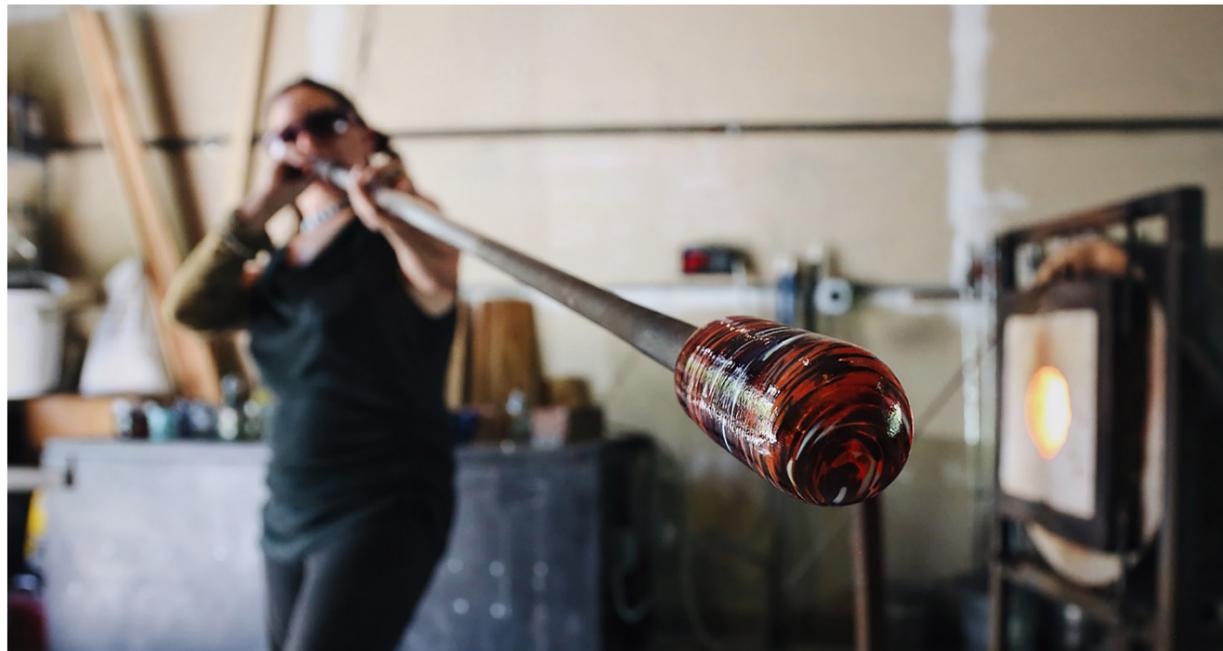


## Kristen Muñoz blows color into joy

finding inspiration through her children, her four-legged friends, and nature



Muñoz begins by blowing air into the molton glass..  
Photo credit - Samantha Yancey

"I think I was a reincarnated soul from the '60s. Ever since I could remember, I would make all of these paintings by blending colors in a somewhat circular fashion. The first time I laid eyes on an actual tie-dye, I knew what I was recreating back in my childhood art pieces." — Kristen Muñoz

**T**here are many different types of glass art. For those who may not be familiar with your work, give us an idea of what you do?

**KM:** I do traditional glass blowing, and when it gets too hot, I turn the furnace off and do flameworking. I create functional art, including tableware, vases, ornaments, hummingbird feeders, chandeliers, various other

lighting, jewelry, and pipes.

**RRM:** How did it all start, and how did your art evolve into being your full-time career?

**KM:** It all started with the love of music. The Grateful Dead started a movement for artists to gather while sharing food music and art. I realized as a young adult, I could make beautiful

artistic glass pipes and jewelry to sell at concerts and have a blast listening to my favorite bands. I was also making tie-dyes and batiks that helped me a lot when it came to working with color. I traveled all over the country doing what I loved when I discovered Penland School of Crafts in Spruce Pine, NC. I received scholarships to attend eight years in a row and it changed my life



"The moment I hold my breath every time is when I have to transfer the glass piece from the pipe to the pontil."  
Photo credit - Samantha Yancey

KRISTEN MUÑOZ INTERVIEW

forever.

