

Bramar

Unique Glass



Brief: A unique glass platter inspired by the Purple Emperor Butterfly



The Purple Emperor is a large British butterfly with an elusive reputation. They are often resident in high canopy of native English trees and thus are a challenge to observe. The stunning blue/purple colour is highly dependent upon the iridescence of the butterfly's wings, changing continuously with the light.

What a challenge to represent this beautiful creature in glass!

After gathering pictures and researching the habits of the Purple Emperor a sketch was made to lay out the elements of the design. Although great detail can be achieved with some fused glass techniques, my passion is to emphasise the colours and only add sufficient fine work to achieve an impression of the subject. The design concept was to keep it simple, but work the image across several layers of glass to achieve the intensity of colour and depth evident in the creature itself. As such the butterfly is to be rich and sharp, with stylised oak leaves receding into the design.

The colours are applied to the white base glass as granules of crushed or powdered glass which are then fused in the kiln to make them permanent, bring out the final colours and allow them to mingle somewhat. Sand sized articles give the specular appearance of the greens and blues and powders are used to give the fine gradations in the umbers and browns. Two different greens, two blues and two browns are used together to enhance the richness of the final colour effect. Of special note here is the yellow/orange glass, this glass, like many reds, oranges and yellows, changes colour when fired, to a darker more intense hue. At this stage I have to imagine what colour it will later become!

As can be seen, to maintain control, the colours have to be added in stages, with the sheet of glass being fired several times, until the desired colours and effects are achieved.



The detail of the butterflies wings and antennae are added to a second sheet of clear glass using stained glass tracing paint. This ancient technique is exactly that used in medieval windows, finely powdered opaque glass is mixed with a carrier medium to make a paint that can be applied with a brush. Once dry, the lines can be refined with a scalpel, then they are fired to become permanent. Further layers of tracing paint are applied without the medium and then dusted away with a dry brush to form the shaded areas of black, again this is fired.

Once this detailed layer is laid over the coloured base layer, the image develops and immediately shows a three dimensional quality, not least because the black image is three millimetres above the colours and casts shadows which move as the combination is tilted. A border of fine blue glass is added, which appears to go under the butterfly, again enhancing the illusion of depth. This is again fired to the glass.



A third layer of glass is added, which is dusted with iridescent powder over the butterfly. This gives an ethereal blue / magenta haze over the wings, bringing the colours to life, enhancing the impression of the creature.

Finally a fourth layer of clear glass is laid over to give a deep clear glossy finish to the plate.

At this point, the piece is comprised of four separate pieces of glass, the reflections between the layers, mute the colours and blur the image. It is time to fully fuse all the components into one single piece of glass. This is performed at around 800 degrees centigrade, when the glass becomes quite liquid and can merge together. Since the glass is liquid, this must be done flat to stop the image running. Once fused, the final colours and image become apparent, vibrant and with great depth.



The final step is to slump the flat plate into a mould to give the finished form, this is done at a slightly lower temperature, where the glass will sag into the shape of the mould, without running and thus distorting the image.



The trapped air bubbles inherent in the fused glass technique add further life and richness.

The final piece is vibrant and full of life.



Ashley Brammer - Bramar Creative

My work centres around my love of that wonderful, ethereal, material, glass. It has always enchanted me, even from my student days. Over the years I have sought ways of using this material, first cold in conjunction with other materials, later using heat in the kiln. What was a deep interest, became an involved hobby and later a creative career.

I originally trained as an engineer, which lets me master the often difficult technical aspects of glass work. Following my engineering degree, I gained my Masters in Product Design at the Royal College of Art, which set my technical abilities free!

My work generally involves fusing and kiln cast glass. The fused glass work involves using glass, minerals and chemicals trapped between multiple layers of glass to create stunning three dimensional imagery. My cast work involves using the saturated colours of glass directly in three dimensions to produce vibrant figurative sculpture. Further examples of my work can be seen in the photos on my Facebook page (see below).

I also occasionally work with metal and wood, sometimes to complement the glass, sometimes for it's own sake (I have built several beautiful steel bicycles!) and sometimes just to have fun with my artist blacksmith father.

My inspirations are found in the nature and rich history of my home region, the North East of Scotland. From the wildlife, scenery and light of the undiscovered Moray Coast, to the lost meanings of the Pictish stone carvings, I will never be short of inspiration.

Contact:-

ash@mcbrammers.com

07824 412314

Facebook - @bramarcreative