

Confessions of a Bead Shopaholic

I opened the door with my short list of what I needed, and crammed that list into my pocket as I entered the store. What was the use? I knew I would lose self-control. But WHY?? Was it the light bouncing off the bits of glass that makes me lose my senses? Was it the brilliance of the Swarovski crystals on the wall that rendered me powerless? Was it the warm inviting ambience of the store that made me throw fistfuls of money at the store owner? Was it the need to join the bead-buying frenzy of the other bead-buyers drooling, no, frothing at the mouth reverently whispering their mantras “gotta have THAT!” Or did the store have some sort of subliminal control on everyone who entered that made us all want to spend our month’s grocery allowance (if not mortgage) on BEADS!

Honest, cross my heart, I swear on a stack of Bibles, let a bolt of lightning strike me dead if I am lying...but I did intend to go into the bead store and stick to my short list of beads I ran out of for my current project. But what I bought that day came to a bill which my poor credit card groaned in pain in response to, and I broke out in a nervous sweat knowing I will have to pay up with real money later when the bill comes in. I left the store with glazed eyes and shaking hands, clutching my bags of beads like a junkie who just bought her “fix” with great anticipation of my ritual of laying out my “score” on the kitchen table once I got home.

Driving home, my mind played out the usual rationalizations.

- “They were a great price, and the prices will only go up!”
- “The beads were unusual, I will probably never see them anywhere again!”
- “Oh the projects I see in my mind will sell better than the last projects!” (that’s why I bought ALL of that particular kind of bead the store had! Just TOTALLY wiped them out).
- “ I am sure I don’t have THAT color (THAT shape, THAT size, THAT finish...)”.
- “I don’t get to a bead store very often, so I better stock up!”

Ok...the last excuse is fairly true, I don't get to a bead store very often. Getting to a good bead store is not as easy as when I lived in the San Francisco Bay area, where they were littered around the area like Tapas Bars in Madrid, Spain. It takes a lot of planning and effort to get to a good store from where I live in the Central Valley of CA. Not to mention a tank of gas and a good part of the day. So when I do go into a good bead store, it is a treat.

Well actually...going into a bead store is a shock to my system. I feel like a dehydrated, sun stroked person having crawled on the scorching desert to an oasis of ice cold pure water! As soon as I see the beads in the display window I know I will swallow up beads until I have OD'd and will be in need of help. Gee...any wonder why the store owners smile when they see me (here comes our profits for the week!) and the clerks groan...(Oh no! It will take FOREVER to ring up her order!).

I've noticed that I have a peculiar way of shopping while I am in a bead store that is unlike shopping for anything else. At the grocery store, I start at one end, and work through the store aisle by aisle. At the department or clothing store, I will go right to the section where I know I will find what I am looking for. But at the bead store, I become the huntress. Cunning and crafty (pardon the pun). Upon entering, I scan the store. Planning the attack on my prey. I take note of where the seed beads are. They are usually all flocked together, nice and neat, and they are easy prey. One swoop and I will have a basket full! To me, seed beads can never come in enough colors or finishes. And I need them in all sizes.

The other beads take a little more effort to plan an attack on. They are fairly organized, but often, the beads will be different from store to store. A different shape, size, a flower bead I have not seen before, a leaf bead that is wonderful, and what do you call that color 4mm fire polished bead? What kind of metal findings and charms does the store have. Are the beads and findings sold singly (Who would want ONE bead? Are they crazy? Do these people really call themselves beaders?) Or are they offered in packages or strung up for those of us who grasp reality and know that one bead will NEVER do?

In one of my favorite bead stores, there are cases of "samples". Oh you cruel, cruel stores who do this. Samples to tease and taunt me. To make me want beads I never had considered using because the samples look as tasty to

me as a buffet line looks to a group of starving overeater anonymous drop outs.

I will always have a heaping tray. Beads!! Glorious beads!! Piled higher, piled deeper. The rainbow of colors, shapes and sizes. Then finally, I will go to gather seed beads. Tubes of 11's, of 14's, 6's and 8's. Only the Delicas are spared....since I buy from only one of two sources where I order the 100 gram industrial size package from (and often even the 11's!).

Sometimes I get so confused standing in front of a well stocked section of seed beads. What colors do I need? How many tubes? I usually play it safe. Never less than 2 tubes, and often the same colors in different sizes.

Finally with sweat on my brow, and making sure I lick the froth off of my lips so that the clerks don't think I am rabid, I make my way to pay up. And always I help organize, like with like so that she can ring me up faster. This I do not so much to be nice, but left on my own to stand in front of the register I will notice something else. Just what do they have in that case? Or behind the register? It must be extra tasty to be under such protection.

Finally, when I am home, the "Laying Out Ceremony" begins. I empty the bags item by item. No rush, they are all MINE!! All the beads are lovingly laid out, so that I can admire them, stroke them, feel their coolness, and talk to them. I reassure them that even though bringing them home to join my collection is like bring sand to the beach, they will always be special to me.

And at long last, when I have had my fill of my new beads.....I get on the internet to visit my favorite online stores.....