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Torchworked Marbles, Vol. 1: Beginner to Intermediate Techniques by Drew Fritts. Published by Dichro-Moon Publishing, 2004. Website: www.frittsartglass.com

People who are interested in lampworking are very fortunate. Not only are there a number of introductory books to choose from (books by Bandu Scott Dunham, James Kervin, Cindy Jenkins, and others), a second group of more specialized and advanced books are starting to emerge. This group includes Elizabeth Mears's *Flameworking*, which focuses on working with borosilicate (hard) glass, and Milon Townsend's *Advanced Flameworking*, which concentrates on more advanced techniques and processes.

The newest addition to this group is Drew Fritts's *Torchworked Marbles*, which focuses on working with a torch to make colorful marbles and related shapes.

But this book is not just for the more experienced. It starts with over 100 pages of basic information such as glass compatibility, equipment selection, safety, and setting up your workspace. Then it continues with a generous second 100 pages of basic information on working with a torch. This section, which is tailored to the marble maker but would appeal to anyone working with a torch, contains such essential information as simple murrine, frit making, hand positions, using punties, and working with dichroic glass. It also discusses elementary techniques such as raking, applying stripes, and working with molds to ensure that your marble is round. The author even throws in sections on signing marbles, removing scratches, and reheating for repairs.

If the book had ended there, it would have been a success. But the final half of the book is where the real fun begins. The author starts with a detailed section on making wooden molds, discusses using both sheet glass and borosilicate, and offers his experiences with specific glasses from Bullseye, Effetre (Moretti), and more. The book has troubleshooting and problem-solving sections on annealing, punty manipulation, scum and discoloration.

But that's not all. The heart of the book, and the reason for even the more experienced to make the purchase, are twenty detailed lessons that focus on making the colorful marbles pictured on the book's front cover. These lessons focus on such techniques as layered dots, plunged

flowers, the endless swirl, and "butterfly" manipulations. As with the rest of the book, the lessons are well written and the step-by-step instructions are easy to follow and illuminating. The skill level for each is clearly identified (from beginner to high intermediate) and each is well illustrated with black and white drawings and photographs.

As a final bonus, the book includes a section on pricing and marketing. Unlike Milon Townsend's book on *Marketing and Marketing Better Artwork* (reviewed in *Common Ground: Glass* several issues ago), Fritts's marketing suggestions concentrate on selling marbles. The author discusses various marketing avenues (such as galleries, dealers, and personal websites), and includes a section on the attributes that appeal to marble collectors. This final section is a bit too brief for my taste, but it does cover the basics and it's good to have some specific advice for marble makers.

The book also contains a brief bibliography, a better-than-average index, and approximately 16 pages of advertisements from suppliers and galleries. I could have done without these advertising pages, as they do detract from the aura of expertise and impartial-

ity that permeates the rest of the book.

But that's probably nit-picking. For all its 450 plus pages, this book has fairly few shortcomings. The writing is excellent and there is material that would be useful for all experience levels, from raw beginner to advanced artists. And while I would have liked it if the book had included a gallery of color photographs of marbles, the black and white illustrations and drawings used throughout the book are excellent and easy to follow.

All in all, this is a superb book. I would highly recommend it to anyone who's interested in flameworking, especially if your interests extend to marblemaking. The book would be a bargain at \$40, making it a steal at \$29.95 (US). And best of all, the author promises a Volume 2.

So buy Volume 1. There's enough in there to keep you busy until the second volume comes around.

Brad Walker is founder and owner of WarmGlass.com, the internet's largest site devoted to working with glass in a kiln. He is also author of *Contemporary Warm Glass: A Guide to Fusing, Slumping, and Related Kiln-forming Techniques*.

