

A TOUCH OF GLASS

Newsletter of the Creative Glass Guild of Queensland December 2016 Edition

What a wonderful year we've had at the Guild, with plenty of activities to keep us all busy and involved.

Once again, our classes and workshops have been very popular, and we have welcomed a number of new members to the Guild family.

If you, friends or family members are interested in trying something new next year, leave your 'Expression of Interest' on our website for one of the fantastic courses on offer, which will start around the first week of February.

Gift vouchers are the go

If your 'significant other' is scratching their head over what to buy you for Christmas, how about throwing out a few hints for a Creative Glass Guild gift voucher. They can be purchased online and paid for by secure electronic funds transfer... glass, courses, accessories. That's Christmas solved!

We had a good rollup for our annual Christmas Party, where members and partners were able to get together to share good tidings for the Festive Season. A pictorial roundup of the festivities can be found on page 8.

Other special dates coming up in December include 'Get Ready for Christmas' Members' Project Day on **Sunday 11th**, our final Monday Members' Projects Day on **Monday 12th**, and our last Saturday Shop and Members' Project Day on **Saturday 17th**.

We've also been busy behind the scenes, completing various electrical safety tasks such as improving our upstairs lighting, installing easy-to-see exit signs that glow in the dark, and creating new electrical points in the



upstairs workshop to eliminate the use of extension cords crossing the floor.

We have a number of volunteer activities coming up early in 2017. Benchtop sanding and painting will take place at Red Hill sometime during the week of 9th January. Let us know if you can help!

We are also seeking volunteers for our annual stocktake on Saturday 14th January. Please come along and help out for an hour or two with this important job, which is a lot more streamlined than previously!

Look out next year for more changes, including the implementation of new Members' Cards, and the removal of volunteer and committee discounts.

Finally, I wish all members, friends and family a very happy Christmas, and may 2017 bring you all the good things you deserve.

All the best, Lyndall

An Italian mosaic journey

Di Holland, Kate Ritchie and I (Chris) had been planning this trip for a long time, so it was hard to believe we were finally attending the Scuola Mosaico (Mosaic Art School) in Ravenna, Italy, to take a mosaic class with world-renowned teacher and mosaicist, Luciana Notturni.

We arrived in Ravenna on September 18, and imagine our surprise to find that of the nine students on the course, five of us were from Australia. There were also students from Iceland, Croatia and Sweden.



Kate Ritchie learns to use the traditional tile cutting tools, the Hammer and Hardie.

Located east of Bologna, Ravenna is known for the colourful mosaics adorning many of its central buildings, like the octagonal Basilica di San Vitale, the 6th-century Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo and the cross-shaped Mausoleo di Galla Placidia.

Back to the class - on Day 1, we had to choose a design for our reproduction piece, and the construction method was to be double reverse.

There were plenty of designs to choose from. All were ancient mosaics made using the traditional methods and materials.

In preparation, we went through some theory, then drew up our patterns on tracing paper and transferred them onto a hydrated lime base so that we could get straight into making our mosaic on Day 2.

One of the more challenging lessons was learning to use a Hammer and Hardie which are traditional cutting tools.

Day 2 was about getting the contour lines of our designs completed, so we could fill them in. This was a real challenge as we were using granite, marble and Smalti, all media we had not used before.

Add to that, we were using the Hammer and Hardie to cut them, but there was lots of help with tutors walking the room to assist, and we all made good progress.

On Day 3 we all worked hard to finish our mosaics. The next step was to glue a piece of muslin on



Our host and teacher, Luciana Notturni, made us feel at home in our class in the beautiful Italian city of Ravenna.

top of our mosaics using glue made by boiling up rabbit bones. This was left to dry. (Perhaps the rest of the rabbit became someone's evening dinner!)

Our second project, on Day 4, saw us working on a freestyle mosaic using the direct method.

I decided to make an Italian balcony festooned with flowers, Kate made an olive branch and Di challenged herself by creating a human eye.

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General meetings: Bi-monthly on first Monday of the month at 7.30 pm (Notice will be emailed to members).

Management Meetings: Alternate months or earlier if required

Italian Mosaic Journey cont...

These were all made by pressing our chosen medium directly into a concrete mix sitting in a frame.

On this day, we also removed our reproduction mosaics out of the bed of hydrated lime and cleaned them up. The glued muslin did a great job of holding each mosaic together as we scraped the lime off the rear of our pieces. We then carefully placed them into a wooden frame filled with a moist concrete mix and left them to set.

