

# GLASSWEAR: A STUDY OF GLASS JEWELLERY THROUGH THE AGES

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## ABSTRACTS

**ANNA HODGKINSON (FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN),** EAR STUDS, EAR PLUGS, OR BEADS? REINTERPRETING A GROUP OF PERSONAL GLASS ORNAMENTS FROM NEW KINGDOM EGYPT

This paper presents a fresh perspective on a type of glass jewellery of the Egyptian New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE), which are commonly referred to as 'ear plugs' or 'ear studs'. I argue that these objects were not worn in the ear lobe and that need to be reclassified as a type of bead. This is due to the fact that the objects in question have a latitudinal piercing through the length of their shaft, while displaying a flat-fronted disc as a 'dome'.

By contrast, while ear studs from other materials do exist in the archaeological record of ancient Egypt, these usually have a convex dome at the front, and this is also visible in pictorial representations. In addition, the piercing, which is related to the manufacture of the glass objects on a mandrel, would have made it possible to thread the objects and to suspended them vertically, either as

**ELEONORA MONTANARI (NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY),** TRUE COLOURS SHINING THROUGH? MATERIALITY AND SENSORIALITY OF PRE-ROMAN GLASS BEADS FROM ABRUZZO, ITALY

Because of their material properties, ancient glass beads are often thought of as exotic objects associated with ideas of social prestige and wealth. But is it always the case, if at all? What about how we, as humans, perceive glass beads and interact with them? What is the importance of their visual – and more broadly sensorial – attributes? Why do glass beads within culture-specific contexts possess specific hues, degrees of opacity and shapes and are these related to each other? Do colour combinations signal forms of identity or social affiliation?

By drawing from the neurosciences, ethnography and sensorial archaeology, these questions will be applied to glass beads retrieved from child and female burials from the 1st millennium BCE cemetery sites of Campovalano, Fossa and Bazzano (Abruzzo, Italy). This talk shall provide a novel interpretative key to explain the use of glass beads, which here are otherwise seen as status symbols or markers of fragile and marginalised identities.

**JOËLLE ROLLAND (CNRS, UMR 8215 TRAJECTOIRES). SPEND, SHINE, AND SHOW COLOUR: GLASS JEWELLERY AS A REFLECTION OF LA TÈNE SOCIETIES AND IDENTITIES**

In Early Iron Age Europe, glass jewellery was imported in small quantities from the Mediterranean glass workshops in Phoenicia, Greece or Italy. But suddenly, in the 5th century BC, the production of an exclusive European object, the glass bracelet, shows that the system changed: the societies of the Late Iron Age decided to import raw glass to make their own jewellery. They developed a new craft dedicated exclusively to making beads and bracelets from an exotic and expensive material that added lustre and colour to the jewellery. They developed glass working to produce objects that reflected their stylistic and symbolic codes.

For five centuries, and especially after the beginning of third century BC, La Tène glass production developed exclusively for the manufacture of jewellery. Wearing jewellery always meant displaying a sign, a symbol, to which both the cultural group and the individual attached meaning. Over the course of these five centuries, this meaning has evolved, as have the symbols, the skills and the freedom of production of the glassmakers, but also the consumption of and access to these objects. The aim of this article is to highlight the elements that allow us today to interpret these glass ornaments and their meaning for the societies and individuals who made and wore them.



Bracelet of Haevernick 14 type, La Tène settlement of Epiais-Rhus (Val d'Oise, France), Musée archéologique du Val d'Oise, inventory number S310. © J.Rolland.

**JO AHMET (MOLA). NOW AND THEN: THE GLASS OF ANGLO-SAXON METALWORK AND MATERIAL PERCEPTIONS JUSTINE BAYLEY. WEARABLE GLASS: ROMAN OBJECTS DECORATED WITH ENAMEL**

Discussion of Early-Medieval inlaid metalwork is dominated by Anglo-Saxon garnet use from the beginning of the period. Other materials such as niello, filigree and glass however, played a significant role in inlaying. These materials are also not limited to this early period with vitreous materials being particularly notable from the 9th century with a surge in the use of enamel designs most exemplified by the famed Aelfred Jewel.

This discussion will summarise the use of inlaid glass and other vitreous materials on metalwork from early-medieval England, highlight possible evidence for the historic perceptions of these materials and finally consider how antiquarian and modern perceptions influence their contemporary interpretation.

**JUSTINE BAYLEY (UCL). WEARABLE GLASS: ROMAN OBJECTS DECORATED WITH ENAMEL**

This fully illustrated talk will describe how objects that were worn, especially brooches, were made and decorated with enamel. Although all Roman enamels were made using the champlevé technique, there is considerable variety in the ways in which the enamel was applied to the metal objects. The Roman love of polychromy becomes obvious when the correlation of colours and colour combinations with styles of enamelling are examined.

**EFFIE BURNS (ARTIST). 'LIFE ON A STRING'; CONTEMPORARY GLASS BEADS CREATED USING HISTORIC TECHNIQUES**

The project led by Ruthin Craft Centre, North Lands Creative and the National Glass Centre was the second stage in an exploration of the relationship between glass and body adornment. This second project has allowed an artist specialising in glass to explore the potential of jewellery. In undertaking this project to develop a new body of wearable glass artworks the artist spent time working in Caithness in Scotland, Sunderland in England and Ruthin in Wales.

