

Hot Time in the City

Written By Sarah Mader

The Eugene Glass School knows how to turn up the heat.

Located in Oregon, this dynamic 10,000 sq. ft. learning facility bustles with creative energy throughout the year. But the Eugene Glass School was an exceptionally hot place to be during their Glass Renaissance Celebration held October 1-5, 2003.

Infusing not only the first Flame Off competition the Pacific Northwest has seen alongside their 4th Annual Art Auction fundraiser, but also an array of artistic and scientific glass demonstrations, exhibits and lectures. Glass enthusiasts, artists and industry leaders came from across the country and as far as Germany animating this high-energy celebration.

"Things like this are so amazing. Everyone stepped up to do their part and this could not of happened without industry support." Says E.G.S. Facility Director Mike Plane.

From the get-go, the Eugene Glass School was on fire. Thursday morning the Flame Off competition jumpstarted the festivities. Ray Olson, John Niles and Sean Mulligan were first to blaze away on the torches while Barry Lafler shortly followed on the lathe.

In two days over forty more flameworkers followed, competing individually in four categories for over \$10,000 worth of prizes. (sculpture, lathe, marble and bead/bracelet/pendant)

"The Flame Off was intense! I've never been around anything like it." Says sculpture participant Sean Mulligan of Eugene, Oregon.

Photographs: Saeed Mohtadi

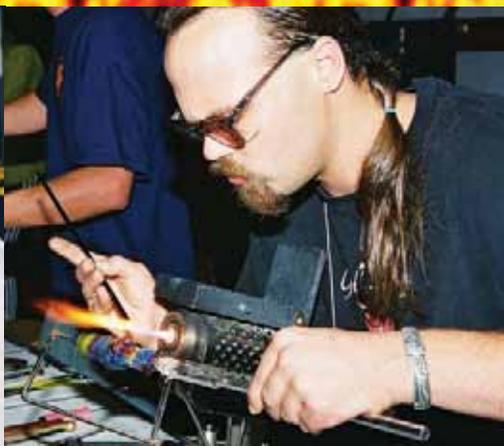
And there were no dull moments in this competition. Past Flame Off participants were throwing it down from Dellene Peralta, Marcel Braun, Jesse Taj and Josh Sable. Flame Off newcomers were also in the limelight like Scott Deppe, Bob Snodgrass, Adam Deering and Chris McElroy just to name a few.

In front of a large didymium speckled audience, the competitors worked side by side, six at a time rotating throughout the day. A large projection screen was set up overhead providing close up of all that was happening in the flames of the competitors, thanks to Spookyfox films.

"It was a new experience participating in a glassblowing competition and to watch so many cool people work." Says Jared Betty, sculpture participant from Snohomish, Washington.

As the Flame Off winded down for the day the Eugene Glass School carried the excitement into the night with a kick off party. In their state of the art hot shop, Charlie Lowrie and team put on an all out glassblowing show, creating a hefty whale before a packed in crowd while Mike Plane took to the School's new Litton K-Lathe. This massive piece of equipment with a 12 ft. bed set the stage for the makings of a colossal four section encalmo bowl. Not only did these demonstrations take your breath away but so did the grand finale- a live fire dancing show.

The second day of the competition picked up where it left off- quickly kicking into high gear. It was the last day of the Flame Off but no one was showing signs of slowing down.



A Glass Renaissance

"There's an incredible amount of inspiration here, so many glassblowers are doing so many different things and pushing the limits and you get to see it all." Says E.G.S. Flame Shop Technician Tracy Doyle.

The Flame Shop was open to with a wide variety of torches available to take for test drives. Frank Hedges of Carlisle Machine Works was in attendance with their new torch while Peter and Juergen Herget of Herbert Arnold were offering a free burner service. Many other manufacturers and distributors were in attendance and all were more than happy to talk shop-while most were exhibiting their wares at the nearby Clarion Hotel over the weekend.

Friday night, the celebration moved to the Clarion for more headlining events. The Flame Off awards, art auction preview, a slide presentation by Michael Neerot and salsa dancing were all part of the mix.

All Flame Off entries were on display along with the auctions mega glass centerpiece-"Logan's Reef." Over 3 ft. tall and weighing nearly 100 pounds, this sculpture featured life size recreations of marine life and was made by Marcel Braun and team during "Project 33" at the Eugene Glass School.

Around 9 p.m. everyone gathered together for the Flame off award ceremony. All entries except for people's choice award were judged by Randall Grubb, Larry Sellman and Michael Neerot who were on hand during the competition.

