

Dellene Peralta

A Rising Flame

By Melissa Willmeth

For Dellene Peralta, the woman who won the first Flame Off, being a glass artist as well as a mother takes her full attention. Whether working in her studio or enjoying the rare Eugene Oregon winter sun, Dellene is ready with a smile and a unique new sculpture to delight. Featured regularly in Dichroic Alchemy's publications and showcased often in Northstar Glassworks newsletters, Dellene is an artist to watch.

When did you first discover glass?

It was 1992. I was 17 years old working for a construction company. We were building firewalls for the University of New Mexico in a hospital lab building. There were burners and a shelf full of Pyrex glass.

How were you exposed to the idea that you could do glass as a profession?



I moved to Oregon in 1995. I needed a change and the forests of Oregon appealed to me. I was young and I found a culture in which I could flow. I was at home. I saw the flood of glass pipes coming out of Eugene. I thought it was cool but I really didn't think I would be doing it. It took some money and a place, things I didn't have. I was still pursuing painting and metal smithing via the community college. When I was feeling lost in finding an art medium that would satisfy my soul, I met Clinton Roman. That was 1996.

He got me a small torch, a tank, regs, and a few carbon rods. It was the medium I was looking for. At that time I worked on making pipes and jewelry made of gold, silver and very little color. I also learned how to build kilns. Clinton revolutionized the design of the lampworker's kiln by making front flip doors. This allowed for easier access.

What was the first thing you made?

The classic mushroom pendant. It came out pretty darn good. I was hooked from then on.

You won the GTT Delta Elite at the 2002 Flame Off. Is that the torch you use now?

Yes, I won the first ever Flame Off and feel very blessed. It was very nerve racking for me. I had never blown glass in front of that many people before. The Flame Off was a great experience. (I learned that the pipe makers aren't the only ones filled with ego). Unfortunately, my shop was broken into this last fall and all my torches were stolen. I'm back on a GTT Mirage for now but I miss my Delta. I loved that torch!

Have GTT's changed your style at all?

I have used Minor Major and Carlisle, not to mention the Victor welding torch. GTT torches didn't change my style; they just helped to improve my style by making a quicker and much hotter torch which works well for how I use it.

You use dichro a lot in your pieces; do you feel it adds something special?

I do use my share of dichro. I use Dichroic Alchemy a lot. I love the way it reflects the colors of light. It adds so much to a piece.

Where do you get your inspiration?

I get my inspiration from everyday life, in the little things I see and love.

Do you sketch your ideas before you sit at the torch?

I do keep a sketchbook for ideas. I still like to draw and it helps me remember the 10 different new things I thought of that day to make. The hardest part is finding the time to make them.

Do you like any other mediums?

I love anything to do with making beautiful things. I paint and sculpt clay all the time with my son Zion.

Do you find it difficult to balance the business aspect of being an artist?

Yes it is hard balancing business and family. There is only so much time in the day and right now my son needs most of that time. Sometimes I just can't fulfill the demand of the business/art world. As my son grows older, I hope to have more focus on it.

Is your family supportive of you being an artist?

My family has always been supportive of me to some extent. It really took my win at the flame off though to prove to them that glass is my career and that I am an artist.

Do you have any advice for beginning female glassblowers?

My advice to beginning female glassblowers is not to get discouraged by the big bad bark of life. Go for it! Grab it and take it to the top, don't stop because women rock.

Do you have any classes coming up?

Yes, I am going to be teaching a class or two at Glass Evolution's new studio. Check out their website (www.glassevolution.com) for the details.