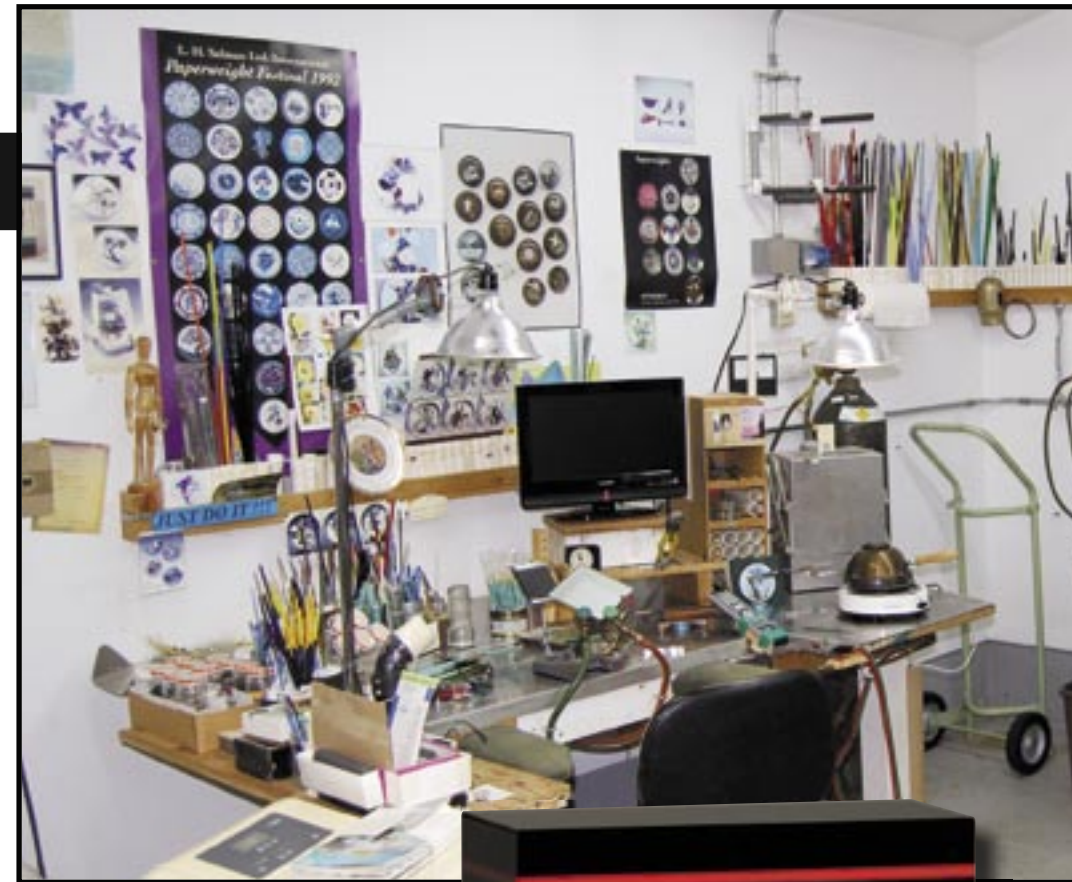
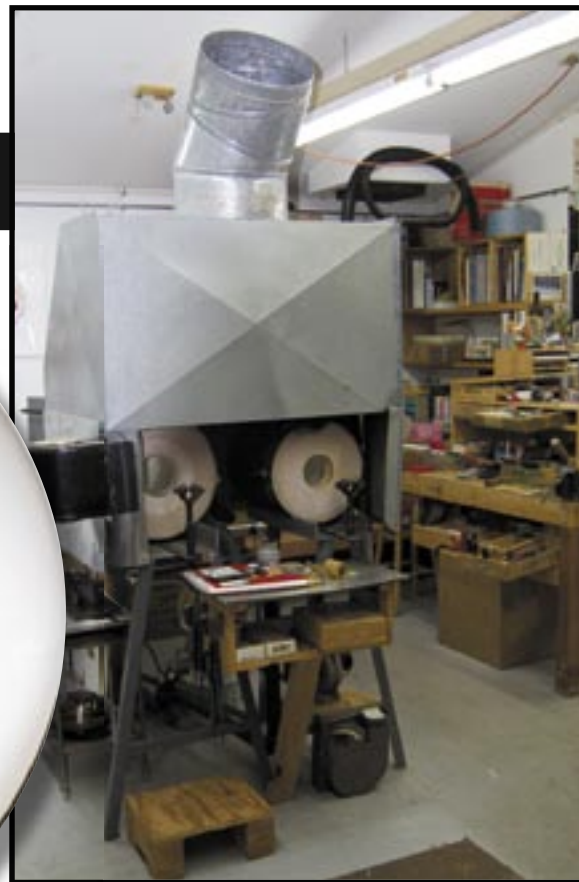


# Chris Buzzini—Touring the Studio Lab

by Colleen Bryan

Chris Buzzini is the sole proprietor and solitary worker at his studio in Oregon City, Oregon, twenty minutes south of Portland. His property is on the outskirts of Oregon City on a dead-end road at the urban/rural interface. “I have Christmas trees growing behind my studio, and horses graze on an empty lot on one side of my house. There are no sidewalks, so the feel is much more remote than it actually is.”

