

Fairy Lamp Club Newsletter

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MURANO FAIRY LAMPS by Lloyd & Nan

Recent purchases from a long-time collector who is getting out of the collecting madness include contemporary Fairy Lamps imported from Murano, Italy by Koscherak Bros. that we had not seen before. We would like to take this opportunity to describe their differences from those seen previously and to review the several types that have been reported before, some of which might be mistaken for being older.



Figure 1 Examples of Millefiori-type Fairy Lamps made in Murano, Italy.

The four examples of millefiori fairy lamps obtained recently are shown in Figure 1. They are about 5" tall and are very heavy with a thin layer of colored glass over a 1/4" thick inner layer which is clear for the one on the upper left and frosted inside and out for the other three.

About 1/4" of the bottom rims of the domes are folded back inside leaving a rather sharp edge at the top of the fold and then the bottom rim ground flat as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Close-up of the folded edge and other features of one of the lamps in Figure 1.

The saucer-like bases are also quite thick, apparently cast in a mold, and ground flat on the bottom over an area that varies from about 1 5/8" to 2 1/4" among the four examples.

The outer colored layer resembles the older "Millefiori" patterns that were made by carefully placing individual slices of glass "canes" in a pattern and fusing them together. However, the current ones have a very thin colored layer that can be seen to fold over the edge of the saucer rim (Figure 2) almost as if the layer had been applied by a transfer print and then fired on. It does have a finite thickness, though, which produces a surface texture that can be felt to define individual cane boundaries. They are attractive when illuminated internally as can be seen from Figure 3a & b.



Figure 3 Appearance when illuminated internally.

Three of the four had one or more of the paper stickers attached that are shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Paper stickers identifying Koscherak Brothers as importers from Murano.

By way of contrast "Millefiori" Fairy Lamps seen previously were made much more delicately. Figure 5 shows two examples of a previous era, the one on the right and R-175 on the left, alongside one from Figure 1 in the center.



R-175 Murano
previous era

Figure 5 Side-by-side comparison of Millefiori lamps from different eras. Center example is contemporary Murano illustrated in Figure 1.

The wall thickness of both the dome and base in the previous era lamps are about $\frac{1}{16}$ " and the bases have pontil scars that appear to be partially ground indicating it was blown, not molded. The bottom rim of the dome is smooth but irregular as if it had been trimmed and flame polished, not ground flat. The colored canes are thin but noticeably thicker than the ones in Figure 1 and appear to have been individually placed in a pattern on a thin clear glass substrate and then frosted. The canes are larger, better defined and have a rougher surface texture as well.



Figure 6 Other Millefiori lamp shapes: Left - from Hammond's book; Right - from recent eBay auction.

Other examples of "Millefiori" Fairy Lamps are shown in Figure 6. The one on the left is from Dorothy Hammond, Confusing Collectibles, Wallace-Homestead, 1969 (2nd printing 1972), p. 36, where it is described as being recently imported from Murano, Italy. It is described by the following: "The modern Millefiori being produced in Italy is thick and heavier than earlier examples. The design is not sharp or distinct. The coloring is poor and frequently runs together producing a blurred effect because the canes have not been cut smoothly." The left example is from a recent eBay auction. Without seeing the lamps in Figure 6 up close and handling them it is impossible to say with certainty which of the lamps in Figure 5 they more closely resemble.



Figure 7 Similar lamps having a "Crazy Quilt" pattern. (Examples not to scale.)

Other lamps seen on eBay recently with similar shapes but with more of a "Crazy Quilt" pattern are shown in Figure 7. It was claimed that the lamp on the left was imported from Murano in the 1950s but we have no way of verifying that. It has the same shape as the one in Figure 5 that also seems to be an earlier vintage. The one on the right is more like R-175 illustrated on the left in Figure 5.

