

Pendant Pizzazz

With a multi-strand
seed bead necklace



by Diane Fitzgerald

American glass artists are creating more and more gorgeous fused glass pendants. They are beautiful and irresistible, but after you buy one, how can you show it off as it deserves? My solution is inexpensive seed beads — small amounts of many different shapes, sizes, and finishes. With them I build a mossy, rope-like necklace to frame the pendant. The necklace develops a rich texture and color. Choosing and gathering the seed beads in colors and textures that go with the pendant is as much fun as stringing them.

As I find beads and other complementary elements, I leave them out where I can see them daily. Become familiar with these pieces. They will speak to you as you think about their colors, shapes, and textures, as well as suggest hidden meanings. Putting what you see into words also helps you develop your design. Ask yourself questions like these as you look at your pendant:

What is its character or style? Is it formal or informal? Is it ethnic, elegant, or something else?

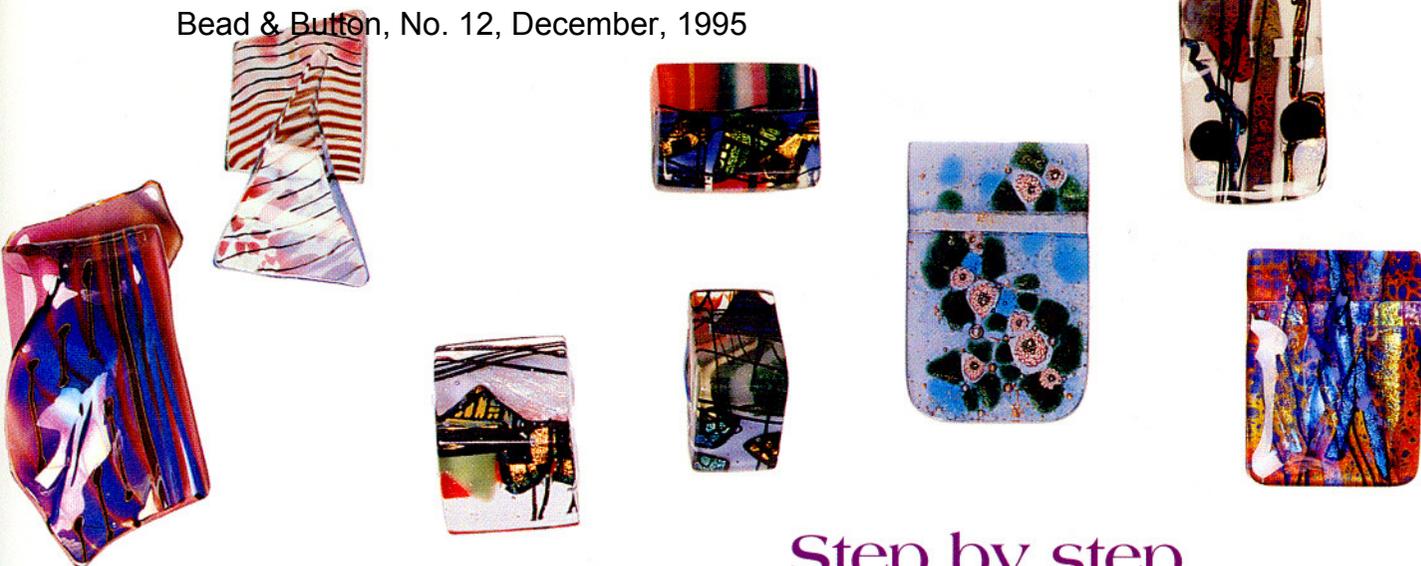
Which colors stand out? How do they relate to each other? Do they contrast, or are they shades of the same basic color? Are they bright or muted or pastel?

Is the finish shiny or dull? Transparent or opaque? Is it textured or smooth? Are the lines and shapes of its pattern curved or straight? What do they suggest?

Do I want this pendant integrated into the overall necklace, or set off from the rest of the piece?

Take your time and enjoy the process of thinking and planning and dreaming.

***Above:** An elaborate necklace with a special glass pendant can be quite inexpensive. If you take your time and string it yourself (using mostly economical seed beads), you'll have a stunning piece that will be the envy of all who see it. And — surprise — it's much easier than it looks!*



Step by step

This necklace is one of my favorite bead projects. The stringing process is relaxing, while the colors and textures energize me. The necklace begins with a backbone strand of beads that supports the pendant and all the other beads. Next you string three or four rows of seed bead loops through the backbone strand and then weave more bead strands through the loop strands to

finish. Each new strand fills out the necklace a bit more.

Work this necklace on a form so it will hold its shape during and after construction. Draw an egg-shaped template pattern measuring 9½ x 5 in. This will make a 26-in.-long necklace. Cut out the smaller piece of foamcore to the size and shape of the pattern and glue it to the larger piece of foamcore with tacky glue or white glue. Set it 1½ in. below the top of the larger board to allow room for the clasp

and beadwork. (You'll find this template useful for other necklaces too.)

Stringing the backbone strand

For the backbone strand, I usually use E beads, which have large holes (a 26-in. strand takes about 156 of these 4mm seed beads). Don't use stone beads because the holes are irregular and often small. Tape the pendant to the foamcore at the bottom of the form and pin the clasp at the top. Thread a dental floss threader with 2 yd. of size F cord and knot the ends together. Clip the tail and seal the knot.

