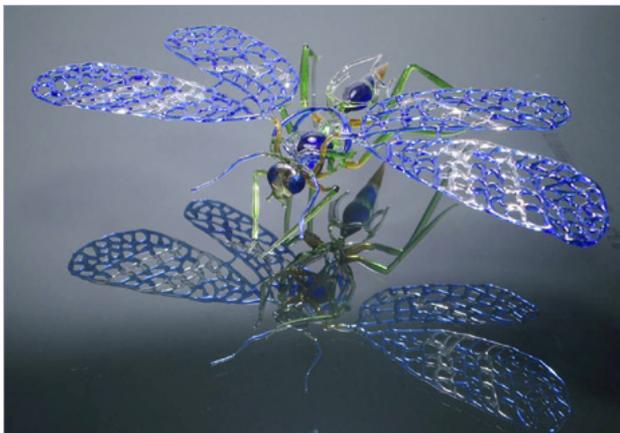


GLASS BEAD evolution



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There Be Dragons...

Dr. Julie Anne Denton, Zurich Glass School: Sculpting Dragons

by Terry Henry, Dragon Slayer in Training



I have always loved dragons. I'm sure it's something that I inherited from my father, who loved dragons too. We shared the entire *Dragonriders of Pern* series by Anne McCaffrey and other dragon-related sci-fi/fantasy books. Dad had dragon sculptures all around the house: glass dragons, ceramic dragons, stained-glass dragons, and wooden dragons. We had brass bowls with three-toed Chinese dragons, and a bigger-than-life bronze incense burner—with dragons.

You can only imagine how thrilled I was when I saw that Dr. Julie Anne Denton, the founder of the Zurich Glass School, was teaching an online workshop on making sculptural glass dragons. Although the class had started the day before, I contacted the school and was allowed to join late and catch up.

Each live session of the online course, offered via Zoom, was recorded and may be watched as many times as necessary to “conquer” each lesson. There are also supplemental PDF drawings and pictures to help while flaming. The class was comprised of five lessons, one night a week for five weeks, lasting from one to two hours in length, depending on the complexity of the tasks. The class used borosilicate glass, a relatively new medium for me. As many glass artists already know, borosilicate is very different from soda lime glass.

Throughout the class, Dr. Julie—she prefers this form of her name for its informality and approachability—always focused on beginning the project with the end in mind. Her lessons are entertaining, humorous, and informative. The class started with group discussions and a progress check, followed by a new presentation ending with a question and answer session.



Photo 1. Dragon tendrils and dragon claws

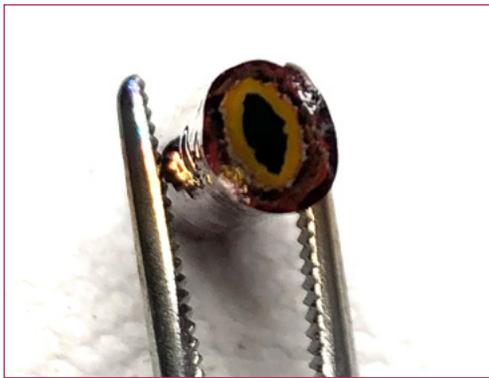


Photo 2. Dragon eye cane for dragon eye murrine



Photo 3. Dragon wings made from borosilicate tubing

Lessons for the Sculpting Dragons class were as follows:

Lesson 1: Dragon Tendrils and Claws

Lesson One focused on application of colored borosilicate glass to a clear glass rod using a white base and the addition of frit. Dr. Julie explains the pulling of borosilicate cane and how and where heat should be applied. The canes are to be used as dragon tendrils later in the class. She assigned a practice challenge; which involved making teeny-tiny dragon claws. This exercise was presented early in the lessons, so we had time to practice before adding claws to the finished dragon. Photo 1 shows my practice claws with tendril cane in the background.

