

MILAN  
FAIR 2011  
TOP PICKS  
FROM THE HOME  
DECOR EVENT OF  
THE YEAR

FIRST  
IMPRESSIONS  
LAST  
THE OHRIS'  
RESIDENCE  
AT THE MET

# PRESTIGE Living

THAILAND

**LIGHTING THE WAY**  
FABIO BKK DEBUTS WITH RAVE REVIEWS

cover story



## LIGHTING THE WAY

WITH AN EYE ON TRADITION AND THE SURVIVAL OF  
SMALL ITALIAN ARTISANS, OWNER FABIO BERGOMI  
OF FABIO BKK SETS OUT TO BE THAILAND'S LEADING  
MURANO GLASS SUPPLIER IN THE FUTURE

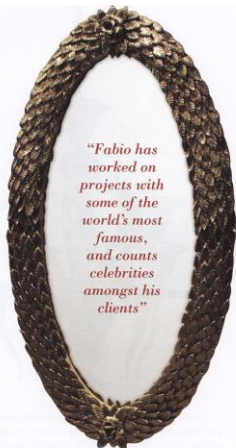
text: Trin Nopatsakorn photos: MEI Photo Center

**W**hen it comes to glassware, few names can compare with the resonance and pedigree of Murano glass. Indeed, the very word conjures up images of Italy's renowned glass home decor, personal accessories and chandeliers. With the earliest Murano glass dating back to 982 AD, it is Europe's oldest glassmaking tradition. Made on the island of Murano three kilometres north of Venice, it was the first place in Europe to assemble glassmakers who pioneered techniques that are still in use more than a millennium later.

Fortunately for fans of Murano glass, the recent opening of FABIO BKK means that customers can commission bespoke designs from the experienced Italian artisans based there. Founder and proprietor Fabio Bergomi envisions that his atelier will be Thailand's leading purveyor of authentic Murano glass, with every piece bearing the 'Vetro Artistico® Murano' trademark.

An award-winning designer in his own right and owner of the famed RAINBOW brand, Fabio has been offering custom designs for each client using Murano glass in London since 1998. Fabio collaborates with different artisans to create his masterpieces, drawing on the exhaustive experience and skills of maestros who have devised methods to achieve the best results for clients.

"This trade has been passed down from generation to generation, from father to son," Fabio says, "and some artisan families have a lineage that spans more than 400 years." The historic prestige of Muranese maestros cannot be overstated, as there was a time when these Italian glassmakers were the only manufacturers of mirrors in all of Europe. In homage to this art, the showroom also carries a range of Murano glass-framed mirrors, ranging from the traditional to the modern.

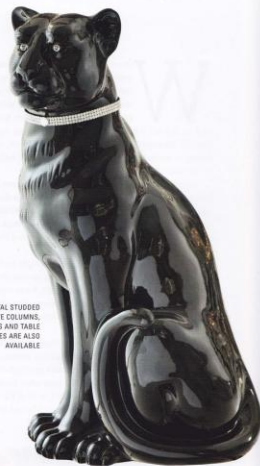


*"Fabio has worked on projects with some of the world's most famous, and counts celebrities amongst his clients"*

IN HOMAGE TO ITALIAN GLASS MAKING, THE SHOWROOM CARRIES A RANGE OF MURANO GLASS-FRAMED MIRRORS, RANGING FROM THE TRADITIONAL TO THE MODERN



CRYSTAL STUDIED DECORATIVE COLUMNS, ANIMALS AND TABLE BASES ARE ALSO AVAILABLE



*"We never say no to any client request. We always find a way to make it happen"*

To this day, many of the old techniques have remained unchanged, with maestros dreaming up innovative techniques to keep up with new trends. Like their historic counterparts, once furnaces are turned on in September, they run non-stop at temperatures of up to 1700° celsius until August the following year, when all work is suspended. For one month, these hardworking artisans take a much deserved break from the sweltering summer heat. But the exorbitant costs of keeping these furnaces on have forced many artisans to abandon their family business, and of those that are left, fewer members of the younger generation are willing or interested to take on the arduous work.

The danger is that if no one buys their authentic works, this time-honoured art form will eventually die out. Clearly, President Silvio Berlusconi recognised the importance of preserving this heritage when he deliberately purchased Murano glass accessories as Christmas presents last year.

Of the artisans who still ply their craft, Fabio never ceases to be fascinated by the harmonious way they work. "When they work, there is utter silence. If the Maestro speaks, there's trouble." Among the many Murano artisans he collaborates with, Fabio has been working with some of the most highly regarded, including the Maestros Signoretto, a father and two sons team, supported by their technicians. In their workshop, alongside modern machinery, traditional glass-making tools and antique weighing scales are still in use.