The property is outfitted with natural gas, which burns somewhat cleaner than propane. “I was very happy on the day I drove down this road and saw a gas meter indicating there was natural gas on the property for sale. I bought the house and converted the previous owner’s wood shop into my glass studio and converted the small outbuilding into my cold shop. I ran power to it and put in a floor, and now I have a self-contained cold shop for polishing the bottoms of the paperweights. I’ve been here since 1991.”



## Touring the Premises

The carefully xeriscaped yard provides a ready nature study for Buzzini’s flowers. A hundred and fifty feet of paved footpaths lead from the house to the 600-square-foot studio and a separately housed 128-square-foot cold shop. The framewoking stations, glory holes, and kilns take up the northern half of the twenty-by-thirty-foot studio. “A lampworking studio has to be dirt and dust free, not just tidy. So much filters into the work that you have to keep it meticulously clean. My studio is more like a lab than a studio in many ways.”

The southern end of the hot shop building has a small office, restroom, and kitchen area. Windows with rural views top a layout area and under-counter storage. An alcove contains a glue kiln that Buzzini innovated for HXTAL epoxy, a superior two-part epoxy that cures in a heated chamber. The base of the kiln is marble with electric heating pads to heat up the base and cure the epoxy in fifteen hours rather than the standard seven days. The kiln walls are made of two-inch-thick, rigid, household insulation. Chris rigged the kiln to be stored at the ceiling or brought down by a pulley. Buzzini clearly enjoys having developed a novel, functional, inexpensive solution that draws very little power. “Glassworking, especially framewoking, is a business of problem solving. The better the solutions, the better you’ll do at the glasswork, and anytime you circumvent a problem you’ll get another opportunity to solve it later. I’m a man who solves problems all the time.”

FloPack drops from a hopper in the ceiling over a packing table. Flattened packing boxes are stored underneath. A series of pine boxes are mounted on the east wall at eye level to keep Chris’ reference books up and out of the way as he works. A photo studio is permanently set up in another alcove at the southwest end of the building. After Chris polishes each paperweight, he sets it on a per-

manent stand set in the counter and takes three or four photographs with one light at an angle to the object. Overall, my studio is like a little ship with a space for everything. I use almost every available square foot of space.”

## Innovating Equipment Solutions

When Chris Buzzini first started out in glass he was taught how to build glory holes, work benches, furnaces, and other equipment necessary to his work. Although all of these are available for purchase today, he clearly enjoys having the skills to custom-manufacture tools and equipment to meet his specific needs.

“Most people who do framework are impressed with the quality of equipment I have,” Chris muses. Four workstations allow him to teach three students concurrently while retaining a torch for himself. His workstation resembles the cockpit of an airplane, with a semicircular array of glass rods and baby food jars of powdered frit. Pictures, posters, and inspirational content line the facing wall. One picture has fifteen close-up photographs of glass flowers that Buzzini has made. “I’ve been asked countless times if those are some of my favorite natural flowers, which always tickles me.” On the right side of the station he keeps tools and a teeny miniature kiln where he can preanneal the flowers before transferring them to a hotplate and immersing them in molten crystal. The noise from the small television is ever present when Chris is in his studio.

A sixteen-foot counter with the student workstations stands perpendicular to the main workstation. A dropped-down center counter runs about a foot lower than the rest of the counter for an

eighteen-inch span. The small kiln that Buzzini uses to house his flowers for the encasement process has been adapted with a cast iron encasement sleeve and a pyrometer probe.

Two small Cress C100-6 box kilns have interior dimension of an eight-inch cube—large enough for four paperweights. Both kilns are now controlled by antique West cam controllers. “These mechanical controllers work very well, but when they go out I’ll have to replace them with digital ones, because there are no replacement parts for the mechanical ones anymore.”

In the center of the studio are a small hood and two glory holes—one only for making paperweights, the other to accommodate larger work. “I built the glory holes in 1994 when I was working on my larger Egyptian sculptures. I use crystal ingots or gobs of solid glass from Schott Glass Technologies. They come in different sizes, are optically perfect, and cost about thirty dollars per pound, which is expensive but manageable, since I don’t make a lot of product. When the product sells for more than a thousand dollars, it is not such a problem to pay thirty dollars for the main raw materials.

PGQ

Visit [www.opb.org/programs/artbeat/segments/view/744](http://www.opb.org/programs/artbeat/segments/view/744) to see Chris at work in his studio.

*Find out more about how Chris Buzzini has developed his glass art over the past forty years in spite of several physical challenges in the Spring 2010 issue of Profitable Glass Quarterly.*

© Copyright 2010 by Profitable Glass Quarterly. All rights reserved.

**Chris Buzzini, Owner**  
**Chris Buzzini Studio**  
15661 S. Lammer Road  
Oregon City, Oregon 97045  
503-632-8533  
[cbuzz@buzzinipaperweights.com](mailto:cbuzz@buzzinipaperweights.com)  
[www.buzzinipaperweights.com](http://www.buzzinipaperweights.com)