

The Marble Weekend at **Wheaton**

A Welcome Place for Contemporary Marble Artists and Collectors

by Josh Mazet

When most people think of Southern New Jersey, the contemporary marble scene is not the first thing that comes to mind. In early September, however, WheatonArts and Cultural Center in Millville, New Jersey, previously known as Wheaton Village, will host a gathering of marble makers to accomplish just that.

The Wheaton Village Marble Weekend began over a decade ago and has early ties to a glass paperweight show that would ultimately become *Marble Weekend at Wheaton*. The show ran until 2007, when it was pulled off the center's schedule as a regular event, since Wheaton felt it was not profitable. While it's more than fair to say that the marble making community was disheartened to see this happen, its cancellation fortunately coincided with the rise in social media exposure for glass artists through Facebook groups dedicated to marbles and online auctions that began to connect artists to a larger community of glass collectors.

In 2013, after seeing the interest in marbles and other lamp-worked glass as well as the price of marbles rise over the years, it was time to bring back the *Marble Weekend at Wheaton*. Paul Katherman and Tawny Bettinger resurrected the show, and now, in what will be its third year, it is back with revitalized energy and momentum.



Marbles by Paul Katherman. Photo by the artist.



*Raven Copeland.
Photo by Jake Ripley Photo.*

*Justin Galante marble.
Photo by Jeff Dimarco.*

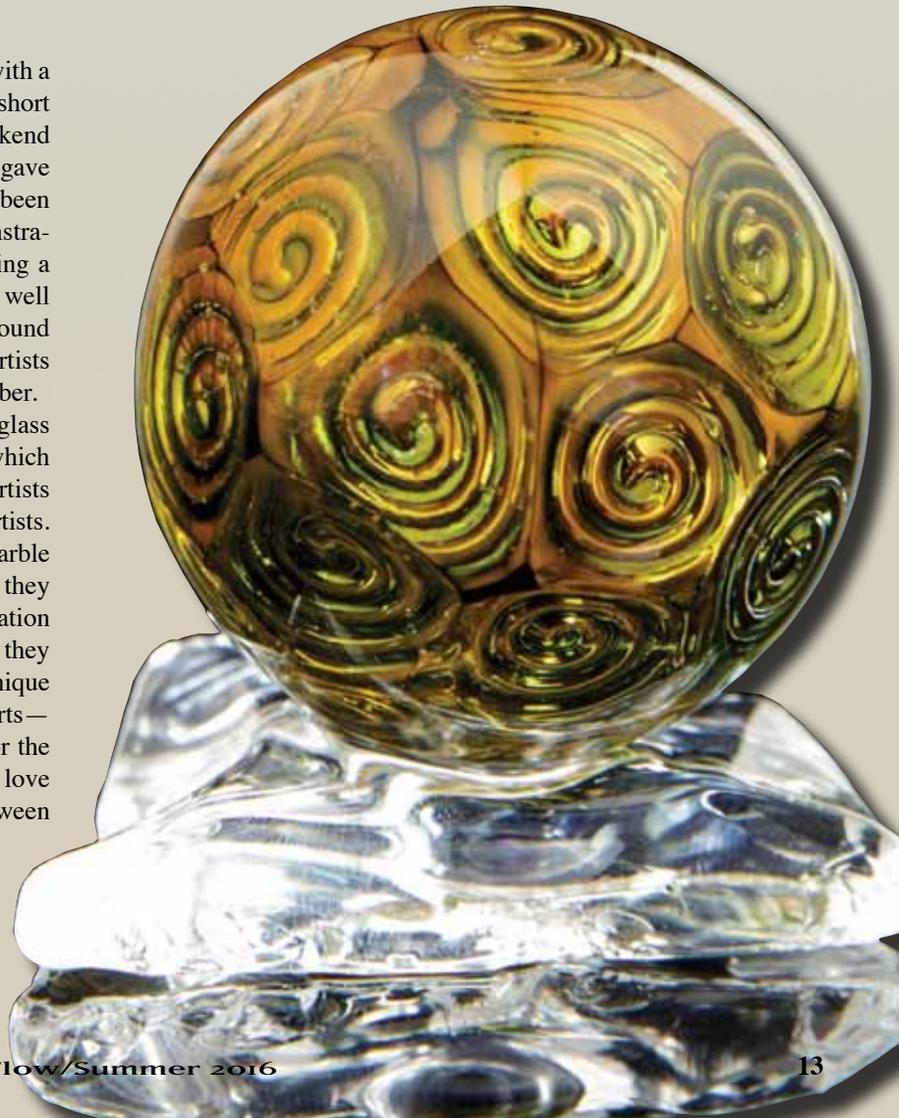


Ben Baracos. Photo by Jake Ripley Photo.

