

Dear Readers,

It's an honor to be the contributing editor for *The Flow* 2018 Nature edition. *The Flow* plays an important role introducing us to new ideas and techniques, spurring us on through the experiences and accomplishments of other artists. Without outside influences, it's easy to get stuck in the familiar. Many of us continue to create those things we are most comfortable with—those things we are assured will succeed. We may even get bored, but we still hold ourselves back from experimentation.

What is it that we're so afraid of? Not being perfect? Feeling awkward? Making something that doesn't look the way we'd hoped? Hearing the dreaded "ping" of cracking glass? I assure you that all of those things will likely happen—and so much more—but everything I've learned has made it easier to learn the next thing. Every challenge I've faced has made it easier to face the next one. It's all part of the journey.

I started melting glass in 2006. Like many of you, I was enthralled by its grace and magic. I didn't know what I was doing, but I knew I had found my medium. I made all the mistakes a beginner could make. Day after day, I wound molten glass around dozens of mandrels, only to create wonky blobs. Then one day it happened. Miraculously I made a series of consistently round beads. I had found the promised land!

Well, not so fast. I was truly happy for a while. Then something in the back of my mind started asking, "Why not try something new? How about sculpting dog head beads?" If you saw my first dogs, you'd laugh. You could tell they were dogs, but that was about it. I decided I didn't want funny. I didn't want cute. I wanted realistic. After months and months of experimentation, I finally could sculpt realistic dog portraits. Yippee! But was that enough? *No*—and I hope it never will be.

Over the past four years, I have transitioned almost exclusively to off-hand sculpture in soft glass. Moving from mandrel to punty has uncovered an infinite universe of possibilities. Was it scary? Of course it was. But it was freeing and uplifting, too. I completed vignettes of children at play called *Childhood*, learned to blow soft glass and some boro, and sculpted *Mama's Garden*, life-size soft glass flowers.

Some days nothing works. Some days everything cracks. But I accept those days as part of my learning process. I may choose to put a particular project on the back burner and work on something easier and more relaxing for a while, but eventually I will revisit my nemesis knowing I will succeed. And you will too. Who knows what greatness you'll achieve!

Enjoy this inspirational edition as you reflect on the creations of others who have taken a chance.

Vicki Schneider
Contributing Editor

*Flameworked berries and blooms
necklace by Magdalena Paukner*



Deadlines for Editorial Submissions

Summer 2018 **Marbles and Paperweights**
March 30, 2018

Fall 2018 **Functional Glass Art**
June 1, 2018

If you are interested in becoming a contributing artist for *The Flow*, visit www.theflowmagazine.com for a link to themes of upcoming issues, author guidelines, and submission forms.



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