

Jewellery Art & Design

This is a e-newsletter about art, jewellery, design and the process of changing vocation. With personal observations of the pitfalls and joys that naturally follow.

This issue: **GLASS BEADS - TYPES and BRANDS**



Czech fire polished beads with Aurora Borealis shine, the closest I came to my mothers string.



Fulgurite, lightning glass



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Wonderful, whimsical glass beads

Let me start on a personal note so you can understand my excitement about glass and crystal jewellery:

Some of my earliest jewellery memories involved glass - so I'm very, very fond of glass. There was one long opera string of Bohemian faceted, faintly blue crystal beads - my mother's. I have no recollection of her wearing it, only my own excitement when playing with the heavy sparkling glass. The myriad of facets reflected life and light and I thought of them as diamonds.

Another glass necklace was given to me by my grandmothers good friend; a stylish french lady, who brought us gifts when she visited. Once I was the lucky recipient of a Venetian glass bead necklace; a lovely necklace, but far too sophisticated for my age. The beads are opaque and oval, with a kind of drawn millefiori in yellow, green, red and blue, with touches of black



and white held together by generous swirls of gold foil. The necklace was graded and most likely well sized for a child's neck; I remember I wore it proudly. But somewhere along the way through teenage-hood it must have lost its charm and got neglected, because when it surfaced in my adult life only 17 beads were left. Such a pity, but I plan to revive them now!

A long Bohemian glass rope of round emerald green beads was yet another happy glass memory predisposing me to appreciate glass jewellery today. No wonder I make one green bracelet after the other!



The history of **Glass** starts in nature

Glass is a mysterious translucent substance; but essentially it's super-heated (melted and fused) silica-sand and when a lightning strikes, blazingly hot in sandy soils it can actually turn the sand into natural glass. After cooling, glass-like hollow tubes (Fulgurites) can sometimes be found beneath the surface of the sand. (*Fulgur* - latin for thunderbolt.) Fulgurites occasionally show up in archaeological sites, but more common still and highly valued by prehistoric cultures is a natural glass called obsidian, a byproduct of volcanic eruptions. I like it, how glass was already priced by prehistoric societies for its shiny colours, sharp edges and workability.



Snow flake obsidian heart



Natural obsidian



Personal note: Glass versus stone

I'm drawn between natural shine and sparkle of glass beads and the attraction of pearls and semiprecious stones. All have their own ancient stories, and when seeing a glass bead I'm reminded of its utterly fascinating history.



Phoenician eye glass beads
Ca 6TH-2ND century BCE



Cone shaped glass beads
from Roman period



Roman Glass beads



Venetian trade beads
- my favourites

A rough picture of the History of Glass Beads - so you can share my fascination.

Beads are probably the oldest glass products in the history of glass making, going back much more than 3000 years, to Mesopotamia and Egypt. Some of the oldest glass beads were made in ancient Egypt as faience beads with a glassy surface. The Egyptians made glass imitations of precious stones, such as the highly desired lapis lazuli and turquoise. They were also the first culture to organise glass-making guilds.

The ancient seafaring Phoenicians

brought precious goods, including [beads](#) across the Mediterranean sea. The glass beads were a novelty and knowledge of glass making soon spread to Europe. But it was the Roman Empire that sparked the great global trade in glass beads.



During the period from 100 BCE to 400 CE an extensive glass industry developed throughout the Empire with glass beads as the major product. Factories blossomed from the Syrian deserts to the banks of the Rhine and trading routes carried glass beads through the Empire and beyond: Roman glass beads have been found in China, Scandinavia, and Central Africa.

By the time of the Roman decline,

the global desire for glass beads had been firmly established and two important glass centres from Roman time Venice and Bohemia, now Czech Republic, are still famous for their glass and beads. After the collapse of the Roman empire production in Bohemia stagnated for some time. Although several small factories in Bohemia made rosary beads the major Czech glass industry wasn't to be founded until the 1550's with the new production of trade beads.



