



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Ghanaian Artist Turns Glass Waste into Art

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A Ghanaian man who once made jewelry from glass **beads** is now using old glass to make new art.

He hopes to reduce glass waste and help the environment in his country.

If glass artist Michael Tetteh can earn some money doing it, he will be happy, too.

Tetteh learned the art of glass blowing during a visit to Europe in 2012. He went to see people who knew about glass blowing in the Netherlands and France and learned to make many-colored, artistic flower holders or water carriers.

Many years later, Tetteh has his own workplace where he melts broken glass from waste centers in Accra and turns it into art.

He looks for broken glass from old televisions or bottles and melts it down in a large round container known as a kiln. The kiln gets very hot, nearly 1,500 degrees Celsius, and turns the old glass into hot liquid.

Tetteh, now 44, is the nation's only professional glass blower.

He uses a long **pole** to remove a ball of melted glass from the kiln and starts working to shape the glass into colorful **items** people can use again.

If he can teach more people to make art pieces from glass, he can reduce his country's need to bring in glass from China. Ghana imports about \$300 million worth of glass and **pottery** each year, says the Observatory for Economic Complexity. About 80 percent comes from China.

He hopes to make Ghana's glass bead-making tradition into a larger industry with people doing many different jobs.

"Glass is my **passion**, my heart," he said. "It takes you on a **journey** from one (place) to another."

In addition to helping his country keep more money in Ghana, Tetteh thinks a larger, glass economy will also make his country cleaner. A glass waste collection program would help.

Tetteh works in the area called Odumase-Krobo and trains other glass blowers in his shop. He learned how to make his equipment by watching videos on a computer. He said he is trying to follow the designs of well-known American glass artist Dale Chihuly.

"My heart wants to train young Ghanaians, both men and women, so they can learn this job," he said. "We will not have to go to other countries like China to buy what we want for Ghana."

Over the years, he has gotten better at the work. Now Tetteh's pieces are sold in shops in Ghana and Ivory Coast. Some of his work is also sold in art stores in Europe and the U.S.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by Reuters.*

*Do you think the artist's passion for glass blowing can change the economy in Ghana? Write to us in the Comments Section and visit our Facebook page.*

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## Words in This Story

**bead** – *n.* a small usually round, piece of glass, wood, stone or other material with a hole through the center that can be used to make jewelry

**pole** – *n.* a long piece of wood or metal that can be used to lengthen reach or hold something such as a sign if it is placed in the ground

**item** – *n.* a single thing in a list, account, or series

**pottery** – *n.* the manufacture of clay objects

**passion** – *n.* a feeling of excitement about doing something

**journey** – *n.* an act of travel; trip

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