



Bonnie Scott

Traveling Ambassador for Glass Art



Text and Photography by Ann Cady

What you notice first is the large white van wrapped in images of pendants and necklaces with the words “Mobile Hot Glass Studio” emblazoned along the side. A billboard on wheels for Bonnie Scott’s flameworking business Joyful Adornments, the van is a bit imposing at first. Large enough to stand upright inside, even for my 5-foot 9-inch frame, yet nimble enough for her to drive comfortably and easily, it’s hard to miss as it travels down the road, or anywhere else, for that matter. But it is what’s on the inside that makes it truly remarkable.

A Complete Studio Experience

Contained within the van’s walls is a fully functional flameworking studio complete with a Nortel Mega Minor Bench Burner torch, rotating kiln, oxygen concentrator, two small propane tanks, and a thorough venting system. Also on board are a purple tool box for supplies and tools, fire extinguishers, safety equipment, display space, and air conditioning, with room left over to admit a student at her side when she teaches.

If that isn’t enough, the back doors open 270 degrees so they are flush with the sides of the van, turning Bonnie’s workstation into a stage so she can demonstrate to an audience. A GoPro camera mounted above her hands projects live video onto a flat screen TV to give her viewers an up close and personal look at what she’s doing. When Bonnie is not traveling, the van also serves as her personal studio and workshop. A 30 amp plug lets her draw power from her home, and a small generator supplies power when the necessary outlet is unavailable.





Glass beads created by Bonnie Scott in her traveling studio. The beads surrounding the title of the article were made from antique Ball Canning Jar recycled glass.

Searching for a Solution

The idea of a mobile glass studio started, rather ironically, at a crossroads in Bonnie's life. After 12 years of working in glass, Bonnie and her husband had decided to sell their home, which included Bonnie's studio and gallery, and move south to Virginia. She didn't want her choice of living space to be dictated by her business—or vice versa—so in order to continue in glass she was going to have to get creative or give up on it completely.

After researching many vehicle options from a Shepherd Hut on wheels to school buses, Bonnie finally decided on the Ford Tall Top Transit Van. For help finding just the right one, she went to her longtime car dealer Hal Van Skiver and explained the project. Happily he not only found her the van she needed but also put her in touch with his son Eric, an engineer. Eric was willing to take on the challenge of putting a frameworking studio in a van and brought Bonnie's ideas and specifications to life. Using CAD software, they were able to hash out the designs first until it looked as if it could work. At that point, the van was purchased and the project began in earnest.

Bonnie freely admits it was scary not knowing if it was really going to work. There were several times during construction when she thought they had hit an impasse. The first generator was way too loud for use in public spaces and almost derailed the entire project. The electrical system was also challenging, to say the least, and installing the movable kiln table to meet safety specifications and weight requirements was a huge hurdle.

Inspiring Future Glass Artists

In the end, Bonnie revolutionized her business and created opportunities for herself and for others that did not exist before. Now she can literally go anywhere—not only to craft shows and art fairs, but also to local wineries, birthday parties, corporate events, and what is to Bonnie the most important place—schools. Art programs don't include glassmaking, and with the van she can introduce any number of kids to the glasswork that she has loved doing for more than 12 years.

Bonnie was recently invited to speak to a local girls' group about what it means to be a self-employed artist. When I asked her what message she wanted to leave with them she said: "I want to inspire them to try something. Even if it doesn't work, you have to be willing to fail, because if you don't try it you will never know. What you know is not the only thing that can be. There is a lot more out there."

And now so is Bonnie—studio and all. To find her, check out her website or call 800-517-6440. Don't ask me, though. She could be anywhere!

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