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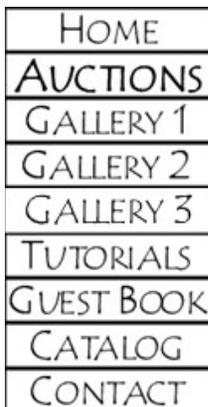
TRACY JERRELL AKHTAR
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Tutorials

Silver Spirals Tutorial

Just a brief tutorial on how I created my Silver Spirals Bead. This was something I began working on this summer (2010) but I haven't experimented much beyond the basics. I want to share my technique with other glass artists and hopefully see some new and exciting variations! I would label this technique "intermediate" since you need to know how to pull stringers, encase and have heat control.

There's no charge for this tutorial. There also aren't step-by-step close up shots yet but I don't feel you really need them. The basic concept is pretty simple and just requires a little practice and heat control. The tutorial is still a work in progress and more photos and tips will posted.

Materials:

- 30 gauge pure silver wire cut into an aprox 15 inch section(I'd also like to see this tried with larger gauge wire just to see what happens)
- 104 COE Transparent glass of your choice. I used **14k** transparent in my lentil beads.
- 104 COE Black glass
- scissors
- glass nippers

First pull your stringer out of the transparent glass. I make my mine aprox 2mm since I want the glass to melt before the wire. My stringers are aprox 3 inches long.

Once your stringer has cooled, begin wrapping your pure silver wire around it. You can play around with the spacing between wraps but make sure it's even. Once you reach the end just snip the excess off. My scissors work fine with the 30 gauge wire but if you try the larger gauge you might want to use a pair of jewelry wire cutters.
Smooth the end of the wire around the tip of the stringer so it isn't poking out.

When I use these on lentils, I then use a pair of disc cutters and nip the stringer right where the silver begins (where I began wrapping). I usually end up with a piece about a half inch long. If you're using a bead press you could just measure the length so you don't end up with too long of a stringer.

On my cone shaped bead (4th photo) I left the stringer intact and wound it around the bead. I needed the entire length for that particular bead.
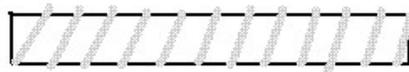
I begin with a base of black glass and make a barrel shape (I use a lentil press).

Now you're going to apply the stringer, so warm the base bead before applying.
I apply the heat underneath the stringer to help it bend and stick to the bead, hopefully before melting all the silver. This is the tricky part. You want enough heat to make the glass bend and stick but if you hold it in the "hot zone" too long the silver wire melts. This is where larger gauge wire would probably help but I haven't tried it yet.

I like to apply the stringer wraps as close as possible to help cut down on air being trapped under your glass casing.

Once you've applied your stringer, encase in transparent glass. This all needs to be done a bit quickly so your base bead doesn't crack from lack of heat. Shape and pop your bead in the kiln.

I applied too much heat and most of the silver wire melted. Still a nice effect.

My heat control was a little better on this one and the rings are visible.

The bead itself turned out too dark but you can see the silver spirals are intact. It just takes practice, the 3rd time was the charm for me.

I applied the stringer without encasing. This is my favorite look so far.

On this bead, I made a stringer with a transparent cobalt blue core.

I used Orange Delight for the center of this stringer. It didn't turn out as I expected, I think I prefer dark transparents for the core. Next time I'm going to try a goldstone core.

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I'm happy to share my tutorial with you but please don't post on forums, websites or in print without my consent.
Thank you, Tracy Jerrell Akhtar.

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