

5th Annual International Flameworking Conference

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Reflecting on my recent adventure in Carney's Point a strange coincidence comes over me that I have my head in the clouds and am flying home from New Jersey at the same time. March 18th to the 20th of 2005 I was in attendance during the 5th Annual International Flameworking Conference at Salem Community College. This was my first time going and surely has been added to my ever growing list of yearly events worth traveling for. Hundreds of wonderful people were gathering together for the enjoyment of good conversation and the sharing of information. Networking is a good term but I like friend making better. My family of glass peoples expands constantly as I find like minded individuals who are pushing for the common good of the world of glass art. As an emerging artist I can't emphasize enough the many reasons that one might find beneficial in coming to the International Flameworking Conference.

First and foremost is the exposure to your fellow artists. Connecting individual personalities with examples of that person's art with the ability to openly communicate is priceless. Featured artist Sensei Iwao Matsushima gave an extremely detailed slide show and video presentation of his work and process of core formed glass. While listening to Sensei's choice of Weather Report we saw the step by step creation of a large core. Murrina and cane made of soft glass were applied and transformed into a beautiful bowl. He also included showing how much cold working was needed to complete his piece. It was quite amazing how time intensive the core formed process can be. The next day we were honored to witness the creation of a similar vessel in the Field House of Salem CC. Using propane and compressed air and burners similar to a venture style bunsen Matsushima finished a piece, that would at times take up to 6 hours, in an hour and a half.



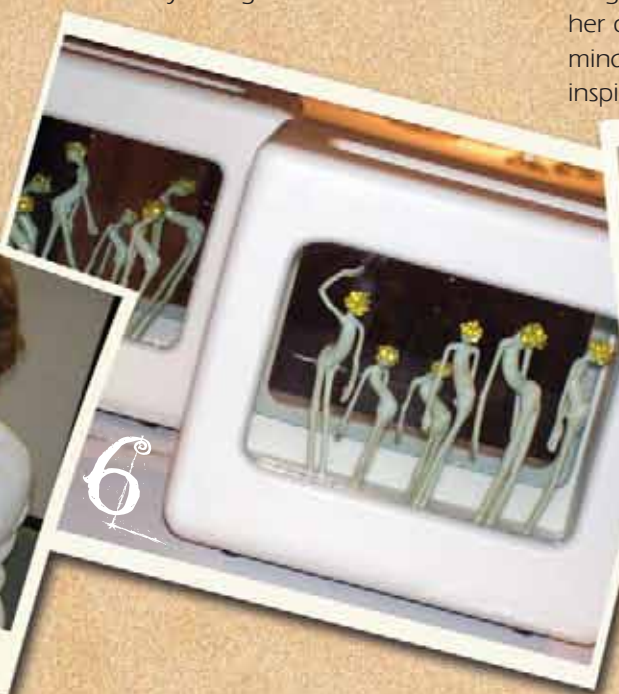
Also demonstrating on the 19th was Tim Drier and Helene Safire. Tim used a combination of hand spun and roller techniques to transform red ion borosilicate scallop tubing into a large decanter. With a background in scientific glass Tim moves fluently between the use of his tools, fire, and hands to create the desired shape of the vessel. Adding pre-made bit work such as handles accented his piece and helped enforce the knowledge of using flame annealing and heat control. Helene Safire created some flower pendants, primarily made in clear scallop boro. She manipulated the hollow form into the petals of a flower and added solid cane for decoration of the center and lip of the piece. There was ample coverage of the demos by video camera and sound so the audience could see detailed shots of the creation process for each and hear what the presenters had to say about their work or any commentary for that matter.

There was plenty of talk in the pre-conference seminar on the 18th. While moderator Shane Fero directed conversation, Ruth Snyderman, Larry Selman, and Amy Morgan discussed amongst the panel and with the audience the topic of "Developing a Relationship with a Gallery". Many good points were made including artistic integrity, marketing, pricing, and emphasis on gallery manners and morals, kept coming up in conversations for the rest of the weekend. A scholarly presentation by Dr. Jutta-Annette Page showed work of the lampworking industry from the Renaissance to early 20th Century. I smiled as I saw in her slide collection work from Italy I had the pleasure of seeing in person not to long ago. Pieces of such immense detail in composition that words can never accurately describe the work.

At the open house in Salem CC Glass Center on the 19th, an on the fly demo by Thomas Mueller-Litz was put together. He used a bench burner to create an encalmo montage vessel from Lauscha soft glass tubing. During and after his demonstration Salem students and conference attendees jumped on torches and tried new tools they had gotten from the Technical Display area.

