



Beauty in the beads

Artist and author shares how to make jewelry and what she loves about it

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Diane Fitzgerald uses beads the way an artist uses color. She buys a palette of beads that she likes and begins to assemble them — incrementally, so the piece evolves as it's designed. "Beading was a natural for me," she says. "I had been studying design at the University of Minnesota and doing needlepoint and quilting. When I started with beads, they intrigued me because of my love of glass, color and their tiny size."

Later this week, intermediate beaders in Hampton Roads will attend workshops with Fitzgerald at Bead Haven in James City County to make some of her favorites — ginkgo-leaf and red trillium necklaces.

Beading enthusiasts, or anyone merely curious about the art, can hear her talk about her passion at 6 p.m. Thursday at Alternatives Inc. in Hampton.

She'll discuss beadwork in Europe and America over the past 200 to 300 years, especially how the styles of beadwork rose and fell in popularity — from making funeral wreaths with beads and wire to the love beads that Hippies strung.

Bead Haven stores in Hampton and James City County, along with the Bead Society of Southeastern Virginia, are sponsoring Fitzgerald's

visit. Eva Washington of Hampton is president of the 100-member society.

In addition to books, Fitzgerald writes for *Beadwork*, *Bead & Button* and *Lapidary Journal* magazines. She traveled to South Africa to study and see Zulu and Xhosa beadwork before writing her latest book, "Zulu Inspired Beadwork," which she will sign at this week's program.

Q: What's the trick to learning how to bead?

A: New beaders must learn how to hold the piece they are working on and to be patient with themselves. Most beginners who are familiar with holding a needle can take my ginkgo leaf necklace class and learn brick stitch as they make a ginkgo leaf.

Mistakes are easy to deal with. If something isn't going the way you like it, either stop and take it apart or change the direction to make it more satisfying. I have many unfinished projects myself.

Q: What are the best beads?

A: That's a personal thing. Everyone develops their

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BOOK SIGNING

Fitzgerald signs her new book "Zulu Inspired Beadwork" at her program Thursday. The book retails for \$25.



GINKGO LEAF NECKLACE

This piece of jewelry features eight ginkgo leaves which cascade from a lariat-style necklace. The colors of the leaves blend smoothly from red to green, green to gold or gold to red that results from a special brick stitch pattern. The necklace was awarded "Best Use of Color" in a recent exhibit.



ROSE GARDEN NECKLACE

This piece was inspired by the delicate flowers made using silk ribbon. The pattern for these roses is included in "The Beaded Garden: Creating Flowers with Beads and Threads," available at book and bead stores.

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Beading is expressive and calming

own style and works with their favorite beads. Mine are Japanese cylinder beads that are a lot like tiny glass beads called seed beads. My favorite beads to collect are 20th-century European glass beads and contemporary American glass beads.

Q. Where are beads mostly produced?

A. One of the most well-known locations for bead production is Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, which produces glass beads sold all over the world. Some cultures such as the Zulu people of South Africa have developed very unusual techniques that are unique to them. I document many of those in my new book.

Q. Is beading a woman thing?

A. There are a few men who do beading, but primarily it's a female pursuit. My favorite male beader is a man from South Africa, Stephen Long, who repairs beadwork he collected from Xhosa people primarily.

