

## Celebrating Designs Inspired by Venetian Glass Beads



*Carol Ann Savage, Canada, Garden Bouquet.  
First Place Winner.  
Photo by Colin Savage.*

*by Floor Kaspers, ISGB Director of Education*

The International Society of Glass Beadmakers (ISGB) recently released the winning entries in ISGB's first annual International Glass Bead Competition dedicated to the Art of Traditional Venetian Glass Beadmaking. The idea for this competition and exhibition came about during a talk that I had as education director of the ISGB with Alessia Fuga, glass artist and member of the Comitato per la Salvaguardia dell'Arte delle Perle di Vetro Veneziane (Committee for the Safeguarding of the Art of Venetian Glass Beads). I was visiting a solo exhibit by Alessia that was part of Venice Glass Week and found that we share a passion for the history but also the innovative art of glass beads.

The idea at first was as simple as suggesting various scenarios. What if we could have an international event that would showcase the tradition and heritage of Venetian glass beadmaking? What if we could collaborate between the ISGB and the committee? What if we could have international artists exhibit during Glass Week 2022? The committee reached out to the prestigious Murano Glass Museum, and they were excited to host this exhibit. A proposal to be an official part of Venice Glass Week was then put forward and accepted.

### **Producing Inspired Beads**

The main criteria for the beads was that the design needed to be inspired by Venetian techniques or Venetian beads. It was great to see how people took this criteria to heart. Artists started looking at antique Venetian beads for ideas or were inspired by memories of their own travels to Venice. Several of the artists had taken classes from Venetian glass artists before or already had been inspired by Venetian techniques and styles. Examples of the inspiration that the artists used for their beads were the traditional trade beads like the chevron beads or the millefiori beads, but also glass painting, cold working, the use of aventurine, and furnace work. Of course, beadmakers from Venice also applied. Artists were allowed to send in a single bead or a set of beads, but not finished jewelry.

The idea developed from there through Zoom calls, board meetings, emails, and WhatsApp messages into, what is today, an international competition inviting bead artists from around the world to send in their beads inspired by Venetian glass techniques or Venetian beads. The best 20 beads were selected to be exhibited during Venice Glass Week 2022.

## Judging an Impressive Collection of Entries

The judging, which was based on the images and the information that the artists put forward, was done by Bronwen Heilman, president of the ISGB; Tom Holland, Hall of Flame member of the ISGB; and Alessia Fuga, lampworker and beadmaker who is a member of the board of the Committee for the Safeguarding of the Art of Venetian Glass Beads. Since the judges did not know who entered which beads, the judging was done anonymously. The criteria on which they scored all of the entries were as follows:

- connection to traditional styles or techniques from Venice,
- overall quality of the beads,
- technique and skill shown,
- color use,
- attention to detail, and
- artist's description.

The judges were all impressed with the quality of the submissions, and they found the mission of scoring the beads to come up with the 20 finalists a very difficult task. We received 59 submissions from 16 countries on 4 continents. It was wonderful to see how truly international the competition had become. From those submissions, 20 finalists were chosen.



*Frank Miguletz, Germany,  
The Venetian Lexi Bead. Third Place winner  
and Public Choice Award.*



*Jodie McDougall, USA,  
Fortune Teller. Second Place winner.*



## Selecting the Final Award Winners

The beads were on display during Venice Glass Week 2022, with the opening on September 17. Judges from the committee and the ISGB judged the beads in person to choose the top three beads. Antonio Dei Rossi, Giovanni Sarpellon, Renata Ferrari, Salvatore Sito, Giovanni Nicola, and I had a difficult choice ahead of us as we carefully assessed each entry. There was also an option for the visitors of the exhibit to vote for a public choice award, and this garnered considerable excitement from the museum visitors. Over 700 people submitted their votes for their favorite bead!

The award ceremony for the winners of the First, Second, and Third Place winners and the Public Choice winner took place on September 24, 2022.

First Place: Carol Ann Savage, Canada, *The Garden Bouquet*

Second Place: Jodie McDougall, USA, *Fortune Teller*

Third Place: Frank Miguletz, Germany, *The Venetian Lexi Bead*

Public Choice: Frank Miguletz, Germany, *The Venetian Lexi Bead*

Several of the finalists from around the world visited Murano to see the exhibit and perhaps gained more inspiration from Venice. Congratulations to everyone who made this event a memorable one!

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Visit [www.isgb.org](http://www.isgb.org) to find more information on the International Society of Glass Beadmakers and how to become a member. For more information on the Committee for the Safeguarding of the Art of Venetian Glass Beads visit [www.arteperlevetro.org](http://www.arteperlevetro.org).



Ally Tsz-Yan Chan, Hong Kong, Fiori Blu. Finalist.



Mary Mullaney and Ralph Mossman, USA,  
Pride Chevron Bead. Finalist.



Virginia Wilson Toccalino, USA, Latticino and Zanfirico  
Filigree Blown Hollow Bead. Finalist.



Kristina Logan, USA,  
Ruby Red Floral Disc Bead. Finalist.

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