

Fairy Lamp Club Newsletter

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IORIO FURNACES *by Pat, Bob, and Jim*

Beautiful glass attracts ones attention especially when it is the shape of a fairy lamp. Ric Iorio, using the name "Iorio Furnaces" and making glass in the Art Nouveau style starting in the 1970's, produced such glass in the shapes of vases, plates, paperweights, fairy lamps, miniature oil lamps and miniatures.



Postcard of the "IO-R-IO Cut Glass Factory" showing the showroom and workshop in the rear. The vintage is uncertain but suspected to be 1950ish. Additional signs on the building read: "Glass Shop," "Cut Glass and Pottery Sale," and "IO-R-IO Glass." It is unknown why the spelling was hyphenated instead of simply "IORIO" (pronounced "Eye-Oreo"). Perhaps, it is a variation of the trademark illustrated below. It is interesting to note the colored "yard balls" displayed outside the showroom. They were a popular landscaping feature of the 1950's and, in some areas, are making a revival.

Ric Iorio was a third generation American glassmaker located in Flemington, New Jersey. His grandfather, Louis, was a stone wheel glass cutter, originally employed by Empire Glass until they closed in 1920. He was the cutter that did

the cutting on all the bi-color pieces they produced. In lieu of his final payment he received the tools of his trade and continued to cut glass under the Iorio name until his death in 1981 at the age of 99. He was a Master Cutter and was known as "Mr. Cut Glass." Louis's son, William, also was a glass cutter and glass restorer but went on to be better known for his colorful buttons and paperweights. His buttons were marked with a small cane containing an "I" and his paperweights are signed or acid-marked "W. IORIO." William's son, Ric, started in a different direction getting a degree in Anthropology before he returned to glass making.



This trademark was used by Louis Iorio, "Mr. Cut Glass," on his cut glass pieces.

T. Robert Anthony, author of 19th Century Fairy Lamps as well as a dealer in fairy lamps, was a long time friend of William Iorio. (Ref. 8) As Ric can not be located to confirm this, the assumption is that this friendship had an influence on choosing the fairy lamp shape to display his glass.

William and Ric built their furnaces in 1973-74 making many of their own bricks. All the glass Ric produced was from raw materials and the shapes were mouth or hand blown.

His fairy lamps were made in five categories:

- 1 paperweight techniques, where the floral motif is encased in the glass;

- 2 multiple color threaded decoration, encircled with multiple colored threads pulled in various patterns;
- 3 single color threaded decoration, encircled with single colored thread pulled in various patterns;
- 4 cut glass; and
- 5 Ambergris, silver-amber glass with interior decoration.

The fairy lamps are marked "lorio Furnaces, Ric Iorio," dated and numbered. The fairy lamps we have are all dated 1975.



All three pieces of this amethyst single threaded over clear glass fairy lamp are signed "lorio Furnaces, Ric Iorio, 1975" and is numbered 45 of 300. The base and candle cup have ground and polished pontil marks. The rims of the shade are also polished. The base is 8.25" wide and the combined height is 5.0."

In 1982 a fairy lamp catalog with actual photos and price list was printed under the heading "lorio Glass Shop, Iorio Furnaces." The photos and his descriptions, with some modifications, follow.



Photo 1

Top center in stand – White threads on light blue background pulled in a feather pattern with crystal cup (single color threaded). Far right – Silver-amber glass with interior veiling, pyramid-size in Clarke lamp cup (ambergris). Far left – Prototype of miniature oil lamp and three lamp shades.



Photo 2

Cut glass, crystal, cut in strawberry diamond and fan pattern with plain crystal cup.



Photo 4

Top center in stand – "Pink Tulip" on opalescent background with white opalescent underlaid cup (paperweight). Far right – "Rainbo" pattern of blue, cranberry and vaseline threads pulled in a feather pattern, blue predominating, on a crystal background with matching cup (multiple color threaded). Far left – miniature oil lamp prototype. Center front – Transparent light amethyst threaded on crystal background with matching lamp cup and underplate (single color threaded).

Photo 3

Top center in stand – "White Dogwood" on opalescent pink background with pink underlaid cup (paperweight). Far right – "White Lilies of the Valley" on transparent Vaseline background with crystal cup (paperweight). Far left – Transparent dark blue threads on crystal with matching cup (single color threaded). Center front – Silver-amber glass with interior threading, pyramid-size in Clarke lamp cup (ambergris).



Photo 5

Top center in stand – "Reptillian" pattern of apple green and coral threads pulled in a counter pattern on an opalescent white background with matching cup (multiple color threaded). Far right – "Rainbo" pattern of blue, cranberry and vaseline threads pulled in a feather pattern, cranberry predominating, on a crystal background with matching cup (multiple color threaded). Far left – "Peacock" pattern of amethyst and blue threads pulled in a feather design on an optic crystal background with matching cup (multiple color threaded). Center front – Silver-amber glass with interior veiling,

pyramid-size in Clarke lamp cup (ambergris).



