

October 14th, 2009

**That was our meeting “Light and Glass” in La Granja,
Spain September 24th – 27th 2009**

This report of the Meeting of LIGHT and GLASS in La Granja, Spain written by [Peter Rath](#) is available in [English](#) and in [German](#).

Some Impressions:



The new La Granja Glass factory, a still hot chandelier glass arm in its mold



The new La Granja Glass factory, a master pulling out a chandelier arm



Master glass cutter in the new factory



In the assembling department of the glass arm chandeliers



Replica of the original 18th century furnace under the magnificent brick dome



The Royal Palace of St. Ildefonso with the huge Sequoia tree



The group of participants in front of Dolores church, La Granja



The old, vaulted mirror production hall of the Royal Glass factory La Granja, since 1727



Excursion to nearby Segovia, with its fantastic Roman aqueduct



One of Segovia's nineteen wonderful Romanesque churches, with glass chandeliers



The Segovia fortress built on top of a most dramatic rock

With this important meeting, held in a most fascinating place, our European Society is at last off the ground!

We flew in from all directions. We met at Madrid airport. How little do we know of [La Granja](#) and the [Royal Glass Factory](#) as we arrive. **Dr. Paloma Pastor Rey de Vinas**, director of the glass museum, the guardian of our well-being has come in person. Our little bus takes us, one and a half hours, first through dried out plains, then up an 1800m pass, and down to La Granja (Spanish for "farmhouse") at 1200m altitude, surrounded by grass covered mountains.

This was the King of Spain's residence since the beginning of the 18th century, with palace and huge park.

We will live in the "Hostel", part of the baroque building, originally housing the factory's workmen and masters.

We are welcomed by the General-director of the "Fondacion Centro National del Vidrio", **Mrs. Aurea Juarez Galindo** in the great lecture hall.

On Friday we start off with a tour through the "**New Studios**", working for production and schooling. Under the guidance of **Cecilio Pajas**, masters are working on glass arms for the typical baroque chandeliers that have been produced here since 1750. They are still practicing the hollow blown "twist". We then see the cutting shop. Students are also practicing the fusing techniques. The factory today mainly works on commissioned orders and produces parts for restorations and is partly funded by the State.

We then are led round the corner, into the quite amazing, **spectacular historic furnace hall**, with its 40m high cupola of visible brickwork, like a huge cathedral it is. A model of the old furnace, with closed pots (similar to the French type), fills the floor underneath. We continue through the ancient production hall, vaulted like a basilica, most impressive. Here the largest

mirrors of the period ware cast on cast and polished bronze tables then rolled flat, to disappear as quickly as possible into the huge annealing ovens. Old prints from the book of Diderot well illustrate the process. We here find also the heavy pressing machines, once used in the period when production was high in the 19th century. Past the second dome, we pass into the historic cutting and mirror polishing hall. Well to be recognized is the deep pit that once housed the huge water wheel that drove the complicated polishing discs. Endless the collection of examples of the former productions. Continuing into a modern glass section with the showing of a private collection of glass from La Granja. This is truly kingly architecture for royal industry.

We then continue up to the lecture hall to listen to four **magnificent lectures** (to be published here). **Dr. Käthe Klappenbach**, Potsdam ([“Kronleuchter als Symbolträger”](#)), **Ingrid Thom**, Munich-Nymphenburg (**“Restaurierung der vier Luster im Kaisersaal der Residenz Würzburg”**), **John Smith**, London (**“English chandeliers unexpected” on the 19th century chandeliers in palaces of Istanbul**), and by the excellent team around **Laura Balboni**, with **Angelo Landi** and **Paolo Corradini**, Milan, working together on their thesis: (**“Lighting in North Italian palaces of the Farnese family”**), the team impressed, as example of a coming up generation on architectural history studies.

There followed the **Members Annual Assembly** ([see the here published minutes](#)). We see our small but fine group now welded together by mutual interests and excitement on the subject.

The evening we enjoy under warm sky with magnificent stars in exceptional atmosphere of Spanish hospitality.

Saturday morning we stroll in gorgeous weather from the factory main gate, through the town, towards the **Royal Palace**, with its great fountains, within a huge park. Our tour begins with the special **tapestry museum**. Quite outstanding the nine huge tapestries, that formed a “book of behaviour” for the later Emperor Charles V, commissioned by his mother in Belgian studios. All the Royal Rooms have exceptional chandeliers coming from the local factory. We find the pompously decorated interiors definitely over-lit for daytime visits – a pity!

We speak of “wonderful soft candlelight in baroque rooms of the past” and ruin the possible atmosphere by the all drowning electric light. Our Society here sees a task, to make those responsible understand our feelings and use our advice.

Later we visit **two churches** showing off the typical old chandeliers, though mostly with a mix of later glass elements.

To visit a grand **antique shop** in town was of great impression for all.

After lunch in a most adorable minute place, with wonderful local food and rich red wine, we continue for a tour through the **Glass Museum**. This gives an excellent idea of the multicultural European Glass, practiced here through the decades. **One of the outstanding praises to Paloma and her museum is the fact that her concept shows studies and publishes hollow, functional, mirror, and chandelier glass all at the same level and with the same intensity. We decide that this concept must become the aim of every glass collection in Europe.**

Once more we come together for a **lecture**. This time it is our host **Dr. Paloma Pastor**, who once more brings near to our imagination the place and its history (“**The chandeliers from the Royal Glass Factory dating from the 18th and 19th century**”).

We then opened the **discussion on the alternatives** to the over one hundred years of success of the “**Edison bulb**” in standard candle bulb shape, and with the standard E-14 screw socket, as being now taken from the market by the European Union. **Peter Rath** can here demonstrate a **LED-bulb** as developed by **Lobmeyr** Vienna, together with Japanese scientists. The colour seems good, lighting power poor, it is discussed that this must still be doubled, to then enable dimming. The glass balloon should be as small as possible, in flame shape. The new system must be without extra transformers or condensers, so that without having to change existing wiring, the lamp can be used most directly. Under these conditions, the abnormally high unit price could be acceptable, due to the savings in hours needed to change former short life bulbs.

After small official **farewell** drinks, members are invited by the President of FCNV, **Francisco Salazar-Simson Bos** and his wife to their private house. **We here stress our wish for ICOM-Glass, through their president Paloma Pastor, to contemplate nearer connections with our Society during their upcoming meeting in November.** Then back to another beautiful walk and dinner in town.

Although some of our members have had to leave us for Madrid, Paloma takes us, with a friend, to see the nearby **ancient center of Segovia**, with a specially arranged guided tour. The impressive outstanding aqueduct, constructed of local granite, without mortar, a large number of Romanesque churches and the most interesting house fronts in local scraffitti-technique. Then the fortress and the Town Museum. Here we marvel at a huge ancient Roman cut bowl, at some original La Granja chandeliers and at other treasures. Once more we are brought back to our “home” and spend the afternoon in the palace park with its famous system of fountains.

Next morning early, now by public transport, practical and inexpensive, we are **off to Madrid**.

With our web-site, with the possibilities here together with our programmer Florian Rath in Vienna, we at last have a chance to **build a wide “internet-community”**, enclosing all those interested in those dormant treasures, those chandeliers now at last seen and recognized as works of art of their period, which we wish to inventory, publish and there-with save from destruction. **May Spain become the long expected break-through.**

We especially thank Paloma Pastor and all her friends for this highly fruitful meeting.