

Emma Young Watermelon Slice

... only 7 made in 9 years!

It looks simple. The process is anything but.

Emma Young's *Watermelon Slice* is a solid glass sculpture built layer by layer, with each element of the fruit created in hot glass before being worked into the next.

The process begins with the internal details. Black glass is carefully drawn on using a stringer to create the black seeds, which are then incorporated into clear glass. Red glass is blown and worked around the clear seeded glass to create the melon flesh, followed by the green rind, which is blown, built and added to the outside. Together, these layers create the depth and translucency that make the finished slice feel almost edible.

At every stage, the glass must be reheated and worked while it remains hot and malleable. Young repeatedly gathers, joins, shapes and reheats the material, working the different layers together until they become a single, cohesive solid form. It is not simply a matter of assembling coloured pieces; the glass has to be worked extensively to ensure the layers hold together, the form is controlled, and the surface resolves into the clean, deceptively simple shape of a watermelon slice.

Young cannot do this alone. The glass must stay at working temperature throughout the process, requiring a skilled partner to help manage the piece, reheating and equipment in the hotshop. The artist has described having her partner and colleague Jessica Murtugh as an essential part of making her work.

Once the hot work is complete, there is still significant finishing. After cooling, the entire surface is ground and polished by hand, gradually removing imperfections and refining the glass until it becomes smooth and highly reflective much like polished diamond.

This is highly specialised glassmaking. Young trained in Glass at the University of South Australia, received a scholarship to Pilchuck Glass School in Seattle, and went on to complete the JamFactory Associate Training Program. Her *Watermelon Slice* series has received national and international recognition, including inclusion in the Corning Museum of Glass's *New Glass Review*.

The amount of work involved is reflected in how rarely Young makes this particular sculpture. She has made only seven watermelon slices since 2017. As Young explains, the combination of studio time, assistance, materials, equipment and the extensive work required for each piece means that the more time-consuming a work is, the fewer she can produce.

So while the finished sculpture seems like a simple slice, the process behind it is anything but.

Seven made since 2017. This is one of them!

Watch Emma at work>

