

Sculptural Birds

Lampwork Glass Tutorial

By Mary Lockwood

Thank you for your interest in my Birds Tutorial. I hope you enjoy creating the many birds I've covered here. The silver bluebird, the cardinal, my personal favorite- the chickadee, the floral birds and all those that will be born from your imagination using the techniques I've included.

Emphasis in this tutorial is on building the birds themselves, but I do also show some options for different wing effects.

Please read the entire tutorial through once before beginning to work.

Necessities and Materials

GLASS & MATERIAL

5mm rods of 104coe glass:

While I do list what glass is used for each bird, you can use any colors you like, there is no requirement for specific colors of glass. Here is a list of what I personally used:

Black
2 Different Opaque Grays
Clear
White
Transparent Red
Triton –or other blue high-silver glass
Light Brown Thompson Enamel
Transparent Dk. Grass Green

EQUIPMENT & SAFETY

Standard Safe Studio Requirements including but not limited to:

Respirator Mask for working with glass powders.

Fire Extinguisher
Good Ventilation
Lampworking Safety Glasses
Propane Outside
Oxygen Tanks chained securely
Bowl of water on work surface

***You are responsible for your own safety!**

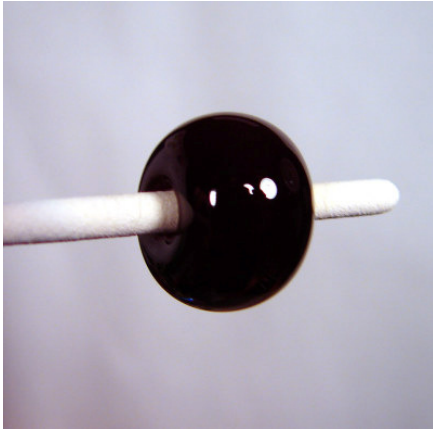
Tools and equipment:

Mashers
Graphite Marver or paddle
Tweezers/pliers
Hot Plate or Warmer

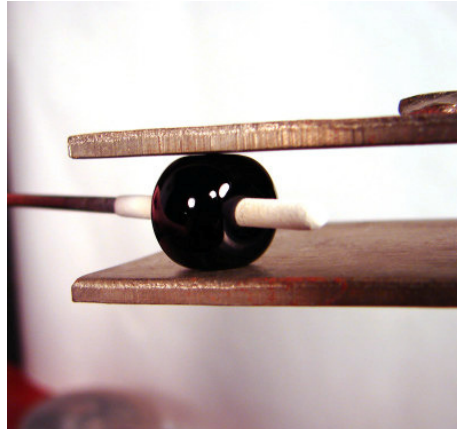


Silver Bluebird

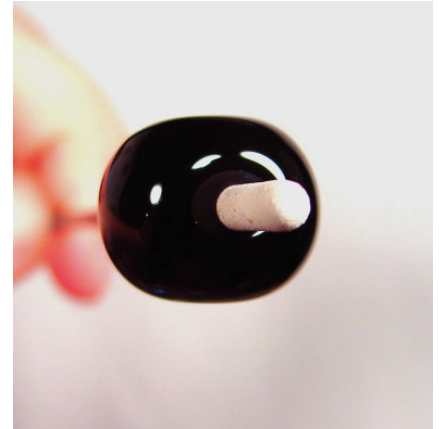
This little bird always look so happy to me, I often call him Shiny Happy Bluebird. I almost always use the silver glasses for these because I like to reduce them at the end for the metallic finish. It really highlights the wing detail.



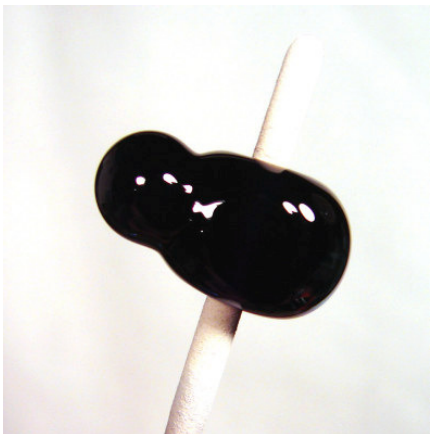
1- This bird is the foundation for all the other birds. Concentrate on construction and placement of elements because they are basically the same for the other birds. Begin with a 3/4" base bead of Triton, silver blue glass.



2- Mash the sides gently. You don't want a tab shaped bead, you just want two slightly flattened sides. This will give you a good base to attach the wings, and will also help you keep everything aligned.



3- This image shows the very slight affect of the mashing. You still want a nice chubby bird.



4- Add a small gather of Triton glass for the head. Melt the connection smooth. No sharp ridge, it will weaken the joint. If there is a sharp ridge here, and the bird is struck, the head will come off.