The Venetian glass factories

developed more quickly but were highly regulated. In 1271 the first guild was introduced: The glass makers were under the strict authority and protection of the Venetian Republic; their formulas highly valued and kept secret and handed down from father to son. In 1291, to prevent the risk of fire, all the furnaces of Venice were moved to the island of Murano.

This isolation intensified the secrecy

and left the glassmakers less than free and in 1295 another harsh rule was imposed: Venetian glass makers were forbidden to emigrate! For years the artisans were virtual prisoners to the small island and their craft. But the rigorous rules resulted in expert and innovative artisans; now highly skilled glass-blowers with a specialised and exclusive production of glassware.



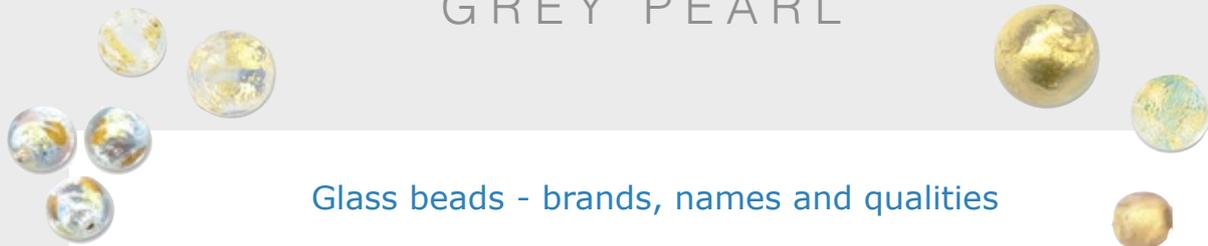
At the end of the fifteenth century

glass beads again become popular with traders, now as currency for merchant ships who exchanged beads for gold, slaves, ivory, and palm oil on the coast of West Africa. These "African Trading Beads" were not made in Africa, but in Bohemia, Holland and Venice. At one time in Venice there were more than 250 firms making beads. By the 18th century, the weekly output of Venetian factories was more than twenty tons of finished beads.

Millions of beads were traded to Africa and the Americas over the next centuries. By 1800, European bead makers were producing a huge variety of designs specifically for the [African trade](#), such as millefiori, chevrons, striped melons, feather, and eye beads.



Bohemia and Venice have been fierce competitors for centuries but have found separate niches today; Czech glass from Bohemia represents the best of factory-made glass beads on the market while Murano-glass from Venice stands for handmade excellence be it glass objects or beads.



ABOUT:

I'm Tittin Rinde, Norwegian visual artist/designer living in France, educated in Norway at KHiO, Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Textile designer by degree, visual artist by practise, visual communicator by experience and creative thinker by nature.

Writing keeps it all together.

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This must be the Swarovski company motto!
All cartoons by [HUGH MACLEOD](#)

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Glass beads - brands, names and qualities

Many of my bracelets are made with glass-beads, cut crystal and pressed beads - which brings me to the confusing world of glass brands, techniques, descriptions and price levels. I'm just putting a catalog together where I refer to [Murano](#) glass, Czech glass and [Swarovski](#). There are many, many more glass-bead types around, but these three terms show up in my catalog a lot, so I'll start by introducing them.



Murano glass beads are all about skills, time and costly materials. They are beautiful and expensive. Each bead is individually created; the techniques are the same now as 700 years ago. One single of the green beads, right, is priced at 9,-€ and a 2-4 cm heart can range from 4-40 euros, depending on size and type. Expertise, glass of excellent quality and extensive use of gold and silver foil explains the price. The bead-types are often named for the type of glass, the technique, or simply inspiration: Fiori, Ca d'oro Millefiori, Sommerso, are some.