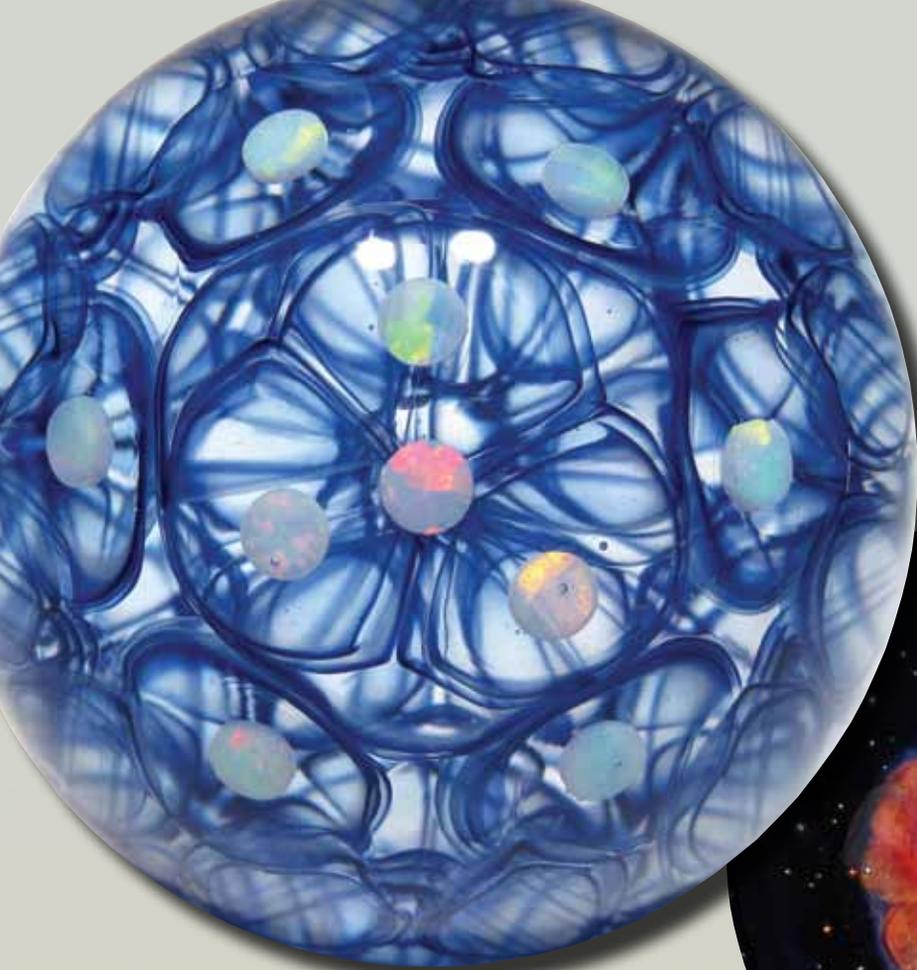
Paving the Way for Contemporary Artists

The format of the show has stayed relatively the same, with a marble artist selected to be featured for the weekend and a short preview being presented the first night, after which the weekend show is open to the public. In the early years, featured artists gave a singular demo and talked about their work, but that has been slightly modified to what is now a full weekend of demonstrations, with multiple artists getting on the torch and showing a little a bit of what they do. It is easy to tell that this has been well received by the continuous crowd you will find gathered around the demonstration tent all weekend. The show's featured artists from the past two years include Mike Gong and Travis Weber.

The early years of the show had more furnace and soft glass marble makers in attendance along with vintage dealers, which always made for an interesting get-together. A lot of those artists and dealers had really paved the way for the contemporary artists. We "contemps" had been piggybacking on established marble shows put on by vintage collectors across the country, and they had really embraced our participation as the younger generation took an interest in the history of marbles and everything they had to offer. As mentioned earlier, though, it made for a unique group that always seemed to me like a family reunion of sorts—an unlikely mix of generations who would get together for the weekend, socializing and sharing, all around the common love of the marble. I definitely remember some fun ribbing between the "contemps" and "the moldy oldies."



*Josh Mazet marble.
Photo by Sarah Sheafe Photography.*



Travis Weber marble. Photo by the artist.



Josh Sable marble.



Sean Clayton marble. Photo by the artist.



Kevin Beecher marble.

There is another big, important change, however, that happened over the years that divided the show's run, and that is the collector base. The first major collectors of marbles were mostly from that vintage base of marble collectors. Social media and Facebook have given the world a window into these really amazing pieces of art, as well as new exposure to younger collectors, who were already well versed in contemporary lampwork through the glass pipe scene that had been exploding. In the early years, the big collectors flew in for the Wheaton show knowing that this was their best chance to have many makers in one spot, meet them, and see what they had been up to. Beyond that one major marble show, though, many artists would have to support themselves through a more diverse range of work and spend days figuring out how to upload photos of their work to the online Marble Forums.

Now you'll find crowds of the next generation of collectors who have made the short drive from Philly, or further from New York or Boston, or really anywhere. This young crowd is just as dedicated and knowledgeable in their own right about glass, the process, and the artists themselves.



*John Bridges marble.
Photo by the artist.*

A Warm and Friendly Atmosphere

The one thing I believe any other show would be hard pressed to duplicate from Wheaton is the close, intimate nature of the show. I've been to the big shows across the country, usually in large cities, from which attendees and show participants escape in the evenings for dinner and adventure, and only see the other participants the next day. Well, you won't find that in Millville.

A single hotel on site at Wheaton houses almost all the artists and committed collectors, who are making a weekend of it. In the evening, the porch of the hotel is a congregation point, and a large group can be found there late into the night socializing, playing music, and just enjoying the company of people who share the love of round glass. It is special.

The dates of the 2016 show are September 9-11 and will feature the incredibly talented John Bridges as this year's featured artist. Make your reservations now. See you there.

FLOW

www.wheatonarts.org/events/marble-weekend-presented-by



*Josh Mazet
marble.*



*Travis Weaber.
Photo by Jake Ripley Photo.*

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