

GLASS ART[®]

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Working in Hot, Warm, and Cold Glass

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Loren Stump



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Stephen Boehme,
Animal Murrine.

On the cover:
Loren Stump, detail of Nativity Triptych.
Photo by Rich Images.

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July/August 2021

Editorial Due	April 20, 2021
Ad Closing	May 20, 2021
Ad Materials	May 30, 2021
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September/October 2021

Editorial Due	June 20, 2021
Ad Closing	July 20, 2021
Ad Materials	July 30, 2021
Issue Mails	August 23, 2021





Loren Stump, Nativity Triptych, fused murrine marquetry, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, 7" x 8-3/4" (open), 2019–2020. Photo by Rich Images.

LOREN STUMP

MAESTRO OF GLASS MURRINE

by Dr. Julie Anne Denton

As I sit in the kitchen quarantining with my dog and cat in my homeland, the Isle of Man, UK, my new best pal the laptop starts to blink. It reminds me that I am about to catch up with a long-standing old friend. In these strange times of isolation, I have actually never felt more connected to the world. In the press of a button and the blink of an eye, on my screen there sits a very handsome, ponytailed, and tanned god of contemporary glass. His name is Loren Stump, and for those of you who may be unfamiliar with this trailblazer, he is known as the murrine king.

As his face appears on my screen, Loren flashes me with his dashing smile and we spend a little time catching up on the news, but today our conversation is not simply a social visit. I have been chosen to interview a man some may call a genius and others a master problem solver. I am interested in where it began, where it is now, and where he is going in the future. I began to pose my questions, and the following is what he relayed to me.

Finding an Artistic Niche

Since the age of sixteen, Loren was working with flat glass alone until he opened a storefront family business in 1978. He created all manner of stained, fused, and cast objects for private and public customers, and it wasn't long before he was running a thriving enterprise. Business boomed, but in the early 1990s with two small children to look after, the artist realized that his business model must pivot.

With that switch in mind, Loren carried on as normal. Since he was a teenager, he had been a friend and customer of Craig and Donna Milliron from the glass supplies company we know today as Arrow Springs. At that time beadmaking was going through what one might call a renaissance. The International Society of Glass Beadmakers (ISGB) was formed in 1990, and Donna was one of the founding members. In the autumn of 1993, Donna took Loren home to view her glass bead collection, the best in contemporary lampworkers' art. When Loren beheld these works, he became excited at the medium's possibilities and exclaimed, "I can do that!"

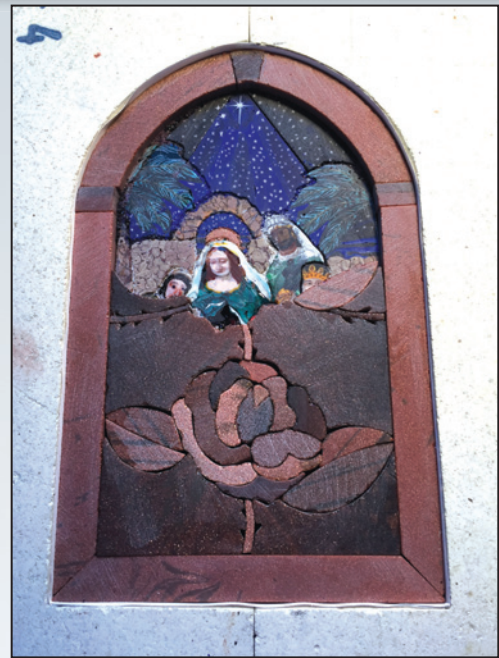
Craig and Donna described the basics to Loren, and after buying a simple Hot Head torch and glass materials, he got to work. When he showed his first creations to the couple, their amazement was palpable, which spurred Loren on. He told me, "That Christmas,

I struck a deal with my mother. If she bought me a lampworking setup plus annealing kiln, I would make her all of her Christmas presents for the family in exchange." The deal was made and *iacta alea est*—the die was cast. With mostly women in the family, he began making beads, little animals, and small cars for them, because he was constrained in size by his Hot Head. Here is the birthplace of the Loren Stump style we all know and love. He found his niche in lampworking that early!

