

PAPERWEIGHTS

by Nancy Alfano

When was glass first made? This question has been debated among authorities for many years. Glass beads have been excavated from a cemetery of the Third Dynasty of UR (2450 B.C.) leading scientists and researchers to believe that glass had its origins in Asia Minor, most likely in Mesopotamia. In Roman times glass making was well established in Palestine, Syria, Sidon and Mesopotamia. There are strong indications that glass was in India during the time of the Singalese kings and evidence China was manufacturing glass as early as 550 B.C. Some noted historians believe that glass goes back as far as 7000B.C.

Glass has certainly been around for a very long time and found in various cultures. It is very likely that each culture made their own discovery and began forming the glass into bits and pieces and creating glass beads that became more valuable than money.

Somewhere between 100 B.C. and 100A.D. craftsmen learned how to blow glass and the earliest vessels were made. With this discovery glass articles slowly became available to more and more people. The world went through the Dark Ages, the Crusades and the fall of the Eastern Empire only to rise out to begin new achievements in the arts and the sciences. Glass manufacturing in Venice became a huge industry and as early as the 1200's a Guild system was in place. This Guild protected glass manufacturing and all the trade secrets. In 1291 the glass industry was moved to the Island of Murano where it could be closely controlled. There it thrived and grew in technical excellence in the capable hands of the Venetians. Two hundred years later the first millefiori paperweight was created with rods of colored canes. The name Millefiori comes from the Italian phrase a thousand flowers. Venetian glass soon became plentiful and they began exporting thus creating a source of revenue for the increasing powerful city-state.

In 1621 a book was published by a man named Neri in Florence and soon the craftsmen of the continent and England were reaping the benefits and taking glass making to new heights. Neri's book represents the first scientific study of glass making.



The Golden Age of Glass was definitely the nineteenth century. And this is where our interest begins as paperweight collectors. The finest paperweights were produced by the three major French Crystal Firms. The three crystal houses, two of which remain today, are the Cristalleries de Saint Louis, the Cristalleries de Baccarat and Clichy-la-Gavenne.

The Cristalleries de Saint Louis has four centuries of history and is located in the Lorraine region of eastern France. The Munzthal glassworks in the heart of the province, ancestor of Saint-Louis Crystal has existed since at least 1586, when it was first mentioned in written records. In the 1700's the Duchy of Lorraine once again became part of France and Louis XV named the Munzthal glassworks his Royal Glassworks and placed it under the protection of this patron saint, Saint Louis. The French Revolution was difficult time for the Saint Louis glassworks but they managed to remain avant-garde in style and design and technical progress. Their global reputation continues in the highest order.

It was in 1845 that Saint Louis created France's first crystal paperweight. The classical period, from 1845 -1860, saw Saint Louis create thousands of pieces that were close to perfection with arrangements of bouquet, flowers, fruits and multicolored canes. Some of these paperweights were faceted and some had pedestals. Toward the end of this class period one of the most talented of the glassworkers, Nickolas Lutz, who began working at Saint Louis at the age of ten, emigrated to the United States bringing all his talents with him and starting a strong American market.



