

## Look or Learn Kiln Firings

Many glass artisans recommend looking in the kiln to see if the firing is complete, then turning the kiln down or off. I completely disagree with this recommendation. I think it's an antiquated and inaccurate way to work. I think instead you should learn to use a digital controller and rely on it to have your kiln do what you program it to do.

Looking to see if a firing is complete can at best just get you close to what you want and will rarely be precise enough to be completely satisfactory. Too often firings from having looked require correction after the firing. If the firing results need to be corrected, you need to correct your firing schedule. Once you've fired too long or too hot, it's too late. You have over fired the glass and now have extra work to correct for that over firing.

Looking is anti-scientific. If you rely on looking, you don't learn how to adjust schedules from previous experience to get exactly the results you want. If a project overcooks, you now know to cook it less next time. Instead of looking, learn exactly what combinations of time and temperature will produce the effect you want. If you like to look, save money and buy a kiln with a pyrometer. If you bought a kiln with a controller, use the controller. The controller's specific purpose is to eliminate the need to look. Isn't that why you bought it?

Kiln cookin' glass is the same as kitchen cookin' a roast. Neither is complicated and both are perfectly predictable. Beef requires a different schedule than chicken, but that doesn't mean you can't learn what the differences are and set cooking times and temperatures as required for whatever meat or whatever glass of whatever size you're cooking.

I suggest if you are serious about learning kilnforming, you stop relying on looking to see if the glass (or the pot roast) is sufficiently cooked. Instead, learn how to calculate how long it takes. Once you've learned the variables, you'll be able to create perfect firing schedules for any project you want to try.

You can look or you can learn. You can keep repeating mistakes or you can learn from them and stop making them. It's your choice.