Head placement affects the attitude of the bird. Up high looks like the bird is taking off, center looks like flight and down low looks like diving.



5- Opposite the head, make a swipe of glass that will be the footprint for the base of the tail.

The next image shows it more clearly as well.

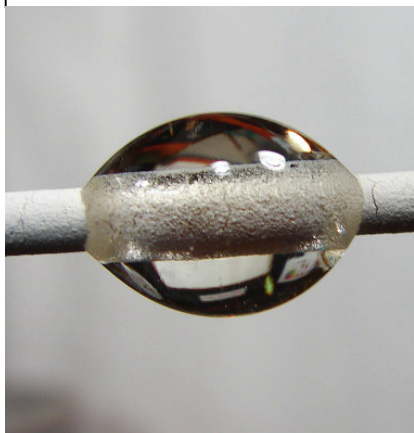


6- The white arrow shows the placement and action of adding the tail.

7- Melt this securely so that the seam where it meets the body is smooth. This helps form a strong connection between the tail and body that is less likely to snap away. Just like the head.

Northern Cardinal

I made my very first bird as an entry into a juried ornament contest for the Ohio Governor's ornament collection. I chose the Northern Cardinal because it is our state bird and I was trying to score points for my patriotism. It worked, my ornament juried in and I've been making birds ever since.



1- Begin with a barrel of clear glass on your mandrel.

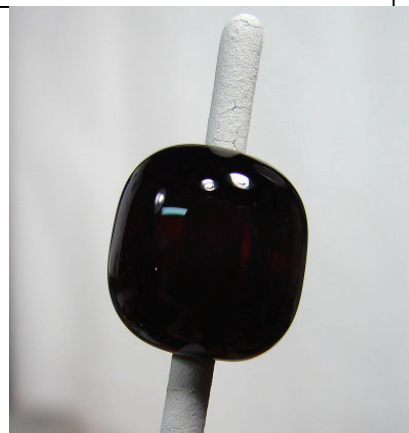
Clear ya say? Yes! When using rich transparents in a piece with varying degrees of thickness, if you don't put clear cores in the solid parts they will appear darker than the rest of the piece. In other words, the wings will look like they don't match the body. By putting the clear core inside the body, it makes it appear lighter and reflects more light helping it to match the thinner parts.



2- Encase the clear core with transparent red.

I'm going to take this empty spot to voice my love of effetre red striker. I know everybody loves lauscha red, yay for lauscha red, but I simply adore effetre striking red #046!

I think it is one of the most under appreciated colors in the soft glass palette. There...I said it!



3- Because I'm building the cardinal a little more upright than the bluebird, I've made my base body a little longer, more barrel shaped than round.

Be sure to check out the end of this section for a tip regarding how to make the smoothest looking bead holes in transparent beads!



4- Just as for the bluebird, it is at this point that we add the head. Same rules of proper construction apply—no sharp ridge where the two pieces come together.

Notice the position of the head in this one. Towards the top, and angled up.



5- Add a swipe of red across the back for the tail. Add it opposite the head, just like for the bluebird.

I like to visualize a diagonal line running from the angle of the head, through the angle of the tail. In this case it would run from 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock. **When I add my wing swipes, they will follow that line.**



6- Add a swipe for the wings on each side of the bird. Follow the angle formed by the head and tail as I mentioned in the last step.

We will now start building up layers.

Raked Feather Wing

I do have one more wing style I'd like to show you because it really can add lots of interest and movement to a bird.



1- Begin with a gather of glass at the end of a rod.

I'm not specifying size because it doesn't really matter. The bigger the gather, the bigger the wing.



2- Scroll around the gather with a contrasting color of stringer.

Here I am using ink blue as the base and white as my stringer.



3- Melt the scrolls in smooth

4- Mash the striped gather into a lollipop shape.



5- Heat the face of one side of the striped lollipop and using the tip of the white stringer, rake the lines in one direction several times as shown.

6- You can rake them in either direction. Repeat for the other side so both sides of the lollipop look raked like this image.



7- Soften the lollipop with your flame and use your needle nose pliers or smooth tweezers to pinch a fan shaped pattern into the wing.



8- Shape the edges of the wing as you like. Here, I have touched a hot rod of glass to the edge of the wing in several spots and pulled it out into tapered points.

9- Preheat your pliers and hold onto the wing and melt away the rod. Place wing on hot plate to keep hot until you are ready to attach it.

I hope that this tutorial has inspired you to make some beautiful birds and given you a good foundation to build your sculptural work upon. If you have not already gotten a copy of the Mushrooms & Fish Tutorial, it is another resource good for people looking to improve their sculptural skills.