

# SOUTHBURY MAKERS SPOTLIGHT



## Elaine Flynn, Garage Glass Beads

By Kelly Keenan, SEDC Arts & Culture Subcommittee  
Photos courtesy Elaine Flynn

In 2015, after signing off from a long career in the insurance industry as a systems analyst, Southbury resident Elaine Flynn sought a creative outlet to transition into retirement. Flynn gravitated towards the unique and challenging world of lampwork, a method of glasswork that utilizes a torch and hand tools to melt, roll and shape glass.

**Q: How did you get into this line of work?**

**A:** I was first introduced to lampworking when I attended a studio tour in Putney, Vermont. A lampwork artist was demonstrating beadmaking in a little shack in the woods heated by a potbellied wood stove. I was very intrigued. That was 20 years ago.

**Q: Tell us about your work.**

**A:** This process of manipulating glass for my bead making is called lampworking, glasswork that uses a torch to melt the glass. It is also known as flameworking. I use a Bethlehem burner alpha torch - it combines propane (red hose) and oxygen (green hose) to give me a flame hot enough to melt the glass.

**Q: What is your favorite aspect of working with glass?**

**A:** Working with the fascinating medium of glass requires learning how to control heat and use gravity to my advantage to create what I have in my mind's eye. I usually have a general idea for a glass bead creation (colors, lines, form etc). But often enough the glass seems to take over and create something quite different. The process might initiate a problem-solving frenzy... how to get those results in my mind's eye. Sometimes the final result yields a beauty not wholly conceived by me but equally engaging and satisfying... a little bit of magic. Being flexible enough to allow and pursue that creative spark that occurs in that moment of magic is truly what this art is all about for me.



Continues on following page....

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## Elaine Flynn, Garage Glass Beads - continued...

**Q: Do you have a favorite artist, glass or other ?**

**A:** My favorite artists are Astrid Riedel and Corina Tettinger. I have taken several of their classes and admire their work.

**Q: Lampwork uses a lot of potentially dangerous equipment. What goes into working with the material safely?**

**A:** Two very important safety elements to consider when working with a torch and glass are proper ventilation and proper eye protection. It is very important to pull any fumes from the glass and torch away from the lampworker. Exhaust fans and venting are often used. Didymium safety eyeglasses protect one's eyes from the bright sodium flare that could cause damage. All lampworker's wear them. There is always a danger of burns when working with a hot flame. Strict attention and focus are needed to prevent injury.

**Q: What advice would you offer somebody looking to get into glasswork?**

**A:** My best advice would be to take a class or two to get an idea of whether it is something that you would enjoy.

For more information about this month's maker, or if you are interested in being featured in an upcoming issue of the Southbury Makers Spotlight, contact us at [edcsouthburymakers@gmail.com](mailto:edcsouthburymakers@gmail.com) or visit <https://www.southbury-ct.org/arts>.



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