



Peacock Eye Beads

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Peacock eye beads are lampwork beads usually made with green glass over foil with one or more cobalt blue dots. They were made in northern Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, from the late 19th century onwards.

The green and blue colour combination is highly appealing and mimicks the colours of eyes in peacock feathers. Although the beads are most often found in an olive shape, they were made in many shapes and also cabochons or stones were another popular form often used in jewellery. Their popularity has never waned and as beads and stones they have been used in various styles of jewellery including Art Nouveau (Fig 4), Egyptian Revival (Fig 10), Arts and Crafts (Figs 13-14) and even 1940's-60's jewellery (Figs 5 & 7).

(continued on page 14)



◀ Fig 1
Ornate buckle; probably late 19th century.



▶ Fig 2
Silver pendant necklace with four oval beads and clasp inset with peacock cab.



▲▲▶ Fig 4
Three pins, Art Nouveau style, probably 1900-20's.



▼ Fig 6
Necklace with filigree pendants and cube beads



▲ Fig 3
Peacock abochons, including a more unusual one with orange foil



▼ Fig 5
Dangles of flattened round and tubular beads attached to a chain, probably 1940's



▼ Fig 7
A single peacock cabochon accents the centre of this bow pin; 1950's-70's?





◀ Fig 9
Multi-strand necklace with various chains accented with oval peacock beads



Fig 8
Two necklaces with oval beads – one with a drop accent



◀ Fig 12
Sample card of peacock eye beads and stones obtained by Jaroslav Kabulka with a large quantity of button sample cards from a warehouse in the Czech Republic in 1989. Note the Art Nouveau decorative edge on the card itself which probably indicates it was made around 1900.



▶ Fig 10
Two pins, Egyptian Revival, probably 1920's-30's



▼ Fig 11
A long chain of small two-sided peacock cabs; recently a similar piece sold on eBay for US\$700+



(continued from page 12)

'Peacock' type pieces were also used in buttons and apparently imported to England and Germany for use in high quality Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau (Secession) silver jewelry. Examples may be found in the 1966 book *Silver Jewelry Designs* by Nancy N. Schiffer and in books by Sybille Jargstorf. Today Emiko Sawamoto makes exquisite lampwork peacock beads inspired by the entire feather including an eye of dichroic glass.

Peacocks are male peafowl that originally came from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, and the Himalayas. They were considered an ornamental bird and today exist all over the world. Their feathers

are easy to collect, because they lose them each year during moulting season.

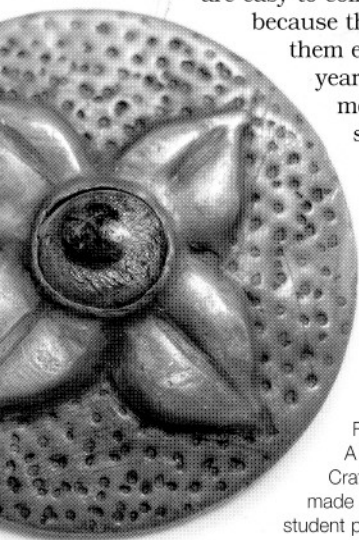
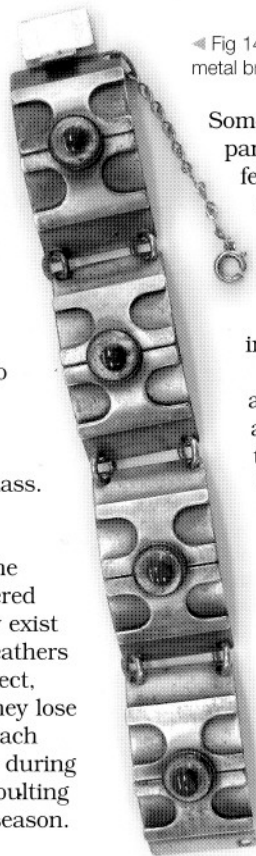


Fig 13
A simple Arts and Crafts pin, perhaps made from a kit or as a student project.



◀ Fig 14 Arts & Crafts white metal bracelet

Some people in the UK, Italy, and other parts of Europe think the peacock feather is unlucky. This has to do with the eyes, which were considered 'evil eyes'. There is extensive lore related to peacock birds, feathers and eyes which one can find easily on the internet.

Currently, peacock eye beads are enjoying popularity on internet auction sites and prices can go to several hundred dollars for an unusual necklace. Because of their rarity, few dealers specialise in these beads.

A rare sample card of peacock eye beads and stones is shown here courtesy of Jaroslava Karbulka, owner of the Racine Antique Mall in Racine, Wisconsin who also offers peacock buttons and beads for sale (Fig 12).

Although the maker's name is not given on this card, an older smaller card gave the name of Patterman Co. Karbulka obtained these cards, "among a huge amount of button sample cards we acquired in 1989 just after the Czech 'Velvet Revolution' (November 16–December 29 1989). It came from the depository (old warehouse) of a button manufacturer who had been operating since the mid 1800's. After the velvet revolution all 'government' owned companies were privatised. The lot had over 10,000 buttons – each different and all of them on the manufacturer's sample cards. These were sold to a button

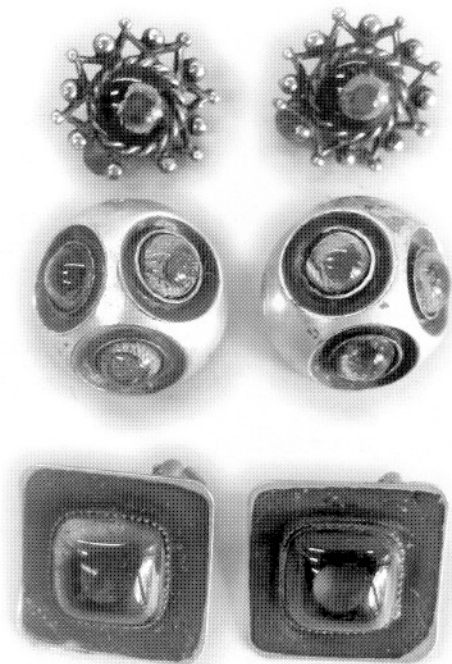


Fig 15 Three pairs of earrings, various styles

collector/dealer from Madison, Wisconsin in the early 1990's."

Another dealer in New York City, Shirley Mariaschin, began collecting peacock eye pieces years ago before they were popular and many thought they were vulgar. She now also offers them in her shop.

My collection contains examples from most periods but perhaps my favourite is the 60" (150 cm) strand of 100 tiny cabs, each only 4 cm in diameter and double sided. The metal surrounding the cabs is cheap 'pot' metal which no longer retains its silver color, but the bronze effect which remains goes well with the blue and green glass.