The artist has gathered natural ephemera from these places, spent time in the landscape and developed a series of new work that incorporates casting, gilding and engraving.

**CHARLOTTE NASH (BRITISH MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF KENT). OBJECTS OF IDENTITY AND ADORNMENT: VIEWING FEMALE IDENTITY THROUGH INVESTIGATIONS INTO ISLAMIC GLASS BANGLES**

By the 14th century, Islamic glass bangles had become an ubiquitous part of female material culture across the Islamic world. These ornaments are intriguing objects of adornment, offering rare insight into many aspects of the cultural, female and personal identity of both elite and non-elite women throughout the Islamic world.

Glass bangles uniquely represent an element of medieval cultural transfer from the Christian Byzantine Empire into the early Islamic Middle East and further transfer of such traditions to Muslim and Hindu communities in South Asia. There is also tantalising evidence for deeper symbolic cultural and regionalised meanings to these enigmatic objects, demonstrated by different colours, combinations and designs. Evidence for such can be drawn from detailed ethnographic research on traditional glass bangle wearing practices in South Asia, which find many roots from earlier Middle Eastern customs. This study also explores the evolution of female fashions from an early Islamic glass bead, to a primarily medieval-Ottoman glass bangle, wearing culture and the development of imports and local manufacturing, such as west African imitations.

Following vigorous research into the periodic and regional trends of these decorative and typological styles, along with archeometric analysis of the

chemical compositions of the glass, interesting insights into trade and cultural transfer has been ascertained. Now, this research attempts to go one step further by exploring the more intangible aspects of the value, meaning and cultural identities that may lie behind these objects of female adornment. It discusses their wide adoption across the Islamic world, how they may have varied across periods and places and attempts to interpret the possible values and meanings behind these symbolically charged aspects of female diaspora.

**ANASTASIA CHOLAKOVA (BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES), MARIA PASHOVA, BERNARD GRATUZE. STRINGS OF ELEGANCE... IN THE RURAL HEART OF THE MEDIEVAL BALKANS**

This talk will present a summarized overview of the glass bead assemblage excavated at a medieval necropolis (ca 10th – 12th c.) near the present-day village of Tuhovishte (SW Bulgaria), in the Upper Mesta River valley. The finds demonstrate a remarkable diversity in terms of bead shapes and techniques of production, of colours and chemical glass compositions, and of combinations of individual beads within the strings found in the graves. Some of these variations are most likely related to the chronological dynamics of the site. At the same time, other determinants have certainly affected the formation of the assemblage as well, considering both its accumulation in general and the crafting of the particular string designs. An attempt will be made to explore a spectrum of potential factors that have influenced the patterns seen in the

Tuhovishte bead material – in the range between wider structure-related phenomena (such as glass production and economic connectivity) and less clearly discernible but rather intriguing, agent-linked aspects of self-identity, aesthetic preferences, and perceptions towards afterlife.

**CRISTINA BOSCHETTI (URBNET). TRAVELLERS, MERCHANTS, ARISTOCRATS AND PEASANTS: GLASS BEADS FROM MIGRATION PERIOD ITALY**

Glass beads are frequently found in burials of Migration period Italy, but the publications on this subject are scarce. This lack of interest is a direct consequence of the ethnic approach, which dominates the studies on Italian Middle Ages. Beads are considered bad ethnic indicators and chronological markers. For this reason, they are rarely discussed in publications. Beads are often labelled as Lombard, Merovingian, Goth or Saxon, creating an identity between the place where they were made and the ethnicity of people who made and used them. In some cases, indicators of glass recycling excavated in Italy were erroneously identified as bead working waste.

I present an overview on glass beads circulating in Italy during the Migration Period, introducing the results of the interdisciplinary studies I conducted during the last years with the colleagues of IRAMAT-CEB, in Orléans. I put the accent on the meaning and international dimension of glass beads and on the contribution of bead studies to understand complex social dynamics.

**SVEN DUPRÉ ( UTRECHT UNIVERSITY,  
UMAKE). FASHION FROM THE LAB: THE  
GLASS DRESS**

Glass has a long history as a material used in jewelry. For such wearable purposes, glass was used in imitation of the colors of (semi-)precious stones found in nature. However, in the late nineteenth century, glass became a material for dresses. At the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, the Libbey Glass Company displayed an evening gown made from glass fibres. For Libbey, the glass dress was part of a show-off of scientific inventiveness. However, it did not become the fashion success the company had perhaps hoped for, and it disappeared to museum storage.

Most recently, the fashion designer Iris van Herpen revived the glass dress. Van Herpen used heat-resistant borosilicate glass, more typically used in science labs, to create a dress of a form inspired in nature. While with this creation Van Herpen shows off scientific inventiveness, her glass dress also continues the idea of art imitating nature which throughout history has been so central to the making of wearable glass jewelry.



The Association  
for the  
History of Glass