During this time of trial and error, Loren attended a few local bead shows and the ISGB yearly Gathering, where his work sold well. Loren was thirsty, and he attended a slide show given by Jamie Allen, an expert in ancient chevron beads at the Northern Californian Bead Collectors Society, where he first beheld murrine. There he was introduced to the groundbreaking portraiture murrine of the late, great Venetian master and genius, Giacomo Franchini, who unfortunately was committed to an asylum when he was just 47. These portraiture murrine struck awe in Loren, and he has never looked back since. His journey started with little people inside the tiny cars he was making, and in the 2020s he now creates entire scenes in glass such as the *Madonna of the Rocks* originally painted by Da Vinci, a feat never before attempted by an artist working in glass.



Loren Stump, *Virgin of the Rocks*, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, 22 slices in total plus the ends of the pulls, approximately 2-1/4" x 1-1/4" x 1/8", 2005. Photo by Rich Images.



Definitions of Success

When asked how he defined success, Loren shared: “For me it’s something that artists feel inwardly. They are not driven by money but understand that the world works in this way and money buys freedom. I believe that if artists do not have the talent to pull off the technical virtuosity, then they will never be truly successful.

“The advice I would give fresh, budding glass artists is not to believe your mom when she tells you that you are the most talented person in the world. The same is reflected in social media, because people mostly want to be nice, and those “likes” merely promote mediocrity, helping neither artist nor buyer.”

For Loren, success is first for him to be happy with what he has created. Second, it is for his peers to understand his work with no explanation and rate its quality with a “Wow,” since artists cannot pull the wool over the eyes of their contemporaries. Gallery and customer opinions are far down the line, because if an artist can use hyperbole, galleries and customers can be duped into believing what the artist wants.

Given Loren’s definition of success, the next burning question is how successful does he believe he is? “I am barely ever contented with my output. If I were satisfied, then the only option would be to stop working.” For Loren, the act of creation is the eternal quest to reach Nirvana. It was at that moment he bestowed on me why he chose glass as his medium. He is essentially an engineer and inventor in all he does. “Glass is the only artistic medium that continues to challenge me daily. It is the medium that is *the* most difficult to control.”

(Top to bottom) Loren Stump, Nativity Triptych, fused Aventurine intarsia, 7" x 4-3/8" (closed), 7" x 8-3/4" (open). Photos by Rich Images.

Fusing setup for a Nativity Triptych, murrine marquetry overlaid with Aventurine intarsia. Photo by the artist.

When appraising his own work, Loren is most critical regarding its merit. “Occasionally I create something close to good. What I find interesting is stretching the technique past the point of known knowledge, since at that stage there is no one left to ask for advice.” He enjoys learning the limitations of the glass, then pushing that envelope. If this advancement of the genre requires creating a new tool, burning out the flux in a glass, or even creating a different recipe for his batch glass, he has chosen to walk that intrepid path of “Do or Die!” In one way, it is a form of thrill seeking and in another it is the quintessence of the material philosopher.



Loren Stump, Camel Caravan/Casbah Cantina murrine, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, 5-1/4" x 5", 2020–2021. Photo by Rich Images.

Monumental New Work

Loren, like the master painters and sculptors of old, has a Swiss patron named Hermann Pedrotti, a rare breed in the 21st century. Loren's freedom to create groundbreaking, world-class murrine that have never been imagined is due, in part, to the deep passion his patron has for the progression of murrine and miniatures.

Currently, Loren is working on both a very special triptych murrina for his patron called *Nativity*, plus the largest and most detailed murrina that has ever been created called *Camel Caravan*. His *Nativity* triptych, after three years of hard work, was finally polished and photographed in February 2021. To give the reader an idea of the amount of effort required to complete such works, each of Loren's tiles have been fired hundreds of times during the making process. Loren's work is revolutionary, because the chemical and physical difficulties involved with refiring glass multiple times is technically challenging and, some might say, impossible. This is what makes the process stimulating for Loren. When I asked the artist what frustrated him most in his daily work, he replied, "Waiting for the kiln to complete the heating and cooling cycles of my creations is a constant source of vexation."

Sharing Tips for Technical Success

Loren is dedicated to his career as a teacher. He comes by this desire to share what he has learned honestly, since all of the matriarchs in his family were and are teachers—his wife, mother, and grandmother. He began teaching four months after he started lampworking and has taught over 300 classes in ten different countries.