Day 5 was my birthday and Luciana very kindly arranged for champagne and cakes for morning tea. I felt very special. We finished off our projects and the afternoon was devoted to a tour of historic sites in the town.



Chris, Di and Kate join their class group for a traditional meal and vino in the town square of Ravenna, where colourful mosaics adorn many of the buildings.

We were very sad to say goodbye to our fellow students and our

tutors at the end of the day. We had become friends in a short period of time.



Above and below: Classes involved the creation of ancient and freestyle mosaics. Chris's piece above featured an Italian balcony festooned with flowers.

Ravenna is a UNESCO world heritage site because of all the historic mosaics located within the town.

As an interesting aside, songwriter Cole Porter was so inspired by the night sky mosaic with its 900 glittering stars in Ravenna's Mausoleum that he wrote his famous song, Night and Day.

Importantly, there is a gelateria on every corner of the town, and we managed to work our way through many flavours.

The streets are busy in the evening with everyone out for appetivo (drinks and snacks) from 6pm and a meal from 7.30pm. We enjoyed evenings with our class members in the eateries in the town's Piazza.

We can recommend a visit to this part of the world to everyone. If you get the opportunity to take a class, do it! You won't regret it 😊



Making ends meet - a beadmaker's story

For those who don't know the process, beads are made using rods of glass that are about the thickness of a drinking straw and approximately 33cm long.

The tip is melted in a flame and wound around a metal stick that looks a bit like a piece of spaghetti. When the rod is removed, it leaves a hole through which the bead can be strung into a necklace or whatever.

As you can imagine, considerable heat is needed to melt the glass which isn't a problem when the rod is long, but the more you use up, the closer your fingers get to the flame, and there comes a point where it becomes too short to use comfortably, leaving you with one of those small, problem bits.

Rods ends are like that bit of soap left when the cake is almost finished. You can't bring yourself to throw it away, but you don't quite know what to do with it either.

You only have to look at the benches of bead makers on YouTube to see that almost every beadmaker has a collection of ends lying around. If you look in the bead studio at the Guild, you will find a neat row of boxes of ends, all carefully sorted by colour, waiting to be used. There are some suggestions on the internet, the main one being "make frit". For the uninitiated, frit is crushed glass, like breadcrumb crumbs, that a molten bead is



Long term member and beadmaker Irene Krieger suggests some cunning ways to optimise the use of glass rod ends so you're not left with all those problem 'bits'. Here's her story...

rolled in to pick up speckles of colour. That's a good idea, but a tiny bit of frit goes a long way (it is sold in 25 gram bags which will give you an idea of how little is used) - and how much frit does a person need?

It is possible to melt the ends of the rods and touch them together to join them. A lot of beadmakers save up their ends and make a new rod out of the bits to cut down on wastage. Of course this works, but there is a downside.

With the best will in the world, no matter what your experience level, it is not possible to make an even join, and the end result is rods that are far from smooth.

I have now come up with a way of working with the rods so that I no longer find myself with a collection of ends. When I say I have come up with the solution, I mean I have worked on it and refined it until I have a workable procedure.

It's more a simple strategy than a method. I stop using a rod when there is a good workable bit left, say about 7 to 10 cm, and I start on a new one - same colour obviously.



All those leftover rod ends are a bit like an almost-finished cake of soap—you don't have the heart to throw them away because they still has some useful life.

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Making ends meet... cont

When I have used 7 to 10 cm of the new rod, I join the old one on, melted end to melted end, so the newly created rod has a cut end at the top and bottom.

I don't join them in the middle of a beading session, so if I needed more glass for a bead (or beads), I would carry on using the new rod: 7-10cm is just a vague guide. Joining rods is usually the last job of my bead making session.

Another reason for not using a joined rod immediately is that holding the cut ends will have resulted in oils from my hands transferring to the glass, and this should really be cleaned off before the joined rod is used for a bead.

Is there a risk that the join will fail? There is always that risk, but in my experience a single join is a whole lot more stable than a lot of joins close together.

I have only had a join break once in as long as I can remember - and looking back it was probably because I squashed the join to try to even it out and almost certainly didn't heat up the glass

enough afterwards to make sure it was all the same temperature. I don't do that anymore.

