati & C., manufacturer  
*Goblet with Lace Design*  
ca. 1870s  
blown, enameled, and gilded glass

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of James Jackson Jarves, 1881, 81.8.221
With the successful launch of the Burano Lace School, glassmakers on Murano began decorating some of their creations with painted designs in imitation of lace, as seen on this goblet. Both products enjoyed reputations for historical excellence across Europe and beyond, so this motif reinforced the Venetian islands’ brand of fine craftsmanship in multiple media. Murano glass and Burano lace are mentioned in the same breath by period guidebooks, and tourists could purchase both in the shops around St. Mark’s Square.

![Attributed to Giuseppe Barovier Artisti Barovier, manufacturer Zanfirico Glass Vase with Floral Murrhines ca. 1910–13 blown and applied hot-worked glass with mosaic glass inclusions](image)

Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Gift of Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., JLS.11103

A netlike pattern, perhaps intended to evoke Burano lace, encircles the bowl of this blown glass vase. Punctuating its design are floral murrhines, pictorial cane slices added during the glassblowing process. The result is a colorful but irregular pattern that illustrates the difficulty of controlling molten glass. Nevertheless, its asymmetries reveal the maker’s handiwork. The Barovier family’s turn-of-the-century experiments with floral murrhines in this and other vessels suggest an interest in French art nouveau and other emerging stylistic trends across Europe.

![Scuola dei Merletti di Burano Lace Panel with Lion of St. Mark 20th century](image)
cotton needle lace

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer, 1981-28-460

These samples of revival-era lace from Burano show the variety of forms created by young women at the Lace School (Scuola dei Merletti), including cuffs, collars, and decorative streamers, as well as pictorial squares suitable for mats or more formal display. The panel depicting the Lion of St. Mark was most likely made as a souvenir. Tags were affixed to Burano revival lace indicating that Italy’s Queen Margherita was a patron of the school, adding a royal blessing to the work of women whose individual names were not recorded.

Wall text, Gallery 1, Section 6

The Mosaic Revival

Although blown glass vessels were the most consumer-friendly dimension of the Venetian glass revival, glass tile mosaics were lucrative products for Murano furnaces. Concern for the deteriorating state of the Byzantine-era mosaics inside St. Mark’s Basilica sparked the entrance of Antonio Salviati into the glassmaking business in 1859, with encouragement from local civic leaders. His first furnace was devoted to the fabrication of glass smalti, colored tiles for mosaics, and he obtained a fifteen-year contract for restoring this landmark. The firm employed prize-winning Murano-born glass technician Lorenzo Radi to manage production of the smalti and invent new colors, and it hired from Rome the mosaic specialist Enrico Podio as a chief designer. More talent soon moved to Venice to join its mosaic revival, including Luigi Taddei, also originally from Rome.

Displays of mosaic-inlaid furniture and other domestically scaled mosaic works helped build a market for larger architectural commissions. These included contributions to the Albert Memorial, Houses of Parliament, and the South Kensington Museum in London, the Palais Garnier opera house in Paris, and the Victory Column (Siegessäule) in Berlin. Religious subjects were especially successful, and dozens of churches across the United Kingdom and the United States installed decorative mosaic panels during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Often these were based on paintings commissioned from famous artists, as in the case of St. Paul’s Within the Walls (the American Episcopal Church in Rome), for which Venetian craftsmen translated into mosaics a program devised by English painter Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898). The Venetian manufacturers also created their own original mosaic designs, such as this image of a lute player, as featured here in a 1920s advertising brochure.
Cold, wet, and dreary winter weather rendered Whistler unhappy and unproductive during his first months in Venice. This depiction of the Piazzetta, adjacent to St. Mark’s Square, was likely made in the spring or summer of 1880, and it features tourists dining at café tables near some of the city’s most popular sights. The facade of St. Mark’s Basilica is on the left, mostly hidden by the large column. Whistler likely worked on the spot with his stylus and etching plate, sketching this scene from life for a sense of freshness and immediacy. Printing has reversed the view, and if you were standing in the Piazzetta, the church would actually be on the right. Notice the tower of X-shaped beams in front of St. Mark’s. This is probably scaffolding for restoration work on its exterior mosaics.

Although St. Mark’s Basilica dates to the eleventh century, improvements continued as Venice’s wealth and artistic appetite grew. This panel is a small-scale reprisal of one of its later
decorative additions—a mosaic filling one of the five arched entryways. Roman mosaicist Leopoldo dal Pozzo executed it around 1727 to 1729 using designs by painter Sebastiano Ricci.

In response to a competition organized by the Venetian Academy of Fine Art, Luigi Taddei created this copy, a project that allegedly required seven years’ labor and one million glass tiles. Taddei’s employer, the Venetian jewelry and mosaic dealer Achille Olivieri, then sent this marvel on a world tour, from Australia to the United States, with exhibitions in Boston, Cincinnati, Louisville, New Orleans, and Chicago (at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition). From 1887 to 1888 Olivieri briefly operated a showroom in Washington, D.C., at 907 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, and wrote to President Grover Cleveland with an invitation to view this work.

