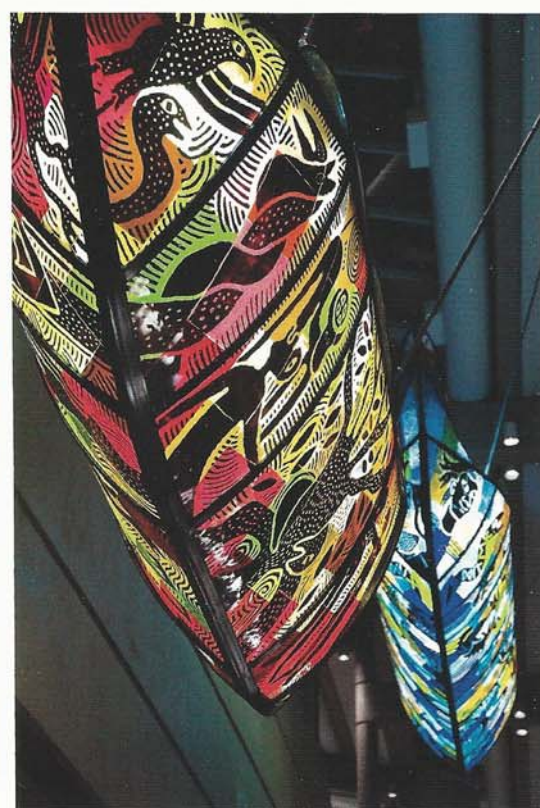
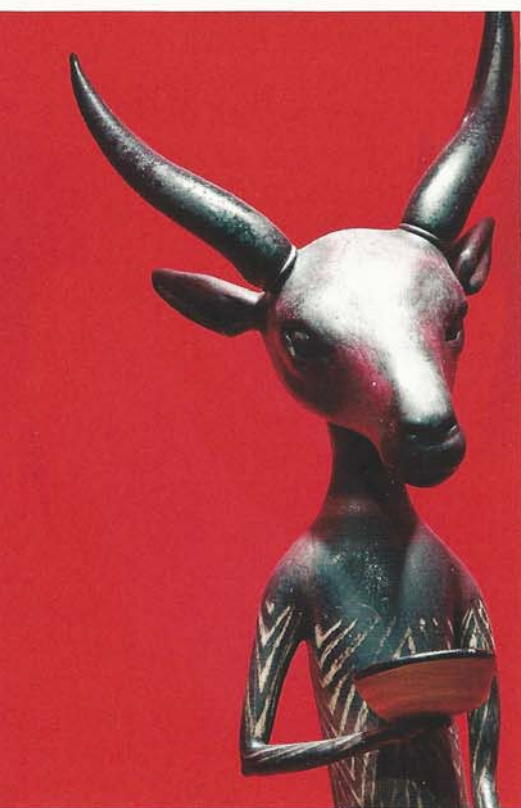


ARTFUL LODGING

A notable collection of beautiful glass brings fresh inspiration to a dramatically remodeled downtown hotel.



BY VIRGINIA BUNKER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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Above, from left: William Morris's blown glass "Idolito" is featured on the 25th floor; the reception desk is illuminated by Orfeo Quagliata's fused panel; Vibeke Skov's longboats are suspended above the main public space. *Opposite:* Not yet installed in the lobby foreground is Massimo Micheluzzi's chandelier.

Bzzzz, thwack, eeeee. The whine of power tools punctuates soft strains of Burt Bacharach on the sound system. "L.A. is a great big freeway"

From an orange suede armchair in the lobby, I watch the final stages of a major renovation: the transformation of the frumpy Tacoma Sheraton into the swank Hotel Murano. The new property in the Provenance Hotels mini-chain debuts in March with luxurious interiors, indulgent guest-room amenities and an international collection of glass art integrated throughout. And outside, too: a large-scale (104-foot-tall) sculpture by Costas Varotsos has been installed in front of the hotel, on Broadway.

Despite the hanging sheets of plastic in the lobby, I can see more than a hint of the glamour to come. And eye-popping glass art is already on display: Orfeo Quagliata's fused rainbow illuminated panel that is the focal point of reception; Vibeke Skov's trio of Viking longboats suspended over the central corridor; Massimo Micheluzzi's stunning silvery chandelier above the main seating area in the lobby.

Actually, the chandelier is still partially draped, but its curvy forms are visible under the canopy. Tessa Papas,





Museo, the Hotel Murano launch party on March 8, features dinner, an auction, entertainment and tours of the hotel. For more information go to www.tacomamuseum.org.

