



## **History of Beaded Flowers**

According to references of beaded decorations, it is estimated that the art was practiced across Europe and England as early as the 1500's. In an effort to support themselves, French and Italian peasants used to collect defective or discarded beads. The beads were then strung on wire and shaped in to flowers designs. The finished flowers were used in bouquets, altar displays and memorial wreaths.

Because of the work and skill involved in creating these beautiful "works of art", beaded flowers have always been collectible and timeless treasures. Many antique flowers can be found in museums, as well as many private collections, all over the world.

According to the French Beading Artists Guild, of Idaho Falls, a few notable people who owned and treasured examples of this fine art were Marie Antoinette, Madam Pompadour, Napoleon's Josephine, Princess Grace, Princess Caroline, Patricia Nixon and William Randolph Hearst.

# History of French Beaded Flowers in the United States

In 1865, Godey's Ladies Book published a flower pattern that suggested the flowers could be used as decorations for hair and clothing.

Another was released by the Dritz Traum Co. in 1928. Since it was titled "Hiawatha New Imported Crystal Bead Models", the words "new" and "imported", may imply that this is one of the earliest publications of "free standing" French Beaded flowers in the United States.

By 1957, Samuel Wallach (Walbead) was packaging and selling kits, "Bead a Bouquet", which included a wide variety of beaded flower instructions.

In 1965, Aleene, of Temple City California, released what is possibly the first U.S. book of patterns, simply titled "Bead Flowers" Years 1966 through 1983 brought us a flurry of publications. These books are now considered the, much coveted, "bibles" of the French beader. The noted authors of these books, include the highly respected, Bobbe Anderson, Virginia Nathanson, Samuel Wallach, Helen Leibman, Ruth Wasley/Edith Harris and Virginia Osterland. Although these books sometimes appear in garage sales, collectors are willing to pay well in excess of \$100.00 each, when they can be found. Then, in 1991 Helen McCall produced a book dedicated entirely to miniatures.

In 1995, Leisure Arts produced a few patterns, in an ornament book. Still, the art seemed to be fading away, in the United States. Then, the late 1990's saw a dramatic interest in beaded flowers spread around the world. Books were published in Japanese, French, Italian, Russian, German, and Dutch. Although some of the

styles "cross over", most of these books do not use the techniques that have become known as the "French technique".

With the dawning of the new millennium, the United States has shown a renewed interest in French beaded flowers . Magazines are describing the art as "what's hot", pattern books are once again appearing, and the Internet is making the materials available to all beaders, regardless of their location.

## **What can you do with French beaded flowers?**

Beaded flowers can be used in every way you use silk or fresh flowers. The only difference is that it will be many, many years before beaded flowers deteriorate. Therefore, they make great inserts in bridal bouquets, bridal headdresses, hair barrettes, napkin rings, corsages, "potted" window plants, 3D pictures and wall hangings. Being made of glass and metal, they give an astounding accent when soldered to stained glass projects. Let your imagination "run away with you". The uses for beaded flowers are endless.