Collection of Vincent and Kako Crisci

Walter Launt Palmer  
*Interior San Marco*  
1902  
gouache on composition board

Looking into the south transept of St. Mark’s Basilica, Palmer shows the church’s large Gothic rose window filling the space with light to set ablaze its golden walls and vaults. These glass mosaic decorations distinguished this church from most European cathedrals, adding to its importance in the eyes of tourists and artists. “You may go there every day and find afresh some lurking pictorial nook,” noted Henry James; “It is a treasury of bits, as the painters say; and there are usually three or four painters, with their easels set up in uncertain equilibrium on the undulating floor.”

Albany Institute of History & Art, Bequest of J. Townsend Lansing, 1920.7.1
Maurice Brazil Prendergast  
*Fiesta Grand Canal, Venice*  
ca. 1899  
glass and ceramic mosaic tiles in plaster

During an eighteen-month stay in Venice, American painter Maurice Prendergast made this small mosaic, translating one of his watercolor paintings into sparkling shades of blue, green, and gold. It depicts a nighttime flotilla of gondolas, the Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer (*Festa del Redentore*), which takes place annually on the third Sunday of July. Reflections on the lagoon convert a cluster of lanterns into a cacophony of sparkling circles, and the irregular shapes of the glass tesserae add ambiguity. The origin and circumstances of this project remain unknown. Was the American artist independently using scraps from a Venetian mosaic factory, or was this a rare collaborative project, perhaps with Italian assistants helping Prendergast to arrange and combine the pieces?

*Williams College Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. Charles Prendergast, 95.4.79*

Maurice Brazil Prendergast  
*Ponte della Paglia*  
ca. 1898, reworked 1922  
oil on canvas

Looking down from the balconies of the Ducal Palace, Prendergast captures the rainbow of parasols and dresses among pedestrians on the Riva degli Schiavoni, celebrating the crowds and merriment of this public space. Rather than conjuring a historical fantasy, his work remains firmly in the present. The harbor is busy with boats, and restaurants along the quay invite visitors to enjoy a view across the lagoons as they dine. A tricolor Italian flag waves proudly
over this scene. The artist uses tesserae-like pops of color to construct this panorama, working in a bold, modern style akin to mosaic design.

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1922, 1610

Wall Text, Gallery 1, Section 7

Gallery Restoring St. Mark’s

During the late 1800s, the first stop for most tourists to Venice was the magnificent St. Mark’s Basilica, the city’s largest and most elaborately decorated church. Unlike the orderly Renaissance-era landmarks elsewhere around the islands by Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea Palladio, St. Mark’s was a pastiche of Gothic and Byzantine styles, a mélange of architectural elements from across the Mediterranean, befitting the city’s nickname of “Crossroads of the World.” However, by the mid-1800s, time and neglect had left the basilica in disrepair, and its distinctive mosaics were in an especially poor state.

Voices from abroad helped spark restoration work on St. Mark’s Basilica in the late nineteenth century. These included French writer George Sand, who invented names and personalities for the anonymous fifteenth-century decorators of the church in her 1838 historical novel *The Mosaic Masters*. English critic John Ruskin drew further attention to the problem in his art historical treatise *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), though he often found beauty in visible signs of aging. With the political unification of Italy in the 1860s (the Risorgimento), many began to regard the church with civic and nationalist pride, and large-scale repair projects commenced.

Within the glass revival, replicas of historical blown glass objects are extensions of this period interest in the preservation of St. Mark’s and appreciation for Venice’s illustrious history. Meanwhile, Sargent, Whistler, William Merritt Chase, and scores of their colleagues sketched and painted views of this world-famous landmark and its interior.

Unidentified

Byzantine-Style Mosaic Necklace with Christ and Twelve Apostles
ca. 1870s–1910s

gold with glass and shell inlay

The age and origin of this necklace are unknown, but many signs point to creation in Italy in the late nineteenth century. Its medallions loosely represent Christ and the twelve apostles, with each face a small mosaic construction of cut shapes in mother of pearl and Venetian glass. These resemble portraits of saints decorating Byzantine-era boxes, book covers, and chalices in
the Treasury of St. Mark's Basilica and other museums. However, jewelry was not a standard element of the attire of priests and religious officials in the tenth century, suggesting that this necklace is a revival piece made in the 1800s that evokes an earlier context. Some of the glass and shell may be repurposed from broken antique objects to increase the appearance of age and authenticity. Was this initially marketed as a studious tribute to the middle ages, or is it a finely crafted fake? Collector John Gellatly left behind no records of its purchase, and these questions remain under investigation.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.247

attributed to leopoldo bearzotti, enamelist
Società Anonima per Azioni Salviati & C., manufacturer
Replica in Glass of a Byzantine Chalice (*Chalice of Emperor Romanos II*)
ca. 1870
blown, enameled, and gilded glass

Like the *San Marco Bowl*, displayed in the case nearby, this chalice is a replica of a much-admired historical object in the collection of the Treasury of Venice’s St. Mark’s Basilica. Here the original Byzantine cup, created in the mid-tenth century, was made of carved sardonyx stone, resting on a silver base and adorned with cloisonné and enamel images of saints, then outlined with tiny pearls. Salviati’s craftsmen have mimicked these materials entirely in glass with painted designs.

