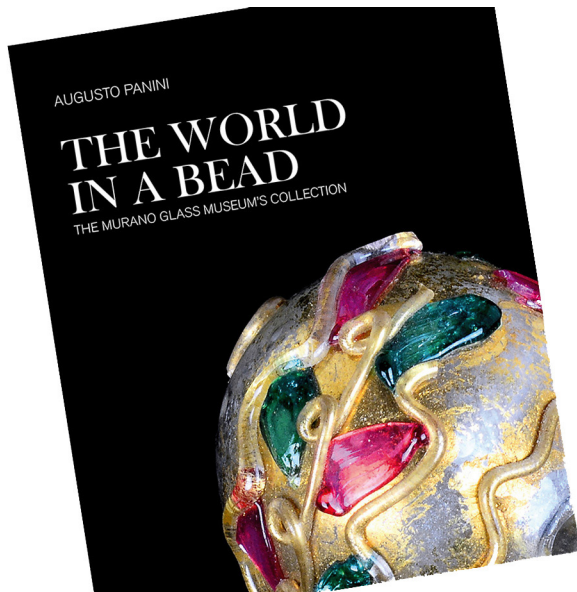


BOOK REVIEWS

The World in a Bead: The Murano Glass Museum's Collection.

Augusto Panini. Antiga Edizioni, Crocetta del Montello (Treviso), Italy. 2017. 376 pp., 677 color figs., glossary. ISBN 978-88-99657-90-1. €39.00 (paper cover).

This handsome, large-format book is – above all – a visual tribute to the innovativeness, artistry, and craftsmanship of Venetian beadmakers. The book is richly illustrated with excellent color images, many in full-page size, which reveal the wide range of bead manufacturing types, decorative styles, and forms that poured out of Venice by the ton during the 19th century.



The Introduction provides a very brief history of the Murano Glass Museum which was founded in 1861, and summarizes its holdings of beads which include individual specimens, bunches, and sample cards. Since an early inventory of the collection was lost in 1912, the author had to do an extensive literature search to provide information concerning the attribution and dating of the specimens illustrated in this book. The section concludes with a discussion of rosetta (star or chevron) beads and why they are all but absent in the sample cards.

The second section (Venetian Beads) lightly touches on the different techniques used to produce glass beads. This is followed by Sample Cards and Bunches of Beads which comprises over half the book and provides an extensive pictorial catalog of the beads – mostly in bunches as offered for sale and on sample cards – made by the following companies: Giovanni Battista Franchini and Giacomo Franchini, Società Fabbriche Unite, Arbib, De Prà Bortolo, Dal Negro & Comp., and Giorgio Benedetto Barbaria.

The pictorial catalog continues in the next two substantial sections which illustrate beads that were primarily intended for the European (pp. 223-251) and the African (pp. 252-303) trade, respectively. The beads are arranged principally on the basis of their decorative style. While the different categories are in English in the table of contents, they are in Italian in the image section causing a bit of confusion, at least initially. One also wonders about the translation of some of the terms; e.g., *vetro filato* (pp. 224-226) is translated as mother-of-pearl but satin glass is what is shown, and a *pettine* (pp. 236-237) should be “combed,” not “feathered” which is the translation for *piumate* (p. 244).

There follow three “Files” which present data on the beads and cards depicted in the three catalog sections discussed above. This includes brief descriptions, type of manufacture, dating, museum inventory numbers, measurements, and notes. One minor error that was noted concerns bead no. 231 in the Europe Beads section which is described as lampworked but is clearly a faceted drawn cane bead. Furthermore, it is doubtful that this bead is a Venetian product as such faceted beads were a staple of the Bohemian bead industry.

A Glossary and Bibliography conclude the volume. The former is well intentioned but is of relatively little use as the definitions often duplicate the term; e.g., “Bead with alphabet letters or figures” is defined as “lamp bead decorated with alphabetic letters and figures” while “Bead with figures” is defined as “lamp bead decorated with figures.” There are several such instances. The terms “Feather bead” and “Fenicia bead” are referred to each other but *fenecia* is not used in the pictorial catalog; *piumate* is, as mentioned above, but does not appear in the glossary. The definition of “Mother of Pearl bead” clearly indicates that “Satin bead” would be the correct term.

Despite these minor problems, *The World in a Bead* provides a beautiful and useful inventory of the glass beads produced by a number of 19th-century Venetian companies and will be of interest not only to collectors and archaeologists, but basically anyone interested in beads.

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Wild Beads of Africa.

Billy Steinberg (editor) and Jamey Allen (text). Privately published, Los Angeles. 2017. 216 pp., 180 color plates, glossary. ISBN: 978-0-692-90710-8. \$65 (hardcover). Order from: <https://www.wildbeadsafrica.com>

Wild Beads of Africa, by renowned songwriter and bead collector Billy Steinberg, is the first book on the subject of old African powder-glass beads. With comments and editing by Mr. Steinberg, text and glossary by noted bead historian Jamey Allen, and stunning photography by Fredrik Nilsen, we learn much of the history of these beads, yet with an astute awareness of their art and mystery.

Why “Wild” beads, you might ask? The phrase “Wild Beads” resembles “Wild Beasts,” or “*les Fauves*” in French, referring to the early-20th-century Fauvist art movement. Those artists, including Henri Matisse and Andre Derain, emphasized painterly qualities and strong colors. Steinberg sees some of the same vitality in that genre of artwork as on the African beads discussed in *Wild Beads of Africa*.

After the forward by John and Ruth Picard, Allen gives an informative history. He explains numerous points, first defining bead names. Among the Krobo people in Ghana, any large, desirable bead is called *kpo*, which translates in old English as “locket” from a time when the British referred to pendants as “lockets.” Allen then explains how names like *Bodom* and *Akoso* have been popularized in recent decades and used primarily by collectors and not the African people themselves.

Next, the high regard for these beads in Africa is explained – they have a mythical sort of esteem. Some believe that these beads have spirits and will reproduce in



the ground if buried! There is also an informative history of glass and glass beadmaking with a specific section on the production of powder-glass beads. Allen explains that it was not invented in Africa, but that the technique was practiced in antiquity in western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. It is believed that the West African powder-glass beadmaking industry is only about two centuries old. We learn about the various glass materials used for powder-glass beadmaking in Mauritania, Ghana, and Nigeria. It is noted that a similar industry existed in South Africa that may pre-date production in West Africa.

Probable inspirations for the West African powder-glass industry are observed: both ancient glass beads from the post-Roman and Islamic periods, as well as modern glass trade beads from 19th-century Venice. We can see these influences in both antique powder-glass beads as well as the recent versions still being made. There is a thorough discussion of the construction of the old beads vs. the newly made ones.

The specific glass used in production is discussed, as well as the construction techniques. It is evident that a thorough study has been made of the specimens in the Steinberg collection, showing much innovative re-use of Venetian glass beads and bead parts. Since the “raw material” glass used in making most of the beads is Italian beads from the mid-19th century onward, it is believed that this is the same general time frame for the earliest powder-glass beads.

A helpful chart of twelve typical bead shapes appears after the opening history and before the three segments