

# SGAA Workshop Wonders— Learning Moretti Murrina with Loren Stump

by Andy Ray

Photography by Terry Bendt, Karl Taylor, and Andy Ray

After a grueling month and a half of preparation and presentation at the Best Bead Show in Tucson this February, I was coerced by a couple of the Sonoran Glass Art Academy (SGAA) staff to take my first official glass workshop, the Loren Stump 2 class. I felt quite daunted by the thought of taking the class. As a boro worker who had never worked with soft glass, the concept of taking this five-day intensive on how to build a butterfly murrina out of Moretti was almost unimaginable. Fortunately after a brief crash course in soft glass by my friend Karl Taylor, the resident lamp shop manager and the in-house lampwork instructor at SGAA, I felt emboldened enough to face the challenge before me.

## Learning from Loren

Loren is a mad man. His class started at 10 a.m. and ran for five days. He never left the Academy before 12 a.m., sometimes as late as 2 a.m. Yes, you read that right; his classes averaged fifteen hours per day. I am very grateful to the SGAA for providing a space where Loren could work until the wee hours of the morning. (I know that many teaching studios have curfews.) Loren is not only a mad man; he is also a fantastic artist, a tremendously gifted teacher, and quite a wit as well.



Loren is also amazing. In those five days, he took us all through a journey of glass that was unforgettable. Our course material was covered and accomplished by all. Loren demonstrated an amazing process of sculpting a face and painting it with glass. He showed us how to do a Venetian-style sculpture of the human form. We all learned how to blow a seashell out of Moretti using a stainless steel blow tube—just like the furnace workers. We were even taught how to make a coil pot vessel on the steel blow tube.

## Learning the Latest

We learned a tremendous amount about tools. At one point we took a field trip to a tool show that was happening nearby. There Loren showed us the difference in the quality of various tools as well as showing us where the best deals could be had on professional-quality tools. His sense of humor was also a real treat. To spend so much time with someone, that person had better have a good sense of humor. Needless to say, I feel we all got more than we bargained for and more than our money's worth from this experience.

From day one I could tell I was going to be truly challenged in this class. There were times throughout the week that I wanted to pack up my glass tools and go home in tears. However, Loren and his assistant Audrey were there every step of the way, calmly demonstrating that no failure would be accepted. Loren even went so far as to pull a student's murrina out of the sizzling water into which it had been thrown and successfully repair it. A huge thank-you goes out to Audrey. Here, a calm demeanor and watchful assistance were of tremendous help to me.





## Learning from Each Other

This journey of glass was not just about what Loren had to teach us. I learned something from every student there. I was hesitant to take a class with other students, partly from being shy and feeling awkward and partly because this was a room full of strangers who were assuredly more talented and familiar with Moretti than I. Everyone was wonderful. We were all challenged by many aspects of the workshop but were able to help each other out of a jam several times. The camaraderie between us made the experience much more than it ever could have been had I taken a class alone.

My experience was also bolstered by the SGAA and its incredible staff. SGAA is a full-on, nonprofit glass school. If it's glass, then the staff have something to teach you about it. Karl's dedication to the school as well as his talent is a tremendous asset. Paul Stout and Jason Marstall, two of the furnace shop instructors, would occasionally poke their heads into our class and seemed to be quite inspired by the potential for crossover of technique and discipline. Loren, Paul, Jason, and Karl hit it off well and started working on a butterfly murina that was a hybrid lampworked and furnace-worked piece of extreme proportions. It was impressive to witness these disciplines in glass merging and these artists collaborating. I feel that the SGAA has a tremendous amount to offer the world of glass art because of how thin the veil is between the various forms of glass art instruction offered at their facility. There is an open door between the lamp shop and the furnace shop, making for an easy transition between the shops and disciplines.



## Many Thanks

A big thank-you goes out to Alex Berger and Karl Taylor for convincing me to take this workshop! I left this class feeling very inspired—inspired to take more workshops and challenge myself further, inspired to be more involved in the glass arts community, and inspired to join the board of the SGAA. What I saw happening there showed me the potential for crossing the barriers between different mediums of glass. After all, as my dear friend Boxfan Willy recently said, “Glass is just glass.” I also saw the potential that the SGAA has to benefit the glass arts community as well as the community of Tucson. I look forward to being a part of the growth of both communities by doing my part to bring success to such a wonderful school.

Please check out the Sonoran Glass Art Academy's website at [www.sonoranglass.org](http://www.sonoranglass.org) or call them at 520-884-7814 for more information about the school. You can get on their mailing list by sending an e-mail to [info@sonoranglass.org](mailto:info@sonoranglass.org).

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