The Walters Art Museum, Acquired by Henry Walters, 1911, 47.356
Attributed to Leopoldo Bearzotti, enamelist
Società Anonima per Azioni Salviati & C., manufacturer
Renaissance-Style Dish with Christ and Four Evangelists
c. 1870s
blown, enameled, and gilded glass

The decorator of this platter probably envisioned it as an homage to the Italian Renaissance, when top painters like Giovanni Bellini and Titian often devoted their talents to religious subjects under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. It presents Christ surrounded by symbols of the four Gospel writers, set within a ring of stylized vines and flowers. Though the artist no doubt studied fifteenth- and sixteenth-century examples, his creation is ultimately a pastiche of decorative elements and unlikely to be mistaken for an antique. American collector James Jackson Jarves (1818–1888) likely recognized this platter's age when he purchased this work sometime around 1880, shortly before the donation of his glass collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Buying glass with the intent to build a museum-worthy ensemble, Jarves saw value in revival glassware like this plate because it could educate viewers about glassware of earlier periods, even if not made in that past era.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of James Jackson Jarves, 1881, 81.8.39

Charles Caryl Coleman
The Bronze Horses of San Marco, Venice
1876
oil on canvas
The loggia above the entrance to St. Mark’s Basilica offers an unusual vantage point for Coleman’s painting of Venice’s most visited monument. Turning away from the vista across the square, he studies the structural bones of the church’s iconic west front, as if standing just offstage at a play. The great bronze horses, trophies captured by Venice in past wars, perch frozen in midprance atop a motley forest of columns. With these details the artist exposes the church to be an ensemble of repurposed fragments and fine treasures. Blue, red, green, and gold floral designs in the upper right provide a glimpse of the extensive program of glass mosaics bedecking the exterior and interior of the church, whose restoration was then underway. Coleman thus offers a collection of clues about the history and character of the basilica, inviting viewers to become amateur architectural historians as they explore its many treasures.

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Regis Collection, 79.13

William Merritt Chase
*In the Baptistry of St. Mark’s, Venice*
1878
oil on canvas

In a dimly lit corner of St. Mark’s Basilica, a sexton (church caretaker) polishes silver lamps and candlesticks for use above the altar. Tourists and artists visiting the massive Byzantine church admired its architecture, patterned stone pavements, interior mosaic cycles, and, as seen here, the antique objects preserved and used there. Chase suggests the pleasures of both observing and touching these treasures, expressing reverence for their materials, artistry, age, and sacred functions. Venetian glassmakers produced replicas of some of the finest antiques in St. Mark’s, offering visitors an opportunity to share in this tactile experience.

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Gift of Marcia Bishopric Gest in memory of Joseph Henry Gest and Henry Gest Jr., 2016.13
Vincenzo Moretti
Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Replica of a Byzantine Glass Bowl (San Marco Bowl)
ca. 1878
blown, enameled, and gilded glass, with gilded bronze handles

The Corning Museum of Glass, 59.3.36

This small drinking cup is made of a dark purple transparent blown glass, with ornate metal handles and painted designs of figures in classical robes. It is a painstaking replica of the San Marco Bowl, one of the most famous objects preserved in the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica. The original bowl, thought to have been made in Constantinople in the tenth century, is the oldest glass object in the Treasury, and it was therefore especially revered by Murano glassmakers. Copies were made in the late nineteenth century and exhibited at world’s fairs, from Paris’s Exposition Universelle of 1878 to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904. The precision of the enamel decoration on this bowl and its finely tooled handles suggest that it is among the earliest of these revival-era replicas.

Unidentified
Fragment of a Footed Bowl with Medici Family Arms
ca. 1513–34
mold-blown, gilded, and enameled glass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.305

Painted designs like those on this bowl were a source of inspiration for Venetian revival glassmakers. The Medici coat of arms indicates that this Renaissance-made bowl was
commissioned by one of Italy’s most powerful families. American collectors like John Gellatly valued the workmanship and age of pieces like this.

Francesco Toso Borella, enamelist
or Vittorio Toso Borella, enamelist
Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Replicas of a Renaissance Goblet (Campanile Cup)
ca. 1903–12
blown, enameled, and gilded glass

Promised gift to the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA
The Corning Museum of Glass, 2006.3.70
Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Gift of Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., JLS.11274

On June 14, 1902, the bell tower (campanile) in St. Mark’s Square, the city’s tallest structure, collapsed into a pile of rubble, its foundation having grown unstable over the centuries. Among the ruins, a large fragment of a Renaissance-era glass goblet was found. The recovered shard became known as the Campanile Cup and is now in Murano’s Glass Museum. Master glass decorator Francesco Toso Borella studied its hand-painted designs and created a new cup fully decorated with an identical collection of arabesques and animals, including dolphins, eagles, and dogs. Public acclaim prompted Toso Borella, his son Vittorio, and their workshop to make additional replicas in small editions over the next decade, and these were sold as souvenirs in Venice and marketed abroad by the city’s leading glass enterprises. London’s Victoria and Albert Museum acquired a copy of the Campanile Cup in 1903, and examples soon entered other noted public and private collections. In the United States, a Campanile Cup replica was shown at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, and Isabella Stewart Gardner received one as a gift from a friend, Mary Curtis.

