



# KOBE

*International Lampwork Festa*  
*Japan, December 18th - 20th 2005*

Written BY JOHN KOBUKI





Just mentioning this country ignites the imagination. From the old romantic world of samurai, geishas, temples and monks to the modern

scene of bullet trains, anime, cell phones and sushi. It is all there. From the moment we arrived, we were treated with gracious hospitality.

The Lampwork Festa took place on Rokko Island, a man-made island in the harbor off Kobe. The event coincided with the Luminarie ceremonies that are held every year in commemoration of the earthquake that devastated Kobe 10 years ago. The city has since risen from the ashes and is one of Japan's most attractive and vibrant cities. It is also home to the Kobe Lampwork Glass Museum ([www.lampwork-museum.com](http://www.lampwork-museum.com)). The museum opened in July 2005 and has a beautiful collection from many international artists. The day before the event some of the artists got to tour the museum. All in attendance were blown away by the amazing work on display and the excellent treatment we received. Later that night was the welcoming dinner to kick off the event. All the participants were invited to enjoy their bento box (three trays of strange food), mingle and get to know each other. The director of the museum, Kyonobu Miyamoto stood proudly in front of everyone and spoke eloquently in Japanese for about five minutes. Of course I didn't understand a word of it but the translation was that he welcomed all the artists and said the event has been a dream of his and thanked everyone for making it possible. I think some sincerity was lost in translation, but his manner was clear.

The three-day event took place at the Kobe Fashion Mart, a building on Rokko Island that is connected by sky bridges to two hotels and the train station. The first day was reserved for vending and sales. The Festa took place on the main floor. It was a large open plaza with rows of tables for artists and vendors and in the middle stood a raised platform for demonstrations. The majority of the participants were Japanese artists with a few supply vendors and a fair share of American and other international artists. Soft glass beads seem







to be the most popular items on the tables. Borosilicate is a relatively new glass to Japanese artists, yet there was some amazing and advanced work in this medium. The glass that intrigued me most was the soft soft glass called Satake. The work I saw with this glass was incredibly detailed. It was not surprising to learn that some of the artists that use Satake are hungry to learn boro and are quickly picking it up. I think Josh Sable and I were the only exclusive marblemakers, and we both did well. What I didn't sell was traded and I came home with some very nice glass.

Later that night was the special collaboration show. Pairs of artists had 90 minutes to make something that was donated and auctioned off with all proceeds going to a Kobe earthquake fund. The demos were upstairs with two rows of raised tables across from each other with the middle area crowded with people. There was a lot of excitement in the room. DJ Bob and crew were spinning music. There was a buffet of normal looking food, and a mc introducing all the participants. The crowd stayed engaged as five pairs of artists performed around them in the first shift and six pairs in the second. Sable and I were in the second group. Hearing all the introductions of the participants and all the years of experience left me feeling like a rookie in the big leagues. I am honored to have participated in such a fantastic event and our demo was successful. There was a lot of good glass made that night and we had a lot of fun doing it.

The next two days were filled with demonstrations by more than 20 prominent Japanese, American and other international artists. The demos were in the collaboration area and in other event spaces on the floor. The technical vendors exhibited torches and tools on the same floor. There were some cool tools but most were the same as the US. Some of the torches were strange. There was a Japanese torch for satake glass that ran on air and propane. I had to buy one. There was also an oxygen-gas torch made by Kinoshita. They range in size and some have replaceable heads. They look like they would work for soft glass and I saw one melt a big rod of boro, but there is no substitute for the GTT triple mix. It was fun to hang out, watch some demos and bump into other artists. Some speak your language and some don't, but all have a common denominator of glass.





There was a dinner cruise on the second night of the event for the participants, organizers and friends. Everyone was bussed to the ship from Rokko Island and greeted by an all girl brass band whaling away in the cold before boarding. Big groups were seated around tables, filling the ship. Everyone was poured a glass of beer and toasts were made. A lot of conversations picture taking and good times. After the event on the third night some of the organizers and artists went to dinner at a Korean BBQ. I never ate so well in my life. The event was closing and everybody started to unwind a little bit. There were well-deserved applauses and cheers to all that put on the event and gratitude to all that participated. Loren Stump even announced that this was one of the finest events that he has been to. I can only agree.

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