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Upright Bouquet
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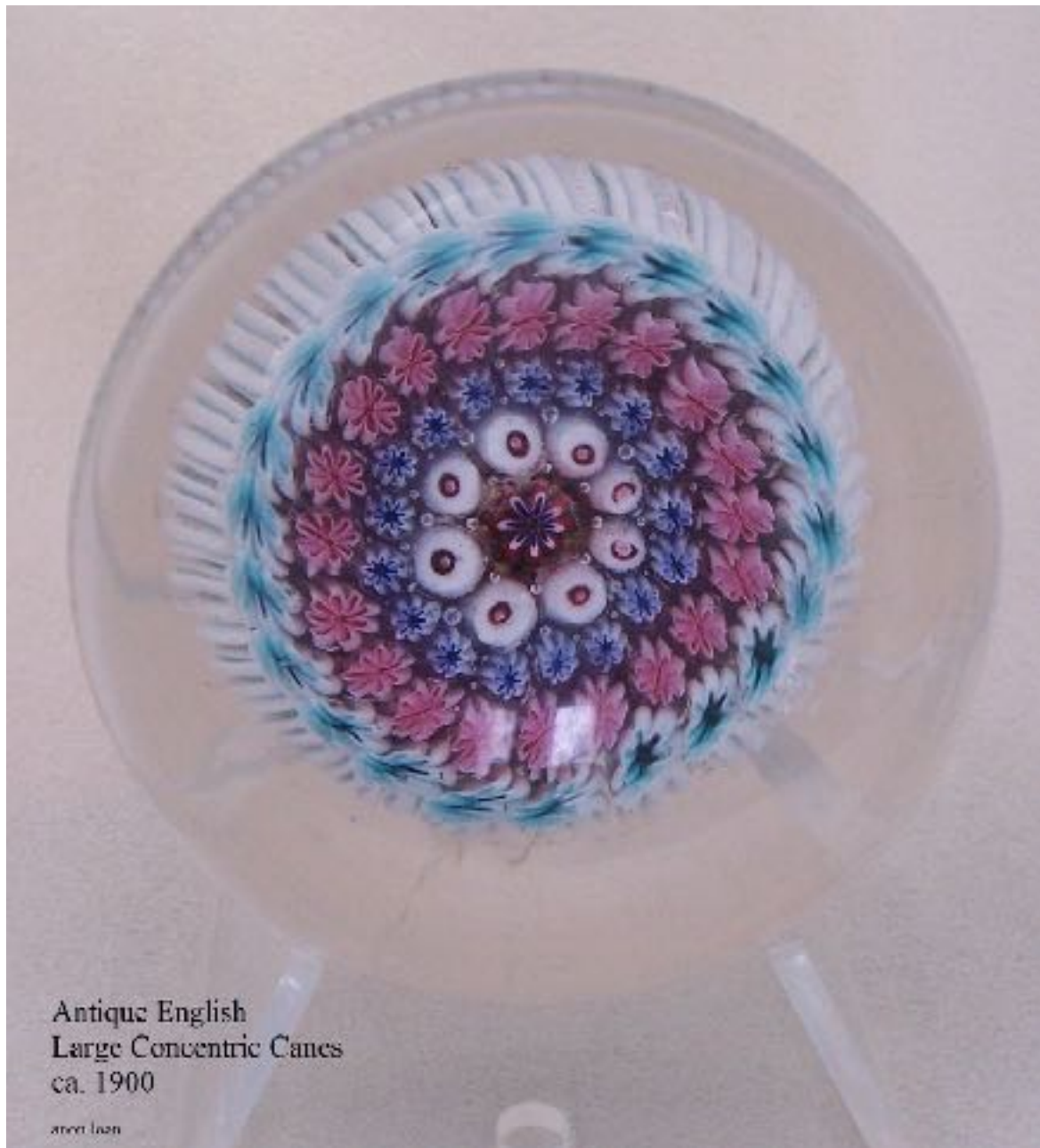
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The Cristalleries de Baccarat is located in the French town of Lorraine in the Vosges Mountains. The factory was founded in 1764, through a charter granted by Louis XV to Monseigneur de Montmorency-Laval, the Bishop of Metz. In the 1800s Baccarat was the leader in the manufacture of sulphides. These contained images for Napoleonic and Royal personages. One hundred years later the firm re-introduced the art of "cameo under glass" with a coronation paperweight portraying Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip. During the classic period, Baccarat created glorious paperweights with flowers, butterflies and snakes.



During a similar time period, many fine paperweights were made in England, primarily by George Bacchus & Son and Islington Glassworks. The English weights were larger than the French weights and done in the millefiori manner: namely rows of concentric canes and far fewer in numbers. These paperweights were not signed and the glassworks firms had poor bookkeeping, making research difficult. Had they only known how sought after their precious glass gems would become, they would have treated them differently.

