

Boro Mermaid Bead

By Rocio Bearer

Photos by Ron Bearer, Jr.

Materials:

1/8" stainless steel mandrel
bead release compound
tweezers
tungsten rake
graphite paddle
beveled paddle or Stump shaper
parallel mashers

Colors:

Forest Green
Avocado
Onyx
Millennium Moss
Cinnamon
Butterscotch

Bubblegum
Ruby
Blue Caramel
Egyptian White Sand
Cherry and/or Canary
Double Amber Purple



The ever growing palette of color boro has influenced glass artists of all skill levels. Over the past few years, the lampworking industry has changed as the new artists developed their passion for glass. The common torch has changed from MAPP gas to oxygen / propane paving the way for color borosilicate glass to flourish in the art world with all of its elegant complexities. The mermaid bead is a great way to combine and practice a wide range of techniques.

Getting Started:

When you prepare your mandrels for mermaid beads, it helps to cover at least four inches of the mandrel. The small bead release jars aren't deep enough to cover the four inches so putting the bead release in a test tube or cigar tube will help. My husband took some 30mm, 4mm wall Simax tube and made the perfect bead release dipping jar just by closing and flattening one end and sealing the top with a cork. The debate over which bead release to use is an endless topic. I like to use Sludge Plus for most of my beads but switch to Super Blue Sludge for larger boro beads. The Super Blue Sludge is stronger and won't spin or pull free on the mandrel as easily. The down side is the beads will be a little harder to remove, but letting them sit in water after they cool down will solve the problem.



Preparing Cane:

Seaweed / Grass Cane



Overlap an inch and a half of Forest Green and Avocado. Melt off the excess Avocado rod.



Lay a thin Onyx stripe in the grooves between the two colors on each side.



Encase with Millennium Moss. This color will add a nice sparkle effect to your bead.



Heat and marver round on a graphite plate or softly squish and round the glass with parallel mashers as shown in the picture.

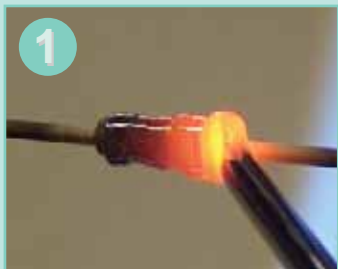
5 Attach a clear rod to the end to use as the punty. Get the color hot and pull into a two to three mm stringer without twisting.

Hair Cane

Follow the same technique, overlapping Cinnamon and Butterscotch. Fill in the groove between the colors with Onyx and add two extra Onyx stripes, one top and bottom. This cane will not be encased. Heat and pull out to two mm without twisting. For black hair, pull out solid Onyx stringers.

Flower Cane

If you want small flowers on the mermaid bead, encase Bubblegum with Ruby. Then Apply 4 thin Onyx stripes around it. Pull the stringer down to 2mm. You can use this stringer to "paint" on flower petals or apply a small dot. Then you can heat the dot and push a small Onyx stringer into the center of the dot, let it cool slightly and break the Onyx stringer off by bending it to one side.



Start by using Blue Caramel as the lower half of the body.



Marver this to a cone shape making the thicker side of the cone pointing to the top end of mandrel.



Add the torso by using one of Northstar's special colors, Egyptian White Sand.



Continue with the same color creating and shaping the head.



Add in leg and buttocks detail with a paddle, knife or Stump shaper.



For the fish detail, add successive dots of black, yellow and red, melting each in smooth between dots.



With a rake, pull the top and bottom fins. Add a smaller dot of Onyx behind the fish and rake in a similar fashion to create the tail.



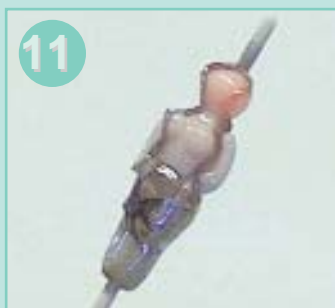
Next add on the arms, starting from the shoulder, laying a thick stripe down, ending with the hand.



Create the chest by adding two quarter inch gathers.



Melt the dots down and fine tune with a graphite shaper, paddle or bladed tool.



Start at the top of the head in the center and draw down a wavy hair line on each side of the mermaid's face continuing down to the hips.



Note that the stringer is not twisted. This creates nice flowing lines and adds more dimension to your piece. Finish laying down the hair on all sides.



Add in the grass starting at the top and working toward the end of the tail for each strip.



To create more movement in your piece, you can swirl some of the grass in small tight loops.



To finish the mermaid add a small band of Double Amber Purple at the bottom of the tail.



Attach a spike on one side of band.



Attach a spike on the other side.



Using tweezers or mini mashers, squish the bottom edge of each spike.



Heat the tail fin and stretch out with tweezers or a glass rod.



Do the same to the other side.

♦The fish will look better if a piece or two of seaweed flows over it. A good place is between the body and the tail on the fish.

♦Remember to reheat your piece in between the steps. After each step, heat the entire mermaid until it has a soft glow. Be careful not to over heat or you will melt in your stripes and lose some of the detail.

♦The torch used to make this mermaid is the Bethlehem Barracuda. It is a center fire, surface mix torch with a nice ability to work Moretti or boro without boiling them. In each step of making the 3" mermaid, only the center fire of the Barracuda was used.

Make large glass figurines in the Paragon F-Series Kilns

The F-Series lamp working kilns come in two sizes: the 120 volt F-120 and 240 volt F-240.

Raise the spring-loaded vertical-drop door to insert a glass figurine with a punty rod. Lower the door. The punty rod extends outside the firing chamber through the smaller punty rod door. This allows the glass to anneal safely.

You can make figurines up to 5" tall in the F-120 and 11" tall in the F-240. Maintain the annealing temperature indefinitely with the Sentry Xpress 3-key digital temperature controller.

Imagine the massive, award-winning figurines you will make with these kilns.

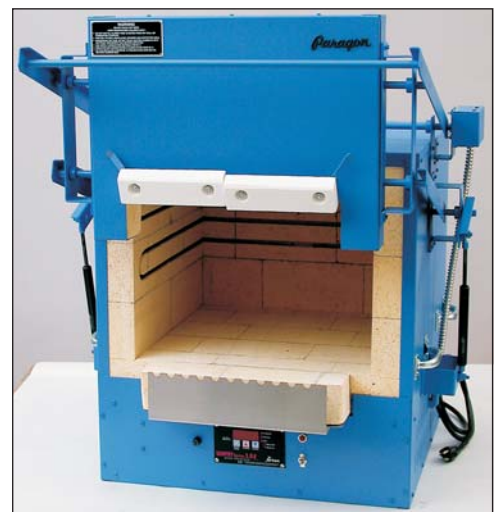
The element is mounted in the top of the kiln for safety. You can also order the F-240 with an optional sidewall element.

- Digital Sentry Xpress with 8 Segment Ramp-Hold, Skip Segment & Program Review
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F-240 interior (above): 18" deep, 18" wide, 13" high.
F-120 interior (not shown): 11" deep, 10 3/4" wide, 7" high.

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