String the cord through the lowest hole of the clasp and through the loop of cord at the knot (photo 1). String enough backbone beads to reach the pendant. Go through the pendant; then string enough backbone beads to reach the other end of the clasp snugly. Go through the clasp and tie a half hitch around the cord (go under the cord, then through the loop). Go back through 2-4 beads and knot again around the cord. Repeat and end by going through 2-4 more beads. Seal knots with nail polish.

Materials

A glass pendant (see "Sources")

Seed beads in several colors and sizes, approx. 2 oz. total

Miscellaneous small beads up to 8mm, stone chips, E beads (another name for size 6° seed beads), rondelles, etc., any quantity from 20-200 each

A three-strand clasp

2 yd. Bead stringing cord, size F

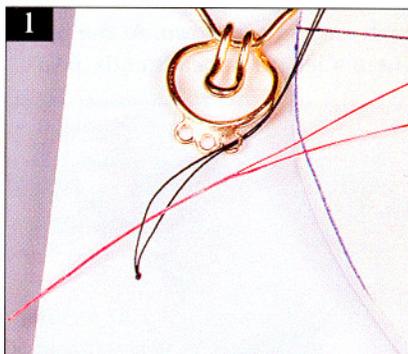
Nymo D thread (preferably from a spool)

2 Beading needles, size 10-12

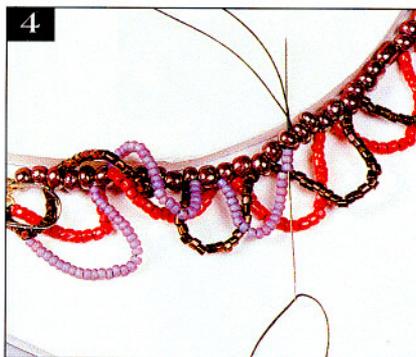
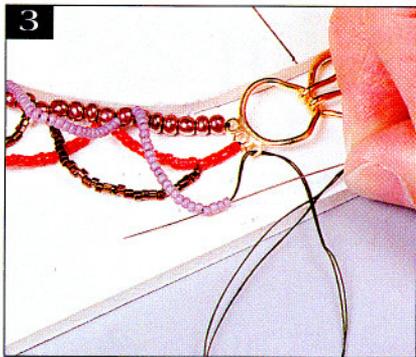
1 Dental floss threader

Foamcore board, 2 pieces ¼-in. thick - 12 x 15 in. and 6 x 12 in. (art supply store)

Miscellaneous supplies: beeswax, clear nail polish, tacky glue or white glue, push pins, transparent tape, small, shallow dish to hold beads, disposable lighter to singe knots



Above: Pendants by three of Diane's favorite glass artists: left to right, two by Pat Whitright, three by Nancy and Malcom Potek, and three by Donna Milliron (see "Sources," page 35).



Making loop rows

Thread a beading needle with 3 yd. Nymo D, doubled, knotted, and waxed. Fasten it to the middle loop of the clasp as before. The "scoop" method is the easiest way to string large quantities of seed beads: Mound the beads in a corner of a shallow box or dish and scoop your needle through the pile; with practice 3-4 scoops will fill a 2-in. needle.

String 1-1½ in. of seed beads and go through the fourth or fifth backbone bead from the clasp. Continue in this way until you reach the pendant (photo 2). When you come to the pendant, simply string through it with no beads. If the pendant hole is too large, anchor the loops by stringing through the E beads on either side of the pendant. When you run out of backbone beads on the other side of the pendant, string a final loop, go through the middle hole of the clasp, and come back through 2-3 of the beads just strung.

Make 2-3 more sets of loops along the backbone strand, going through different backbone beads each time. Use the same or different colors for each strand (photo 3) and anchor a strand in the clasp's third holes as described above. Small loops make a tight, narrow necklace; larger loops give a more open look. Mix varying sizes and colors of seed beads to add texture and interest. Silver-lined beads increase sparkle; transparent beads add lightness.

Adding thread

This necklace is strung with a continuous thread, so when about 4 in. remains, thread the second

beading needle with doubled Nymo as before and seal the knot. Bring the second needle through the last inch of beads, coming out the same bead as the first needle (photo 4). Tie both old and new threads together with a square knot and seal. When you've strung a couple more loops, string the old thread through some of the new beads to bury the end and protect the knot.

Interweaving

With 3-4 sets of loops strung, begin weaving more loops through them to fill out the necklace.

When you come out the clasp, string a needleful of beads and push them against the clasp. Randomly weave loops of beads in and out of the anchored loops going back and forth and up and down. At the point where a length of beads ends, pass

the needle through the closest bead to anchor the weaving (photo 5).

Fluff the loops in over the edge of the template to widen the weaving pathway and make the necklace fuller. If you only go back and forth, laying round after round over each other, you'll have lines of color that meander snakelike over the piece, rather than an integrated, intertwined appearance. Imagine that you're a bird building a nest.

The necklace will develop a mossy, rope-like appearance after 3-4 rounds. Keep going until the look satisfies you, but be careful not to add too many strands and overwhelm the pendant.

Diane lives in Minneapolis, MN, and writes about and teaches beadwork. Her studio is every beader's heaven with countless projects underway.



Above: Diane doesn't string through the pendant every time she comes to it. The hole might not be large enough to handle that much thread. Besides, several loops of seed beads strung behind the pendant give it extra support. Pendant by Pat Whitright.