Preciosa is the brand name of a Czech glass company registered in Bohemia in 1915, making precision-cut crystal glass and beads. **Preciosa Ornela**, Jablonec, produces a wide selection of high quality glass beads sold under the label **Preciosa Genuine Czech Beads**; among others, fire polished faceted beads. **Fire polished beads** are pressed glass, machine faceted and heat polished, which means the sharp cuts are softened somewhat. They have a rich sparkle and come in a good selection of colours, sizes and finishes, like aurora borealis (AB). Preciosa's machine cut crystal beads brand is called 'Preciosa MC crystal beads'.



Swarovski crystals - the Austrian brand of precision-cut crystal glass founded by Daniel Swarovski (from Bohemia). At first the cutting and faceting was done by hand. Then in 1892 Daniel Swarovski patented a crystal cutting machine and started manufacturing crystal in 1895. First in 1977, did Swarovski enter the jewelry and fashion market. Swarovski crystal, made in Austria, is the world leader in quality of crystal beads. Swarovski present a unique variety of precision cuts and have an unparalleled colour palette and above all, marketing.



Crystal is glass which contains a certain amount of lead. Leaded glass was first made in the late 1600s. The lead content, shape and number of facets are giving crystal its brilliance.

Under the heading 'Colour my Day' I'm launching a collection of bracelets: Follow the **Rainbow**. These are elastic bracelets made with faceted glass or crystal beads. They come in fire polished **Preciosa** faceted beads and the **Swarovski** crystal beads. The colours of the rainbow set the palette.



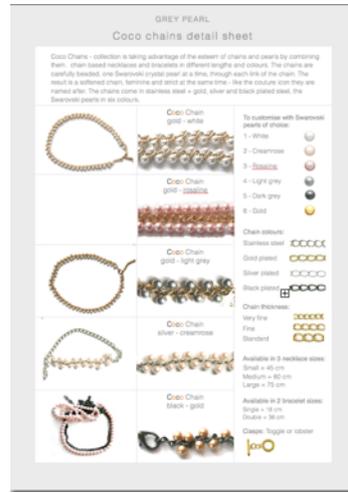
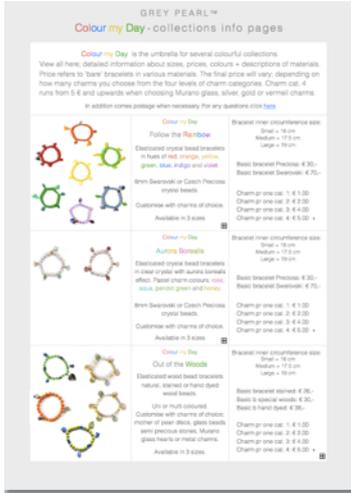
No excuse any longer, even for a minute, to think that glass jewellery is a substitute for something more prestigious. Glass has its own value and character.

Very best creative wishes from Tittin @ GREY PEARL!

GREY PEARL

News page

I'm happy to announce that some catalogs are ready!
These are just random page previews of the catalogs I will send you on request
- click on the links to order catalog PDF's



Colour my Day is the key words for several collections of colourful bracelets.

These are everyday bracelets of glass, crystal or wood beads; bright and cheerful materials. Easy to wear and easy to change, that's why they are strung on elastic cord. Use them single or in stacks.

These bracelets are for your eyes to enjoy on your wrist. I make them because I believe colours are uplifting and good for you!

Follow the **Rainbow** - glass/crystal
Aurora Borealis- crystal
Birds on a **String** - glass
Out of the **Woods** - wood
Hold that **Thought!** - wood

Catalog click [here](#)
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Coco chains collection is making the most of chains and pearls by combining them.

The chains are carefully beaded, one Swarovski pearl at a time, through each link of the chain.

The result is a softened chain, feminine and strict at the same time - like the couture icon they are named after.

Chain-based necklaces and bracelets that come in different lengths, thickness and colours.

The chains come in stainless steel + gold, silver and black plated steel, the Swarovski pearls in six colours.

To order Coco Chains catalog click [here](#).

I'm also selling a few prototypes, mainly necklaces, if you're curious click [here](#) for photos and info.

All catalogs are PDF files sent to you by email

