

Ambiente – Printed Fabrics by Timo Sarpaneva

Exhibition at the Finnish Glass Museum 6.5.–16.10.2022



Ambiente-printed fabric, Photographer Teppo Moilanen

Timo Sarpaneva (1926–2006) was among the world's most well-known glass artists and a designer with a stellar career. His designs, of various types, were loved by designers and consumers alike. Glass may have been the material that Sarpaneva most enjoyed using, but he also worked with other materials, ranging from textiles to steel.

Ambiente – Printed Fabrics by Timo Sarpaneva is an exhibition about the Ambiente fabrics that were printed at Tampella's Lapinniemi factory, in Tampere. Sarpaneva invented the Ambiente technique at the Rosenlew paper mill in Pori in 1965, when a broken printing machine splashed dye around in surprising patterns. He set out to refine this random quality further.

The new technique was applied to fabrics in Tampere with great enthusiasm. This process created uniquely vibrant and varied prints, which inspired Sarpaneva to call the Ambiente technique 'machine painting'. He described his thoughts thus: 'I have transformed a large fabric-printing machine into a giant paintbrush. I'm both excited and exhilarated. I'm painting again!'