

## Glass-making in Bavaria: The Bild-Werk Summer Academy

In August 2009, I traveled to the heart of the old glass manufacturing region of Germany, to Frauenau, a small village in the Bavarian forest near the Czech border. I went there to attend the Bild-Werk Frauenau International Summer Academy, I chose the 'Assemblage in Glass and Bronze: Street Alchemy' workshop run by the American artist Stephen Paul Day.



Stephen teaches mold making with zircar, a porous ceramic shell-casting material that will take molten glass in the kiln or poured bronze from the crucible, his class is very open and participants can work on their own pieces in their own time which is one reason that this was my third year there. We did have deadlines to accommodate the 5 kiln firings and 3 bronze pouring days and was up to the individual to have work ready.

There were a variety of courses running in the academy during the 2 1/2 weeks, glass cutting, engraving slumping and lampworking alongside painting, printing, ceramic and wood sculpture so a diverse mix of people and artists were present.



On the first day it was great to see old friends again. At the introductory talk given by Erwin Eisch one of the founders of the modern Studio Glass movement we were blessed with glorious sunshine.

Classes' mixed during the communal dinners and on most evenings, were followed by artists' lectures from the teachers. New friendships were made and new techniques were learnt even in disciplines not in ones own field. The studios were open late in the evening if people wanted to continue working and this was often combined with socialising. Teachers and students letting their hair down after long days this was very infectious and one would invariably get drawn into conversations in the large kitchen usually over a glass of wine or bottle of good Bavarian beer. One of the events arranged by Bild-werk staff was the T-shirt raffle, everyone bought a T-shirt and decorated it, gave it back and received a ticket which was called during the T-shirt 'fashion show' this was hilarious and very entertaining.

During the Academy, 2 consecutive glass exhibitions were on in the Eisch Gallery Sue Parry from England and then Mare Saare from Estonia who had both completed residences in the Eisch glass making factory, both excellent bodies of work. The gallery has a strong connection with the U.K. having hosted exhibitions by Stourbridge glass artists in the past.

As well as the gallery Frauenau boasts an amazing glass museum which charts the history of glass production and has many contemporary glass artists work on show, a very educating and inspiring afternoon was spent there.

I would highly recommend the summer academy to all, young and old, experienced, and inexperienced alike. I had an amazing time, I learnt many new things there, produced some good work, made lifelong friends and came away exhausted but very happy. Bild-Werk and Frauenau will always have a place in my heart.



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Photos by Udo Posch: bronze casting