Lesson 2: Dragon Eye Murrine¹ Cane

Lesson Two focused on building a large cane for the dragon's-eye murrine. We selected an eye color, drew a diagram, and used it as a map during construction. We then pulled fine stringers of different colors to give the eyes depth and complexity and lined them up in order of use. Now it was time to shape the iris of the eye into a dragon iris, which should be pointy at each end. Again, borosilicate is so much different from soft glass! It took forever to shape the center of the eye. After forming the iris, glass stringers were applied. My takeaway from this experience is the eye grows as more glass is added. Next time I will pull more stringers than I think I need. After the eye cane was assembled, it was time to pull the cane following the instructions in the previous lesson.

Lesson 3: Marias, Points and Wings

Lesson Three was all about preparation and execution of a blown dragon wing. The experience was fun and quite a challenge. We learned to take a glass rod and make evenly spaced marias² to get a feel for the glass. We were also instructed on how to pull and straighten points from glass tubing. After pulling points we applied colored glass, allowed the glass to thicken up at one end of the tubing, causing compression, and blew the tubing out at the other end to make a "funnel-like" shape. We then cut the funnel into halves and pulled each half into a wing shape with tips, spurs and an avolio³. Then we prepared the wings for attachment to the dragon's body. I used 32mm tubing for my wings and a color called Experimental Green, which proved to be incompatible with my tubing, causing a kind of crazing. This sent me back to the drawing board. Photo 3 shows my successful dragon wings.

¹ Murrine: (singular: murrina) are colored patterns or images made in a glass cane that are revealed when the cane is cut into thin cross-sections. (Wikipedia, 2019)

² Maria: Basically, a maria is an accumulation of glass caused by pushing molten glass into itself to create a large gather. It can be used to anchor one piece of glass to another. (Denton 2020, personal communication)
An expanded area in a rod or tube, formed by compressing the length of the glass. (Dunham, 1997)

³ Avolio: A spool-shaped element, usually in clear cristallo glass, used in a goblet or vase to join the bowl to the stem, or the stem to the foot. (Murano, n.d.)

Lesson 4 Alternate Wings and Seahorse Body

Lesson Four provided an additional skill. We learned how to make a seahorse as a way to enhance our skills prior to assembly of the final project. Making the seahorse uses all of the skills previously taught. We made a wig-wag pattern on the seahorse cane and tapered each end while leaving a fat center which was then slumped into a body. It took me five tries before I finally conquered the seahorse. Photo 4 is my best seahorse. We also learned an alternative to blown wings, the lace wing. While I haven't tried this wing type myself, there is a photograph of Julie's dragon with lace wings in Photo 6 and a photograph of Cathy Somody's lace-wing dragon in Photo 10.

Lesson 5 Dragon Body and Putting It All together: Hanging, Framed, and Standing Dragons

Finally, we got to make our dragons! In Class Five we learned how to combine our dragon parts into a finished dragon. Dr. Julie provided much more than expected. Not only did she show us how to assemble the hanging dragon (photo 5), she also included instructions and demonstration for a framed dragon with lace wings (photo 6), and a standing dragon (photo 7).

All in all, this was a fabulous class. There were nine of us from across the world: Sydney, Australia; San Antonio, Texas; Palmer, Alaska; Buffalo, New York; Galion, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Eureka, California; Atascadero, California; and most impressive Dr. Julie Anne Denton who lives in Zürich, Switzerland and got up at 2 am her time to start class! The Dragon Slayers in training have provided dragon and seahorses photographs of class work in photographs 8-13. Photos are courtesy of each student.

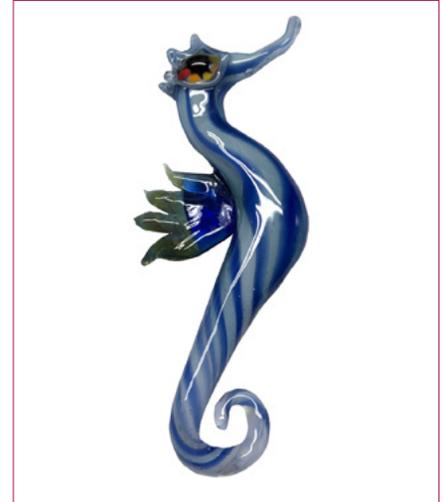


Photo 4. Seahorse body



Photo 5, Dr. Julie's Hanging Red Dragon, [Click photo for video](#)