A wonderful grouping of suppliers offered almost anything a flamemaker could want ranging from educational resources to torches, tools, and raw glass. Torchworkers wandered from table to table trying to convince themselves to just put away the credit card and everything would be okay. Later that evening a special dinner was held at Wheaton Village to honor Robert Mickelsen and Douglas Heller for their extraordinary contributions to Salem CC and the glass art community. I was able to indulge later in some South Jersey action when the locals cut a rug line dancing at the Holiday Inn bar.

Sunday came quickly as time often flies when your having fun. A demonstration in the Field House by Carmen Lozar kicked things into gear. Carmen shared a slideshow presentation of her portfolio and related subjects, giving us insight into her creative mind and inspiration.



This led into her demo using a Carlisle CC and clear borosilicate tubing to blow and sculpt a woman's dress that would be used in one of her mixed media pieces. A scholarly presentation by Paul Stankard titled "A Contemporary Glass Art Survey through the Workmanship of Certainty: A Flameworking Perspective", gave great proof of the immense impact torchworkers have made in the world of glass art.

Following lunch concurrent demonstrations by Rosita Walsh and Matt Eskuche captivated the audience as the end drew near. Others had the option to see Barry Lafler demonstrating latheworking in the Glass Center but I was planted in the Field House. Rosita created a hollow, soft glass mandrel wound vessel reminiscent of Egyptian core formed amphoras from times of old. Matt took prepared colored tubing and demonstrated different techniques of encalmo using borosilicate on a Carlisle CC burner. He made a multi banded sphere shape for the main bubble of the vessel, and connected to a pre-made hollow stem and freshly spun out encalmo blown foot. Relying on flame annealing control he went back and forth from top to bottom connecting parts. He finished while puntied to the foot and he flared the lip of the neck that was attached to the top of the sphere. Matt wanted to remind all the youngsters out there that friends don't let friends wig wag. An amazing presentation by Shane Fero about the Evolution of Flameworking in the 20th Century took us to the finish of the 2005 International Flameworking Conference. It was quite fitting if you ask me, being that Shane touched on very interesting topics such as roots of performance flameworking and the connection to our time now. The collection of slides shown during the presentation were by far some of the best material I have ever witnessed to support a given topic. Saying farewell as glass peoples flood out of the auditorium brings a smile to my face. Realizing how many new pals I have to talk glass, art, and life with. I'm thinking ahead to next year and the next opportunity to spend time in South Jersey with my glass family. Until then, fuel your fire, for the new renaissance draws closer.

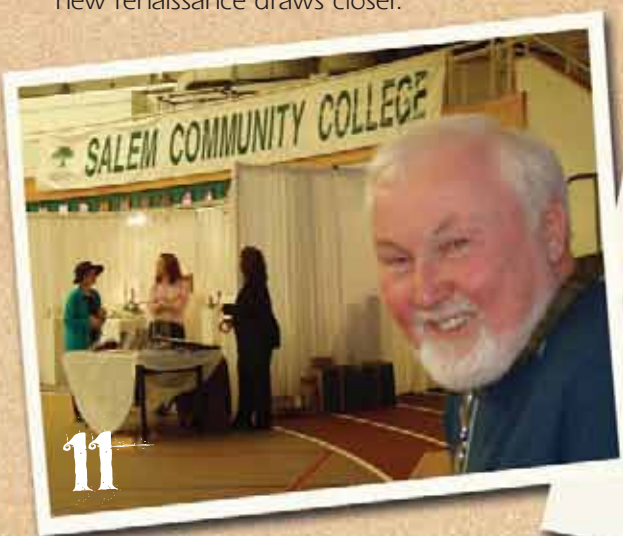


10

Guide to Photos

1: Mixed media artwork by Carmen Lozar. 2: Crowd watching demonstrations. 3: Sensei Iwao Matsushima creating a core formed vessel. 4: Tim Drier makes a red decanter. 5: Helene Safire demonstrates making flower pendants. 6: Jillian Molettieri's artwork. 7: Thomas Mueller-Litz demos. 8: Max Trainque traveling bead show. 9 & 10: Shane Fero's artwork. 11: Paul Stankard. 12: Rosita Walsh demos. 13: Matt Eskuche demonstrates encalmo techniques.

The 2006 conference is scheduled for March 17-19 with featured artist Ginny Ruffner.



11



12



13