Meanwhile, Venice rebuilt the bell tower, precisely repeating its previous design (as completed by Giorgio Spavento and Bartolomeo Bon in 1514). The reconstruction was finished in 1912,
and during the intervening decade, while construction was still underway, tourists had the opportunity to purchase their own *Campanile Cups* as mementos of the tower’s collapse and refabrication.

**Wall Text Panels, Gallery 1, Section 8**

**From Murano to America**

Many American travelers purchased glass in Venice, bringing these treasures home to their parlors and dining rooms. Articles in popular magazines explained the history and techniques of Venetian glassmaking, while books and essays on household decorating advised how to display these treasures. Some collectors also donated glass to museums, including antique specimens and sophisticated revival examples. Venetian glass thus became a symbol of cosmopolitan elegance for elites, as well as their middle-class emulators. They all used artworks to elevate their individual prestige and collectively proclaim the growing power of the United States.

Meanwhile, Venetian glassmakers directly stimulated international demand for their wares. The firm Salviati & C. opened showrooms in New York, London, and Paris, while other luxury retailers, such as Tiffany & Co., also stocked Murano vessels. Italian manufacturers sent samples of Venetian glass to arts and industries exhibitions, from the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. At the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM) built a glassmaking furnace in a Venetian Gothic–style pavilion, where Italian craftsmen gave demonstrations. Murano’s mosaic firms petitioned for U.S. government commissions, and though these were unsuccessful, many churches ordered Venetian mosaics. The largest of these is the Memorial Chapel at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, and in gratitude for this mosaic commission, the Salviati firm donated hundreds of its revival-era glass vessels to the campus museum.

Ultimately, the visibility of Venetian glass in the United States inspired American makers to imitate or visually quote some Venetian designs, and this influence and dialogue continue in the studio glass movement today.
Enrico Podio
Salviati Dott. Antonio fu Bartolomeo, manufacturer
*Portrait of Abraham Lincoln*
1866
glass mosaic tiles

In 1866 Antonio Salviati’s glassmaking firm created and donated to the U.S. government a glass mosaic portrait of recently assassinated President Abraham Lincoln. Many Italians admired Lincoln’s leadership, but this gift was more than an expression of friendship and shared political values between the United States and the newly unified Italy. The Murano glassmakers had received lucrative commissions in the early 1860s to create large-scale architectural mosaic programs for public buildings and monuments in London, Berlin, and Paris, and they likely hoped this portrait would showcase the beauty of mosaics and generate work in Washington, D.C. American politicians received the gift with gratitude but placed no orders for mosaics.

U.S. Senate Collection

Attributed to Antonio Ermolao Paoletti
Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., manufacturer
*Study for David Mosaic in Stanford Memorial Chapel*
ca. 1903–5
oil on canvas

Stanford University Libraries, Department of Special Collections
In 1890 the Stanford family began discussions with the Salviati company regarding mosaic projects for their soon-to-be-built Leland Stanford Junior University, named in honor of their only child, who had died at age fifteen of typhoid fever. This relationship ultimately lasted almost three decades and became the firm’s largest project outside Europe. Pictorial and decorative mosaics were produced for the campus art museum and church, with an 84-foot-wide mosaic on the facade and a program of narrative scenes on walls and vaults inside. Set against a solid ground of gold mosaic tiles, the interior design intentionally resembled St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice. The impact of the gold is seen in this study painting for a figure of David within a series of Old Testament prophets, a small element of the church’s vast decorative scheme.

Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., manufacturer
Fragment from Stanford Memorial Church Mosaic Cycle
ca. 1903–5
glass mosaic tiles and cement on sandstone with gold foil

The Corning Museum of Glass, Gift of Sheldon Barr and Thomas Gardner, 2017.3.13

On April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake shook the San Francisco region, and the recently completed Memorial Church, centerpiece of the Stanford University campus, collapsed. Jane Stanford and university officials immediately resolved to reconstruct the church almost exactly as before; its clock tower was not rebuilt, but its entire program of Venetian glass mosaic decorations, both interior and exterior, were repaired or completely refabricated based on the original design drawings. This chunk of wall from the narthex, with circumscribed Greek letters alpha and omega (familiar Christian symbols), is one of many discarded fragments from the original building.
Dott. Antonio Salviati & C., manufacturer
or Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., manufacturer

*Portrait of Jane Lathrop Stanford*
ca. 1902
glass mosaic tiles

Jane Lathrop Stanford (1828–1905) discovered the beauty of Venetian glass while touring Italy with her husband, railroad tycoon and California politician Leland Stanford, and their son. Following the boy’s death at age 15 from typhoid fever, the couple resolved to erect a university in his honor. Jane Stanford managed much of its design, including ordering Venetian glass mosaics to decorate the chapel and other buildings. These mosaics were made by the Salviati firm, which donated hundreds of specimens of contemporary blown glass to the school’s museum. They also created mosaic portraits of Jane, Leland, Leland Jr., and other relatives.

Compare the glass tesserae in this portrait to those in the adjacent wall fragment. Venetian glassmakers worked from a library of more than 20,000 colors, but they adjusted tile size and design detail for each project. Architectural mosaics, particularly large wall and ceiling treatments, did not demand the intricacy of a portrait.

Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Gift of Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., JLS.11462

*Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt*
ca. 1904
glass mosaic tiles and cement
Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., manufacturer
Murano, Venice, Italy, active 1903–1920

This mosaic portrait of America’s twenty-sixth president may be based on Roosevelt’s official White House portrait, painted by John Singer Sargent in 1903. Its public debut was in a display of Venetian mosaics at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a world’s fair held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904. A photograph of the booth shows the Roosevelt portrait as well as one of Jane Stanford. Salviati’s company used such fairs as marketing tools to cultivate further private or civic portrait commissions. Roosevelt may have seen his portrait while attending the fair’s opening ceremonies, but it was never purchased by or donated to the U.S. government, and no federal orders for Venetian mosaics ensued.

The Corning Museum of Glass, 2007.3.70

Winslow Homer
*The Fountains at Night, World’s Columbian Exposition*
1893
oil on canvas

A dark gondola glides swiftly over a moonlit lagoon—not in Venice, but rather Chicago. For the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, organizers contracted a team of sixty Venetian gondoliers to row visitors across its central artificial lake on a fleet of twenty genuine gondolas. These provided an appropriate old world, nautical complement to the fountains and classical architecture of the surrounding pavilions. Elsewhere at the fair, thirty Murano glassblowers gave demonstrations at the pavilion of the Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), one of city’s leading glassmaking firms. These spectacles delighted thousands of visitors who knew Venice by reputation but had not visited, including painter Winslow Homer.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, Bequest of Mrs. Charles Savage Homer Jr., 1938.2
The Scuola d'Industrie Italiane

Is this lace Italian or American? These items are the creations of young women from Italy working at the Scuola d'Industrie Italiane (Guild of Italian Crafts), a lacemaking studio in New York City’s Greenwich Village. Founded in 1905, the Scuola was part of Richmond Hill House, a charitable organization providing services to Catholic immigrants, most of whom were Italian. The Scuola offered vocational training and a source of income to these new American citizens while celebrating and preserving an art tradition from their country of origin. The founders and directors of the Scuola included American heiress Florence Colgate Speranza, her Italian-born husband Gino Speranza, and lace expert Carolina Amari from Florence, who also contributed to lacemaking revival projects in Italy.

Union Glass Company, manufacturer
Venetian-Style Twin-Handled Vase
1894–1910
mold-blown, tooled, and applied glass with gold leaf

The Corning Museum of Glass, 2008.4.128

Union Glass Company, manufacturer
Venetian-Style Creamer with “Snake” Handle
1894–1910
blown and applied glass with gold leaf

The Corning Museum of Glass, 2008.4.114
American glass pioneer Julian de Cordova, owner of the Union Glass Company, looked to his personal collection of modern Venetian glass in devising new patterns. His “Venetian” series, in which cups and pitchers bear gold leaf decoration, mimics Murano’s famous aventurine technique of creating glittering metallic qualities in molten glass. This series also used serpentine applied handles, in subtle reference to the ornaments and flourishes of more complex Venetian revival specimens. Tiffany & Co. and other American glassmaking firms likewise borrowed and adapted signature Venetian revival elements. Union Glass’s “Venetian” series and similar hybrid wares allowed American consumers to honor the genius of Venice while also supporting U.S. companies and their pursuit of excellence in art and design.

The Scuola d'Industrie Italiane (New York City, active 1905–1927) made all lace in this case.

Burse Cover
ca. 1920
linen with cutwork embroidery

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Scuola d'Industrie Italiane in New York through Florence Colgate Speranza, 1943-41-1-c

This burse cover is one of four items in a set of matching altar vestments made and sold by the women who worked at the Scuola d'Industrie Italiane. Its design is loosely based on a sixteenth-century chalice veil. It is meant to be pinned over the face of a stiff square pouch (burse) in which communion wafers are stored during a mass, prior to their use during the Holy Eucharist ceremony. Liturgical textiles were a particular focus of the Scuola’s production, finding a potential audience within the Roman Catholic churches attended by New York’s Italian American community.
Lace Panel with Dragon
ca. 1920
linen needle lace

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Marian Hague, 1938-48-7-a

Just as Murano glassmakers created replicas of historical objects, the artists at the Scuola d’Industrie Italiane copied examples of fine Italian lace from prior centuries. This panel depicting a dragon uses a design from one corner of a much larger lace chalice veil owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. To expand the school’s library of examples, its directors traveled in Italy to collect lace and to make pattern drawings.