Photo 6

Top center in stand – "Iris" pattern featuring large bands of copper ruby bordering orange threads on opalescent white background with opalescent white underlaid cup (multiple color threaded). Far right- Transparent dark amethyst threads on crystal with matching cup (single threaded). Far left – prototype miniature oil lamp. Left – Silver-amber glass with interior veiling, pyramid-size in Clarke lamp cup (ambergris). Center front – Transparent green threads on crystal with matching cup (single threaded).



lorio fairy lamps are listed on eBay infrequently, however, the above example in a multi-colored threaded pattern with

matching base was offered for auction in August 2000. The bidding stopped at \$128 and failed to meet the reserve.

The Skinner Auction of fairy lamps belonging to Robert Anthony Tobias ("pen name" T. Robert Anthony) listed eleven lots of lorio fairy lamps with descriptions and pictured two of the lamps. (Ref 9)

Original Specialty Lamp Price List:

Paperweight Technique.

- White Dogwood \$165
- White Lilies of the Valley \$165
- Pink Tulip \$150

Multiple Color Threaded Decoration

- Rainbo pattern on crystal background \$135
- Rainbo pattern on opalescent white \$145
- Reptilian pattern \$145
- Peacock pattern \$145
- Peacock pattern, white opalescent cup \$135
- Iris pattern \$120

Single Color Threaded Decoration

Available in the following colors on a crystal background: transparent dark amethyst, light amethyst, dark blue and green.

- All colors with clear crystal cup \$75
- All colors with matching threaded cup \$100
- All colors with crystal cup \$75
- All colors with matching threaded cup \$100
- White threads on blue background \$100
- Light amethyst with matching cup and underplate, limited edition of 300 \$150

Note: We have a black and white photo from both the "Early American Antiques," January 1975 and "The Hunterdon Democrat," January 2, 1975 showing a variation of this underplate with higher and smaller diameter.

Cut Glass

Strawberry Diamond and Fan pattern
\$150

Pyramid-size

Single Color Threaded Decoration

These were available in the following colors on a crystal background: transparent dark amethyst, light amethyst, dark blue, light blue, green and cranberry and opaque coral.

Dome alone \$45.00

Dome with crystal cup \$57.50

Dome with matching cup \$75.00

Addition fee for satin finish \$5.00

Cranberry Cased with Crystal (not illustrated)

Dome alone \$45.00

Dome with crystal cup \$57.50

Ambergris

Silver-amber glass with random interior threading or with rose veiling.

Dome alone \$45.00

Dome with crystal cup \$57.50

The pyramid lamps pictured are on Clarke bases but they were to be "matched with a handblown Iorio base."

Miniature Oil Lamps

A prototype of an Iorio miniature oil lamp is shown in several pictures. The Price List states that they "will be made available in a variety of colors and decorative motifs, if interest warrants."

The estimated price range would vary from \$150.00 to \$250.00. The miniature lamp shades were to be available separately but no price is quoted. We have made several inquiries among miniature lamp collectors; however, except for the one in the Robert Anthony Tobias collection, no one has seen or remembers these lamps.

The Iorio's also had a Glass Museum and Glass Shop at their facility in Flemington, New Jersey. In it were some of the 2500 pieces of museum-quality glass collected by William who also had an extensive collection of books, manuscripts, articles, etc. pertaining to glassmaking. (Ref 1) William also did many copper wheel engravings on fairy lamps – usually clear glass – his own designs of bursting star, owls, Webb's butterfly, etc. Robert Anthony sold some of these on Hobstar holders. In the last years of his life he was doing custom ordered "Russian cut" fairies – just a few. William said it took many hours for this type of cutting and he was never able to complete the orders he had. (Ref 8) William passed away in 1986.

The last conversation my acquaintance had with Ric, Ric told him the expense of firing the furnaces had become prohibitive. (Ref 8) Telephone calls to Flemington have turned up nothing more than a recollection of the name. What has happened to any of the above seems to be unknown. It would be great to know the rest of this story. Can anyone help us find Ric? Does anyone know the fate of William's collection and library?

References:

1. *Glass Collector's Digest*, December/January 1999, "William L. Iorio, From Cut Glass to Hot Glass" by Tony Beadell, 7 pgs.
2. *The Antique Trader Weekly*, January 12, 1977, "The Iorio Family of Glass Artists," by Jo Ann Rogers, 2 pgs.
3. Six photos from the Iorio descriptive list and the above two articles are from the collection of the late T. Robert Anthony, the "pen name" for Robert Anthony Tobias.
4. *Iorio Glass Shop, Iorio Furnaces*, 1982, List and description of fairy

lamps and miniature oil lamps by Ric lorio, 2 pgs.

5. *Iorio Glass Studios, Specialty Lamp Price List*, 1982, by Ric lorio, 2 pgs.
6. *Sunday, Newark News Magazine*, March 20, 1960, "Meet Mr. Cut Glass" by Marjorie Arendt, 4 pgs.
7. *Antiques Journal*, April 1977, "Ric lorio and His Art Glass" by Jo Ann Rogers, 3 pgs.
8. Private collection lorio reference material.
9. *Skinner Auction, September 20, 1984*, "Fairy and Pyramid Lamps," Collection of Robert Anthony Tobias.