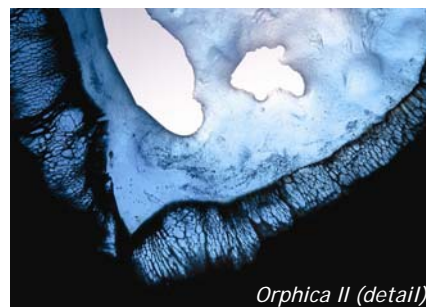


Glass Festival Wins Silver Tourism Award

A review of this summer's third festival by Chris Day & Keith Brocklehurst



Orphica II (detail)

The third International Festival of Glass has won a prestigious award for tourism picking up a Silver Award in the 'Best Tourism Experience' category at in the regional Excellence in Tourism Awards 2008. Festival Directors Janine Christley and Keith Brocklehurst (pictured) collected the award at Birmingham's International Convention Centre.



The festival drew a large national and international audience of around 15,000 into Stourbridge and the area to see glassmaking at its finest and once again, The Glasshouse was the centre of much of the activity over the August bank holiday weekend with events throughout the historic Glass Quarter. Here at The Glasshouse, where we had an Egyptian theme, there was even a Bedouin tent pitched on the car park in which a series of fascinating lectures were held.

The Glasshouse courtyard was transformed to reflect the Egyptian theme of the festival with a 'pyramid' in the central pool which became covered in dazzling colourful glass bottles painted by children and other visitors during the four day festival.



The International Sculpture Garden

A number of students took part in the festival in various ways from working in the kitchens, serving food and drinks at the various food outlets, to helping with the management and staging of performances, talks and workshops. A few

also worked with some of the on-site businesses demonstrating glass making and cutting techniques.

As part of the festival there were several world class exhibitions, including the prestigious British Glass Biennale, the International Sculpture Garden and a Bead exhibition based on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' along with demonstrations, performances and a range of interesting events. There was something for all ages; the festival

presented a multi-media, visually exciting and dynamic interpretation of all aspects of glass making from creative use of the material to recycling and beyond. Glass music, glass puppets, glass dresses, glass installations and talks about some fascinating glass-related topics such as the meteoric glass scarab found on one of Tutankhamun's necklaces and the history of Egyptian pharaoh, Akenaten's Glassmakers.

We were also captivated by the amazing skills of father and son glassmakers, Galal and Mohammed El Gendi who never seemed to stop producing hundreds of pieces of decorative glassware from their traditional Egyptian glass furnace which they built on site.



Galal El Gendi

The winner of the Biennale was chosen from work submitted by over 80 artists winning a prize of £8,000. Tracy Nicholls, of Kingston-upon-Thames, won the Award for her piece "Orphica I, II and III". She was presented with her award by Stourbridge Auctioneer, Will Farmer, Chairman of the Biennale judging panel and member of the BBC TV Antique Roadshow team of experts, at the launch of the exhibition.

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The Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London also awarded prizes to Bob Crooks for his free-blown 'Vertical Vase'. Runners up prize was awarded to James Lethbridge for his piece 'Serpentine Chandelier'. The Glass Sellers Student Award was given to Timothy Boswell for Fiesta and Steven Whitehill was runner up.

Carrie Fertig and Robyn Smith were equal winners of the People's Prize, awarded for the first time, which was announced at a special 'Jazz at the Biennale' event held to mark the conclusion of the exhibition at the end of September.

Among the many different attractions at The Glasshouse was a display called Sand To Glass created in the Hot Glass studio by Keith Brocklehurst with the help of some students using sand collected by people associated with Ruskin Mill Educational Trust from all around the world. Some of the resulting glass is bright turquoise in colour whilst other samples are almost jet black. The display is still available to see at The Glasshouse and it is planned to add even more examples of glass from elsewhere in the near future.

To cap it all there was a very successful Fun Auction on the final day and then, in the evening, the stunning finale in which a group of Sufi dancers and musicians from Egypt held a huge audience spellbound with a performance rarely seen outside Cairo.

With the forthcoming transformation of the Glasshouse site due to begin next year the format for the Festival in 2010 may be different. We shall have to wait and see.



Top to bottom: Bottle painting, Christian Schmidt glass engraving, Alan Ellismore in the lecture tent, the Student exhibition, browsing in the Glass Emporium, the pyramid of bottles, Diana East beadmaking, Biennale winner 2008, Tracy Nicholls



The Egyptian Sufi dancing Festival Finale