

Japanese Glass Fishing Floats at KYO

Glass floats have been made and used by fisheries in many parts of the world including Europe and Asia and are said to have originated in Norway in the late 1800s. A float can be identified as European, Asian or Scandinavian according to the method of manufacture and identification of its markings. For example Japanese floats are hand blown and have a seal button whereas Korean floats are made in a 3 part mould and have the symbols embossed on the side of the glass.

Hand blown glass fishing floats have been manufactured in Japan since the early 1900s. The hollow balls were woven into the rope lines of large fishing nets and proved to be both buoyant and economical. To accommodate different styles and nets, the Japanese experimented with many different shapes and sizes of floats, from 1.5 inches in diameter to 20 inches in diameter. Most commonly the glass floats are spherical but about 5% were made in the shape of a rolling pin ranging in size from 4 inches to 18 inches in length. Some floats can still retain their netting which is made from nylon, hemp or other natural fibres with the original, natural fibre netting being considered the most special. Rolling pin floats typically did not have nets as these were attached with ropes tied to the end knobs.

Floats vary in colour and were most commonly made from recycled sake bottles (green), coca cola bottles (aquamarine) and beer bottles (brown). More rarely they can be found in clear, amethyst, blue and yellow and more rarely still in red and cobalt blue.

Trademarks and embossing were used on the floats to identify the users and manufacturers, and are used today by collectors to identify their origin and authenticity. About 20% of floats have some type of trade mark.

Glass floats would often escape their nets and were found washed up on beaches around the world. Beachcombing for these glass floats became a hobby in the 1950's and since the advent of plastic and foam floats in the 1970s, these rare gems are highly sought after by collectors all over the world. A float can be worth as little as \$5 or as much as \$5000 depending on its size, colour, markings and rarity. At KYO we are fortunate to have a line of supply of authentic glass fishing floats through sources in Japan and can boast the largest stock in the Southern Hemisphere.

Our Japanese hand blown glass fishing floats were made and used by fishermen from Hokkaido Island of northern Japan and considered by collectors to be 'real' and authentic.. They are constructed of heavy glass and normally show signs of wear such as scars, chips and scrapes. Sometimes there can be signs of plant and animal life attached to them. All signs of wear and tear are considered to add character and value to the float.