

Berengo Studio brings a modern twist to the craft of Murano glass-blowing

Curated by Vik Muniz and Koen Vanmechelen, the sixth edition of Glasstress explores the possibilities of glass through the lens of contemporary art at the 58th Venice Biennale



Glasstress 2019, installation view at Fondazione Berengo Art Space, Murano. *Photography: Nikola Crozdanov*

Adriano Berengo, a born and bred Venetian, first established his glass studio on Murano in 1989. Inspired by art collector and erstwhile Venice resident Peggy Guggenheim and the way she had guided the likes of Max Ernst, [Le Corbusier](#) and Pablo Picasso towards glass in the 1950s and 1960s, he has since welcomed more than 300 contemporary artists to the island to work with the maestros of Murano. Thirty years on, Berengo shows no signs of slowing down as his mission to reinvigorate the 1500-year-old traditional craft of Murano glass-making continues apace.

A showcase of the fruits of Berengo Studio's labour, the inaugural edition of Glasstress took place in 2009 and has since become a firm fixture of the Venice Biennale. This year's exhibition sees Glasstress alumni Laure Prouvost, Erwin Wurm and Ai Weiwei, among others, join newcomers including José Parlá and Denise Milan for a blockbuster tenth anniversary edition of two halves – one that casts its eye to the future, while the other celebrates Glasstress' greatest hits.



Tiempos Frágiles (Fragile Times), by José Parlá. Photography: Francesco Allegretto

A disused glass furnace sets the scene for new works and installations by artists such as Monica Bonvicini and Thomas Schütte. For this section, Brazilian artist Vik Muniz dons his curatorial cap, having invited his peers to explore 'how glass redefines our perception of space'. He, too, takes part in the show with a pair of hyper-realistic murrine portraits in which he has borrowed from a centuries-old decorating technique. Fellow compatriot and sculptor Valeska Soares has made a series of glass containers, entitled *Acqua Alta*, that reflect on water as a precious commodity. Argentine artist Pablo Reinoso similarly references Venice with a life-size sculpture based on the wooden poles (*bricole*) that line the channels of the city and its lagoon.

Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen has curate the other section of the exhibition, pulling together highlights from the past ten years. It's a chance to revisit some of Glasstress' most memorable works, including Mat Collishaw's *A Different Self* (2014), comprising a digital screen embedded in an ornate Venetian mirror frame; and Jaume Plensa's Barcelona muse (*Laura's Hands*, 2011) in a state of dreaming. A special project by Robert Wilson, curated by Jean Blancheart, also forms part of the sixth edition of Glasstress.

Beyond Murano, the studio is supporting a number of artists at the Venice Biennale, from Liliano Moro, who features in the Italian Pavilion at the Arsenale, to Renate Bertlmann, the first women to represent Austria at its national pavilion in the Giardini. Over on San Clemente island, Joana Vasconcelos and Tony Cragg play with perception as their larger-than-life works take over the Palace Kempinski gardens. ✨



Tony Cragg. Photography: Francesco Allegretto. Courtesy of the artist and Berengo Studio



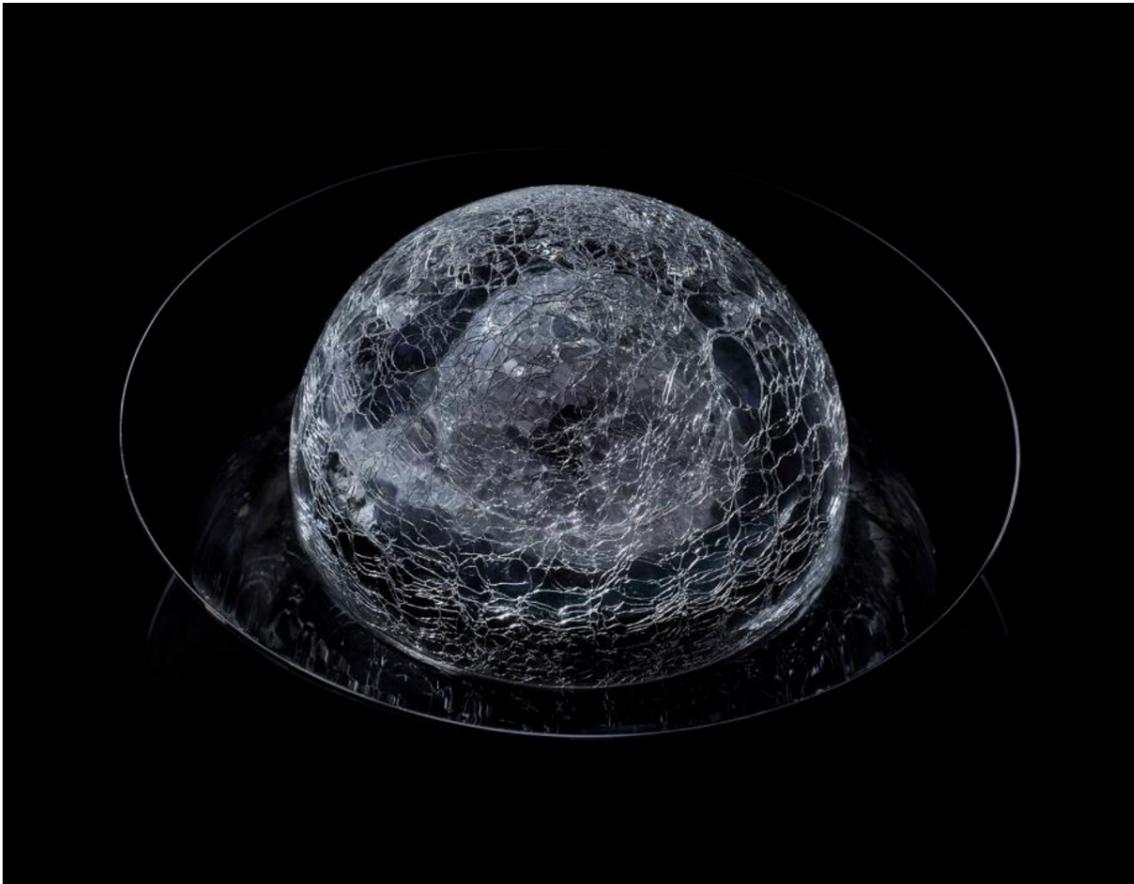
Valeska Soares. Photography: Allegretto. Courtesy of the artist and Berengo Studio



Study of Perspective in Glass (detail), 2018, by Ai Weiwei. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio and Berengo Studio



Untitled, 2019, by Vik Muniz. Photography: Alessio Buldrin. Courtesy of the artist and Berengo Studio



Earth Banquet, by Denise Milan. *Photography: Sergio Coimbra. Courtesy of the artist and Berengo Studio*