Irving Ramsay Wiles
John Gellatly
1930–32
oil on canvas

Art collecting is a hobby for some, but for John Gellatly it was a passion. His buying began in collaboration with his first wife, Edith Rogers (1858–1913), whose family manufactured railroad locomotives. The couple supported many contemporary American artists, including Abbott Handerson Thayer, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, John Henry Twachtman, and Albert Pinkham Ryder—all painters influenced by French impressionism. The Gellatlys also collected decorative arts, especially glass. After Edith’s death, John’s collecting pace increased, perhaps exceeding
his means. By the time he donated his art collection to what later became the Smithsonian American Art Museum, few funds remained in the estate to settle his debts.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artist, 1932.6.1

Ralph Seymour
Miniature Diorama of John Gellatly Collection
ca. 1924–29
wood, fabric, glass, and other materials

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.530

This diorama re-creates in miniature a few elements from the diverse art collection of John Gellatly, an early benefactor to the Smithsonian Institution. In 1929 Gellatly donated more than 1,600 works to support the growing national art collections in Washington, D.C., including paintings, antiquities, and Venetian glass. This velvet-covered case with folding doors was made by his personal curator and butler, Ralph Seymour, and it depicts the collector’s “favorite corner” with tiny replicas of a painting by Abbott Thayer and a large wooden desk covered in specimens of glass.
Ancient Mediterranean Flasks, Goblet, and Ewer  
6th century BCE–4th century CE  
glass, various techniques

Unidentified  
ancient Mediterranean


Ancient glass beguiled artists and connoisseurs with its rich colors and irregularities—signs of hand workmanship that distinguished these vessels from factory-made glass. For John Gellatly, such imperfections likely added to their value; these were favorites within his vast collection, objects that he allegedly “sat fingering late into the night,” according to a reporter at the time of their donation to the Smithsonian Institution. A sense of history guided many collectors of this era. Related qualities are also seen in Gellatly’s small painting of Venice, which he no doubt believed to be a minor work by the Baroque landscapist Francesco Guardi. Its frame, made in the 1920s but inspired by earlier Venetian designs, underscores its age and character.

**Stile Liberty Glass: The Art Nouveau Style in Italy**

Inspired by international expositions, including the Venice Biennale art fairs, Murano glassmakers began around 1900 to adopt art nouveau trends, distinguished by simplified elegance. This new direction became known in Italy as the *stile floreale* (floral style), given its frequent flower motifs, or *stile Liberty* (Liberty style) in reference to London’s Liberty department store, a promoter of this movement. In glassware its principal characteristics are smooth profiles and experimental use of *murrhines*, thin glass discs that can be combined into complex patterns or pictures. Such designs, as seen in the vessels in this case, slowly replaced historically inspired gilding, enamel painting, and bravura sculptural flourishes.
Attributed to Ercole Barovier or Nicolò Barovier
Artisti Barovier, manufacturer
Mosaic Glass Goblet
ca. 1914–28
blown and applied hot-worked glass, with mosaic glass inclusions

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.8.469.9

This Liberty-style goblet features a bowl of clear hexagonal murrhines, each lined in dark purple, interrupted by a band of murrhines with green rosettes and scattered murrhines featuring mosaic glass images of white flowers. Such use of clear murrhines to build tile or bricklike patterns is characteristic of the early work of Ercole and Nicolò Barovier, one of whom may have made this goblet. It is the most contemporary design in John Gellatly’s collection, indicating the breadth of his taste.

Attributed to Giulio Salviati & C., manufacturer
or Erede Dr. A. Salviati & Co., manufacturer
Floral Goblet with Knotted Stem
ca. 1890–1911
blown and applied hot-worked glass

The Walters Art Museum, Acquired by Henry Walters, 47.327
Like many earlier revival-style creations, Venetian Liberty style glass vessels were exceedingly difficult to execute and often virtually impossible to duplicate. The chief design element of this goblet is its pretzel-shaped knot stem, a simplified form that is a feat of symmetry. Through such works a younger generation of Murano glassblowers established new standards for elegance while maintaining Murano’s reputation for technical complexity. Baltimore collector and museum founder Henry Walters purchased this goblet in 1911 among a mixed group of both historically inspired and more contemporary designs.

Charles Caryl Coleman
*Interior with Lute Player*
1875
oil on canvas

This painting is a lesson in the appreciation of artistic glass. A young musician in Renaissance attire has lowered his lute to silently contemplate a small Venetian goblet. Although surrounded by antique objects of varied textures—a gilt ewer, his silk embroidered doublet, the stiletto at his waist—all attention is concentrated on a dark blue drinking glass. Faces in the detailed medieval tapestry also seem to gaze upon its color and symmetry. His cautious two-finger grip is a clue to another characteristic of Murano glass: the empty vessel is extraordinarily light in weight, thin and fragile like a soap bubble. The painting’s small size enhances its themes of delicacy and detail.

McGuigan Collection
Walter Launt Palmer
*Interior at 6 Elk Street (Residence of the Reverend Frank L. Norton)*
1885
oil on canvas

This home’s interior has been decorated according to period standards of fine taste among upper-class Americans. Contemporary writers like Charles Locke Eastlake and Clarence Cook counseled that a variety of materials and textures would stimulate the senses, and that objects from faraway places helped educate about history and world cultures. This parlor’s patterned textiles, shimmering silver, and sparkling glass are crowned by a painting of Venice’s Bridge of Sighs, which hangs on the right wall. This picture may be evidence of the homeowners’ past visits to Italy, and the surrounding décor may include luxury travel souvenirs.

Albany Institute of History & Art purchase, 1968.72

Louise Howland King Cox
*May Flowers*
1911
oil on canvas

Is this child looking at the cluster of flowers, or is she admiring the Venetian glass vase in which they rest? The vessel is identifiable as Murano glass by its hot-worked stem in the form of a sea serpent. While she may be charmed by the smiling monster, informed viewers would understand that its value lies in its workmanship and overseas origins. Here painter Louise Cox, in a nod to the vanitas still life tradition, may be signaling that this vase (and her painting) will outlast the beauty of the flowers and that of the young girl. “[Glass] neither rusts nor decays,”
observed critic and collector James Jackson Jarves. “Moths can not consume it, nor time alter its shape or dim its beauty. It is always the same frolicsome, fascinating, suggestive, imperishable object.”