The newly-joined rod is always used from the short end down, past the join, until 7-10 cms are left and it becomes an end ready to be joined to a new rod itself, so I am sort of leap-frogging the ends and rods.

Obviously, I don't always need to start a new rod of the same colour in a bead making session. Often there is enough on a part rod for my requirements, so to make sure I don't forget I have an end waiting to be joined, I attach it to a whole rod of the same colour with a rubber band.

Finally, a word of caution. Glass is like knitting wool. The colour can vary from batch to batch. If I find myself with an end that is different in colour to the rest of my rods of the same colour code, obviously it would be pointless to join it to

one of those different rods.

Most beadmakers have a few rods that for whatever reason are not very good.

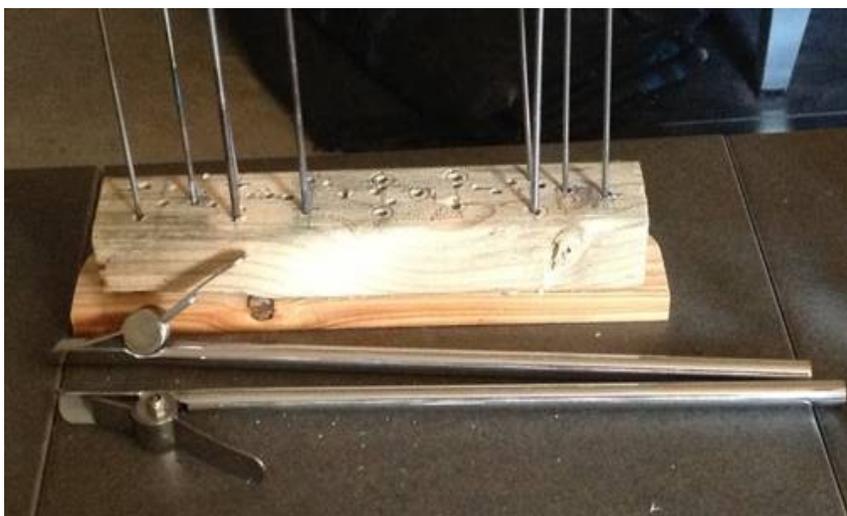


With the best will in the world, it is not possible to make a smooth, even join, so you end up with a result like the one on the left; On the right, you can see there is quite a bit of length left on both ends, so joining is a lot easier.

It might be clear glass that looks scummy because it has tiny little bubbles in it, or it might be glass that changes its characteristics too easily, and not in a good way.

We use these rods for the centre of beads which will then be covered with a thin layer of an expensive glass, and no-one will be any the wiser. Joining that odd coloured end to some of this glass is another good use for it.

That way, the piece of the good glass can be used right to the end - no wastage - and the not-so-good rod survives to pad out another bead or be used to extend another rod end.



Tools such as these grippers help grip a short piece of rod, and use more of it. But they are rather unwieldy and not easy to manipulate. If you melt a rod right down level with the metal of the gripper, you're still left with up to 3cm of glass.

Best wishes, Irene

Church of flamboyant mosaics

One of the highlights of a visit to St Petersburg, Russia, is the Church of Saviour on the Spilled Blood.

It is so named because it marks the spot where Tsar Alexander II was fatally wounded in an assassination attempt on March 1, 1881. Designed in the style of 16th and 17th-century Russian churches, the Church on the Spilled Blood provides a stark (some would say jarring) contrast to its surroundings of baroque, classical and modernist architecture.

The church has a fascinating history. After the Russian Revolution, the church - despite becoming an official cathedral in 1923 - was looted. It was closed in 1932, and essentially turned into a garbage dump. Rumours abounded that the church would be torn down.

Damage from World War II and the siege of Leningrad (as St Petersburg was then known) can still be seen on the church's walls. For some time during the war, the church was used as a mortuary.

After the war, it became a warehouse for the Small Opera Theatre. Its valuable shrine was almost completely destroyed, and four jasper columns with mosaic mountings and a part of the balustrade were all that remained.

Decades of deterioration and then restoration culminated in a dramatic re-opening of the church in 1997. The restoration project cost 4.6 million rubles (around A\$100,000) mainly for the



It's not your conventional church—the exterior of the Church on Spilled Blood in St Petersburg, Russia, is a riot of colour and gaudy embellishments.

extravagant collection of more than 7500 sq. metres of mosaics which link Alexander II's murder with the crucifixion of Christ.

