

# Black Glass 101: Shapes

By Claudia Chalmers

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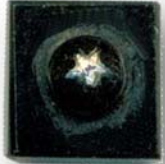

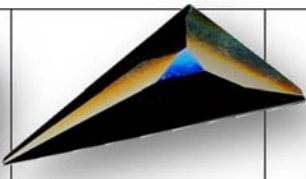


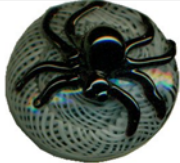
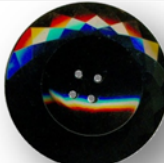
The variety of shapes available in buttons, and particularly in glass buttons, is practically inexhaustible. The difficulty is not in finding shapes, but in organizing them in a way that is logical and orderly. *The National Button Society Blue Book* makes a start by categorizing shapes in three ways: linear, contour, and realistic. The linear shape of a button can be determined by tracing around the outside of the button; the contour shape of the button takes into consideration its depth/height. Realistic buttons have the shape of the actual subject (the subject must be from one of the four pictorial sections in the NBB classification). For example, a button that is shaped like a dog would be considered realistic.

In the December 2009 *National Button Bulletin* there is a detailed article by Barbara Barrans, the Classification Chairperson of the National Button Society, entitled "The Shapes Class Explored and Illustrated" (p. 238). In this excellent article, Mrs. Barrans breaks down the three shape classes into greater detail, illustrating many possibilities. This article on black glass button shapes will use that article as a guideline, with the hope of illustrating the variety of shapes available in black glass buttons.






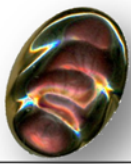

## Contour Shapes: Simple Geometric

				
<b>Ball</b> shaped. This one has star shaped foil embedded.	Modified <b>cone</b> shape. A conventional seven tipped coronet.	<b>Spindle.</b> Rounded shape with swirled overlay.	<b>Dome</b> shape. Domes differ from balls in that they are flattened on the bottom. This button sits quite high and has a white glass overlay.	<b>Cylinder</b> shape. This is an antique paperweight.
				
Modified <b>pyramid.</b> Plain tipped impression inlay with a white stripe overlay.	<b>Berry tipped</b> and <b>Multi-tipped.</b> Coronet with clambroth glass (top) and a molded antique paperweight.	These three are <b>polyhedrons.</b> The definition of polyhedron is "a geometric solid in three dimensions with flat faces and straight edges." The first example has paint decorative finish. The center example has attached red glass embellishment, and the last is a vintage moonglow.		<b>Drum-like.</b> The one on the left is two-tiered, green glass OME on a black glass base. The one on the right is a watch crystal in a black glass frame.




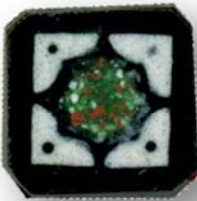

## Contour Shapes: Complex

				
<b>Concave.</b> Metal backed. Wafer. Acid etched leaf.	<b>Convex on flat surface.</b> Foil embedded.	<b>Irregular.</b> Oddly shaped paperweight.	<b>Asymmetrical.</b> Faceted chunky triangle. Large.	<b>Asymmetrical/irregular.</b> Gold lustered, blown black glass. Self shank.
				
	<b>Chunky Symmetrical.</b> Impression inlay "bracelet."	<b>Dome with additional convex shape.</b> Modern paperweight with spider overlay. Backmark: Jari 2007.	<b>Convex/concave combination.</b> Faceted sew-through. Large.	

## Linear Shapes: Curved Lines Only

				
<b>Irregular.</b> Fused black glass penguin with chick. Studio by Kay Ferguson.	<b>Paisley.</b> Gold luster on outline surface design.	<b>Very uniquely shaped swirlback.</b> Medium.	<b>Scalloped edges.</b> Riveted, metal backed black glass.	<b>Scalloped edges.</b> Lacy black glass. Silver lustered with blue wash.
				
<b>Oval.</b> This is a modern button with a plastic pearled finish over gold luster.			<b>Spindle.</b> A flat, all black lacy design. Large.	

