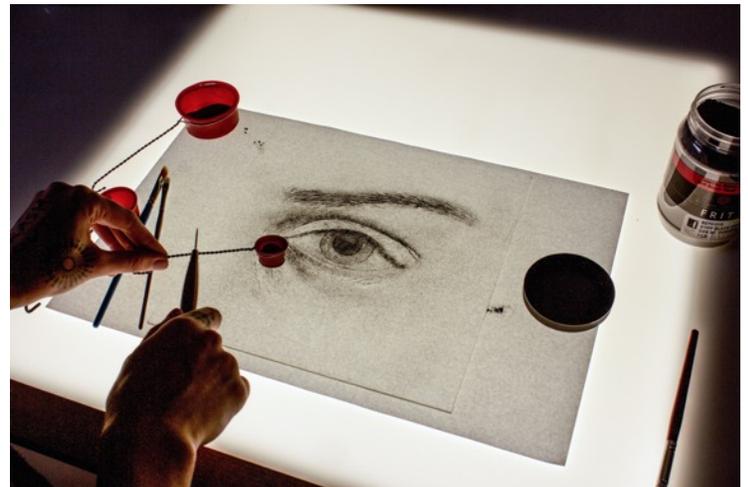
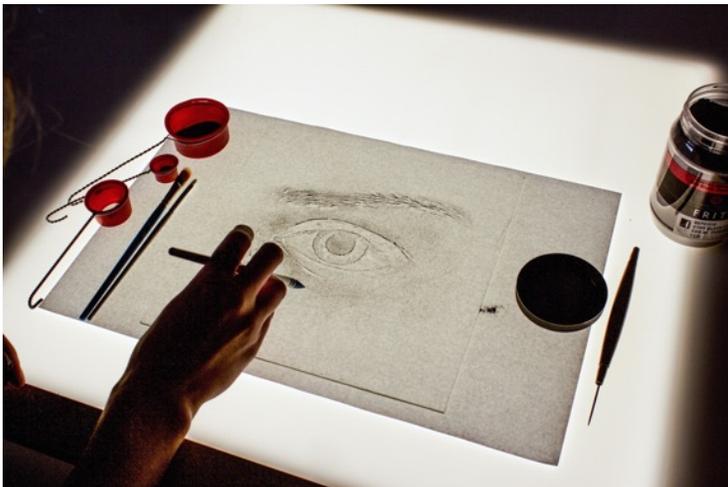
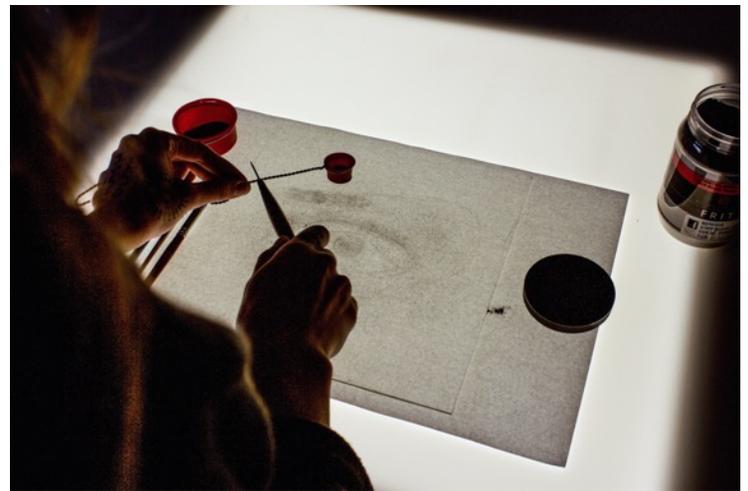


Suzanne Head's Process for Drawing with Glass Powder

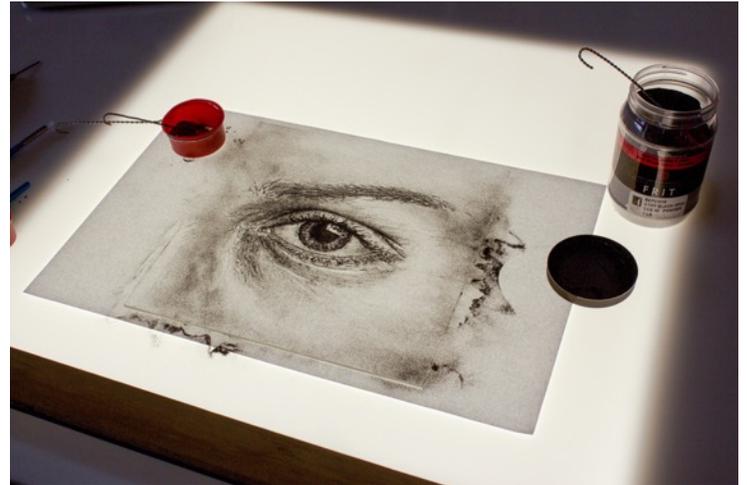
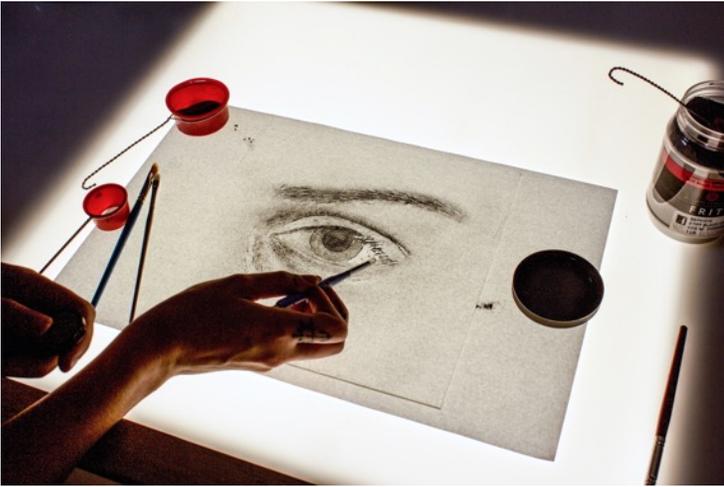
Composed in August, 2018.

