

Seven ways to enhance your beading

by Diane Fitzgerald

I'd like to share some ideas and thoughts that I've gathered along my bead journey. When I'm designing with beads, I always keep these in mind.

1 Always select your beads on the basis of quality, beauty, and appeal. Don't bother with beads just because they're a bargain. Good work begins with good materials.

2 Take time to learn the history, manufacture, symbolism, and lore of beads. This knowledge will make your beading experience more enjoyable, and who knows where the pursuit will lead.

3 Look for inspiration in everything around you – not only in the arts or in crafts, but in objects, people, and everyday life. Ask yourself, "How can I do this in beads?"

4 Take the time to study color and design. Understanding the elements and principles of design will give you the language to analyze what happens when you create. It helps you know what to change to make your work satisfying and complete. Read through a short course called "Art, Design, and Visual Thinking" by Charlotte Jirousek, an associate professor at Cornell University in the Department of Textiles and Apparel. The course is posted on her Web site, char.txa.cornell.edu.

5 Consider the *second* right answer when deciding on colors and design for your beadwork. This idea is offered by Edward de Bono, a leading authority in the field of creative thinking. You may come up with a good idea, but by pushing a little harder you can often come up with something even better.



6 Make your beadwork as durable as you can. Think about where your beadwork will go when it leaves you. A hundred years from now, it might end up in an antique dealer's case or become part of the cherished collection of another bead fanatic. Make no mistake, beads will come and go in popularity as surely as the sun rises and sets, just as they have for 75,000 years.

7 Finally, fully develop your beading. I've always liked the advice of artist Jasper Johns who said, "Do something, do something to that, and then do something to that." ♦



Diane Fitzgerald is the author of eight books and numerous magazine articles about beadwork. For the past 15 years, she has been teaching extensively across the United States as well as in Europe and South Africa. She lives in Minneapolis, where she owns a bead store, Beautiful Beads. You can see more of Diane's work at her Web site, dianefitzgerald.com.

Diane will be teaching a master class, The Jewels of Miriam Haskell, at the 2007 *Bead & Button* Show. For details about admission to the master class and her other classes, visit beadandbuttonshow.com.