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Tradition and innovation: new business models for Wave Murano Glass

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Managing change in times of crisis is possible, by adjusting one's business model, maintaining customer relationships, and finding alternative sales solutions.

Such is the scope of Wave Murano Glass, a Murano glassmaker established in January 2017. As a start-up, they adopted an innovative approach to the market, totally different than traditional ones in the Venetian Lagoon.

We meet master glassmaker Roberto Beltrami for a pleasant online chat, during which he tells us about an intriguing new project of his.

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Roberto, tell us about the new tools you've just launched, the WaveMurano Bonds.

Wave Murano Glass partners with the most prestigious luxury brands. Given the critical situation that we are facing and its inevitable consequences for business, we have decided to offer new tools to our customers, the ***WaveMurano Bonds***, vouchers with a nominal value that may be spent later, with discounts applied to retail prices.

A significant 70% discount off the retail price. What goals have you set for yourselves?

We want to be on our customers' side, and to show them that we're able to manage our organization flexibly while protecting our loyal clientele.

A *bond* is also a relationship, and this is what our company is staking on – a bond of strong trust with our long-standing customers.

You basically offer your customers the chance to book one of your creations today, and purchase it later whenever they choose to?

Yes. We mainly target the United States and Asia, which are now facing the pandemic crisis just like us.

This way, we can offer solid partnerships based on the guaranteed quality of our work and the utmost compliance with delivery times.

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What communication tools have you been using to inform your customers of this initiative?

Mainly a dedicated newsletter where we explain this project. We have also been considering communicating via social media, mostly to broaden our target.

How have you been dealing with this forced business lockdown?

We have respected the order to suspend business activities, and have used this time to arrange our new kiln at best, by expanding the glassmaking area that we opened last January.

Wave Murano Glass was built on a different business model than traditional Murano glassmakers. What was behind this choice?

Upon launching our start-up, we set out to develop a cutting-edge project, still tied to the expertise and long tradition of Murano's glassblowing, yet based on modern, up-to-date business models.

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For example, we decided to have no warehouse, both because renting spaces suitable to stock glass is definitely costly, and because our model might be considered as on demand.

We chose to establish collaborations with our customers in order to develop projects, sometimes based on prototypes that they create themselves, to avoid large-scale productions, and not to compete on the price factor, which – as it's well known in mass manufacturing – would disadvantage us compared to other countries like Czech Republic.

An art or a technique?

Hard to tell the difference. In glassmaking, different professionals are involved – some demanding and particularly attentive to technique, others more interested in art-like aesthetics.

There have been a few great examples of this, like Venini, who blended the sublime simplicity of shapes with perfect glassblowing.

Do you feel distant from the traditional, old-school Murano glassmaking?

Definitely. We do appreciate our history and heritage, but our business model is totally different, a completely new one.

When did you first approach this field?

Ten years ago. I had some sort of epiphany while I was visiting an exhibition by American master Dal Hilux in Boston. Once back to Italy, I started studying the technique of glassblowing, until I turned this passion into my new business. A privilege and a challenge that allows me to constantly find new ways to stay proactive and in line with the market's needs.

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