## Linear Shapes: Straight Lines Only

				
<b>Triangle (3-sided).</b> Fused modern glass. Studio by Kay Ferguson.	<b>Square/rectangle (4-sided.</b> Please note: in competitions specialized to squares, all four sides must be exactly the same length. The judges will often actually measure the sides. Left: white sheet overlay. Right: embossed surface design.		<b>Modified square.</b> Modified squares have <i>slightly</i> cut off or rounded corners. Tile inlay.	<b>Modified rectangle.</b> <i>Slightly</i> rounded corners. Fused colored glass on black glass base. Paste OME. Studio by Cathy Mayer.



## Linear Shapes: Straight Lines Only, Cont'd:

				
<b>Hexagon. (6-sided).</b> This button has a nice contour shape too, and a British registry mark on the back!	<b>6-sided.</b> A more elongated shape with paint finish.	<b>6-sided.</b> Collectors frequently try to use this beautiful lacy button as a square, but if you trace around it, it will be apparent that it has six sides.	<b>Octagon. (8-sided).</b> Nice sew-through moonglow. Vintage.	<b>6-Point Star.</b> Antique swirlback in a great linear shape.

## Linear Shapes: Complex

				
<b>Straight and curved lines.</b> Bright and dull finishes on a lovely, large antique button.	<b>Straight and curved lines.</b> Intaglio lizard.	<b>Straight and curved lines.</b> Realistic fan with gold and silver luster.	<b>Symmetrical.</b> Antique button with incised surface design.	<b>Irregular Linear.</b> Deer. Pictorial black glass bini with gold luster and backmarked metal back.

## Realistic Shapes

Realistic buttons are shaped like their subject and must represent something from one of the four pictorial sections: animal, plant, object, or other pictorial. Do not use heart shapes, stars, paisleys, or snowflakes for realistics. They are considered patterns.

## Realistic Shapes: Animals

				
Realistic bird head. Gold luster decorative finish and paste OME. Vintage. Medium.	Realistic owl head. Swirlback.	Realistic horse head. Silver luster. Self-shank. Vintage.	Realistic fish. Studio lampwork by Kathy Hoppe.	Insects. Left: molded silver lustered fly. Right: riveted and faceted realistic. Both are small.



## Realistic Shapes: Objects

				
Realistic barrel complete with cork. Paint decorative finish.	Realistic frying pan with eggs. Lampwork by Mike Edmundson.	Realistic buckle. Heavily silver lustered.	Realistic doorknocker.	Realistic horseshoe with hoof showing.

## Realistic Shapes, Objects: cont'd

			
Realistic shell. Antique paperweight. (Note: if the animal is showing in a shell button, it is classed as an animal instead of an object.	Realistic log. Self-shank. Gold luster decorative finish.	Realistic shoe. Gold luster filled outline. This antique sample has a metal shank and plate, but modern versions with self shanks exist.	

## Realistic Shapes: Plants

				
Realistic leaf. Modern button with gunmetal luster and a self shank. Large.	Realistic acorn. Molded and highly convex with a self-shank. Antique. Small.	Also a realistic acorn, this tongue shape is, by tradition, accepted as an acorn despite its tongue-like facets.	Realistic leaf. Antique lacy. Note that fine details, like the stem on this button, can be molded into the design instead of realistically separate – especially in glass buttons.	Realistic pansy. Tiny button with paint decorative finish.

## Realistic Shapes: Other Pictorials

				
Realistic Mexican bandit. A vintage West German glass button with paint decoration and a self shank.	Buddha. Modern Czechoslovakian glass with paint decoration.	Two classic profiles of women. At left, Minerva can also be classed as mythological. Both are antique. The button on left is small and the one on the right is medium.	A crescent moon, with or without a face is accepted as realistic. Modern Czechoslovakian glass with single paste jewel embellishment. Medium.	

This is the conclusion of the series of articles on the classification of black glass buttons. I wish to thank all of the people who have helped with gathering information, button samples, photos, etc., Yessy Byl, Cathy Mayer, Merry Jo Thoele, and Phyllis Paule. And I most especially wish to thank antique glass button specialist Rebecca Lyon without whose tireless research, editing, sample searching, and scanning these articles would not have happened.