Q. What's your collection like?

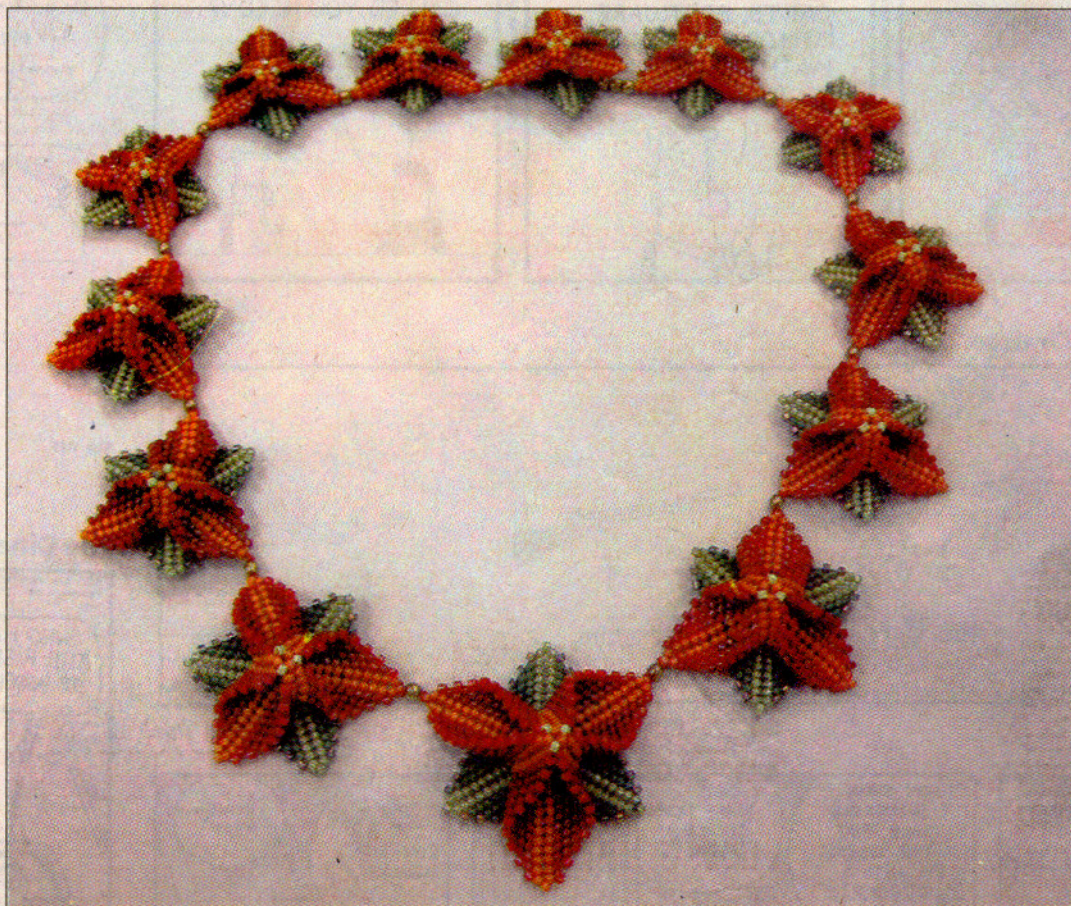
A. I make almost all of my jewelry but occasionally buy a piece from another artist, especially glass bead artists. I can't begin to tell you how many pieces I have.

One chest has 30 shallow drawers stuffed with necklaces and another chest has 20 drawers. I try to wear something different every day.

Q. Beading books?

A. Two books got me started 20 years ago: "Indian Bead-Weaving Patterns" by Horace Goodhue and "Those Bad, Bad Beads" by Virginia Blakelock. Until the mid-'90s, those were the only books available and both were influential in the current cycle of beading frenzy. I have written nine books over the past 12 years.

Q. Is beading for kids?



Diane Fitzgerald's necklace called "Red Trillium" is featured in her new book "Zulu Inspired Beadwork." PHOTO COURTESY DIANE FITZGERALD

A. Children can learn about beading and patterns and improve their manual dexterity by stringing the large plastic cylinder beads known as perlen beads available at craft stores. There are also many kits available.

Q. What's the most you've paid for beads?

A. Oh, don't make me confess how much I spent for beads! I've only told one other person how much my most expensive ones cost because she already knew what they go for.

My most expensive beads are a string of 12 light blue beads signed by the famous glass and jewelry maker, Rene Lalique. I'll talk about the oldest beads in my slide show, which are

News to Use

What: Beading workshops at Bead Haven in the Village Shops at Kingsmill on Route 60, James City County.

When: Friday-Sunday

Meet the beader: The Bead Society of Southeastern Virginia sponsors a talk by Diane Fitzgerald at 6 p.m. Thursday at Alternatives Inc. on Von Schilling Drive, off

Coliseum Drive in Hampton. Cost is \$5 members, \$10 nonmembers at the door. She also will sign her new book "Zulu Inspired Beadwork."

Not a beader? Classes are offered at the shop, or join Bead Society of Southeastern Virginia; visit bssv.org.

Info: www.beadhavenva.com or 253-2323

some shell beads that are 75,000 years old.

Q. Why is beading suddenly so popular?

A. It's a mean of self-expression and it's calming. The repe-

tion can be soothing and meditative and you can also see something beautiful emerge from your hands and later enjoy the finished project with others. It brings many people together.