



Diane Fitzgerald is a beader who designs jewelry, writes books and articles about beadwork, and collects glass beads, both old and new. "My life is a bead," says Diane, "and I'm just a fuzzy string trying to get through it."



Paisley Necklace from *Beading with Brick Stitch* (Interweave Press, 2001)

Who/What hooked you on beading?

I've liked tiny things since I was very young (I once had a six-inch-tall dollhouse complete with tiny dolls and furniture). I've always liked pattern and watching it evolve, and I did quilts and needlepoint before beading. Although I've always had a little stash of beads, I must attribute my real awakening to beads to Helen Banes and her needlewoven necklaces. After that I was encouraged by Horace Goodhue (author of *Indian-Beadweaving Patterns*), Virginia Blakelock and Carol Perrenoud, and the teachers at The Shepherdess in San Diego, California.

What is the most obnoxious thing you've done to acquire beads?

I think Loren Stump is the most skillful of all glass bead-makers throughout history. To get his beads, I used to find people who would let me pose as their assistant so I could sneak into bead bazaars early. Then I'd make a beeline for Stump's table and grab everything I could (or that I had enough money to pay for)! I've also whined and cajoled dealers, and once even drove all night to get a bead I really wanted from Patty Franz.

How has beading affected your personal relationships?

My friends are pretty much all bead-ers or bead collectors now. It seems that bead-ers are the only people with whom I have much in common. Fortunately, my husband shows some interest in beads and supports my beading efforts. Otherwise, hmmm. . .

What advice do you have for new bead-ers?

I encourage new bead-ers to learn the basics thoroughly, then find their own voice or niche by drawing on their abilities, interests, and life experiences and applying them to their beadwork.

What is the hardest part of beading for you?

The hardest thing for me is giving myself permission to just sit and bead. I still consider beading a pleasure and feel I should be doing some "real" work when, in fact, beading is my real work.

How has beading affected your life?

Beads, frankly, have taken over my life. Almost all my efforts are bead directed.

You've had great success as a beader, thus the term "diva." Any insights why?

My philosophy about teaching may have helped. I think that mostly what people want and need is respect, and maybe a little humor to lighten things up. And they want this respect from someone who is respected herself, so I've tried to gain respect by working hard, by doing good designs, and by being nice to people. People also want to know that they are liked and doing well. I try to give everybody respect by assessing where they're at, then patiently explaining or helping as needed and letting them know I like them. I learned this approach from Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*. On the other hand, maybe it helps to have curly hair.