

Tink Martin— Making a Point with Lauscha Ribbed Cane

Below are excerpts from a Glasscaster interview with flameworking artist, Tink Martin. Glasscaster podcasts feature hot glass talk in a high-tech world. This series, hosted by Marcie Davis, can be found at www.fireladyproductions.com or on iTunes.

Tink, you're the only person I know who teaches a workshop on glass pens. How did that come to be?

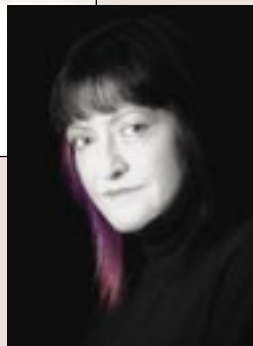
Ooo, glass pens! Well, there's always the "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" thing. In this case, what came first was that I found a piece of ribbed Lauscha cane, and I thought, "What can I do with this?" I got online and Googled "ribbed cane," and I found a little tutorial and thought that it was wonderful and that I would do that. It looked easy. I didn't do such a good job! So I put it away for another year, and then I took it out again and decided to take a weekend and learn how to do it.

Once you understand the process, it's very easy. But when you take this wonderful Lauscha ribbed cane, which is what you use to make the pen nib, and you couple it with the wonderful Lauscha—the candy canes and the beautiful striped rods and stuff—let me put it this way; nobody I know—my friends, my family—nobody's impressed to get one of my Tink vessels. They say, "Yeah, we've seen these before." But you give them a pen and they think you've given them the world. They finally made my mom go, "Oh, you do cool stuff."

The pen classes are fun, and it's easy if you have somebody show you in person the how and the why. It's a perfect class whether somebody has been flameworking for a long time or has never, ever touched a torch before, because doing pens properly is all about heat control and gravity. It's a lesson unto itself, so it's just a fabulous class no matter what you've done.

I have in my possession a number of Lauscha glass pens that the Lauscha factory gave me and even some ink directly from Germany. I can tell you that these pens write beautifully and for a long time on a single dip. I have the world's worst handwriting, but with one of those pens, my handwriting looks kind of nice. There's just something beautiful about it.

They're romantic. I think it was two years ago on the Lampwork, Etc. board that I came up with a Valentine pen challenge. For people to have successfully completed my challenge, they would have to write "I love you" with the pen that they made. It was a wonderful thread out there, and it really got people to be a little more adventurous. I love challenging people anyway, and this was a fun thing.



About the nibs—the tip of the pen—they're made with this ribbed rod, and when you pull it, I think some people will flame-cut it. Then if you reheat it after that, there is a tendency for the very end tip to ball up, which would render it useless, correct?

Exactly. First of all you can pull the tip out straight if you wish, but if you twist it, you're giving more distance for the ink to be moved up into the nib through the capillary action. To get that ink up into the channels made by this fabulous ribbed cane, you have to allow it to do that wicking from the very point. So what I have my students do is twist the nib, pull it out, and snap it off. Then they anneal it and snap it off at home or snip it to whatever length they want the nib to be. Next we do circles with the nib on sandpaper. You can shape the pen nib to be a fine point, medium point, or fat point. You can even sand it down to make a calligraphy pen if you want.

What diameter of rods do you use for the various parts of the pen. I would think that would be very significant in making a good nib. You would also want the body of the pen to be comfortable in the hand. What do you do?

I like fat rods—the fat, colorful, ribbony, wonderful Lauscha canes with all the beautiful stripes. The fatter, the better for me, because you've already got the mass there and you can heat and taper whenever you wish.

If anyone is interested in finding out about your upcoming classes or Beadventure tours, where can they find your schedule?

I try to keep a very current listing of my classes and the dates and everything on my website at www.tinkmartin.com. You can check my class schedule there.

Do you have a phone number or an e-mail address that you're willing to share?

People can contact me by e-mailing tink@blackswampglassworks.com.

Do you have a swamp?

Yes. Actually, Northwest Ohio where I live used to be referred to as the Great Black Swamp, so hence Black Swamp Glassworks.

PGQ
This interview was conducted at The International Flameworking Conference at Salem Community College. Find out more about the Conference at www.salemcc.edu/glass/conference/index.php.

Discover more about Tink Martin's glass art in the Winter 2009 issue of Profitable Glass Quarterly.

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