In the United States early paperweight making was dominated by two glass factories; Boston & Sandwich and New England Glass Company. Their production period was mainly between 1850 –1880, and they were prolific. Most of the glass workers came from the glass houses of Europe during the huge waves of immigration. American paperweights would never be confused with antique French weights, but they are sought after by collectors for their charm and interest and their own style of beauty.



Antique English
Large Concentric Canes
ca. 1900

antique

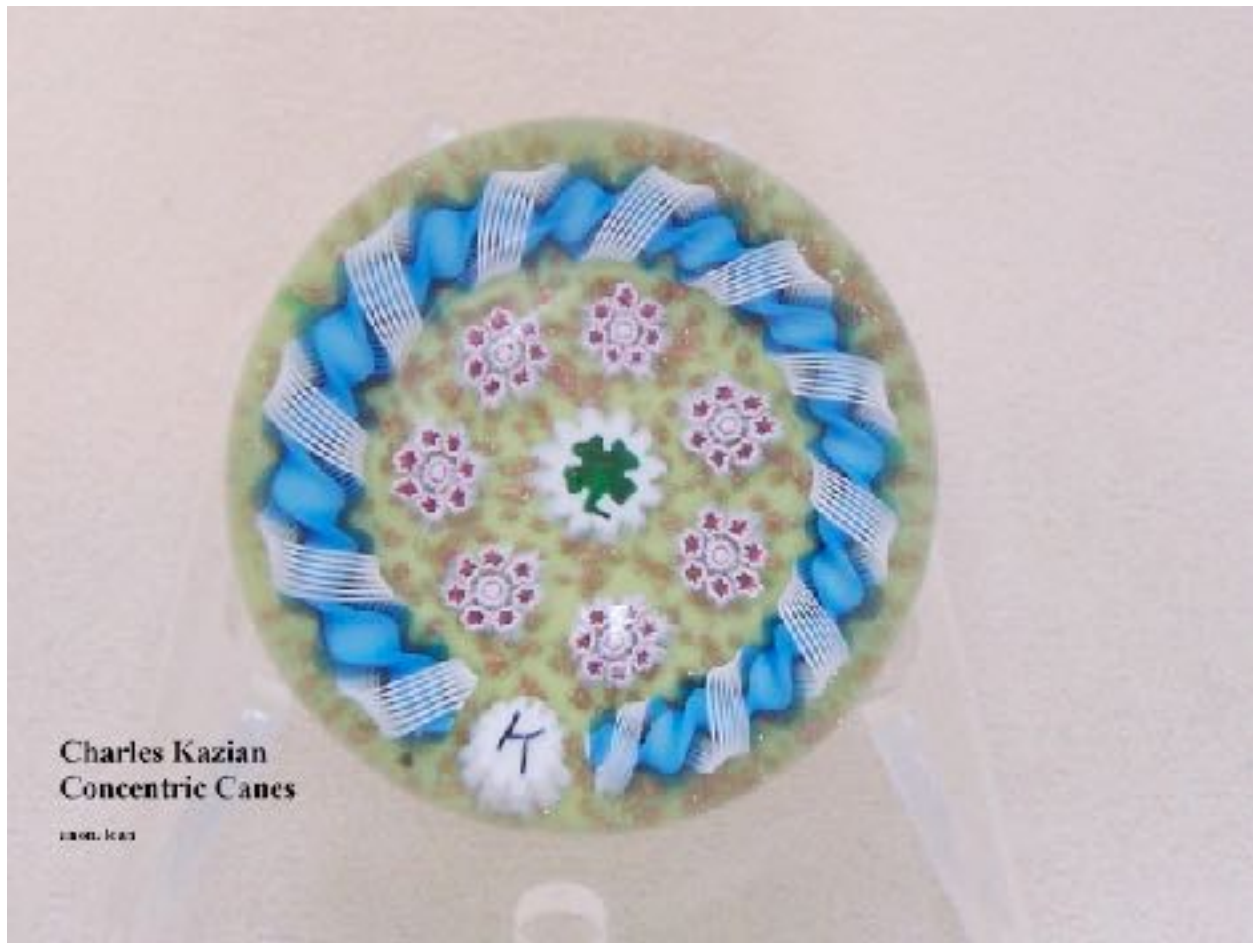
Paperweight making subsided first in Europe and then in the United States as the world became involved with World War I and the Great Depression and then World War II.