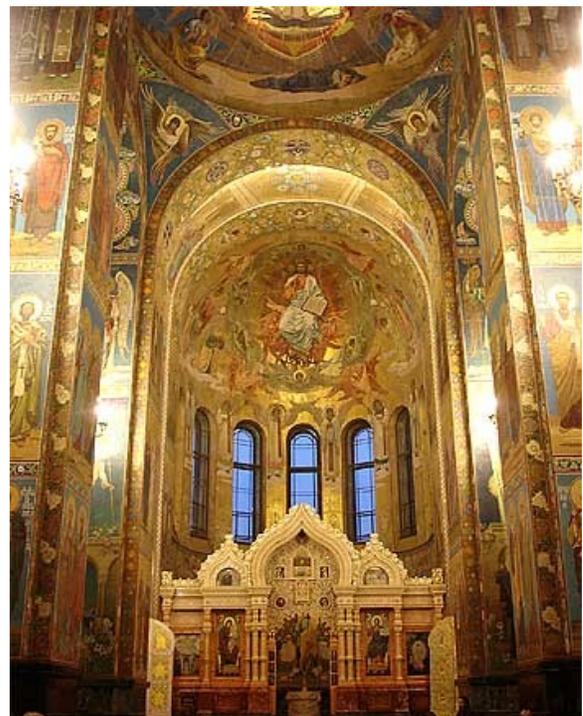
The flamboyant exterior of the building is adorned with icons in a riot of colour and becomes more mind-boggling the closer you get. Amongst this colourful exterior are 20 granite plaques recording the historic events of Alexander II's reign.

Inside, mosaics fill the walls, arches, ceiling, altar, niches, crevices and cornices. No surface is left bare of embellishment, with opulent mosaics portraying paintings by religious artists of the late 19th century.

It's not one of the most beautiful

churches you will ever see, but for those who appreciate brilliant mosaics, the Church on Spilled Blood is a rare treat!

Best wishes, Ian Dymock



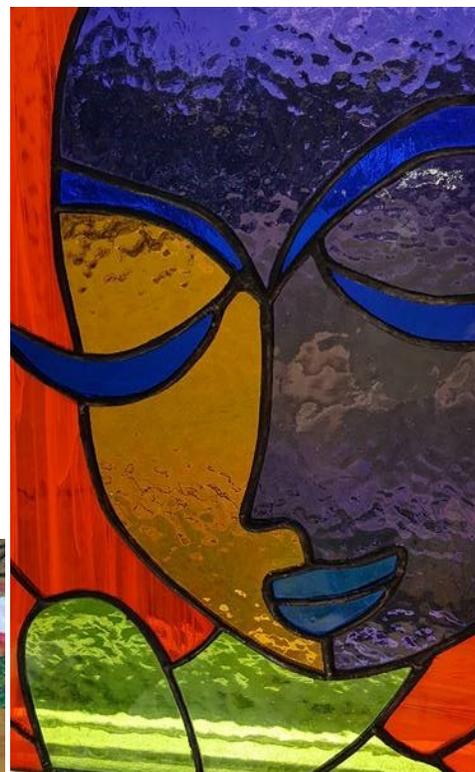
The inside of the church features 7,500 sq. metres of mosaics. Nothing has been spared, with mosaics covering altar, walls, arches, ceilings and cornices.



What's happening around the Guild

Here are a few Guild people doing their thing(s) over recent months (pictured clockwise from above):

1. Di Holland, Kate Ritchie and Chris Bell catch up with former member and Guild Secretary, Gaynor Hepenstall in the hills of Oxfordshire, England;
2. Grahame Sawyer shows off his art deco style lamp which will become a family Christmas gift;
3. Sheree Buffet puts the finishing touches to her beautiful lamp;
4. One of Ken Ede's series of exotic Picasso-style ladies—can he ever stop?
5. Some of the fused glass ornaments produced in the recent Christmas decorations class;
6. Natasha Aisthorpe puts together an exquisite jewellery box for a Christmas gift, and
7. Jenni Jones' copperfoiling project featuring two Celtic dragons will find a resting place above her kitchen pantry.





Around 45 Guild members and friends celebrated Christmas in style at the Guild's annual Christmas Party held at Red Hill on 5th December. Here are a few of the party-goers enjoying food, drinks and good company before the Guild takes its traditional summer break from Sun 18 Dec to Fri 27 January. Merry Christmas everyone!

