

HEATHER TRIMLETT

120 BEAD PROJECT!



300 Beads? What was I thinking?

Beadmakers often ask where my design ideas come from. Most of the time, they come to me while I am making a bead. I ask myself “What if I did this differently, put a dot here rather than there, added a twist, layered this on top of that.” You know that little ‘nudge’ in your brain that tells you this is something you really *must* do and a fresh design suddenly becomes reality?

It all started on a sunny afternoon with the idea to create a new challenge for myself. Make 300 black and white beads. How many unique designs could I produce using only those two colors and of course, clear for encasing? So, I set a course for meeting this exciting challenge and with that, the 120 Bead Project would follow in the footsteps of its predecessor, the 40 Bead Project. I know! You thought my 40 Bead Project was a challenge, but this one is just a bit different.

I knew from the beginning that the color limitations might be frustrating, BUT... isn't that a bit of what creativity is all about? Frustration can often run side by side with creativity and that is a key part of what makes an artistic challenge more interesting and engaging. I also understood that at some point in time, I was going to grumble about taking on such a big project. Especially around the halfway point! But through 30+ years of experience, I have learned that each step of a repetitive process has its own value and as you progress, those steps become the foundation that leads you to completion.

One of my goals with teaching is to always help guide students to a better understanding of two critical things - how heat works and how glass moves. This project is designed to do exactly that and be a focused challenge to increase your base of knowledge.

Supplies:

- **Mandrels**... your choice on size
- **Two colors of highly contrasting glass;** I recommend opaque colors, though you know your work better than I do. Run color tests before you commit to your final color scheme
- **Clear glass**
- **Tools!** NOTE: this includes your tweezers, presses, or any tool you like; you can even use your **Heather Trimlett Round-up** or **Groovy tools**

Instructions:

- Make 20 different bead designs, 6 of each design. Beads should be about 1/2" – 5/8" in diameter
- Make all six of one design before moving on to the next series
- The goal is to make each of the six beads more precise than the previous one

Tips:

- Try making twisted cane for your beads
- Experiment with dot size
- Think clean, simple designs
- Take your time; this is not a race
- Focus on improving each bead of your series of six
- Limit yourself to 2-4 designs a day; this keeps your mind fresh and creativity flowing
- Write down your ideas, let them percolate overnight and then execute the next day
- When I teach, I encourage students to work cooler and more slowly; give that a try



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Questions you might have:

Why do I want you to make 6 of the same design?

There are a host of reasons, but number one is simply that repetition is a marvelous teacher. You know the feeling; you just made a bead and you say to yourself “I wish I had done ___ on that bead.” Now you are making the same bead six times. If there are adjustments needed, you can do that on the very next bead.

And remember, sometimes simple can be better. It can also be more challenging as small mistakes show in a super clean, simple design. Often, I will alternate between a simple bead design and a more complex one. You might consider this as well. Beads change personality completely by simply reversing the color of the base bead.

Why the two-color limit?

Using only two colors gives you a series that works well together in a finished piece. My recommendation is two opaques that will give you high contrast. When you are not thinking about what color to use next, you can completely focus on your heat placement and how the glass moves. Every color will move differently. Using the same color for a longer period of time will help build a deeper understanding of the characteristics for that particular color.

Color restriction also gives you a body of work that fits well together at the end of the project. It is cohesive and opens the door to any number of pieces you can create when making jewelry. Another plus? Making 6-10 of the same bead will net matching pairs within the grouping. Depending on how many beads you make, when finished, you could also have a series of graduated beads to work with as well.

Why is the clear glass important?

Clear glass is added to the mix because there is nothing quite as yummy as a clear encased bead. The clear adds depth and by using it, your design choices show both greater definition and magnification in the bead.

Making multiple beads in the same design has been my process for years. I firmly believe I am acquiring muscle memory and stronger technical skills based on the repetition. As I said previously, my goal in each of these projects is for you to better understand how heat works and how glass moves.

So, turn on the kiln, light your torch, and get creative! Meet the challenge and be sure to send me photos of your completed projects so I can post them on my Pinterest page.



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