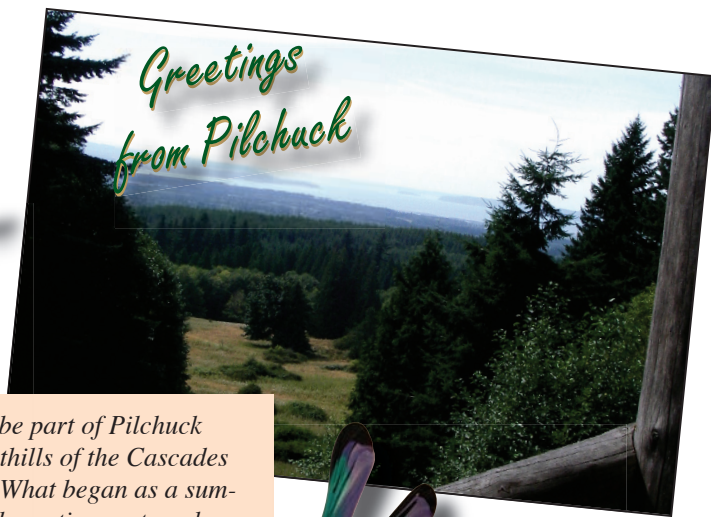


Experiencing Pilchuck and Vittorio Constantini



Glass artists come from all over the world to be part of Pilchuck Glass School, which is nestled in the wooded foothills of the Cascades north of Seattle, Washington, near Puget Sound. What began as a summer tent camp has since grown into a year-round creative center where glass artists can learn new skills, gain inspiration for their work, and in turn share their own insights with others. Here, two glass artists who were fortunate to be part of classes with Vittorio Constantini share their Pilchuck experience.



Mountain Retreat Experience

by Kathy Johnson

If you travel the I-5 corridor in northwestern Washington State that heads toward Canada, you pass an obscure exit labeled #300. This is the exit that will take you to an experience unlike any other.

Pilchuck Glass School was brought into existence by artists with the need to express themselves. With the help of Dale Chihuly, William Morris, and many other great names in the glass world, the Pilchuck experience was born. In the mountains of Washington State, the spirit of Pilchuck is alive and flourishing. Pilchuck is an experience of sight, sound, and spirit. You find yourself immersed with art and life. There is nowhere in the world that combines the beauty of nature and the excitement of glass with the enthusiasm of Pilchuck.

We arrived at the mountain for the fifth session of 2006. All participants of the classes gathered in the main hall for orientation. Along with the lampworking class of Vittorio Constantini, the classes that were being held were Casting with Nancy Blair, Blown Glass with Richard Royal and Peter Ivey, and Glass Engraving with Lienors Torre. We were invited to participate in other classes in the session, but it was hard to take time because we were in the most fascinating class being held on the mountain!



I had been waiting for six years for the opportunity to learn from Vittorio Constantini, having met him while in Italy participating in a class with Lucio Bubacco. Even though Vittorio speaks very little English, he is always accompanied by his lovely wife Graziella. She not only helped students understand what Vittorio was trying to convey, but she also kept us entertained with her wit and charm. I want to let you know that it was worth the wait to experience Vittorio's class in the Pilchuck environment.

This class at Pilchuck was the longest Vittorio has taught since he began teaching in the United States. I felt fortunate to have been able to attend. Vittorio is an early riser and expected us to be also. He started each day's demonstration with a gavel pounding on the bench and his pronouncement, "Chi, che, che, chi non che mon che." The loose English translation—you snooze, you loose. We would then gather around the torch for the first of three to four demos he would do each day.

We were well-immersed with techniques, tips, and tricks that this master glassworker would use to create his masterpieces of miniature glass art and animal sculptures. Vittorio is unsurpassed at capturing the beauty and life of animals and fish and infusing this into his glasswork. Even with the language challenge, Vittorio's magic with glass was easy to interpret. Each of his many demonstrations was filled with the smooth and flawless movements that come from not only being born Italian but from years of making repetitive pieces for production studios, where he worked to make a living and support his growing family before branching off and taking on his own studio. Since then, Vittorio, with much help from Graziella, has been selling glass art to tourists in the streets of Venice. In 2001 Vittorio was discovered by the traveling students from America. Finding a new audience for his art, Vittorio began teaching at Corning and has taught many lucky students his methods of creation.

If you are interested in a learning experience with glass, definitely consider the Pilchuck experience. And if you love animals and strive to improve your glass sculpture skills, don't pass up any opportunity to learn from the glass maestro, Vittorio Constantini.

Happy Beading!