

Tight Buds and Blossoms

by Carmen Anderson

I am a collector of contemporary art glass beads and have a lot of respect for those artists whose body of work demonstrates that they are constantly challenging themselves and learning new techniques, yet still manage to have their voices resonate throughout their work. These five narratives present lampwork artists who have made the arduous journey from a tight bud to a blossom.



Kate Fowle Meleney was involved in fiber/textile art, lace making, quilting, basketry, and metalsmithing before she began lampworking beads and pendants. She has a great interest in surface treatments on glass and spends a lot of time chemically altering the surface of the glass she has in her palette of Effetre, using enamel powders and paints, ceramic overglazes, electroforming, and other techniques. This produces beads and pendants that look different from those of other glass artists. Kate explained, “When fuming with silver, you can chemically change some of the colors. This is when you aren’t using it for the actual silvery shine, but using it so that you can combine it with the other chemicals in the surface of the glass and create the illusion of a raku finish.”

Kate began using electroforming extensively during the late 1990s with a series she calls Biotech, which reflects her vision of the minimalist abstract style. The series name comes from the fact that the beads and pendants combine the abstract shapes found in microorganisms with a multitude of techniques that she uses in surface treatments. Kate’s recent work applies this same “biotech” style to pod-shaped forms. She likes the timelessness of this series and will continue to expand it by including new surface treatments that combine existing ones and apply them to new lampworked, abstract shapes.

www.katefowle.com

Photography by
Jerry Anthony

Kristina Logan transitioned from wood sculpting to glass as she worked for glass artist, Dan Dailey. During that time she observed a woman lampworking beads. The medium interested her because it could be accomplished alone and didn’t require a large studio with several assistants.

Kristina describes her work as having a timeless quality based on classical principles, symmetry, and balance. She views her work as constantly shifting, her most current work generally being a hybrid of something she has done in the past. Revisiting and shifting old designs can sometimes pose a few challenges, such as with her new rings, which combine metal and glass in such a way that the flameworked glass doesn’t crack. Another is to make sure that her work is aesthetically pleasing by maintaining a harmonious balance of the glass and metal. When asked to describe how she plans what direction her body of work will take, Kristina responded that she does not plan regarding the direction in which she will head. The words she uses to describe her approach to working are “methodical, resolute, dedicated, and consistent.”

www.kristinalogan.com/

Photography by
Dean Powell



Melanie Moertel was first introduced to flameworking at a bead lampworking class, during which she discovered that glass had an element of permanency that appealed to her. She believes that working in glass forces her to work with more patience and think through the process and technique, which helps her express herself much better. Melanie was also drawn to the medium by her love of glass jewelry. In addition to transparent glass, she uses opaque glass for her beads, which she feels offers her a more intense color palette that better represents her.

This summer Melanie had the opportunity to teach bead lampworking at the Eugene Glass School in Oregon where she shared fine stringer control, color choices, elephant beads, free-form beads, murrine, and design concepts with the students. For inspiration, she has cataloged many design ideas in her mind over the years, which she calls her "inner design library." When once asked to custom-design a bead for a birthday present, Melanie visited that library to create a fairy on a bead as a symbol of friendship and good luck, which she called *Pixie Land*. As for future direction in her work, Melanie relies on the unplanned randomness of life. "I'm doing more focals now. My beads became larger with more complex stringer work. I put more of my heart and soul into each bead."

www.melaniemoertel.de

*Photography by
Melanie Moertel*



Terri Caspary Schmidt has been lampworking beads since 1999 and was drawn to the quiet meditative aspect of the medium. She likes the permanence of glass and its historic context. Her work can be described as complex and symmetrical, with designs being built on a network of lines and repetition. Terri describes her approach to making beads as very old-school and is heavily influenced by artists who are the pioneers of the American beadmaking movement. Terri says, "I like using the standard Effetre/Moretti colors and basic lampworking techniques of surface design such as precise dot application, masking, pick work, and optical color blending (layering transparent colors over opaques)."

This past year she decided to pick up some stringer and created a fish on the surface of a bicone. These new beads have led to her refining her basic techniques of applying stringer to the surface of the beads. She is also experimenting with new glass colors as they become available, as well as silver leaf and fuming. With her new designs, Terri stated that she is having to refocus her attention in different, sometimes very subtle ways when she's working on them. Despite the challenges she faced with the fish beads, however, they are her favorites that she has made within the past year. Their crusty, rough-hewn quality is an obvious departure from the perfection seen in her usual complex, symmetrical designs.

www.casparylampwork.com

*Photography by
Margot Geist*



Sherry Bellamy has made a transition from creating in stained glass to flameworking beads, which was natural since functional art appeals to her and the idea of melting glass excites her. A common characteristic in Sherry's flamework is her focus on the interior of the bead, which can be seen in her Chaos and Shipwreck beads. The Chaos bead is created by extruding glass through copper mesh in the interior of the bead. She has refined this technique and has produced a tutorial for it that is popular in the lampworking bead community. The Shipwreck beads are created using a variety of techniques and metals to represent the "fabric" of a shipwreck. She creates this montage within the interior of the bead.

Sherry has made a significant achievement within the past year by owning her uniqueness as an artist. As she explained, "I've learned to make what makes me happy without worrying about how it will be received." There have been mixed results in her experiments with making marbles, as well as those with silver foil. This involves her layering pieces of silver foil with different colored glass, and she is refining her technique to overcome the challenges presented when combining these materials. Sherry is also experimenting with making spheres of fine silver to include in her beads, which she calls hidden treasures.

www.orcabeads.com



*Photography by
Sherry Bellamy*

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