

# **Lino Dinosaur: A Sublime Testament to Glass Art**

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In December 2012, with construction of Museum's exterior already completed, the building's interior design is slowly beginning to take shape. Visitors to the interior are surprised to see that the designer has included a superbly crafted glass room that hangs between the first and second floor. Within, cabinets hold 1695 silver plated glass bottles of all shapes and sizes that have been

arranged in orderly rows along each side of the glass room. A Chinese character has been engraved onto each one using a laser, and when put together these almost preternatural characters form a romantic love story that has a connection to glass: The Glass Mountain. Interspersed among them are limited-edition artworks from internationally-renowned brands such as Venini, Baccarat and Lalique that enhance their beauty. When design began for the contemporary art hall on the second floor, the team had deliberated which artworks were suitable to put in the cases that faced the exit to the glass room. Mr. Tilman Thürmer, our German designer, asked us: “Out of all the Chinese and foreign artworks in here, which one you like the most?” My reply ultimately became the piece of art that is currently placed in this position: the first piece of contemporary art to meet the eyes of visitors who have stepped out of this magical space is a work created by Lino Tagliapietra in 2010 - Dinosaur.

This year the World Glass Workshop turns 50. For many years countless wonderfully talented artists have emerged from every corner of the globe - but the achievements of one artist in particular have caught the world’s attention. His work has always been filled with a deep, serene spirituality, and during career as an artist spanning close to 70 years he has created an untold number of miracles.

Dinosaur is typical of Lino’s work, and its inspiration was drawn from the simple form that he has always strived for in his creations. His home is surrounded by water, and fish and other aquatic life are the source of his creative inspiration. In his eyes, dinosaurs, long ago extinct in a distant age, are both powerful and docile creatures. Much of the time he imagines them as gentle, water-dwelling animals, and in this collection he has experimented with combining their strength and habitat with a sense of movement of fish in the Adriatic sea. His unrestrained imagination and the flawless evocation of this concept make this a preeminent piece of contemporary glass artwork. When I first saw it, it left an impression on me deeper than any other work of art.

This unique piece possesses simple, flowing lines, fresh colors and a noble refinement. This, and its rich charm, is what made me fall in love with it. Its superb expression of texture gives me a strong sense of how it seems to contain the whole universe. The observation and thinking behind the way it depicts glass as an object of art never fails to move me.

Another reason why this work of art means so much to me is in the constant demands that Lino makes of himself when it comes to the art of glass blowing. Prior to creating this collection, he had already invented a number of techniques that have had a deep influence on glass art. But his fastidious pursuit of technical excellence, and the astounding visual effects he has achieved, have pushed him to continue innovating. At the same time, this has made his artistic creations both

extremely arduous and complex. In order to achieve his ideas and concepts, he has had to conquer physical and mental exhaustion. Through years of observation, revisions and production, he has continuously perfected his glass-blowing technique, and his mastery of molten glass has ultimately become a breakthrough in his creative expression. He has allowed me to see the transition from old elements to new concepts, and has injected his experience and wisdom into this inanimate glass object. It is because of this that he has earned such titles as 'cultural icon' of glass art and the 'greatest glass blower of his era.'

This piece was created in 2011, in a year when Lino was already 77 years old, an age when most artists - not to mention ordinary people - would have already retired. Though he no longer has to endure the physical demands of glass blowing and is settling in to the later years of his life, Lino still continues to extend his artistic achievements and remains active in art circles: "I hope people see love - love for glass, love for the flame of the glass furnace. When it comes to art I want to be able to face myself honestly - that's just the way it is." It is this kind of dedication that has allowed him to retain his love for art, and this kind of artistic commitment is something that deeply moves me.

In June 2011, we accepted an invite to visit a famous glass art gallery in Seattle called the Traver Gallery. The owner of the gallery introduced us to Lino's agent, after which, whilst sitting in a restaurant, we discussed with him how best to present Lino's work to China. We decided that holding an exhibition would give fans in China the chance to witness more than 100 artworks produced throughout Lino's career. As we were talking, a diner next to us overheard what we were discussing, and, unable to contain himself, excitedly said to Lino's agent as he sat opposite me: "I'm a real fan of Lino's work. Please give him my regards and wish him all the best." I have no doubt that there will be more fans like this in China, people who would love to see his exhibition come to their country. Making this wonderful dream come true is the mission of Shanghai Art Museum.

Enjoying the endless possibilities of glass is the concept behind the Glass Art Museum - and the day when these possibilities can become a reality might not be very far off.