Loren takes almost as much satisfaction from teaching as he does from creating his masterworks. He does not teach what he makes, but rather teaches technique only. While instilling positivity in his classes, his honesty to the craft dictates that his absolute best comment to a participant's effort is, "That's pretty good," most likely due to Loren's high expectations of his own work.

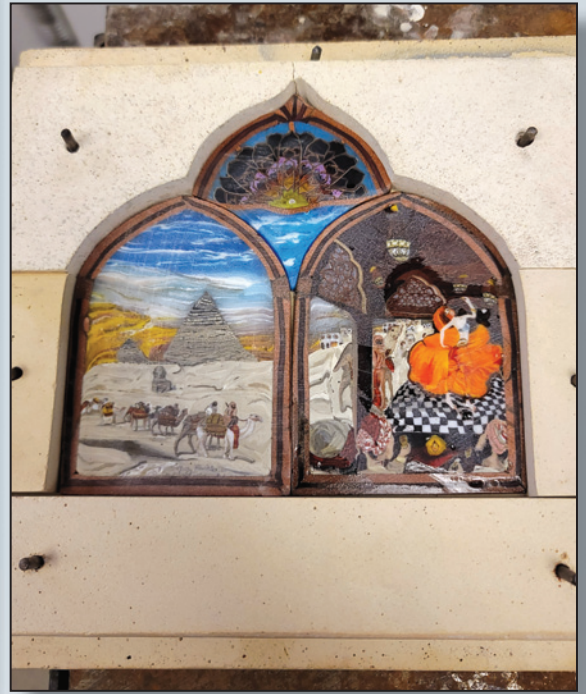
Loren is very skilled at observing a class of new participants and reading the room. He also caters to the needs of each individual so they can receive the most from their class without others feeling alienated. As he observes and accounts for the group dynamics, he imparts his vast knowledge to his students, which is, after all, the job of a good teacher. Becoming a teacher is a calling, and not every artist in glass is a capable instructor.



Cantina murrine block without spectator components, 4" x 3" x 2".

Loren's favorite place to teach is The Studio at The Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG) in Upstate New York. As soon as The Studio opened in 1996, Loren taught there. Forty-six classes later, he continues to teach there biannually, at least until the pandemic hit in 2020. He loves Corning and has many long-standing friends who work there.

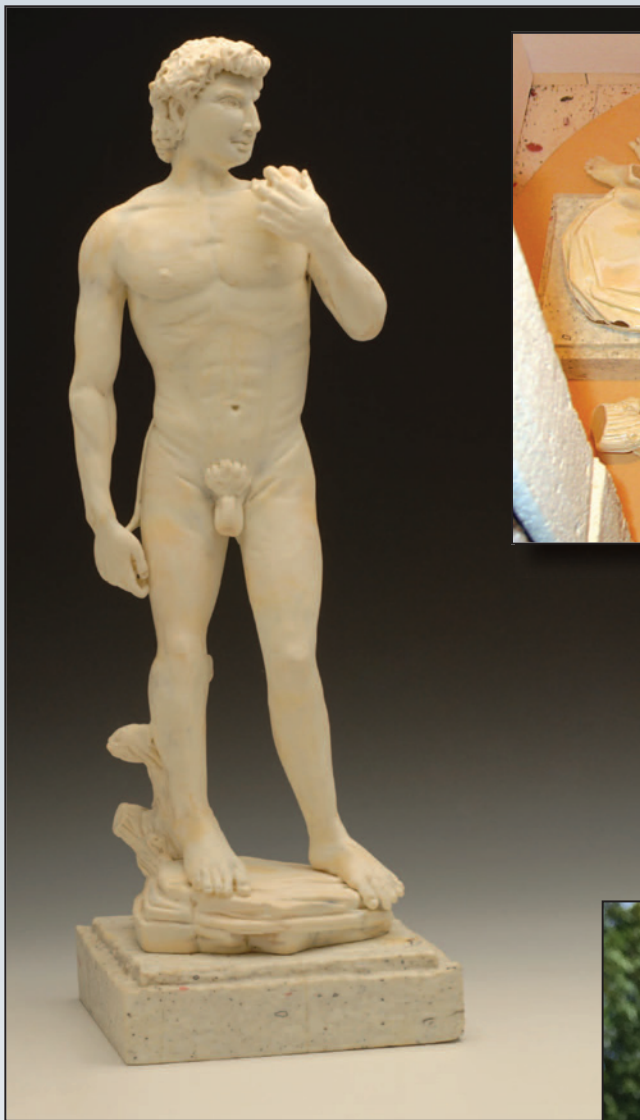
As our conversation progressed, Loren began to speak in hushed tones of awe when he mentioned Sullivan Park, Corning's material science and technology research facility. The center was established in 1908 and continues to be Corning's primary location for early stage research through product development. The Sullivan Park building is a mile in length and houses several pilot plants to test production scale manufacturing and produce prototypes. The artist and teacher is obviously gripped in wonder by this source of technical advancements in glass. He has been offered a residency there, but Loren does not take on residencies due to varying constraints in his life. One day soon, however, he will seize that residency at Sullivan Park in order to realize his material dreams of furthering the scenic murrine.



