

Creative Careers

Emma Mackintosh

Glass artist
& business owner



I'm a glass artist based in the Lake District, working with a gas-fired torch using a technique called flamework (or lampwork). This detailed, intimate process allows me to create functional glassware, sculptural pieces, and occasional jewellery - all from a small studio space.

I discovered flameworking while running a bead supply business and was instantly captivated. What began as a hobby quickly became a full-time passion, evolving from making small beads to creating larger blown and sculptural works - and eventually, into a full-time profession.

As I gained confidence and developed my own distinct style, I felt the urge to share my work with a wider audience. That's how my brand, [A Flame With Desire](#), was born - a way to showcase the more artistic, commission-based pieces that define my creative voice. Being able to think creatively, solve problems and work things through has helped me learn how to run my own business.

Over time, I launched a second brand, [Nettle and Tansy](#), which focuses on my ranges of functional glassware.

Learning to adapt

Working with glass feels like having a conversation with a living material. Every movement, every breath, affects how the glass reacts. It's a constant dance that requires patience, calmness, and a keen eye for detail.

Design is only part of it – you also need to understand how something can actually be made. I often start with a sketch and then mentally walk through the entire making process. It's this blend of planning and instinct that I find most rewarding.

Looking back, I've always been creative. I come from a family where making things was just part of life – whether that was cooking, crafting, or simply experimenting with new ideas.

At school, I didn't study art or design. In fact, I chose science and languages because I didn't think I was good enough at art – and design, drama, and music weren't really on offer. But looking back, science has played a big part in my career and it actually helps me creatively.

I'm sure creativity plays a role in many – if not all – subjects, not just the more 'obvious' creative pathways.

The type of glass I use is the same as that used in laboratory equipment: borosilicate. I need to understand its properties, stress points, and how it responds to different temperatures or flame atmospheres. Even the colours come from chemical elements like copper, silver, and gold.

Being self-employed means I have to wear a lot of hats. English helps me write descriptions and content for my website; maths comes in handy for the accounts; science helps me master the material itself. One thing that really surprised me, though, was how valuable my school's public speaking sessions turned out to be. I hated them at the time, but they've helped me enormously in adult life.

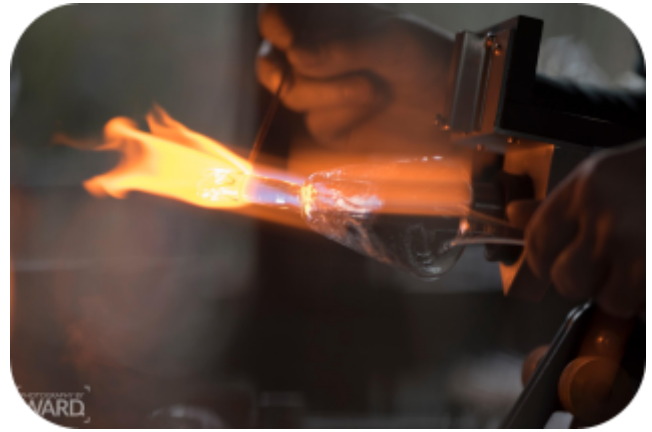
Creativity influences your whole life

Creativity, I believe, doesn't just influence your career – it affects your whole life. It teaches you to be adaptable, to approach problems with an open mind, and to say yes to new opportunities. It makes life more varied and, in my view, much more enjoyable.

To any young person wondering whether to take a creative subject, I'd say: absolutely go for it. It won't limit your future – it will enhance it.

Creativity sharpens your ability to think laterally, supports learning in other subjects like science and maths, and helps you develop original ideas. It's not about becoming an artist necessarily – it's about learning how to think.

If I had to pick a highlight from my career, I'd say making a pair of wine glasses that were presented to Prince Charles (now King Charles) was pretty special. But truthfully, nothing beats hearing from someone who has bought a piece of mine and tells me how much joy it brings them. That's the real magic of this work.



The secret to creativity? Keep an open mind, allow time to experiment, and never give up - even when things go wrong. Because they will. But that's how you learn.

Find out more at go.pearson.com/creatives