

TRADITIONAL HOME

February 2011

fresh
looks
FOR THE NEW YEAR!

**DISCOVER DESIGN
PARADISE IN
HEAVENLY HONOLULU**

**LOVE THAT VERSATILE
VALENTINE RED!**

**+ ELEGANT VENETIAN-
GLASS CHANDELIERS**

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venetianmagic

SEGUSO BREATHE NEW LIFE
 INTO THE ANCIENT ART OF GLASS BLOWING

Italian style

The radiant amber blown-glass "Albireo" chandelier by Seguso casts a warm glow.



The name Seguso is shorthand for Venetian art glass, the kind that sparkles under spotlights in museum collections. And no wonder. After 22 generations of blowing glass on the tiny island of Murano, the Seguso *famiglia* knows how to shape molten liquid into works of art. They've turned out glassware for a pope, kings, and young American couples cruising the Grand Canal. Favored by an earlier generation, Seguso's thick, drop-shaped *sommerso* and lace-like *merletto* vases are still coveted by collectors who snap up vintage pieces at auction and online (1stdibs.com).

Italian ceramicist and designer Flavio Poli (1900–1984) was the mastermind behind many of Seguso's greatest hits in the

1950s, but it was maestro Archimede Seguso (1909–1999) who blew them to life and later dazzled art lovers with his own designs. Like his father, Giampaolo Seguso (born 1942) also achieved international renown as a maestro glassblower but with a more expressionistic bent. In 1993, Giampaolo went on to found his own glassworks (the story of which was chronicled in best-selling author John Berendt's *City of Falling Angels*).

But with the recent launch of the family's newest American venture, Seguso Interiors, the emphasis is on haute-couture pieces tailored by American designers and architects to suit a client's personal taste.



eye candy by Seguso

A groovy 1960s chandelier offered at Manhattan's Coolhouse gallery. Most glass isn't signed, so it pays to train your eye. "Venini glass looks like ice and Seguso like water," says dealer Kevin Allen. "Seguso has a warmer quality."



"You need knowledge of the glass itself to understand what is possible—how to turn a glass dream into an object," explains Pierpaolo, left, the 36-year-old son of Giampaolo. "And if you're loyal to the past, you can push design forward without doing something violent to beauty." After working on custom-tailored projects with architects Peter Marino and Roger Thomas (think Bellagio), Pierpaolo decided to offer the made-to-order service through showrooms at design centers around the country (segusointeriors.com). "We customize not only lighting but furniture, too," he explains in his spicy Italian accent.

The first Seguso to trade in his blow pipe for a pencil (he studied art and architecture), Pierpaolo lives in Manhattan, where he also runs the firm's vase and stemware divisions, Seguso Viro and Seguso Vetri d'Arte, available through prestigious stores (Neiman Marcus, Gump's, Halls, and L.V. Harkness).

Top left: Spinning a decorative border at the Seguso furnace in Murano, where glassmaking takes time, strength, and skill. **Middle:** A 1950s snapshot of Flvio Poli (holding plans). **Bottom:** Creative director Pierpaolo Seguso runs the firm's American division and just introduced custom-tailored lighting and furniture. "Now we can offer the expertise of 600 years of glass blowing to every designer," says the glass guru.



SUPER-SIZED CHANDELIER

A stunning, 24-foot-tall Seguso chandelier was just installed in the stairwell of a home in Los Angeles. The one-ton dazzler, below, is decorated with 2,800 flowers, which took 35 artisans three months to create. "Each piece is mouth-blown and finished by hand," explains Pierpaolo Seguso, who supervised the hanging. "It was shipped in pieces and took five days to assemble." More often, Seguso's custom-designed chandeliers solve the practical challenges of dining-table dimensions and ceiling heights. "Proportion and position are everything," says Pierpaolo.



flowing fronds

"Each leaf is different," says Pierpaolo, "but they give the feeling that a breeze has blown through the room."

fluted arms

The decorative fluted arms hide the wires threaded inside.

"all-clear" sign of quality

Better-made pieces have no bubbles trapped inside the glass (unless it's part of the design).



SHOP LIKE A VENETIAN

- Don't consider a chandelier as a source of light. "It's elegant jewelry for the home," says Pierpaolo Seguso, head of the Seguso firm's U.S. operations.
- To figure out the right size for the light fixture, first add together the room dimensions; then add 5. Thus, for a 13x20-foot room, add 13 and 20 plus 5. Then substitute inches for feet. So, in this example, a chandelier that's 38 inches in diameter would be ideal.
- A long, rectangular table requires two chandeliers (a worthwhile investment if you decide to resell; matching pairs of light fixtures are worth more than the price of two singles).
- Always be sure the ceiling hook is strong enough to support the chandelier. ("The weight never sleeps," Pierpaolo notes.) ■

invisible wires

The silver metal cup hides the electrical parts, leaving no exposed wires or screws.

moving parts

Beautifully blown and completely detachable, the finial and leaves are easy to replace if they break.