

Imperial Lead Lustre Vases

By Roy Hieger

I don't know how I managed, for so long, to overlook Imperial's Lead Lustre vases. I check the new carnival glass postings on eBay every day, and occasional Lead Lustre vases can be found there. They are not always identified as such, however. They are more likely to be found, and correctly identified, if one searches under Imperial Glass. Once I became familiar with the various shapes and finishes I found they were commoner than I had realized. In the last 13 months, for example, approximately 60 different Lead Lustre vases have been for sale on eBay, 39 plain, 21 with exterior patterns. The sale prices ranged from a low of \$40.00 for a small plain marigold on milk glass vase, to a high of \$650.00 for a mid size green vase with the Hanging Hearts pattern, and a marigold interior, on milk glass. Most of the vases sold for \$100-\$300.00.



The Lead Lustre vases, a creation of the Imperial Glass Co., were introduced in 1925, and were described in Imperial's promotional materials as "the highest type of Art Glass." All of the Lead Lustre pieces were intended to be used as vases. They were unique in that they were mould blown, using paste moulds. All were iridized, generally on both surfaces, but some on the interior only. Although exterior patterns such as Swirl, King Tut, and Hanging Hearts were used, approximately 2/3 were plain with a radium finish. Seventeen different shapes, and more than 20 different exterior treatments were offered. Each vase was identified

with a double number, 418/10 or 418-10 for example, the first number indicating the shape, the second the exterior & interior finish. The base glass was either cobalt or milk glass. Since the Lead Lustre vases were "stuck up" during production, most have a ground, polished pontil mark on the bottom. The color of the base glass can easily be determined by looking at the pontil area. Since, as indicated above, the Lead Lustre vases were made in paste moulds, the finished product is devoid of mould seams. While still hot the vases were sprayed with metallic salt solutions to give them their color and vivid iridescence.

A detailed description of the Lead Lustre vases can be found in Volume II of *The Imperial Glass Encyclopedia*, the narrative portion on pages 382-384, the color illustrations on pages 446-450, and 474-478.

As can be seen in the accompanying photos, the Lead Lustre vases are beautiful, and in many instances spectacular. They are mould blown, and iridized, and approximately 1/3 have a pattern. Whether you consider them carnival glass or not, they are a pleasure to behold.

