

COURSE DETAILS – WEEKEND WE0043

TITLE: INTRICATE SURFACES – COLOUR AND TEXTURE WITH KILN-FORMED GLASS

TUTOR: ALEX ROBINSON

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

**AIMS OF COURSE:**

This weekend course introduces beginners to the exciting possibilities of ‘warm glass’ – using fusing and slumping techniques to form glass in the kiln. With a focus on colour and texture, students will be doing small-scale fusing with glass, making use of other decorative elements such as frits, stringers and metal inclusions. Slumping glass into impressions made in loose plaster allows students to explore the magic of creating texture and low-level relief in a glass surface.

**WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD ACHIEVE:**

By the end of the weekend each student will have created a range of glass ‘nuggets’ or small tiles, and used a selection of these to make one or two colourful hanging panels in fused glass. There is also the option of slumping one of these glass pieces into a mould to create a bowl.

In producing this work students learn how to cut glass, how to combine coloured glass by fusing and how to create texture and low-level relief in a glass surface by slumping. Over the weekend, students become acquainted with the glass kiln, understanding what happens to glass in the kiln during a firing cycle, learning about glass compatibility and how to load and unload a kiln.

**MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES COVERED:**

We cover simple glass cutting – cutting straight lines, gentle curves, circles and strips. Students learn how to fuse or slump at different levels inside the kiln to achieve different effects in glass. A large selection of materials is provided including glass sheet, powdered glass frit, stringers and noodles, metal inclusions such as copper sheet, mesh and wire. Handouts cover kiln processes, chart the firing cycle and explain strain points, soaking and annealing.

**TEACHING METHOD:**

All students work towards one or two main glass pieces and have an allotted space in three kiln firings with which to make the glass elements for their projects. Teaching will be a combination of methods: showing a wide range of samples – as well as photographs in books – to illustrate possibilities, demonstrations of techniques, group evaluation of the glass coming out of the kiln, technical information explained and recorded in handouts.

**EVENING SESSIONS:**

First evening session – attendance is an essential part of the course:

8–10pm	Introduction. Showing samples: levels of fusing, inclusions and frits. Experimentation, assembling glass for fused nuggets. Making impressions in loose plaster. Loading the kiln – placing glass at different levels.
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After a brief introduction showing glass samples, students get immediately involved. The first evening session is a freeform exploration of possibilities. Students have access to pre-cut pieces of glass in all colours, various objects with which to make impressions and textures in loose plaster, and a range of glass products as well as metal inclusions to play with. The emphasis of this session will be to try things out. I introduce students to the kiln and explain how to load it.

Sketching (both during the class and afterwards) will be encouraged at this stage to plan designs.

*Please note: although the class officially runs for an hour, it would be advisable to work on later (until 10pm) in order to have sufficient time to make the first batch of glass nuggets.*

## GENERAL TIMETABLE:

### Day 1

9–10.30am      Handheld slideshow of images of previous students' work.  
Induction into safe working practices in the studio.  
*Demonstration:* Simple glass cutting – breaking with running pliers.

The session starts with an informal look at pictures of glasswork from previous courses to inspire and illustrate the possibilities of the course.

After a short induction into health and safety, students see a demonstration of glass cutting, and learn how to use a glass cutter to score and tap glass and how to break glass along straight lines with running pliers or by hand. They can practise cutting simple shapes from plain float glass.

11–12.30pm    *Demonstration:* Cutting gentle curves and circles.  
*Demonstration:* Using grozing pliers – grozing and nibbling.  
Unloading the kiln – group review.

I demonstrate how to use the glass cutter to tap out simple curves in glass, how to use the circle cutter and how to use the grozing pliers to clean up the edge of the glass by grozing and nibbling. Students can put these new skills into practice straight away on fusing glass.

By this time the kiln should be cool enough to open, so we look at the glass nuggets made in the evening session. The lunch break gives students time to absorb what they have seen and start thinking about designs for a panel.

2–3.30pm      Cutting and assembling glass for the first project.  
Showing samples: choosing glass and combining colours.  
*Demonstration:* Using kiln paper to create relief in the glass.

The afternoon is an intensive session of individual work to cut and assemble the glass pieces for the first project. Students are shown colour samples in fused glass over a lightbox to allow them to make informed decisions when choosing colours to work with. Students may want to produce a glass blank to make into a bowl, or they may prefer to make a flat hanging panel or set of glass tiles. We will consider ways of attaching fittings for hanging panels and requirements for making flat tiles. I also demonstrate the use of thick fibre paper to create shapes in relief in the glass.

