Twisting it All Up

By Kris Schaible

Twisties…. Say this word to someone who isn’t involved with the world of glass and they may think you are talking about some mini-tornado! For us flamworkers it represents an invaluable combination of design possibilities. There are so many fantastic artists out there who use twisties in so many different ways that I wanted to share my method with you.

Some of you may know my husband, John, makes tools for me here at our studio. We sell some of them to other flameworkers on my website at www.krisschaible.com or www.noodlesaurus.com. Among some of our most popular tools are the punties. They are quite a useful tool in the studio and I use them to make murrini and ribbon cane. They are fantastic at pulling down large slices of furnace rod into smaller cane, and I even have a few I use to make cabachons.

One of the most fun things to make are twisties. Watching the glass whirl around itself creating a mini-tornado is something magical.

There are so many color combinations and layering techniques you can explore, but I will cover just a basic twistie and hope that you expand and explore on your own.

Supply List

- Punties
- Quench bowl
- Tweezers
- Your favorite shaping marver
- Kugler clear –K-100
- System 96-Black Stringers –S-56
- Reichenbach Brilliant Copper Blue-R-39
- Reichenbach Mountain Blue- R-420
- Kugler Enamel White- K-61
Step 1: Start by gently heating one puntie as you also heat up a gather of glass. I am using Kugler K-100 clear.

Step 2: When the puntie is glowing a soft red, start building the base. Don’t let your puntie ever get hotter than bright orange or you risk damaging the metal. Add glass to the puntie as you go; be careful not to trap any air bubbles.

Step 3: Continue to add glass until you have about a one-inch gather on the puntie.

So let’s get this party started!!!
Steps 4 - 6: Now you will need to shape the gather into a cylinder shape.

I prefer to use a Val Cox tabletop marver for this as it creates a slightly conical shape that will squash out into a great cylinder. (photo right)

You can also use a hand held marver or other tabletop marver, even gravity will work. Whatever you have close by to shape your glass will work.

After each step always be sure to keep your puntie warm or the glass can cool to the point it will crack or pop off.

Step 7: Here is where the fun begins and all of the design possibilities lie. Heat the Enamel White into a gather large enough to make one stripe across the center of the clear gather.

After applying this initial stripe, heat the entire gather slightly and then add a second stripe, making a “+” on the clear gather.

Step 8: With one of the blue canes, add another stripe right on top of the first white stripe, being careful not to let the blue touch the clear. You want it just on top of the white.
Step 9: Select the other blue cane and repeat the same process, applying the blue this time to the second white stripe, again being careful not to let the blue sag onto the clear.

Step 10: Now it is time to add a very thin stringer of Opal Black in between the white and blue stripes. This will be a super fine line to help the eye separate the colors and will not be seen in part of the finished design.

Step 11: Carefully heat each stripe and marver it flat. You want to keep the blue on top of the white but push them together a bit to flatten the stripe. I use the back side of my tweezers but you can use whatever marvering tool works for you.

Step 12: Now it’s time to cap everything with K-100 clear. Begin by making sure you have a good heat base in your puntie and design.

Begin by filling the clear spaces between the blue/white stripes. This will do two things: it will trap the blue/white strips so they can’t spread, and it will make the gather easier to shape.

To do this, carefully heat a gather of clear and lay it down in the spaces between the blue/white, working your way around all four open spaces.

Step 13: After applying clear between the stripes, go back and apply clear over the blue stripes, completely encasing the gather.
Step 14: Heat the entire gather and shape it back into a cylinder. Be careful not to twist the design while shaping, You want the lines to stay straight, for now.

Steps 15 - 17: Time to heat up the other puntie and join it to the design gather. Keep the design gather warm and carefully heat up the other puntie until it is has a soft, red glow.

Line up the two punties and center the design gather as well as you can, gently pressing the two together.

If you need to adjust the punties, heat up the gather and do that now. You will need the punties to be aligned with each other so you get an even twist.

Step 18: Time to get ready for the twist. Adjust your flame if you need to, and heat just the design gather and the edges of the punties. You don’t want any heat on the handles.

As you heat just the design gather it will begin to move slightly as you rotate the two punties in the same direction. When the design gather will move easily, begin to twist the punties in opposite directions to make your twistie.

Here is your chance to add to your design idea. Twist and pull fast and you get a tight tornado. Twist and pull slow and you get a nice open lacy look. Pull and twist as straight as you can.

TIP: As the glass stiffens, try not to press your thumbs hard against the punties so that you exert too much pressure on them. This could damage the punties.
Step 19: This is what the twistie should look like as you begin twisting. It take a little practice to know how hard to pull and how fast to twist in order to get exactly what you want.

Step 20: Keep pulling and twisting as far as you can reach. I usually try for at least a 24-inch twistie. My “wingspan” isn’t very big, being just 5 ft 3 inches tall.

Step 21: When you have all the twist you can muster it is time to take the twistie off of the punties and put the waste glass in the quench bowl. To do this: flame cut one end of the twistie close to the the puntie and put the puntie into your quench bowl. There should still be enough heat in this puntie to crack off all of the waste glass.

Steps 22 and 23: Repeat for the other side of the twistie. Occasionally, there is a large gather of waste glass left on the punties before I quench them and in these cases I usually heat the whole waste gather again and pinch off what I can with my tweezers, put that in the quench bowl, heat up the puntie again and quench it.

You want to try to get off as much waste glass as you can because leaving glass behind will cause it to splatter and pop the next time you heat the punties, and it can also affect your next design.

I hope you will give my method a try...it’s fun!
I want to take a minute to thank everyone who has purchased from my website in the past and for those murrini makers out there who use our tools, and teachers who introduce them to their students.

As a special treat for those who support SodaLime Times I am going to offer you a $5 off discount code for my website until April, 2013. Just type in “sodalime” (no quotation marks) at check out and you will receive your discount off a single set of punties.

Sources:

Punties: www.krisschaible.com
Kugler: www.hotglasscolor.com
Reichenbach: Olympic Color Rods at www.glasscolor.com
System 96- www.artglasshouse.com

Author Kris Schaible is a Pennsylvania lampworker who has been melting glass since 2004. She was taught the love of all art forms by her father and grandmother at an early age. She is mostly self-taught, but has had some wonderful guidance from other lampworkers. The tool side of Kris’s business is Noodlesaurus where she and husband, John, produce a line of tools for other lampworkers. Kris is also an ISGB District Director as well as Mid-Atlantic Regional Director. Please visit her website at www.krisschaible.com for additional information, work for sale, a show schedule, or to schedule a class at your studio.

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