

Canadian glassmaker Jay McDonell doing some “cold” working. (Photo: Bruce Gerus)



Introduction

Creative work is very much a dialogue between the physical and spiritual, the work providing the meeting point. Creating is the means for exploration, towards a greater understanding.

-Stephen Procter

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines “joy” as “the emotion evoked by well being, success, or good fortune...a state of happiness or felicity: bliss...the source or cause of delight.” For many, joy is one of the primary emotions that motivates and sustains life. It's right up there with love. Joy is also very infectious to others -- many can pick up on it easily. Joy is meant for all. And there is joy to be found with almost everything, even coldworking.

“Coldworking” can be defined as the manipulation and alteration of glass without the addition of heat -- the changing of form and surface via some sort of mechanical or hand-manipulated method. Coldworking is often the last bit of work that is done to a piece of glass before it is considered “finished.” It is also sometimes considered anathema to joy to some. Truly, “coldworking” is not a very sweet-sounding term -- the combination of “cold” and

“work” into one word seems like a description of some ultimate form of misery. The good thing is that actually doing the coldworking does not need to be so dreadful at all. When given its full due, coldworking turns into an intriguing exercise dealing with form and surface. Soon the endeavor turns into a puzzle and a journey, a rejection and a redemption, a loss and a save. It's truly just a dance with the glass on a wet and a rotating dance floor.

“Grinding” and “sanding” are often used as synonyms to coldwork. Grinding refers to flat grinding on the lap wheel, while sanding is more associated with the belt sander. Hot and kiln-formed glass definitely have more compelling terms, such as “snorkle, high fire, overlay, Roll Up, reticello, hot torch, pot melt, slump, and trim.” These all sound like exciting ways to work with glass -- whereas “grind” does not. Perhaps the most concise term for coldworking is “finishing.” Coldworking is usually the process that completes the piece of glass since things are not done until they are finished. Whether it's grinding off a pumty, reworking a surface, or smoothing out a rough area, coldworking is usually the final step in completing that piece of glass. That