

12th International Society of Glass Bead Makers Gathering Written and photographed by Christopher Best of Nouveau Marketing Concepts

Buzzing with energy and excitement the 12th International Society of Glass Bead Makers Gathering was launched as bead makers from all over the country and the world arrived in Portland, Oregon "Glass Town". Checking in at the conference was a boisterous reunion full of hugs for long time veterans. As well as thrilling for "newbies" as they came to their first Gathering anticipating the demonstrations and lectures that would ultimately inspire them to produce better work.

The gusto and affection for one another was as impressive as the mutual respect and admiration they all showed for each other's work. Proudly they flashed beads, rings and pendants of other artists. Susan Webb from Glass Alchemy was having so much fun that she changed the beads she wore as if it were a rotating gallery of glass artists around her neck.

Susan Silvy, President of the ISGB, said, "This was an incredible turnout of members, totaling around forty percent. Normally for events like this, it is usually around twenty percent. We are so pleased to have had so many members here."

On the eve of the opening day, a Flame-Off ensued with torches blazing from different manufacturers at four tables. Northstar Glassworks Inc. provided color rods for the artists to create their beads with. Different styles and techniques were shared with the thick crowd of onlookers.

Lauri Copeland, Jed Bliley and Andrew Brown among others at the flame off, exhibited their fine skills making their beads. Leigh Keenan demonstrated one of her beads where she first clamps the pendant with her pinchers to mark a spot on both sides to start the hole. Then she finished the hole by pushing a tungsten pick through the pendant in the flame to open it.

— — — — —, created the Glasstown bead by drawing on a tube of glass a reverse image of Portland with Mount Hood behind the city. This could only be done with a steady hand and small flame so that he did not melt the stringer too much and distort the image. This is one of many techniques that the crowd was eager to observe.

Leah Fairbanks, Lewis Wilson, Tom Boylan and Loren Stump were among the artists performing the demonstration lectures in the large ballroom. They had two large projector screens on either side of the artist whom was on stage in order to show a close and personal view of the bead demo in process. This way the crowded room of seated attendees could watch as if they were right next to the artist looking over their shoulder. The demonstrators had a small collection of their glass art pieces on the table so the observers could handle them up close, ask questions and even purchase the finished work.

A delicious assortment of desserts and refreshments were provided at the back of the room. There is nothing better than sugar and caffeine to keep the gathering of glass bead makers awake and energized for an almost around the clock event.

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The bead bazaar of ISGB members work was enormous! There were three large rooms of about 150 artists, each having about four feet of table space. They displayed their work with a warm reception from customers invited by an advertisement in Oregonian, a local newspaper and TV news spotlight. Many of the artists picked up large wholesale accounts as well as retail sales. Great profits were made, totaling as much and often more than their expenses for the whole Gathering in one day.

Leigh Keenan displays her beads, along with some pendants just like the one she demonstrated during the flame off. Like all of the artists she gets comfortably crowded with customers asking questions and debating which one they like more. Doni Hatz hands a customer one of her beads to have a closer look while talking about the unique qualities of the glass. A beautiful floral ornament encased behind a wall of glass tubing was on display demonstrating the versatility and skill of her work.

The technical display room was constantly busy with attendees picking up new tools from Arrow Springs, Frantz Art Glass Supply, Wale Apparatus, Glass Craft, ABR Imagery and many more. Members of Northstar Glassworks were available at their booth to answer questions about new and old colors. Didi Dahlsrud of Glass Alchemy was like a butterfly lending her talents to all of the vendors who sold Glass Alchemy color. Glass Torch Technology and Dichroic Alchemy shared a booth space and were extremely busy as the first booth by the entrance. So busy in fact, that Willy Horn from GTT by the last day was horse from talking so much with artists about the benefits and advantages of their torches.

Tom Boylan, Lewis Wilson, Andrew Brown and Harold Cooney are pictured bottom right deep in discussion before the bead auction following the banquet dinner. Artists talked freely with one another about where ideas come from and how to utilize them when creating glass artwork. It seems that humor is a common thread among all of the bead artists attending the Gathering. This warm-hearted nature creates a synergy of creativity and fun. It's like summer camp in the city for adults who stay up late and get to play with molten glass and fire! With tours of glass factories, gallery walks downtown, lively dinners and open torch time the Gathering was a great experience for everyone. This ISGB Gathering was a great success and future Gatherings should not be missed for anyone creating glass beads or looking to start.

Guide to photos: Previous page starting from the top; Leah Fairbanks, Andrew Brown, Loren Stump, Laurie Copeland. a piece in the flame. Current page starting from the top; Lewis Wilson, —, Leigh Keenan, Leigh Keenan beads, Tom Boylan, Lewis Wilson, Andrew Brown and Harold Cooney.

For more information about the International Society of Glass Beadmakers or The Gathering visit www.isgb.org.