With admiration and a smile on his face, Randall Grubb announced the twelve winners of the 1st Annual Eugene Glass School Flame Off. First place finishers-Eric Edner, Dave Willis, Scott Deppe and John Kobuki all walked away with top

of the line GTT Torches.

Eric Edner's first place sculpture broke twice in the making and later shattered from someone's mishandling, which made the win a complete surprise.

"I was just stoked to blow glass at the Flame Off and hoped the judges liked my stuff...I didn't expect to win." Says Eric from Groveland, California.

For first place marble winner John Kobuki from Seattle, Washington the win was also completely unexpected. "At the very least-I expected to win a door prize!" Says John.

Second place finishers-Chris McElroy, Todd Deem, Josh Sable and Jeremy Pfeifer won Skutt and Aim kilns, torches by Bethlehem and Nortel along with tools by GTC and Litton.

"This Flame Off was a good experience, it was great just being out there and sharing what I do." Says Todd Deem, second place finisher in lathe from Everson, Washington.

Deveron Musgrave, Scott Deppe, Daniel Benway and Barry Lafler were the third place winners, receiving Glass Alchemy and Northstar gift certificates and cases of Kimble Glass. People's choice award went to Chris McElroy, who won a \$500 gift certificate to the Eugene Glass School.

"The dedication of the volunteers that staff and organize at the glass school was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating aspects of the whole event, it was very inspiring." Says Deveron Musgrave of Alsea, Oregon, third place winner in bracelet.



Sculpture:

- 1st— Eric Edner
- 2nd— Chris McElroy
- 3rd— Scott Deppe

Lathe:

- 1st— Dave Willis
- 2nd— Todd Deem
- 3rd— Barry Lafler

Marble:

- 1st— John Kobuki
- 2nd— Joshua Sable
- 3rd— Daniel Benway

Bead, Braclet, Pendant

- 1st— Scott Deppe
- 2nd— Jeremy Pfeifer
- 3rd— Deveron Musgrave

Peoples Choice Award:

Chris McElroy

Saturday the celebration continued on with trade exhibits, more demonstrations and the auction banquet. At the Eugene Glass School, off hand furnace demonstrations in the hot shop took place by guest artist Michael Nourot while Wade Martindale of Farlow Scientific Glassblowing created an amazing glass heart replica out of borosilicate on the lathe.

Meanwhile at the Clarion Hotel, a dozen exhibits were open to the public which was a harmonious mix of manufacturers, distributors and artists. Friedrich & Dimmock, Wale Apparatus, Aim Kiln, Glass Alchemy, Herbert Arnold, ABR Imagery, Carlisle, Kimble Glass, and Litton Engineering were there along with Eugene Glass

pieces were on display by artists from across the country from blown glass vases to slumped bowls and everything else in between during the silent auction. Not only were the tables completely full but so was the room.

“People were going mad at the silent auction and crowding around pieces that they were on intent on going home with. It was thrilling!” Says E.G.S. founding member Jason Harris.

As the excitement from the silent auction simmered down, everyone took their seats for dinner and the live auction. The enthusiasm from the day and evening carried on- making for an enthralling night while auctioneer Mark Joy and hostess of ceremonies Jenny Newton captivated the audience, who happily bid into the night on more art. All proceeds benefited the Eugene Glass School.

“At the auction, one of the best parts was taking 45 minutes to quiet down the audience...the level of conversation and merriment was electrifying.” Says Candy Moffett, E.G.S. Auction Chair.

Sunday was the last day of the Glass Renaissance Celebration. Exhibits were still open at the Clarion Hotel, with Henry Grimmert of Glass Alchemy lecturing bright and early on colored glass in beadmaking along with demonstrations by James Smircich and Jay Shuster. The Eugene Glass School was also still hosting demonstrations.

Alliance, Snodgrass Supply and bead artists from James Smircich, Jay Shuster and Jenny Newton.

“It was nice getting together with the whole Northwest bunch- I get to see them so rarely, it was a great time.” Says Ross Thackery of ABR Imagery.

As the day sizzled away into the evening, the Eugene Glass School's 4th Annual Art Auction got underway. This was the hot spot to network with artists and collectors with over 200 people in attendance. And talk about eye candy. Over 100 art

After partaking in this paramount event, it is obvious that the Eugene Glass School will endure as a Mecca for glassblowers in the Pacific Northwest. And according to Mike Plane, “There is going to be another Flame Off competition and it's going to be bigger and better.”

If the Eugene Glass School is planning on topping this celebration, the glass community will once again be treated to one the best events of the year- and we can't wait. Thank you Eugene Glass School.

