

Boro Stix . . .

How Do I Love Thee?

Let Me Count The Ways

by Aymie McKesson

Hmmm . . . where to start? I don't write a lot of technical stuff. There is a lot of information on working with Boro Stix that I want to cover, but I don't want to ramble.

I love Boro Stix. They are functional for a variety of applications: surface work, internal work, implosions, and even tube pulls. Most of what I do is surface work, so I enlisted the help of a friend, Mr. Smith, to help demonstrate the workability of the Boro Stix in a stick stack.

Working with Boro Stix Colors

Anyone who knows me or my work can easily recognize my color choices. Purple sucked me in, and the white got me hooked. The more I explored the Origins color palette, the happier I grew. With the exception of a couple of particular shades, all of the colors are workable and very complementary to one another.

For all of my work with Boro Stix, I rework the bars before I use them. I punty up to both ends of a stick of color, then mix and twist it, forming it into a large gather. Then I pull it out to the desired diameter rod or stringer, and I'm ready to go. That's all the extra time and effort they require to yield consistent results. Once remixed, all of the colors are smooth and workable.

When I'm applying Boro Stix to the surface, I am reminded of thick paint. They glide along and melt together seamlessly. I use Boro Stix exclusively for the color in my fill-a-cellos. They fill the spaces smoothly and cook in evenly. I am able to drop it down to a disk and blow it out with minimal risk of boiling the backside before the disk is flipped.

Some of the colors are less tolerant of being imploded. Both the Kelly and Ivy greens are unsuitable for internal work. No matter how well they are remixed, they fight their way out of the glass like ninjas. Purple and black need a gentle heat until acute angles have smoothed out to avoid boiling and color loss. The rest of the colors can be raged. With any implosions or disk flips, the color on the flame-exposed side is likely to fade. This is due to an off gassing of color components, and the color and the lensed side will remain vibrant.



Creating a Stick Stack

For doing a stick stack with Boro Stix, you have to make sure to find straight bars.

The bars are slightly fatter at the bottom than on the top, so the last bar applied to the stack has to be put in upside down. I would never suggest using Kelly or Ivy green in a tube pull of any kind, but the rest of the colors seem to be safe. For the first stack that Mr. Smith pulled with Boro Stix, we chose white and rainbow. The white is smoother than any of the other colors, but the tube melted down and pulled out evenly. The second stack was rainbow with Baby Blue and Elan Gray. Both the Baby Blue and the White are buttery enough to do a middle work tube pull to use for solid sections. Either of the pinks would be a great solid tube color as well.

In my opinion, the Stix make cleaner and more distinct lines for pattern work. Since all of the colors have a similar consistency, there are no issues with a stiffer side that results in messy line work. The terminations can be cleaned to a finite point, and even the lines in the center of a tight spiral remain clear.

Now Glow Stix have been added to the mix. They are awesome! While they need to be heated slowly to avoid breakage, once warmed they work nicely. They retain the glow when pulled down to 2 mm stringers and can even be encased with clear. The glow is simply phenomenal. Once charged, even low light allows the glow to be seen. I have not had good result with implosions, but I use the Glow Stix for chain links and surface-worked flowers all the time. Mr. Smith did a stick stack with two colors of Glow Stix, and it came out perfectly. Both the patterns and colors were clearly visible with excellent glow.



Respecting Color Issues

There are a few color issues, but none that are insurmountable. The Black and Lazuli are shocky and need to be heated slowly. I don't ever use the black for black, since it grays. I use Chinese black for *all* of my black needs.

As I mentioned before, the Kelly and Ivy greens are only acceptable for sculpting or surface work. The purple needs a gentle touch to avoid color loss. Reds, oranges, and browns need that same gentle touch. The Bing Cherry is the only color changer, and it can produce a variety of reds, browns, and greens depending on how hard you work it. All of the other colors are easy-breezy.

Company Kudos

Since moving to Boro Stix, I have never looked back. The Origins/Elan employees I talked to were all friendly, helpful, and enthusiastic about their product. I am eager to encourage other glass artists, especially pipers, to start making more use of the Origins palette. They are beautiful, workable, and affordable.

Many thanks to Origins Glass for the color and to Mr. Smith for all his hard work. All of the line work in this article was done by him.

www.glassartists.org/AymieMcKesson

www.glasspipes.org/Mr.Smith



The Importance of Proper Ventilation

Because of the way the bars are made, there is quite a bit of off gassing of the color components. Encasing with a thin layer of clear helps to eliminate the loss of color. As with any and all glasswork, you need adequate ventilation. If you ever feel funny or light headed in the studio, stop working and address your airflow issues immediately. I know I am harping a bit, but I feel that this can't be stressed enough. Clean air in the studio is a must.

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