

GlassQuest 2017

by Alice Henry

There will certainly be a GlassQuest 2018 and it will be bigger and better. That's a given, because in a room full of some of the real gurus of the glass community plus about 100 other glass artists and enthusiasts, the energy at GlassQuest 2017 was palpable. Maybe you remember that feeling of excitement you had when you met "someone," and all you wanted to do was tell everyone you saw all about how wonderful that new person was. The same feeling is what we experienced at GlassQuest 2017.

There were many demonstrations and hands-on activities throughout the weekend, starting with silk-screening on glass by Tony Glander. Jason LeVan produced two remarkable sand-casting creations with molten glass. Three nonglass artists—Bruce Helander, Craig McInnis, and Mark Walnock—were invited to create panels using vitrigraph stringers, each of which were superb and highlighted the artists' styles ranging from abstract to very painterly. On Sunday, conference participants, with coaching from some of the presenting artists, were given the chance to pull their own vitrigraph stringers using Jen-Ken kilns.

Friday evening check-in was a time to shop the booths of the participating artists, chat with event organizers, and view some inspiring artwork by Fused in Glass, another local glass art shop. It was a great chance to speak one-on-one with artists whose work some of us have loved and admired for years.



An unfired vitrigraph stringer panel 12" x 16" awaits a trip to the kiln by artist Mark Walnock of Armory Art Center.

An Educational Experience in All Things Glass

The main event started early Saturday morning. GlassQuest participants enjoyed an expansive and delicious breakfast spread from a local coffee house while Maureen James delivered the keynote address. Publisher of several glass art periodicals, she also serves as co-host of the excellent *Glass Expert Webinars* available through *Glass Patterns Quarterly*. Her talk was filled with encouragement, forward-thinking wisdom, and valuable practical advice such as how to submit work for publication.

Leslie Perlis shared her process for creating detailed mosaic and fused pieces. Much of her work features life-size people, including a few self-portraits. Using slides, she demonstrated her work in various stages of production. Perlis' dimensional pieces, many with kiln fired surface decoration, incorporate fused elements and even twisties and beads from another well-known artist, Heather Trimlett. Perlis described how she uses those components in colorful, intricate mosaic creations. Her newest endeavors are

based in whimsy and nostalgia by combining these mosaic compilations with vinyl records. The artist was both personable and generous with her knowledge, and attendees each received a copy of her book, *Dimensional Mosaics*, which she was happy to autograph.

The entertainment continued with Tony Glander, whose topic on "The Accidental Fuser" covered outside-the-box ideas and techniques such as putting landing gear and feet on fused bowls. He shared slides of his successes as well as some "learning moments" that most of us have experienced in our own kilns. Some of the most intriguing pieces used shattered tempered glass and molds, which most fusers would never think to use because of size, shape, or material. Glander kept everyone engaged with his humor and the encouragement to let loose and experiment, inspiring everyone to be willing to risk innovation.

Peter McGrain rounded out the morning with his beautiful examples of glass painting techniques, using slides of remarkable pieces from many artists, including his own as well as some very notable



historic figures. McGrain was genuinely excited and proud to share many pieces created by his students. He also described how glass painting has evolved over the last 1,000 years and how it continues to be a most effective and aesthetically pleasing medium for evoking emotion and awe.

Advances in Kiln Formed Glass

A working lunch was enhanced by keynote speaker Dawndae HK Hamilton, development manager for Bullseye Studio. Hamilton shared the history of Bullseye Glass and discussed many endeavors that have thrust the company to the forefront of the glass manufacturing industry worldwide. She also addressed the environmental concerns that have been very much in the news lately. Assurances were given that those have been corrected and that Bullseye is now one of the cleanest of any manufacturer in the Portland, Oregon, area.

“Art into Architecture” included information about the myriad possibilities to use kiln formed glass in large-scale works and installations. Many artists collaborate with the terrific team at Bullseye in Portland to execute their designs, with assistance ranging from tapping the team’s knowledge and expertise to renting time in the 10-by-4-foot kiln at the facility. Murmurs of, “We’re going to need a bigger kiln,” floated around the room. Luckily, Mike Glotfelty of Jen-Ken Kilns was on hand to provide information on available kiln sizes and which cutting-edge kiln products might be on the horizon.

Many attendees were thrilled to meet and talk with Lisa Vogt, some of whom had attended, by way of the Internet, her fantastic Webinar on glass sinks. Vogt’s presentation went far beyond sinks as she shared ways to create gallery level art. Composition quality was stressed, including color combinations, patterns, and textures. Once again, participants were encouraged to reach beyond their current level of expertise to experiment with multiple techniques, including abstract designs. The artist also shared numerous slides of her work, which is both impressive and inspiring.



(Clockwise from top left) Mark Walnock placing vitrigraph stringers during a live demonstration; Artist Craig McInnis talks with attendees during the vitrigraph stringer demonstration; Craig McInnis’ vitrigraph panel, approximately 12" x 16", before firing.



McMow Art Glass owner Phil Materio, along with Randy Wardell, gave a fascinating talk on Lost Clay Casting, which gives a result that is virtually the same as sand-casting or hot-glass casting without the expense and magnitude of a hot shop. Materio and Wardell also introduced participants to the Glass Tattoo Stencil System. Many attendees took the opportunity to try their hand at the technique at Randy and Carol Wardell's booth, where several products were available for purchase.

Addressing Ways to Promote Glass Art

Paramount in a lively moderated panel discussion between attendees and the featured presenters was the topic of introducing more young people to the wonders of glass art. How do we, as glass artists and enthusiasts, entice younger generations to join this growing and innovative community? This is an important quandary that we must work together to remedy. None of us wants to see our passion and livelihood dwindle or disappear.

The day wound down with a reception hosted by Habatat Galleries, where attendees and GlassQuest artists alike were mesmerized by the extraordinary array of glass art pieces on exhibit. The reception also provided another chance to talk individually with other attendees and the presenters.

Final Moments of a Rejuvenating Weekend

The final portion on Sunday included another keynote address over breakfast. Jenny Mesirow spoke impressively about making our collective voices heard in Washington, D.C., and urged the glass community to invite elected officials to partner with us in moving our glass art community and businesses forward, rather than causing harm or detriment such as we saw with glass production during 2016.

What participants took away from this weekend was how willing all the featured presenters were to share their knowledge and expertise with humility and a generous spirit. It was a wonderful weekend filled with fascinating people, beautiful artwork, and so much fun. Next year's conference promises to be all that and more. A special thanks goes to McMow Art Glass and Wardell Publications, in particular Taylor Materio, creative director at McMow Art Glass, for organizing the event.

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(Clockwise from top right) Bruce Helander's 12" x 16" vitriograph panel, his interpretation of the sea; Helander selecting stringers for the live demo; Peter McGrain sharing glass painting techniques with the audience including his own Vitri-Fusaille process.

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