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December 2010 Issue 100

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ARTIST PROFILE

Facing the muse

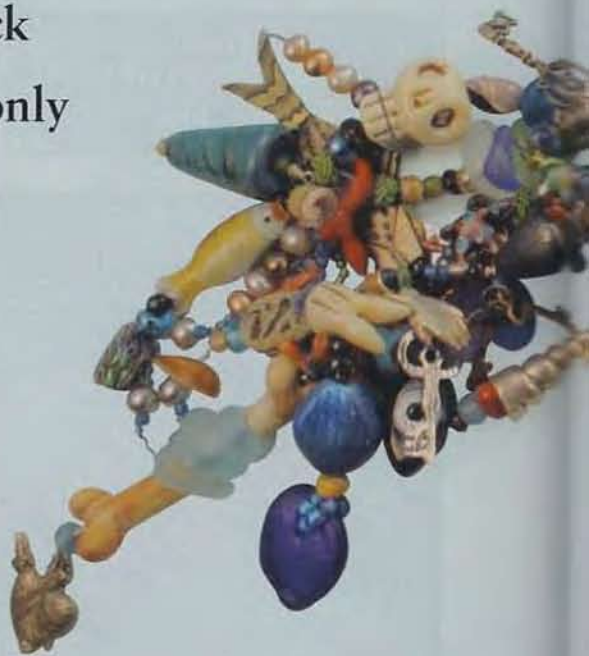
Lampworker Janice Peacock
left bead making behind, only
to rediscover her passion.

by Ann Dee Allen


Pirates, masks, and glass may not appear to have much in common — unless you're Janice Peacock. Pirates and masks are among the sources of inspiration for Janice, who has been making jewelry for more than 20 years and lampworking glass beads for 18.

Her most recent jewelry piece for exhibition was her *Anne Bonny's Treasure* necklace in the International Society of Glass Beadmakers' (ISGB) 2010 Convergence II competition and exhibit. Anne Bonny was a pirate in the 1700s, and the necklace includes things that Anne would have collected, such as bones and shells.

"I love pirates because they scavenge so artfully," Janice says. "I'm really interested in the hunt! I searched through all of my treasures to find things I could repurpose in the necklace."



Janice has been hunting for new mediums to express her creativity for most of her life. In 1992, after making jewelry and experimenting with photography, silk painting, and polymer clay, she found herself at a crossroads. She was already curious about working with glass, and couldn't find the beads she wanted for a jewelry design, so she thought she would try lampworking. "I realized that everything I was trying to



Janice Peacock finds that her best work comes from experimentation. Her Aurora beads at top are made with Italian soft glass and inclusions of silver. The beads pictured in this article average 1¼ x 2½ in. (3.2 x 6.4 cm) in size.



do simulated glass,” Janice says. “I thought: I just need to do glass.”

Getting started

Janice found Fenton Glass Studio in Oakland, Calif., in the U.S., where lampworker Brian Kerkvliet was teaching a workshop, and took her first lampworking class from him. The class was a gift to herself after the birth of her daughter, Kiera, now 18. Soon after taking the class, Janice was making glass

beads and scouting for opportunities to learn more about lampworking.

“It was slow going for the first few years with a job (teaching software applications) and a child,” she says. But, she met other bead makers through the ISGB, and her work became better known after she exhibited her beads for the first time at the ISGB Gathering conference in 1998. She learned how to photograph beads for marketing, and soon she was spending her days as a glass artist.

Janice’s *Anne Bonny’s Treasure* necklace includes dozens of her lampworked shells, vessels, bones, animals, and glass bubbles of sand. Incorporated with Janice’s beads are Thai silver, more than 100 pieces of sea glass, and many other items from her bead collection.



Curtain going up

Although pirates and masks don't automatically conjure glass beads, they do call to mind drama, and here is where theater comes in. In 2006, during time off from bead making, Janice took a job at the Town Hall Theater Company in Lafayette, Calif. "Working in your studio, you're not always interacting with other people," she says. "I had beader's block and theater looked really interesting." Janice's experiences as an actor in high school and as a mother watching Kiera gain self-confidence from acting spurred her to take the job.

She started coordinating children's acting classes at Town Hall and contributing in myriad ways. For one theater show, she created four full-sized masks. "They transformed these 13-year-old girls into powerful goddesses!" she recalls. She also led a fundraiser in which artists created masks for sale. As director of education for the company, she developed an impressive children's program that won accolades.

"I loved the theater," Janice says. "It was an amazing part of my life, but I found myself missing glass-bead making. In my managerial role, I wasn't being creative. The job had become about schedules, budgets, and licensing — I was no longer having fun."

By November 2009, she was ready to resign from the theater company and get back to glass. She remains involved with Town Hall as a volunteer, however.

"It was very hard to resign," she says. "But I wanted to return to what I was meant to do. I had so much success when I was working for the theater company, but there wasn't any time for myself. With the theater, if some small thing doesn't happen, the show doesn't go on. There was always a crisis. The biggest crisis in making beads is when the bead cracks or you can't get it off the mandrel."