Photo 6. Dr. Julie's Framed "Dragon Breath" with lace wings. [Click Photo for Video](#)



Photo 7. Dr. Julie's Standing Dragon "Smaug". [Click Photo for Video](#)



Photo 8. Seahorse by Vikki Titus



Photo 9. Seahorse by Holly Menard

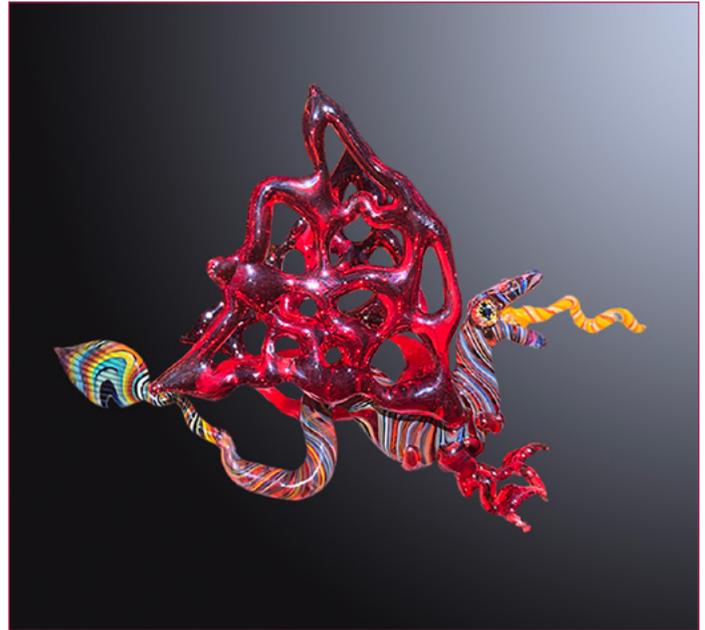


Photo 10 Dragon with Lace wings by Cathy Somody



Photo 11. Dragon by Gail Oldroyd



Photo 12 Dragon by Melea Farlow-Low

Dr. Julie has so much to offer and many more classes offered all year-round. I made eight new friends taking this class and improved my skills. She set up a private Facebook page so we could share our achievements and discuss our problems together. She provides an atmosphere of “collective community” where we can help each other, share our trials, and successes.

This write-up would not be complete without a bit about our instructor and [Zurich Glass School](#).



Photo 13. Dragon by Terry Henry

Dr. Julie Anne Denton is originally from the Isle of Man. Her upbringing in the hotel trade on this heritage-rich island in the Irish Sea continues to influence her work, which includes the key themes of folklore, nature and counterculture. She is recognized worldwide as a glass artist who combines storytelling and technical skills in her own unique way.

After her academic studies at the University of Wolverhampton for glass and philosophy she attended the University of Sunderland's National Glass Center in England, where she earned a Doctor of Philosophy in the hot combination of sandcast and flameworked glass from an artist's perspective. She continued her studies in the U.S. with a one-year apprenticeship with maestro Emilio Santini who is from Murano, Italy. She traveled to study with other well-known glass artists, and finally rounded off her education with Bertil Vallien of the renowned Swedish design house Kosta Boda (est. 1742). Julie settled in Zürich in 2010 and opened her design firm Atelier #315 and later founded Zurich Glass School, her remote learning platform. She works with a small team beside her who all care deeply about learning and creating quality pieces which resonate beauty, workmanship, and authenticity.

Stay safe, keep creating, and until we can all gather together, I will leave you with another lovely dragon from Dr. Julie Anne Denton (photo 14) and a dragon quote.

***...Here be dragons to be slain,
here be rich rewards to gain.***
—Dorothy L. Sayers



Photo 14. "Dragon", 2015 by J. A. Denton. Flameworked glass; H. 20 cm, W. 15 cm, D. 8 cm. Acquired by Broadfield House Glass Museum, UK for their public collection, photography credit: Kevin Moonan

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