It was here my passion for working with fire and earth morphed into traditional glassblowing and blacksmithing. At this point, a friend and I built my entire hot shop from scratch. This glass studio was built on a prayer to bring joy into people's lives through color, light, and creation.

I still like to go to shows, so maybe I'll see you out there dancing someday! It's also helpful to have my work displayed in several prestigious art galleries in my area, including **Twigs and Leaves** in Waynesville, **Appalachian Craft Center** in Asheville, **Pura Vida** in Asheville, **Featherheads**

in Chimney Rock, **Green Mother Goods** in Asheville, and **Vessel** in Hendersonville.

**RRM:** Your work has a lot of movement in it, and your colors seem to perfectly swirl in the glass without becoming blended into a single color. How difficult of a process is this?

**KM:** I think I was a reincarnated soul from the '60's. Ever since I could remember, I would make all of these paintings by blending colors in a somewhat circular fashion. The first time I laid eyes on an actual tie-dye, I knew what I was recreating back in my childhood art pieces. I immediately got

my mom (she has always fueled my passion for art) to buy me some dyes, and I got busy dying every bit of white cotton fabric in the house.

When I got turned onto glass, I wanted to find out how to make the glass look like tie-dye. My nickname growing up wasn't Rainbow Bright for nothin' (laughs).

**RRM:** Do you draw out what you want the final piece to look like or is it created in the moment?

**KM:** Very rarely. I love what the prayer and the elements all working together create with my attention at the



Taking a break for some puppy love!

Photo credit - Samantha Yancey



"I like making lighting look like fire. These sconces are on either side of a fireplace," Muñoz explains.



Fire-polishing the puntil mark from the bottom, before putting this beautiful bowl in the kiln.

Photo credit - Samantha Yancey

moment.

**RRM:** Tell us about Moon Girl Glass.

**KM:** Moon Girl was a nickname given to me by my flameworking teacher when I first started. It came from my last name being Muñoz, as well as my

love for howling at the moon with my four-legged companions. I've had one by my side ever since I was a teenager. I've been blessed at this time to have 11 by my side when my girl, Kali Ma, turned into a puppy portal and gave birth to ten.

**RRM:** Do you create all the work yourself, or do

you have employees?

**KM:** The funny thing is, one of the main attractions to hot glass for me, was the relationship between the gaffer and their assistant. As a flameworker, pieces are made individually with a single fire from a

Photo credit - Samantha Yancey



Large bowl.  
"Remember what it's like to see with childlike abandon."



Small vase to add color to any room.

"When I got turned onto glass, I wanted to find out how to make the glass look like tie-dye. My nickname growing up wasn't Rainbow Bright for nothin."

torch. I loved watching how the gaffer and assistant would do a somewhat dance around the studio together, moving from the furnace to the marver, bench, glory hole, or kiln.

I live out in the country, so it's out of the way for people. Having a consistent assistant that can stand the heat and difficulty of blowing glass has been an issue. I found myself making deep connections with the elements, asking them for help, listening to

their teachings. If I need help holding something in place, I'll ask one of my children to hold it in hopes they will see the Spirit in the elements.

I have learned so much playing with molten earth. She is very much a feminine energy, like me. I have so much respect for her power. When I'm creating with her, I'm building a friendship. I'm praying with her. I try not to manipulate her too much. I sweet talk her without intimidating her

presence. I want her voice to be heard through each piece, each prayer. If you look closely, each piece has a Spirit. The prayers help them come alive. It can especially be felt when holding them.

Many people say the words upon entering into my studio, "This is so joyful," and it always puts a smile on my face because I know the prayers are working. What I'm learning is that we can connect with our ancestors



Opening up the rainbow bowl, if I'm not sweating I'm not doing something right- (laughs).

Photo credit - Samantha Yancey

Muñoz sand-casted a glass wolf head to honor her four-legged friends  
 Photo credit - Samantha Yancey



"Gotta keep it hot!"  
 Photo credit - Samantha Yancey



"I love playing with glass and light."

through these elements. This water is the same water that has always been here from the beginning. It is the same water that our ancestors drank. This earth, this quartz silicate is the bones of our ancestors.

**RRM:** What inspires you to create something new every day?

**KM:** Nature has always inspired me. I live with my two young boys that help me remember what it's like to see with childlike abandon. I like my pieces to look like they have been made by a child, whimsical like mother nature.



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