I spent 10 years drawing the figure before I ever worked in glass. My techniques are deeply rooted in how I learned to draw and oil paint. Consistently drawing and painting is still a large part of my practice. Each work I've completed in glass was previously sketched out in pencil, sometimes painted, or even sculpted. Fluidity between mediums is very important to me when it comes to understanding the figure and the natural world.

That being said, when I do decide to create a glass work, the medium is %100 glass. It can be soaked in an acetone bath or manipulated by a glass blower in the hot shop. The image may stretch and warp from the heat; but it will not disappear. There are many methods of putting imagery onto glass: ranging from digitally printed decals to screen printing powders and enamels. It is rare that glass powder imagery is drawn entirely by hand. However, I was lucky enough to have developed a set of skills which allow me to do just that.



I usually begin with a penciled outline on paper that is set underneath my glass, I also work on a light table. If I want more spontaneity, I will not use a pencil drawing underneath. My tools are a few cheap brushes, rubber nibs, and small sifters in various sizes. My medium is glass "frit" crushed to a powder, and sheet glass made by Bullseye glass. I sift powder onto the sheet by vibrating the sifter's twisted wire stem with a metal stick. (A somewhat similar technique can be seen when watching Tibetan monks create a sand mandala.) The powder is extremely delicate before it is fired. A hair falling on it could destroy the image. This does happen, and it's an excellent exercise in patience!



Achieving realism in any medium requires a lot of time adding and subtracting. I push the powder around with brushes and rubber nibs to create lines. I wipe powder away or push it aside to create highlights. This process is repeated sequentially: sifting on powder, selectively moving it, and sifting more on top.

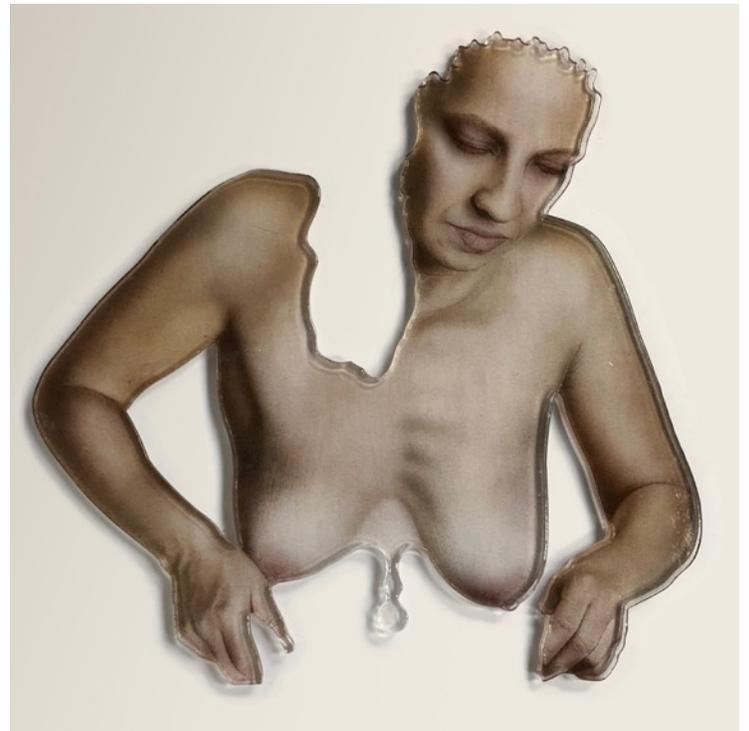


The final Image is fired in a kiln between 1300 and 1400 degrees fahrenheit, and the powder is “fused” to the sheet glass. My work consists of many layers of sheet glass, with drawings on each sheet. I fuse the layers together to create depth and emphasis. My finished pieces that you see in a gallery were fired anywhere between five and fifteen times.

“...but what about color?”



Whenever I teach powder drawing, I always demonstrate the process with black powder, first. While the basic principles for manipulating powder are the same, colored powders can be more difficult to understand. My ability to work with colored powder is a result of experimenting with each color and its unique characteristics. It is also a product of my years spent oil painting. My understanding of color theory, light and translucency is crucial to my ability to work with powder and achieve realism if I choose to do so.



Above, you can see a component of my now finished piece, *Drip*. The image on the left is unfired, colored powder, on the light table. The image on the right has been fired multiple times, and is the result of layered, translucent color. My best advice to someone who wanted to achieve full color realism in glass powder would be to enroll in a painting class. The color theory learned there will be very useful.

More process images can be seen on my website.

Please contact me with any questions at info@suzannehead.com.