4–5.30pm      *Demonstration:* Use of stringers and noodles – using heat to bend.  
*Demonstration:* Use of frits – sieving and making use of templates.  
Loading the kiln – using layers to obtain different levels of fusing.

The last session includes demonstrations of how to add other decorative detail into the glass. Stringers and noodles are long thin pieces of glass which can be bent and manipulated over the flame of a candle, and students will be shown how to incorporate this into the work. Students will already be using glass frits in all grades from powder to coarse chunks. However this demonstration shows how to create subtle overlapping shapes and colours in the glass using frits and templates.

Finally the students help to load the kiln, building the shelves up at different levels to exploit the temperature differential inside the kiln to get the results they want.

We can work later into the evening if necessary.

After supper    Optional Evening Slideshow – in which I talk about my work.

## Day 2

9–10.30am      *Talk* – the firing cycle.  
                         – compatibility of glass.

In the morning I go through the more technical aspects of glass fusing and slumping and what happens to the glass during the firing cycle, giving students handouts for reference. One can do simple fusing and slumping without knowing the finer details of the kiln process, however this information gives any students a good base knowledge if they choose to follow through with any further courses in glass fusing and slumping.

11–12.30pm      Unloading the kiln – group review.  
                         Cutting and assembling glass for the second project.  
                         *Demonstration*: the glass grinder / diamond pads for finishing.

We open the kiln and look at the glass from the previous day's work. Often the results dictate the direction that students take in the second project. If any glass needs some simple coldworking, I will demonstrate the use of the glass grinder to abrade larger areas of glass as well as the diamond pads to finish the edges. Students begin to work on their second project.

2–3.30pm        Cutting and assembling glass for the second project.  
                         Loading the kiln – using shelves to exploit the temperature differential.

The final afternoon is an intensive making session, bringing together all knowledge and skills acquired over the weekend to create a second project. For those wanting to slump their glass blanks into a mould to make a bowl, I explain how to use the kiln shelves to create both fusing and slumping temperatures in the same kiln. By 3 o'clock the kiln should have been loaded with all work in place.

### STUDENT PREPARATION FOR COURSE IF ANY:

I bring a selection of items to make impressions into loose plaster, but students could also bring their own objects if they wish to experiment. Appropriate objects would need to be fairly small (the impressionable area being no larger than 5 cm square) with an interesting texture or relief surface. Examples could include: a flower head (particularly with defined petal shapes, i.e. a daisy), a fork, a piece of bubble wrap, a small ornament, a wood screw, a piece of tree bark, leaves with defined veins, etc.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY:

The tutor instructs students in health and safety issues relevant to this course. Students may work unsupervised on agreed projects once they have satisfied the tutor as to their competence. There may be restrictions on the equipment available to students in the tutor's absence. All Personal Protection Equipment, apart from footwear, is provided by the College.

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### MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE:

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT ON PRACTICAL COURSES YOU MAY WELL NEED TO PURCHASE MATERIALS THROUGHOUT THE COURSE TO COMPLETE PROJECTS**

Included in the non-residential fee for this course: the cost of 2kg of glass, glass products and inclusions, kiln paper and plaster, and is in addition to any items you may purchase individually.

**PLEASE NOTE – PIECES FROM THE LAST FIRING WILL NEED TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE COLLEGE AFTER THE FOLLOWING MORNING. THEY ARE TOO HEAVY TO POST.**

### These items will be available for purchase in the College Shop:

Sketch book	A selection of drawing materials, e.g. pencils, pens, charcoal, Conté, crayons etc.
Scissors	Paint brushes

### Please bring any of the above, if you have them, and in addition:

Apron	Enclosed toe footwear (essential)
Camera	

**COURSE TIMETABLE** (*unless otherwise stated above or agreed with the tutor during the course*)

Course timetable for 2–9 day courses – each course starts with a welcome session on the first evening of the start date of the course and is followed by 2–9 days depending on the length of the course.

<b>Arrival Day</b>	From 4.00pm 7.00 8.15–9.15	Arrival for residential students. Non-residential students please arrive by 6.45pm for welcome chat and dinner. Dinner. First teaching session.
<b>Daily Timetable</b>	<b>9.15am</b> 10.30 12.45pm <b>2.00pm</b> 3.30 5.00 7.00 8.15	<b>Morning classes.</b> Coffee. Lunch. <b>Afternoon classes.</b> Tea. Classes finish. Dinner. Evening working – students may have evening access to certain workshops in the absence of their tutor, but only with their tutor's permission and provided it is safe to do so.
<b>Departure – last day</b>	10.00am 3.00pm 3.30	Residential students are asked to vacate rooms. Classes finish. Tea then departure.

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