

Beads from Jablonec: A History in Beads.

Floor Kaspers. Marblings Publishing, Amsterdam. 2014. 115 pp., 133 color figs. ISBN: 9789-49131-1024. \$27.00 US (paper cover), \$37.00 US (hard cover). Also available as a free PDF download.

Floor Kaspers has already produced two small books (17 cm square) on beads. One takes the reader on a visit to the famous annual bead show at Tucson, Arizona; the other on a visit to Briare in north-central France. On the bead trail, we now get a visit to Jablonec nad Nisou, the Czech beadmaking city formerly known by the German name Gablonz.

The first part of the book covers the early glassmaking period, 1550-1750. The next period of glassmaking (1750-1918) includes discussions of molded beads along with the equipment used, faceted beads including "Russian" beads, followed by an architectural digression on the town of Jablonec and the glassmakers, especially the Riedel family. Also discussed are special beads such as those of uranium glass, special shapes for overseas markets, "Hubbell beads," and Swarovski glass. During the 1918-1945 period, Jablonec craftspeople made a wide variety of beads and other jewelry, some of it influenced by Oriental and Egyptian styles.



The war years saw Jablonec under German occupation which involved Sudeten Germans taking over beadmaking from the pre-1938 Czech population. After the war, the Czech majority expelled most of the Germans in a reaction against the Nazi occupation. This meant that many beadmakers left the area and bead and bijouterie production diminished sharply. The post-war period is hard to disentangle, as accounts are colored by political bias. Five industries evolved into a new grouping under the name of Jablonec

Bijouterie. This evolved into the state company Jablonex, later taken over by Preciosa. Beads and jewelry continued in production with cheap labor provided by prison inmates. After the Communists lost power in Czechoslovakia in 1989, production continued through private enterprise, but lost ground to India and China. Kaspers' historical narrative derives from a number of sources which are meticulously noted in the Notes and Bibliography at the end of the book.

Bead illustrations form a major part of the pictorial copy which range from sample cards though equipment for bead manufacture and work places, to examples of different sorts of beads, and even dumps where discarded beads lie in colorful spread. As with Kaspers' other books, there is a variety of local scenery as well as a goodly number of purely bead images, including a glassblower on page 12 and another on page 103, as well as numerous shots of factories and miscellaneous architectural features that provide a sense of visiting the town as a whole, rather than focusing solely on beads and bead production. The illustrations range from full-page to smaller ones at four to a page. Many have a caption or other ways of identifying the subject. When a caption is absent, it can be sorely missed.

The Contents page comprehensively lists the subjects covered under five subdivided headings, making it easy to find the way about. It would, however, have been an improvement if page numbers had been added to the subject headings. This lack may have arisen from the way the Blurb self-publishing platform seems to process the copy that it works from, which appears to be a direct printout, with no scope for editing the copy or the pagination. This means, for example, that on page 110, the entry for "Francis, Peter" has got the entry for "Hannich, Wilhelm" stuck on seamlessly, and the entry for "Kaspers, Floor" is split up, ending two pages later. There are several typos which might have been avoided if the production method had allowed for an extra proofreading. The four-page bibliography includes Waltraud Neuirth's bilingual book on *Beads from Gablonz* (1994); it would have been useful to include the version published in *Beads* 23 (2011). The bibliography shows that there is already plenty of published material concerning Jablonec; this little book is a delightful addition to the whole.

The book is available in both a hard- and soft-cover version, as well as a free PDF download: <https://beadmuseum.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/beadsfromjablonec.pdf>.

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