In contrast to the uniformity resulting from the use of moulds, every single component is handmade, making each design unique. Even finishing the pieces is no mean feat as the weights have to be carefully balanced when assembled and mounted. Fabio has

worked on projects with some of the world's most famous, and counts celebrities amongst his clients. This successful partnership will continue for his clients in Asia where he has now been based since 2010. As a mark of respect, Fabio has requested that all pieces produced by Maestro Signoretto for FABIO BKK bear the Maestro's signature, and clients can affix customised dedications on bespoke pieces to mark special occasions.

Fabio also harnesses the talents of artisans in Florence and Milan for his designs, which range from traditional to art deco and modern styles, and sometimes incorporate the trendy sparkle of Swarovski crystals. Besides his work which he describes as 'light sculptures', Fabio says: "There's no limitation on size and style: there are only infinite possibilities of what can be done by the Murano Maestros." His latest project in London is a chandelier



resembling glass bamboo rods for a Japanese restaurant that measures five metres across and hangs three storeys down, while another project involves a chandelier weighing 1,500 kilograms. The extraordinary range of colours, textures, shapes and shades that this malleable glass allows, enables creations that transcend culture and designs that appeal to a wide market. "We never say no to any client request. We always find a way to make it happen," he says.

"FABIO BKK is a collection of well-known brands," says Fabio of his showroom on the third floor, walk-up in Sukhumvit 31, whose products are produced by Italian craftsmen. Besides bespoke designs, the discreet comfortable salon, which can be closed on request for VIP guests, offers a wide selection of fine Venetian glass and crystal by Salviati.

With a history that spans more than a century, Salviati emerged in 1850 as a result of forging new paths alongside rich traditions and skills of Muranese Maestros to produce in-house designs primarily for export across Europe and America. Fabio is Salviati's exclusive distributor in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, meaning that all orders, including limited edition designer pieces, can be placed with him.

Complementing the design oriented lifestyle, Fabio imports beautiful appliances and houseware from CasaBugatti established in 1923 by the Bugatti family in Lamezzano: a variety of beautifully scented and decorative Periclit Candles made by hand since 1892 in Bergamo; and ceramics from Nove. One of a kind accessories produced exclusively for FABIO BKK, all of these are produced by the small and highly skilled family businesses in Italy with whom Fabio is associated. Again, Fabio accepts custom designs in this medium.

Some samples from the latest collection include crystal studded decorative columns, animals and table bases. Furniture such as tables and chairs, cabinets and sideboards are available. He offers around 60 styles of handmade walnut and beech chairs



DECORATIVE ITEMS AND HOME APPLIANCES, INCLUDING EXCLUSIVE OIVA ESPRESSO MACHINES, ARE JUST SOME OF THE ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT FABIO BKK.



from Verona. For clients who prefer their own fabrics, material can be shipped to Italy for upholstering. As he learns to discern the preferences of consumers in Thailand, Fabio will bring in more brands and goods from small family owned Italian artisans whose goods are rarely exported.

Designers and retail clients alike will also enjoy product sourcing services provided by the Bergamits. "We're very big on this," Fabio emphasises. "If clients want antique furniture, chandeliers or accessories from Italy, England or France, my mother, Maria Grazia, who has 35 years' experience and numerous contacts in the field, can source them. She is still operating an antiques business in Italy to this day." The era covered run from early 19th century work to vintage pieces, evident from a Louis XV style North Italian set of drawers to a 1960s Alain Dedon sideboard displayed in the showroom. For special requests, Fabio will personally track down quality artisans as required.

With equal attention paid to the authenticity of the provenance as well as the demands and requirements of each artistic design, Fabio hopes to be more than a worthy partner to the most discerning client – he also wants to provide a platform for the beauty and artistry of quality European craftsmanship.



## KINGDOM OF LIGHT

Owner: Anonymous

"This is my kingdom, when I close the door, I sink into the luxurious bedding and relax. Inspiration for design flows easily." A designer himself, the owner felt the need to be surrounded by quality and beauty. His rainbow, circular leather headboard holds court to the two 'ice' Murano glass bedside lamps at either side – so heavy at 50 kilos each that only miniature versions are now ever made. Meanwhile, a big flower glass ball reflects that the designer's love of lamps is no passing phase! The colours are relaxing: monochromatic, lacuna and leather with a creamy leaf wallpaper. "I wanted somewhere I could go for peace," the man said. "and I'm happy to say I got it right."