The SECOND MILLENNIUM came into being largely due to an American collector named Paul Jokelson. Mr. Jokelson was originally from Paris, France but lived in New York. He urged and encouraged the great French Glass houses of Baccarat and Saint Louis to once again make paperweights. To mark this renaissance, Saint Louis created the first modern crystal paperweights. The first of the many paperweights to follow was a sulphide, made in 1953, to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England. Baccarat began making beautiful lampwork and millefiori limited edition paperweights in the same time period. Both of these productions feed into an ever growing demand by collectors who appreciated the rare beauty of these exquisite little gems.



Not content with the re-emergence of French paperweights, Mr. Jokelson sought talented American glass artists and gave them his encouragement. He mentored many young glass artist. Paul Jokelson was the founder of the Paperweight Collectors Association, Inc. which has an international membership.

In the 1950s, it was two glass artists who were in the forefront of the paperweight revival. The leaders were Charles Kazian from Massachusetts and Paul Ysart from Scotland. Charles Kazian has been called the “Father of the American Paperweight Renaissance.” Mr. Kazian first meet Paul Jokelson in the early 1950s and Mr. Jokelson invited him to speak and present his work at many PCA conventions. One of the delights of Charles Kazian’s life as a glass artist was when one of his paperweights was mistaken for a Saint Louis paperweight and even Saint Louis said it was one of their better pieces except that oddly enough it had a signature cane in it, the famous "K".



Paul Ysart was born into a family of glassworkers in Barcelona, Spain in 1904. The family emigrated first to France and in 1915 to Scotland. Paul was apprenticed in that field and joined his father in working at a glassworks in Perth, Scotland. For many years he was the training officer at Caithness Glass and between 1971-1979 Paul Ysart had his own factory where he concentrated on paperweights. Ysart had a long and distinguished career that stretches from before the paperweight renaissance of the 20th century right into the midst of it. Paul's paperweights offer a wide variety of motifs including flowers, insects, birds, snakes, fish and millefiori. At the encouragement of Paul Jokelson, Paul Ysart paperweights have a signature cane.



Paul Ysart
Mid-Career work
1971-1979

In 1968 a Scottish gentleman named Stuart Drysdale, who had been fascinated with 19th century French paperweights took the best glassworkers from Strathearn Glass and formed Perthshire Paperweights in Crieff, Scotland. Stuart died in 1990 and his son Neil took over the firm.

Perthshire Paperweights is no longer with us, but they had a long and prosperous career. Many paperweight collectors began collecting by first acquiring a Perthshire paperweight.

Peter MacDougall was head designer at Perthshire and after they ceased production Peter continued the tradition making paperweights under his own name.



These pioneers in glass and especially in artistic paperweights opened up a whole new world for American artists. The most famous is artist, Paul Stankard who this year 2011 celebrates 50 years as a glass artist. American artists work in glass, not in the European factory tradition, but on their own terms, as independent, creative, and often ingenious artists working in their own studios.