Janice had known when it was time to take a hiatus from bead making for the theater, and she knew when it was time to jump back



Top: *Whistler Mask* from Janice's *Glowing Series* is made from Italian soft glass and dichroic glass and is acid etched.

Center: Also from the *Glowing Series*, *Smiling Mask* has the same properties as *Whistler Mask*.

Bottom: *Peaceful Mask*, from the *Ancient Series*, is lampworked in Italian soft glass with various powders and enamels.

into beads. "When I stopped making glass beads, I became a better bead maker," she says.

Masks have been touch points for Janice for years. She has been incorporating images of faces into her glass beads since 2000 when she made a glass face bead with a technobent. "I used dichroic glass inside of the head and clear glass for the face," she says. "It was supposed to look like there was a machine inside of the head, like a robot. Instead, it looked like there was a soft inner glow — the opposite of the effect I was looking for."

What goes around

It was one of those happy mistakes that led her to make face beads over the past decade, she says: "At first I worked mostly with small heads. The heads morphed into different shapes and started to look more like masks." She worked new techniques into her skill set, including sculpting clear glass over layers of foil and other components.

"After a while I got sick of clear glass and bubbles and dichroic glass, so I started making faces in opaque glass," she explains. "The beads I've made recently look like they've been recovered from the ocean. They have lots of different powders on them, some melted in, some left unmelted and crusty. Rather than having a lot going on deep down inside, they leave a lot to see on the outside."

Her methods are spontaneous and she doesn't keep a lot of notes, so she doesn't replicate much of her work. "It's kind of like a salad bar," she says. "I'll have dozens of different trays of jars and powders that I choose from. In the past, before there were many suppliers of lampworking tools, I had to come up with what I needed myself. I made enamel-powder shakers out of old film canisters by covering the openings with fine-mesh pipe screens from Haight-Ashbury."

Janice also absorbs ideas from the richness of the

Advice to other bead makers

- Don't sell everything that you make, keep a few pieces that you love.
- Don't get into a production mode too early in your flameworking experience. Making the same beads over and over can lead to burnout and you'll feel less creative.
- Go into your studio every day. Even if you're just sorting glass rods, get in there.
- Organize your studio, discard what you don't need, and rediscover what you never know what you'll find!

world around her, including masks she collects on her travels. "They take me back to certain places and certain times in my life," she says. In January 2010, she spent three weeks teaching English in Thailand and brought back several masks, including one of a Buddha. "Some of my new mask beads have peaceful closed eyes and a small smile," she says. The beads remind her of Buddhas and Thailand.



In January 2010, Janice spent three weeks teaching English at an elementary school in Chiang Mai, Thailand. "That was a life-changing experience for me, reminding me that there are lots of ways to make a difference in this world," she says.

Other ideas come from the images and masks that Janice sees in books and museums, but her finished beads are far removed from the original depictions. "Most masks have meanings for the cultures they belong to," she says. "I don't try to duplicate masks because they're not part of my culture."

Sharing the bounty

Over the years as Janice experimented and studied with many lampworkers, including Loren Stump, Vittorio Constantini, and Lucio Bubacco, she became a more accomplished bead maker. Soon, her work was included in books and exhibitions. She also began teaching glass-bead making and giving presentations about her work and making beads.

In July 2009, Janice gave a presentation titled "The Journey of the Mask" at the ISGB Gathering. The talk was about the changes in her life as she journeyed away from glass and back. "My work is about masks and their transformational properties," she says. "The theater is all about the power of transformation, which is one reason it appeals to me."

While the ISGB was instrumental in Janice's work gaining notice, it was also the locus of a longtime relationship with other lampworkers. Her husband, Jeff, created the first ISGB website and together they helped launch isgb.org's online forum. "The forum is a great way to transfer knowledge from artist to artist," says Janice, who praises bead makers for their willingness to share information about techniques.

As for her latest trials, at the end of the summer Janice was using Double Helix glass powders, which create iridized or metallic effects. She is now combining these new powders with other powders that she has used in the past to create ancient-looking effects in her beads. She experiments with different flame environments to see which

ones provide the best results. Different mixtures of oxygen and propane coming through the torch, the amount of time in the torch flame, and the distance at which she holds the glass from the flame all play a part in the visual effects and colors in the finished pieces.

"I just started doing some very simple samples so that I could recreate certain colors," she says. "I still like the surprise of what might come out." And if she doesn't like the beads she gets the first time around, she gives them back to the earth: "I throw them in my garden — I'm making a future archaeological dig in my yard!" she says. Perhaps some lucky bead lovers of the future will find her castoffs on treasure hunts of their own. ●

You can find Janice's treasures at her website: janicepeacock.com.

Top and center: The red *Peaceful Mask* and bronze-colored *African Warrior* are from the Ancient Series.

Bottom: *Horned Beast* is from the Ancient Series. All three beads are Italian soft glass with powders and enamels.



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