Camel Caravan/Casbah Cantina murrine, set up for fusing in dams.



Loren Stump performing a Casbah Cantina pull.



David statue parts, process shot of components to be assembled in the kiln.

David assembly, process shot of parts of the statue assembled hot in a zone-controlled kiln.



Loren Stump, David, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, etched surface, 16" x 5" x 5-1/2" at base, 2006. Photo by Rich Images.

No Retirement in Sight

On asking Loren if he ever felt blocked, he took a different context from my question and answered, "Time is the only thing by which I feel blocked." He had celebrated his 65th birthday only a few days earlier and understands there is not enough time to realize all of his ideas. This lack of time means that he only sleeps four to five hours per day in order to fit everything he wants to do into his day. This feeling about time feeds into Loren's teaching style, because he is well known for teaching five-day classes that run well until two or three o'clock the next morning. There is so much knowledge that he wishes to impart.

With all this talk of time, our minds began to turn to the future, and I wondered what is next for Loren. I query if he would ever retire, and he reiterates with his own question. "What else would I do if it wasn't pushing the boundaries of my devotion?" Therefore, there is no retiring for master glassmaker Loren Stump.



Loren Stump, Grand Canal plaque (front), fused mosaic front, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, Aventurine border, 3" x 4" x 1/4", 2018.

In terms of Loren's legacy, he informs me that his peer and friend, the renowned paperweight artist Paul Stankard, is pressing him to write a book. As he ruminates over the contents of his imaginary novel, it is clear that he feels obliged to act so that his discoveries are not lost to future generations. He has already spent weeks in Venice, Italy, researching and interviewing glass figures and glass historians. Why? "I desire to intersect the crazy, tragic, and controversial life of Franchini and parallel that story with the contemporary how-to of the techniques I have rediscovered about the lost art of the murrine." This book would be an historically accurate account of Franchini flashing back and forth from 19th-century Venice to 21st-century California—a beautiful fusion between documentary nonfiction and educational legacy to the glass community. I await this gem of a book with bated breath.

G&A



Loren Stump, Madonna slice and carved Madonna murrine, approximately 1-3/4" x 1-1/4".

Loren Stump
lorenstump@comcast.net



G. Franchini, portrait of Cavour, 1-1/4" diameter (32 mm), 1862.



Loren Stump, Taxi Cab Bead, Effetre/Moretti soft glass, multiple murrine placements, 1" high x 7/8" wide x 1-3/8" long. Photo by Rich Images.

Dr. Julie Anne Denton received her doctorate in the combination of sandcast and flameworked glass for artists from the National Glass Centre, UK. She has learned from and worked with the best flameworking artists in the world including Emilio Santini, Lucio Bubacco, Vittorio Costantini, Gianni Toso, Shane Fero, Loren Stump, and Sally Prasch, to name just a few. She rounded off her education with Bertil Vallien of the renowned Swedish design house Kosta Boda (est. 1742).



Julie settled in Zürich, Switzerland, in 2010 and runs her design firm, www.Atelier315.ch, and www.ZurichGlassSchool.com, her online learning platform for sculptural flameworking skills, from the center of the city. She works with a small team beside her who all care deeply about quality education, creativity, and business.

Dr. Julie creates glass and bronze work that resonates beauty, workmanship, and authenticity. Her key themes are people, folklore, nature, and counterculture. She has also received worldwide recognition for her storytelling skills as an artist and her technical skills as a glassmaker.

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