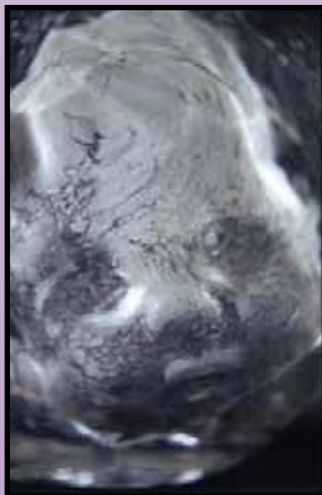


# amber pellegrini

By Marissa Hancock



Amber Pellegrini is easy to recognize. She's the only woman blowing glass in the large warehouse-studio, Glassworks Park, a glassworking cooperative located near Seattle's Lake Union. Amber is a founding member of GWP, and it has in turn served her well; its supportive environment has nurtured Amber's growth into the successful, active artist that she is. The ten or more artists who share space there count on each other to help with brainstorming, technical and physical assistance, and mutual encouragement. The community they've created has helped the studio bloom as an artists' collective and a major part of the larger flameworking scene in the United States.

For as long as she can remember, Amber has been interested in art. She's one of those fortunate people who always knew what they wanted to be. When Amber was young, if her parents couldn't find her, they'd first look in the garage, where she'd be creating a sculpture with nails, a hot glue gun or anything else she could get her hands on. Later on, she pursued a formal education in art, and in 1994 enrolled at Parsons School of Design in Manhattan, initially focusing on metalworking. But after her first hot glass class, Amber switched her major from metals to glass. Amber recalls what it was about that first class that impacted her so: the heat and fire, the collaborative community effort, and the ability to transform a raw material into something totally different and beautiful. Eight years after that discovery, she's still in love with glass for the same reasons. She loves that glassworking is, as she puts it, "an artistic sport." She finds herself physically challenged while she's creating her art.

Amber continued her education while working at Urban Glass in Brooklyn, and then in 1997 transferred to Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. By then she had explored blowing and sculpting glass, slumped and fused glass, pate de verre, stained glass, and flamework-



ing soft and hard glass. At Tyler she assisted in teaching hot glass classes. She narrowed her focus to casting for a while, and discovered that capturing materials within glass fascinated her. She drew inspiration at that time from an interest in voodoo and Santeria, and much of her "Philly phase" of glassworking involved casting dolls and creating altars. Some of her pieces from this period are understandably among her favorite. Her series of cast baby dolls has an ethereal and beautiful, yet visceral, dark feel. The detail in these pieces commands attention and awe.



After graduating from Tyler in 1999 with a BFA in Glass, Amber moved to California. She moved from San Francisco to the Redwoods and began flameworking for a living. Although she loved her physical surroundings, she found she lacked one of the critical components that attracted her to glass in the first place: the community. So, she moved to Seattle, a beautiful city known for things like rain, coffee, and its glass art community. Here, her art and her community have flourished. Amber describes that, "in Seattle, you're living among hundreds of other glass artists, and although technically you're competing with them, you're part of the community, and ultimately working together, challenging and inspiring each other."

As a sculptor, Amber spends much of her time in the designing process, sketching and planning. She says, "I make my art to get it out of my head. It's liberating to move from the paper to three dimensions in glass. Each piece is one-of-a-kind. I rarely reproduce an object. Maybe I'm still looking for my niche - but I've always worked this way. I just like to entertain myself and be diverse in my art." Amber finds a welcome challenge in designing art that succeeds not only functionally but also conceptually. A recent piece that she created, a congo drummer, is likely her biggest "success" to date in striking that balance. Like her past studies of ornamented dolls, her latest series of hollow formed figures (now made on a torch) is similarly intriguing, inviting, and artistically and technically impressive.



Amber is fortunate to be able to make a living creating art. She maintains her vision of, passion for, and commitment to the Arts in the community. Amber plans to continue to put her concepts and dreams into a tangible reality: glass.

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