Another type of art glass made into Fairy Lamps in Murano, according to Hammond, is Mother-of-Pearl or Satin Glass and there are several examples shown in various forms in her book but none of fairy lamps. The examples she shows were produced in the early 1960s and are described as being heavier with a "chalky white" lining. That very accurately describes the fairy lamps we pictured in FL-XVII-8 and here again in Figure 8.



Figure 8 Three Mother-of-Pearl Fairy Lamps made in Murano. (Examples not to scale.)

Note the similarity in shape to the one in Figure 6. The dome in R-78, U-44 and U-214 (also see Figure 11 shape) are also probably from Murano.

Other recent examples seen on eBay are shown in Figure 9. Although there is no paper sticker to identify the lamp in the center, it has characteristics similar to the others and we believe it to be from the same source. Again, handling would make identification more positive.



Figure 9 Three more MOP lamps seen recently on eBay. (Examples not to scale.)

Much more can be read about the characteristics of this glass in an article in [Antique and Collectors Reproduction News](#), November 1992.

Also in this same article Italian Burmese glass is discussed. Burmese pieces are always blown and therefore have a pontil. Quoting the article: "New Burmese almost always has a rough, broken pontil" - and most - "also show pink mixed in with the pontil mark." This is illustrated in Figure 10.¹



Figure 10 Pink color in the broken pontil of a Murano Burmese lamp illustrated.

This same lamp is also shown in [ACRN](#), September 1998 along with another shape as shown in Figure 11 and described as circa 1970-1980 Italian reproductions.



Figure 11 Pictures from [ACRN](#) of two shapes of Murano Burmese lamps.

¹ A "triple cased" variant of this lamp is described in FL-XI-2 article "Light your Lamps."

Similar examples are shown in R-796 and R-797. Note the similarity between R-796 and the MOP lamps in Figure 8.

Hammond, on p. 16, also describes Italian Burmese - "Fairy Lamps, in various sizes, some with Clarke (sic) bases." – but gives no illustrations. (She does, however, show the lamp of Figure 10 and Figure 11 (left) on p. 32 that she states is a reproduction of a Mt. Washington Peachblow Fairy Lamp, which we know is incorrect since Mt. Washington "never made a fairy lamp."



Figure 12 Italian "peachblow" simulating Wheeling Peachblow.

There is, however, an Italian Peachblow fairy lamp illustrated in [ACRN](#), August 1993, p.10. It was made to simulate "Wheeling Peachblow" which was made in many forms by Hobbs, Brockunier & Co. in the 1880s but never as a Fairy Lamp. The color is shown in Figure 12. The item is striking in color and workmanship and one could easily believe the glassworkers in Wheeling, West Virginia made it 120 years ago. The

wholesale price in 1970 was \$45 according to the article in [ACRN](#).



Figure 13 Six examples of the "Coca Cola" type lamps seen recently on eBay.

The final type of modern Italian Fairy Lamp we will present is the "Coca Cola" type of

R-799. Further examples taken from eBay are shown in Figure 13.

As far as we know Koscherak Bros. was the exclusive importer of Italian Fairy Lamps during the ca. 1960-1990 time period. That seems strange but we are not aware of any other source. Further input, of course, would be most welcome.

That same question remains as to the relationship between AA Imports and Central European sources of Fairy Lamps. Any volunteers to tackle that one?

MORE MURANO FAIRY LAMPS by Jim

As many you know, I maintain an extensive collection of fairy lamp photographs. Many excellent images are provided by our members in support of this newsletter. Other images are obtained from auctions including a large inventory of photographs from eBay auctions.

These images, categorized by type and

manufacturers, are an invaluable resource for this newsletter and me.

As follow-on to Lloyd and Nan's article, I have put together a few additional Murano fairy lamps that show the diversity of colors in the types they described in their article.



As you can see, the range of glass types and colors is quite large and I am sure there are many more examples yet to be documented. If you have examples to share, send them along and I will attempt to develop a separate Murano fairy lamp webpage for everyone's benefit.