

In an abandoned Murano glass factory, artist Loris Gréaud shines light on an age-old art

ART / 24 MAY 2017 / BY NADYA SAYEJ



French artist Loris Gréaud has taken over an abandoned glass factory on Murano for the duration of the Venice Biennale

▶ ↻ 1 OF 5

In the 12th century, the Venetian island of Murano was famed for its glassmakers. They made chandeliers for palaces; glass mirrors and colourful jewellery for the ruling class. But in recent years, Murano has closed a number of its glass factories, as demand for this diminishing industry declines.

As part of the Glasstress initiative at Palazzo Franchetti, French artist Loris Gréaud is presenting an offsite exhibition inside of an abandoned glass factory on Murano, on view for the duration of the Venice Biennale. The latest project in his 'The Unplayed Notes Factory' series reopens a factory that been closed since the 1960s, where the artist has lit up the kiln and hired local glass makers to revive the production line.

Fog fills the main installation space, while the ceiling is lined with 1,000 grey-hued glass chandeliers made from hourglass sand. They glow and dim with a brooding soundtrack that calls to mind a suspense scene in a science-fiction film. One area of the factory is sectioned off, with glassblowers creating the ceiling pieces using a century-old kiln. Once they're made, they hang them on a conveyor belt and every so often, one piece is let go and crashes to the ground. The glass is then swept up and recycled to make new pieces.

The Murano glassmakers are akin to secret alchemists conjuring up trade secrets only some still know, with techniques that are handed down through generations. Gréaud's installation sheds light on how quickly this age-old art can disappear over a matter of centuries; a lost art which has a sort of spellbinding magic to it, even if today it's at risk of being lost.