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of William T. Evans, 1911.6.1

Charles Caryl Coleman  
*Still Life with Peach Blossoms*  
1877  
oil on canvas

A large vase of teal blue blown glass takes center stage in this bric-a-brac still life painting. Curving handles with pinched protrusions identify this as a Murano-made vessel. American artist Charles Caryl Coleman was familiar with these unique shapes and with the latest developments in Venetian glassmaking because he repeatedly visited Venice after moving permanently to Italy in 1866. He collected glass objects during these trips, likely including this vase, which he used as a prop in at least two paintings. Here it joins objects from Japan (the bamboo fan) and Rome (the peach blossoms), offering viewers avenues of escape into exotic worlds.

Art Bridges, AB.2016.1
Maria Oakey Dewing
Henry Marsh, engraver
_An Every-day Mantel-piece, Simply Treated_
1878
from Clarence Cook, _The House Beautiful_ (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1878)
wood engraving on paper
Private collection

In the late nineteenth century, many Americans read books on domestic décor for guidance on how to organize an attractive and stimulating household, a space that would amuse its occupants and impress neighbors. Clarence Cook’s _The House Beautiful_, published in 1878, was one of the earliest and most popular, giving room-by-room suggestions for furnishings, window treatments, and lighting schemes. Illustrations, such as this parlor scene originally designed by Maria Oakey, helped readers visualize how Venetian glass, East Asian ceramics, and other items might be displayed. Oakey, who later married fellow painter Thomas Wilmer Dewing, composed and published several design handbooks of her own before embracing painting as her primary career.

John Rogers
"Ha! I Like Not That"
1882
painted plaster

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Rogers and Son, 1882.1.4
For this statuette illustrating a scene from Shakespeare’s *Othello*, John Rogers conveys the play’s setting—Renaissance Venice—through swords, ceramics, feathers, brocades, leather, and lace. These bring to life a pivotal scene in which the vile Iago, on the far left, plants the seeds of murderous jealousy in Othello, whose wife, Desdemona, appears to receive inappropriate attentions from a rival. A luxurious collar accentuates Desdemona’s beauty, while a dagger hints at Iago’s treachery. Through such historical detail, this parlor statue fueled Americans’ popular conception of Venice as a place of adventure, romance, and above all, sensual excess.

Henry Alexander
*Cyprus Glass*
1894
oil on canvas

In 1894 Henry Alexander obtained permission to paint from the growing collection of glass at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. Against a velvety black background, a selection of jugs, jars, perfume bottles, bowls, and vases glow with rainbow hues. Curators and museum-goers no doubt valued these two-thousand-year-old objects as examples of the ingenuity of ancient civilizations, but in this painting Alexander celebrates their variety of colors and shapes. A newspaper account from 1892 rhapsodized about the colors in the Met’s ancient glass collection, perhaps referring to some of the same objects here painted by Alexander: “One of the urns with double-looped handles shines with a wine-colored iridescence quite impossible to describe; another has the brilliant green sheen of a Brazilian beetle or the eye of a peacock’s tail.”

Collection of David Mamet and Rebecca Pidgeon
In the late 1700s, workshops in Rome began making exquisitely detailed pictures using tiny pieces of glass. Travelers to Italy purchased jewelry, plaques, paperweights, and furniture decorated with these micromosaic vignettes. Instead of more typical Roman landmarks, this piece features the Lion of St. Mark, a symbol of Venice, and it is made of Murano glass—both the colored mosaic blocks and the glittering copper-flecked glass setting, a distinctive Venetian formula called aventurine. Jane and Leland Stanford purchased this micromosaic and many other souvenir objects while traveling in Italy with their son, Leland Jr., in the early 1880s.

Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Stanford Family Collections, JLS.17610

Luigi Moretti
Compagnia di Venezia e Murano (CVM), manufacturer
Glass Cane Slice with Portrait of Christopher Columbus
1892
mosaic glass

Visitors to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago could enjoy an authentic Venetian glassmaking experience at the pavilion operated by the Compagnia di Venezia e Murano, one
of the leading Venetian art glass firms. In Chicago the company demonstrated glassblowing, sold glassware, and offered souvenir gifts, including glass cane slices depicting Christopher Columbus, like the one shown here. This marvel of miniature portraiture was made by carefully constructing the image with glass rods, fusing them into a single cylinder, and then cutting it into thin disks. These tokens acknowledged the occasion of the fair—the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s voyage—while honoring the Italian-born navigator for his ambition and leadership, sometimes in defiance of authority. In the 1890s Columbus was heralded as a national hero and history-changing ancestor throughout Italy, and many Euro-Americans regarded him as a Founding Father.