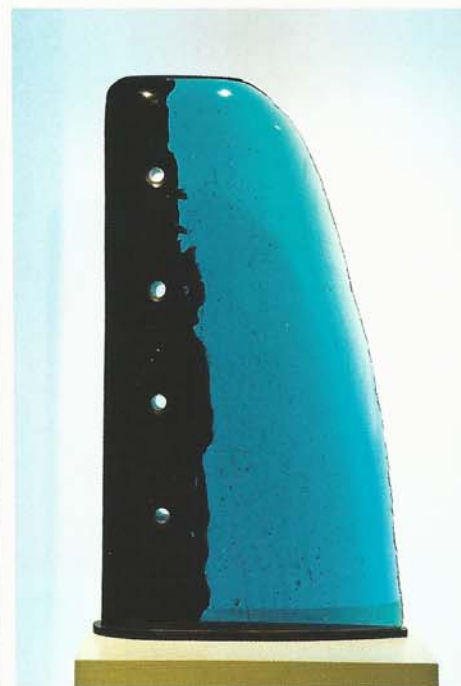
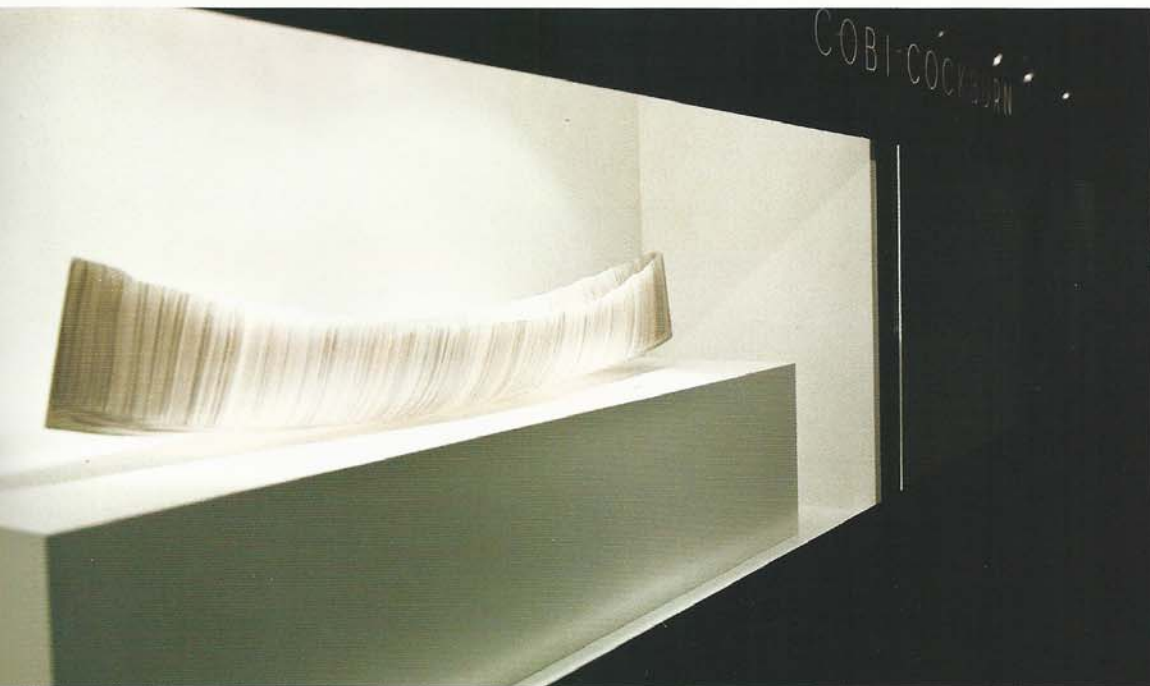
curator of the hotel's collection, is reminded of "the snaky locks of the Medusa." "This is the biggest chandelier Micheluzzi has ever created," she says. "The mirrored surface will change all the time, reflecting the colorful ebb and flow of passersby."

Papas has devoted two years to building the collection. On view are more than forty works by international glass artists and Northwest virtuosos including Dale Chihuly, William Morris, Martin Blank and Dante Marioni.

The hotel's star-studded lineup builds on Tacoma's reputation as a city of glass. According to Mark

Matthews, the Murano's general manager, the all-art-glass theme is an unprecedented vision in the hospitality industry. "What's intriguing is the opportunity to create something that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. That's such a big statement, but it's truly the case."

Each guest floor is dedicated to one artist, featuring work displayed behind a customized etched glass wall engraved with artist quotes and commentary. In addition to the central installation, photographs along the corridor shed light on the artistic process.



Admiring “sewn corset” by Susan Taylor Glasgow on the fifteenth floor, I forget that I’m in a hotel. This feels like a show at a gallery or museum.

Melissa Post, the recently arrived curator at Museum of Glass, sees potential for partnership. “It’s a dynamic long-term alliance that will grow and change as we both grow and change,” she says. “Hotel Murano offers yet another vital link to the artistic and cultural experience that we know as Tacoma. I can’t think of anything better than going to a hotel and having it also be an artistic experience.” The

hotel’s March 8 gala opening, with Burt Bacharach headlining, benefits both the Museum of Glass and the Tacoma Art Museum.

With a collection of glass that ranges stylistically from representational to highly conceptual and in scale from intimate to truly grand, few visitors to the Hotel Murano will be able to say that this is something they’ve seen anywhere before. And many may find their conception of glass art — and a comfortable place to spend the night — turned entirely on its head. ◀

Opposite, clockwise, from top left: A guest room with custom blown-glass lamp; washbasin in bathroom; Dante Marioni’s work on the 14th floor; “Pull...Earl” by Brent Kee Young in the cocktail lounge. Above, clockwise, from top left: On the 12th floor, Cobi Cockburn’s “Shifting Season” shows; Peter Bremers’ cast glass “Iceberg” is on floor 24; Quagliata’s fused panel; “Happily Ever After” by Susan Taylor Glasgow.