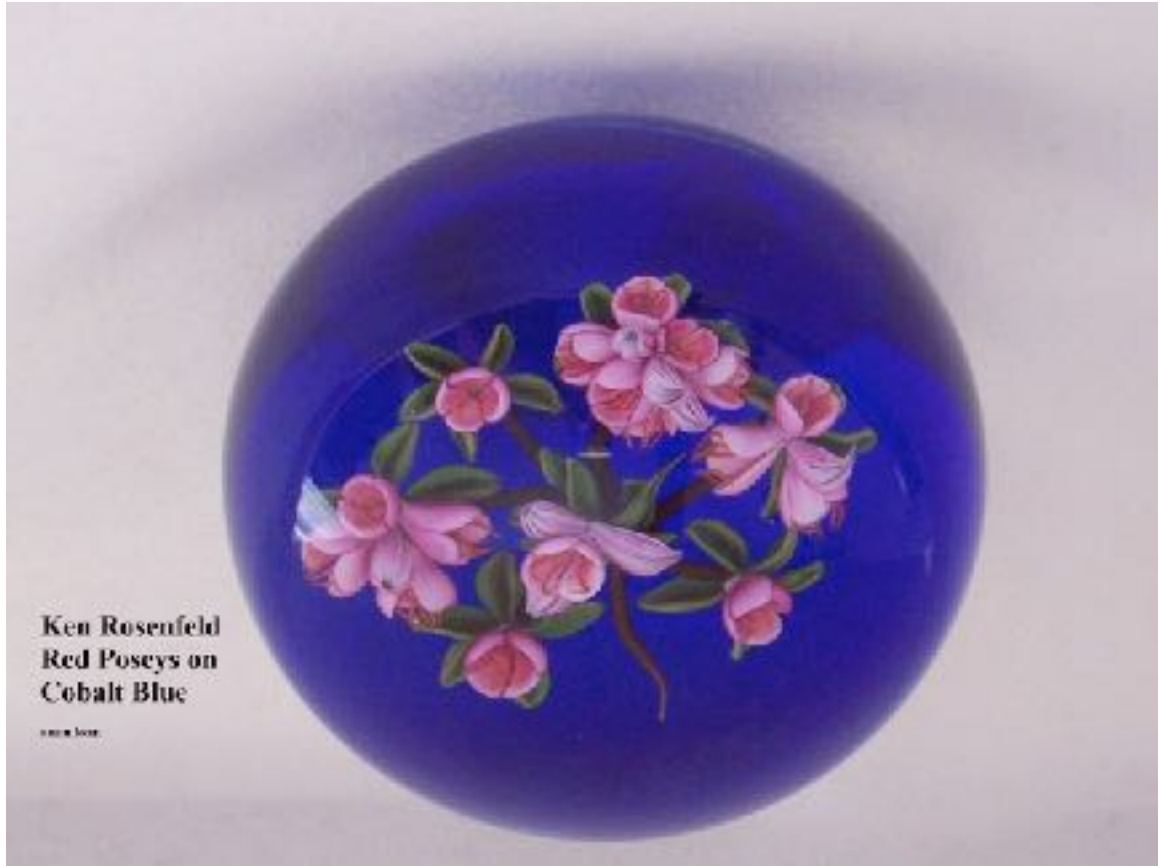


Many fine American artists are represented in this exhibit such as Ken Rosenfeld, known as the Master of Color, Mayauel Ward, a California artist known for beautiful bouquets, Rick Ayotte, the famous bird man, Victor Trabucco, whose work is so superior he has been chosen by our Government to create works of art as Ambassadorial gifts to other countries, and many others. In the true American Tradition we now have outstanding women in the field such as Debbie Tarsitano, who learned the art from her father Delmo Tarsitano, and Karen Federici, who took

class with Paul Stankard, and Cathy Richardson, who left her life as a PhD. in Geology to follow her dream and make exquisite environmental paperweights. The contemporary paperweight artist are creating art pieces that no one ever even dreamed of. And now we have two French artists, Richard Loesel and Micheal Hingant, that are setting the world on Fire. The future of Paperweight Collecting looks bright as young artists are learning to master this art form.



The beautiful work that these artists create is what stirs collectors to love and admire art and of course the fun of the hunt is always there.



Ken Rosenfeld
Red Poseys on
Cobalt Blue

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