The Corning Museum of Glass, Gift of Mrs. Giusy Moretti, 99.3.94

Attributed to Scuola di Ricamo, Istituto delle Zitelle
Brooch with *Pittura d’Ago* (Needle Painting) of the Rialto Bridge, Venice
late 19th century
silk, gold, and glass

In addition to glass- and lacemaking, Venice developed a small but acclaimed trade in hand embroidery in the late 1800s. The leading embroidery workshop was the Scuola di Ricamo at the Istituto delle Zitelle, a convent-run charity that offered housing and professional training to impoverished young women and orphaned girls. Its artists and students created highly detailed silk patterns and designs called *pittura d’ago* (needle paintings). These depicted religious subjects and views of famous Venetian sites. As with micromosaics, these works could be fashioned into jewelry, as seen in this brooch, which was acquired by a collector from Providence, Rhode Island, presumably during her grand tour.

RISD Museum, Bequest of Lyra Brown Nickerson, 16.602
Glassware figures at the center of a decadent and elegant fantasy of Venice in this picture, an illustration for a short story by American writer Edith Wharton that was published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1903. Set in the late 1700s, it depicts the first moments in Venice for a young American traveler, shown on the left in a tricornered hat and surrounded by festively attired musicians, Carnevale revelers, and servers. He reaches out to grasp a slender, transparent wineglass as he is seduced into conversation by an Italian dandy in a lace collar and a plumed hat. This is a con man eager to befriend the naïve American and entrap him in a web of romantic intrigue designed to fleece him. The delicate cups and their alcoholic contents suggest both refinement and temptation, summarizing some of the romanticized stereotypes of Venice common among Wharton’s American readers.

Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, 2018.269

Though he never returned to Venice after his fruitful 1879–80 visit, Whistler’s reputation and legacy became firmly linked to the urban archipelago. At Venice’s 1895 Esposizione...
Internazionale d’Arte (the first Venice Biennale), he won a top prize for *Symphony in White No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864, now in the collection of the Tate Britain). For the next two Biennali, in 1897 and 1899, he and John Singer Sargent were the sole representatives of the United States among the fair’s honorary patrons. Shortly after his death, the 1905 Biennale recognized Whistler’s revolutionary contributions to art with the display of this recent portrait by Italian-born society painter Giovanni Boldini, known for his informal and energetic painting style.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of A. Augustus Healy, 09.849

Robert Frederick Blum  
*Canal in Venice, San Trovaso Quarter*  
ca. 1885  
oil on canvas

In repeated visits to Venice in the 1880s, Blum became one of the most careful American observers of its architecture, inhabitants, customs, and colors. This picture combines all of these elements for a view of a quiet canal in the southern Dorsoduro neighborhood. In the center, a solitary boatman propels his *sandolo*, a traditional Venetian watercraft akin to a gondola, but smaller, shallower, and less ornate in decoration. *Sandoli* were easier to navigate than gondolas, and some visiting artists, including women, rented their own for exploring Venice’s labyrinth of canals.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of William T. Evans, 1909.7.7
Francis Hopkinson Smith  
*On the Way to the Public Garden*  
ca. 1895  
opaque watercolor and pastel over graphite on paper

Francis Hopkinson “Hop” Smith spent almost every summer painting in Venice between the 1880s and the end of his life, quickly finding friends among its growing community of American artists and art collectors. Specializing in watercolors, he typically created large and detailed images of canals and modest buildings, celebrating Venice’s everyday beauty. Unlike the gestural, expressive styles of Sargent and Whistler, Smith chose a more controlled approach that conveys tranquility. He also published accounts of his journeys, writing in an accessible voice and illustrating these with reproductions of his watercolors. This scene of a bridge near the Public Garden, on the city’s western tip, appeared in his 1895 collection *Venice of To-Day*. That same year Venice launched the first of its Biennale art fairs, which continue to this day in special pavilions in these gardens, just paces from this bridge.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Laura Dreyfus Barney and Natalie Clifford Barney in memory of their mother, Alice Pike Barney, 1957.13.22

Arthur Beecher Carles  
*Venetian Gondolas*  
ca. 1909  
oil on canvas

For a radically spare and modern view of a favorite Venetian subject, Carles presents a nighttime flotilla of gondolas using wide, flat strokes of deep blues, greens, and grays. A constellation of yellow orbs hovers in the center—lanterns or streetlamps, perhaps, with a full
moon mingling amid her artificial cousins. The technical challenges of representing reflections of light on water encouraged many of Venice’s visiting artists to experiment. Look for a similar embrace of simplified designs and rich colors in Murano glassware of this period.

The Estate of Robert and Linda Wueste

Maxfield Parrish
*Venetian Lamplighters*
1922
oil on panel

This is the original painting for a calendar image published in 1924, one in a series chronicling the history of lighting. Here Parrish takes us to Venice, where a trio rows across the placid lagoon at dusk to ignite a slender beacon, described in the caption as “the magic light that inspired the love songs of the gondoliers.” Wearing loose, classical robes, the light-giving maiden in the center can be read as an artistic muse, a goddess of commerce (illuminating the harbor to aid fishermen and traders), or perhaps a Venetian cousin to New York’s *Statue of Liberty*. While advertising the General Electric Company’s light bulbs, this picture also illustrates an identity shift underway in Venice. While honoring its past, it also welcomes leadership in technology and the arts, particularly in glassmaking.