



Art Glass Invitational 2003

By Kristen Pickett (aka: Gypsea)

Photos by Kristen Pickett & Erik Anders

Monday, August twenty fifth, 2003, marked the beginning of the third annual Art Glass Invitational, affectionately referred to by lamp workers as "AGI". Fifty eight glassworkers representing seventeen states and Canada converged upon the rural Pennsylvania compound of Tom and Elaine Doner (aka: Mr. & Mrs. Wonka). With golden tickets in hand, glassworkers journeyed many miles on their pilgrimage to this glass mecca. Greeting each other enthusiastically, old friends and new shared a week of peace, love, and glassblowing at Tom Doner's newly expanded studios.



Tom Doner's glass shangri-la consists of three studios on the main grounds, which have fifteen workstations and eight kilns. He provided a chartered bus for the convenience of AGI attendees, and a short ride down the road led to the Doner's glass school and retail store, "Flame Worked Creations". The brightly lit and colorful gift shop has an appealing ambiance set by classical music and the soft aroma of scented candles, and is efficiently run by Wonka's beautiful wife, Elaine Doner. A glassed in demo area provides the opportunity for customers to experience live glassblowing demos first hand. This helps to spread the understanding and appreciation of the process involved in this ancient art form. The six hundred square foot school building adjacent to the store was where everyone gathered to check out the scheduled daily demos and presentations. This school building has bench space for five students plus a teacher.



On Monday, AGI-ers arrived, set up their torches and tents. Sleeping accommodations ranged from free camping (where Maestro encountered a bear, and others reported UFO activity) to local motel rooms. It was a wonderful, easygoing atmosphere filled with great vibes. Kristian Turley of Generations Glass (NC) set up a festival store with his glass supplies, and everyone eagerly browsed through all of the glass, tools, and videos. Other vendors who arrived throughout the week included Ross Thackery, Josh Ziegler, Joe Technolux, Carlisle, and Erik Anders.

Steve Selchow started off the scheduled presentations on Tuesday with fantasy and wildlife sculpture. He taught shaping, texture, and form of his incredible dragons, and also demonstrated a duck and eagle to teach how to achieve the natural look of bird wings. Jason Howard's afternoon class introduced the use of in-line regulators, which enable any torch to be "fine tuned" similar to the Herbert Arnold, for optimum performance, and to achieve extreme control of your colors.



Wednesday started off with Peter Goldstein's (FL) lecture and slide show about Fulgarites, which is glass that formed naturally by lightning striking sand. Peter has conducted research with International Center for Lightning Research and Technology (ICLRT) at the University of Florida, and brought actual samples of natural fulgarites as well as results of an experiment conducted by channeling lightning through a tube of colored borosilicate glass.

Dr. Ed, a MD from Pennsylvania, Dr. Jo. a DDS from Chicago II, and Dr. Mike, a DCM from Brooklyn, NY presented health and safety lectures and slide shows that covered prevention and treatment of glass related injuries, as well as first aid and the hazards associated with lampworking. An extremely interesting and interactive Q & A session ended their presentations. Dr. Jo also covered the uses of art clay and brainstormed ways to use it with boro.

Paco (from Seattle, WA) gave a reticello class, which covered the techniques used to make reticello discs, which can be used as pendants, embellishments for larger sectional pieces, marbles, or incorporated in montage vessels. Mike Fro (Vermont) and Erik Anders (NY) teamed up to demonstrate a two person method of pulling large colored tubes. Starting with fifty to sixty mm heavy wall clear tube, they encased with color, and then encased again with twelve-mm. clear rod. Their team tube pulls yielded six to fifteen feet of tube varying from eight to twenty-six mm in diameter with a three to five mm wall thickness.

Thursday's classes began with Jeff Stairs (Connecticut) teaching tube encasements. He covered the techniques used to decorate a tube on the surface, which he then inserted into a larger tube for casing, which produces an inside out effect. Barry Lafler (Long Island, NY) a full time scientific glassworker gave a very interesting class on scientific seals, which included the Dewar and triple ring seals. Jupiter Nielsen's (Hawaii) class on solid sculpture and blending colors showed how to blend clear and color rods to achieve a "solid color" effect. He skillfully demonstrated his techniques with a solid scorpion sculpture.

Friday morning's class given by Mike Fro (Vermont) and JP (New York) consisted of a dichroic tube pull from plate glass. Using the Clinton press and the "taco technique", they pulled six to twelve feet of colored dichroic tubing. John Koutsourous (Philadelphia, PA) demonstrated techniques used to produce goblet cups and Venetian style feet. He spun out an amazingly large flare for a candy dish, and didn't even curse when it unfortunately made friends with the floor!

Back at the home front, Lala (Wisconsin) conducted an open discussion on marketing strategies, which included photography, display, and presentation of finished jewelry. Erik Anders gave a dichro tube roll up demo, first showing how to roll plate dichro up into a tube, and then how to successfully work the dichro tube into a finished piece. Luke Gardner demoed his incredible detailed implosion pendants, shot glasses and marbles. Brian Carrigan whipped out wigwags, Jamie Ruggerio showed his beautiful vases, Barry made goblet making look effortless, and John Cho demoed his special prodo techs. Tom Wilson of NorthStar Glass, Oregon, was on hand to answer questions about borosilicate glass, and he expressed great admiration and respect for all the techniques and art that have been developed by the pipemaking scene.

On Friday evening, Wonka's backyard was the site of an outdoor concert given by Eddie Pickett (Jekyll Island, GA), John Koutsourous, and friends. Good tunes and good times with good friends!

Saturday and Sunday brought Henry Grimmert; Glass Alchemy, LTD (Portland, OR) and his color workshop. This two day interactive class with Henry explained the composition and use of borosilicate glass. It consisted of lecture and included demonstrations by TA, Dave Walker, of Zen Glass Studio in FL. The topics of nucleation, crystal growth, striking, and phase separation among many others were covered. Each student received a sample pack of GA color, in addition to a new test color for evaluation.

Monday too soon brought about the packing up of torches, exchanging of contact info and glass pieces. AGI 2003 was a wonderful setting for free and open exchange of thoughts and information. The opportunity to collaborate and converse with other glassworkers twenty-four hours a day for an entire week is a stimulating and educational experience! Each year has brought continued improvements and organization to this event. As Lewis Wilson said on the dedication of his dvd documentary, "In 2001, Tom Doner aka Mr. Wonka had the event called Pipestock. It may have been overlooked by the mainstream gallery crowd and art crowd. It was as simple as it gets. Come and share glass knowledge. Tom did it right! The second year it became the Art Glass Invitational. It was bigger and well done. Tom did it right for the second year". Well, the third year proved to surpass the previous events! Tom and Elaine Doner are the perfect hosts and their mission is to expand glass knowledge to all. Keep your fingers crossed, and you may become the lucky holder of a golden ticket for AGI 2004! In your wildest dreams you cannot imagine the marvelous surprises that will await you!!!

