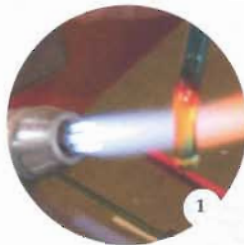




Just Bead it!

Angie Polonich and daughter Jade McLendon have been making Bitchin' Beads for almost 10 years and the true uniqueness of their jewellery has been a MOM Magazine favourite since we launched in 2007. They each have their own studio - Angie is in Calgary, Jade is in Edmonton - and we decided it was time to find out what goes into making these funky, chunky, brash and sassy pieces!

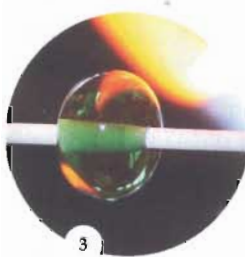
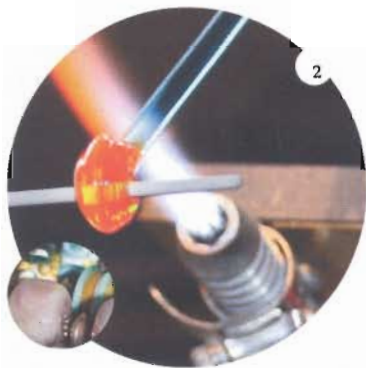


How did you get started?

Angie had been involved in rustic wood and stained glass making gifts, and angels, and frogs. The supplier said why don't you try this bead making class, her exact response was, "Ya, like I need another f***ing hobby." But she knew that I really wanted to learn. The class was very expensive so mom took it, and taught me. We have been hooked ever since.

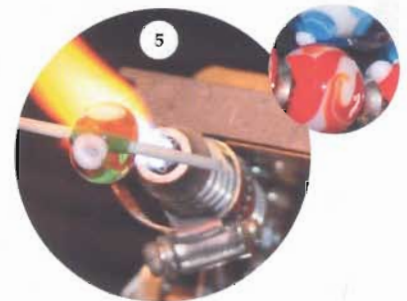
Where do you get your inspiration?

For me, mostly fashion, I am always into what's hot for the season, the colors and I find that chunky bold pieces are a statement on anyone. We say go big or go home!!! We are also inspired by the seasons, and of course our customers.



Will they break?

All of our beads are kiln-annealed which makes them stronger, and the glass beads should last for hundreds of years. That being said, we string the bracelets and necklaces on 49 strand stainless steel wire (its the best available). Sometimes the wire will eventually break. If that happens get the beads back to us. The hearts are more fragile since they are thinner in the center, and beads with detail that is raised are also fragile. We do lifetime guarantee our beads.



Do you do home parties?

We do not do home parties. We did when we first started, but it is so important for us to really educate our customers about lampwork, how the beads are made and good quality. We find it is best for people to come to our home studios and see it first hand, then they can make an educated decision on their purchase, without feeling obligated.



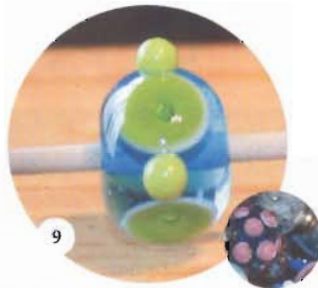
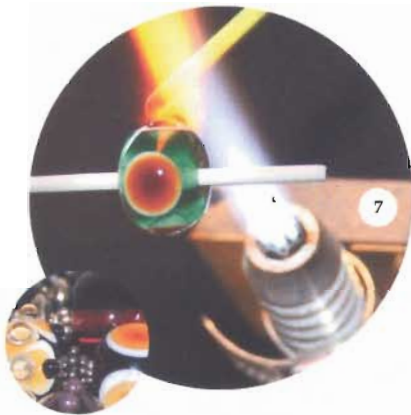
Where do you get your beads?

I know that this is ridiculous but I have actually had people ask me "OK, so where do you get your beads from?" after they have seen the studio. We don't use any filler beads, only swarovski crystals and sterling spacers.



Why don't you open a store?

We will open a store eventually but for right now, things are good the way they are. We love being personal and having the charm to visit with our customers, it doesn't seem like work to us, and also, we can go on vacation for two weeks and not have to worry about the store, not to mention, that if we did open, we would not have enough stock.



The Process

1. Starting the bead. The torch is fueled by propane and oxygen. The bead is made on a mandrel with bead release on the end so the bead will slide off when finished. Here I am heating the glass rod, once it starts to become molten I start the process.

2. Wrapping the melting glass onto the mandrel, twisting the mandrel away from me, and pulling the glass towards me.

3. Size matters. Once I am happy with the size of the bead, I keep turning it in the flame until it is perfectly round.

4. The decorating process. I have chosen white dots. I will heat the tip of the glass stringer and place it onto the bead, then pull the stringer and repeat.



This is looking at the bead through the didymium safety glasses that I wear while working. The purple lens takes away the orange flame that comes off the bead. It makes it easier to see where to apply the glass when decorating each bead.

5. Trapping an air bubble. I have heated up each white dot, and poked it with a tungsten poker. This leaves an indent in the centre of the dot.

6. Encasing the poked dot with a lime green stringer. Once melted in it will leave an air bubble in the centre of the dot.

7. Finished! The green looks slightly brown but will come back to a vibrant lime green once completely cooled.

8. The finished bead immediately goes into a kiln and is held at 980 degrees until I am finished making beads for the day. My kiln is then shut down and this is called Annealing. It strengthens the beads, and prevents breakage. It takes about 7 hours for the kiln to shut down. Once the bead is cooled, it slides off the mandrel, and then the inside bead release powder is drilled out with a diamond bit drill under water. It then is put into a set where I will then make it into jewelry.

9. The finished bead! **M**

The beads are not sold individually, they are set as bracelets, rings, necklaces, earrings, even pens and keychains!

This is a general look at how the bracelets are made.



Each bead is hand drilled



Beads are carefully chosen and strung together because they only sell their pieces as jewellery, not individual beads.

Making
the
pieces



The bracelets are strung on a 49 strand stainless steel wire.



They finalize the bracelet with a bead, in this case a heart, by wrapping a headpin on the final bead.