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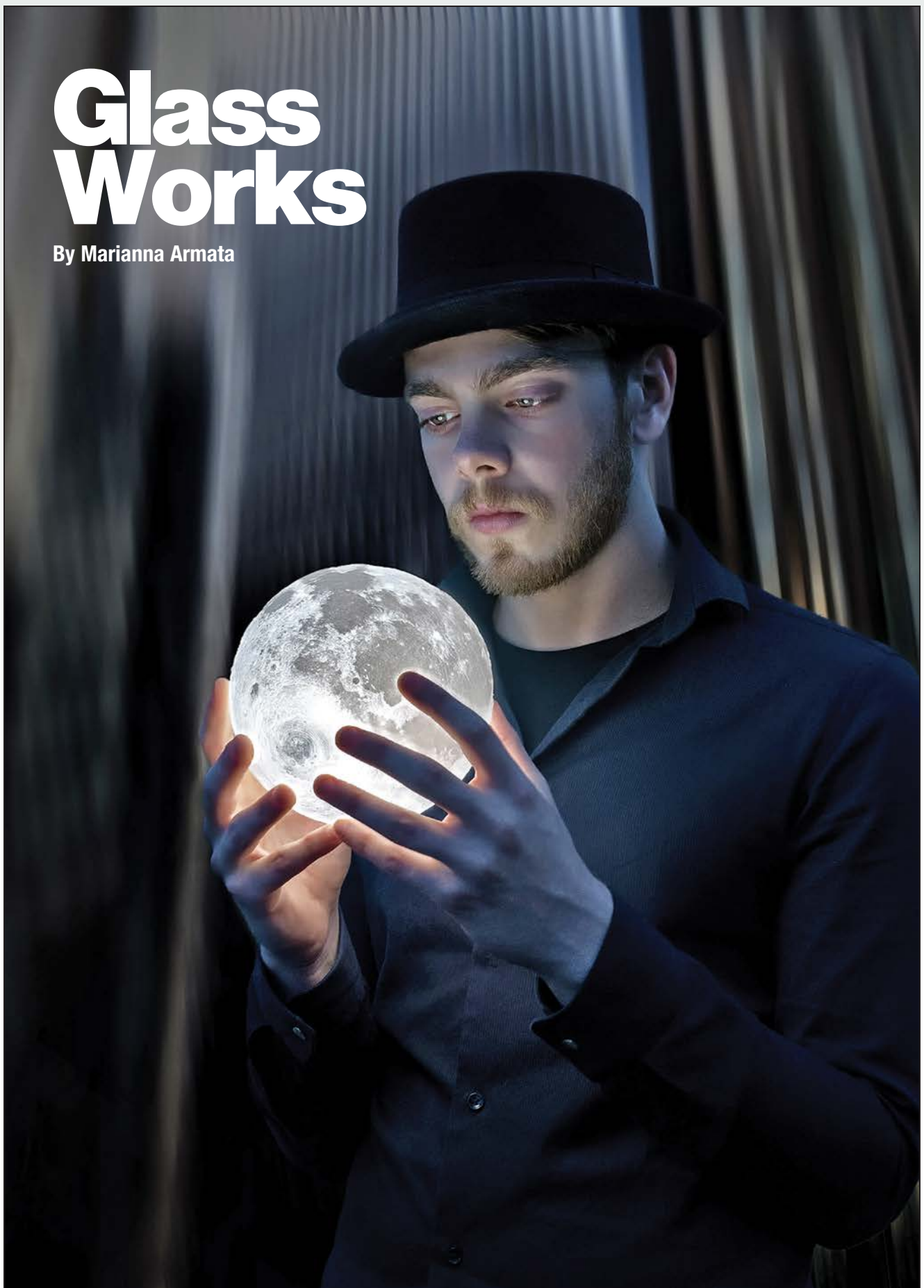
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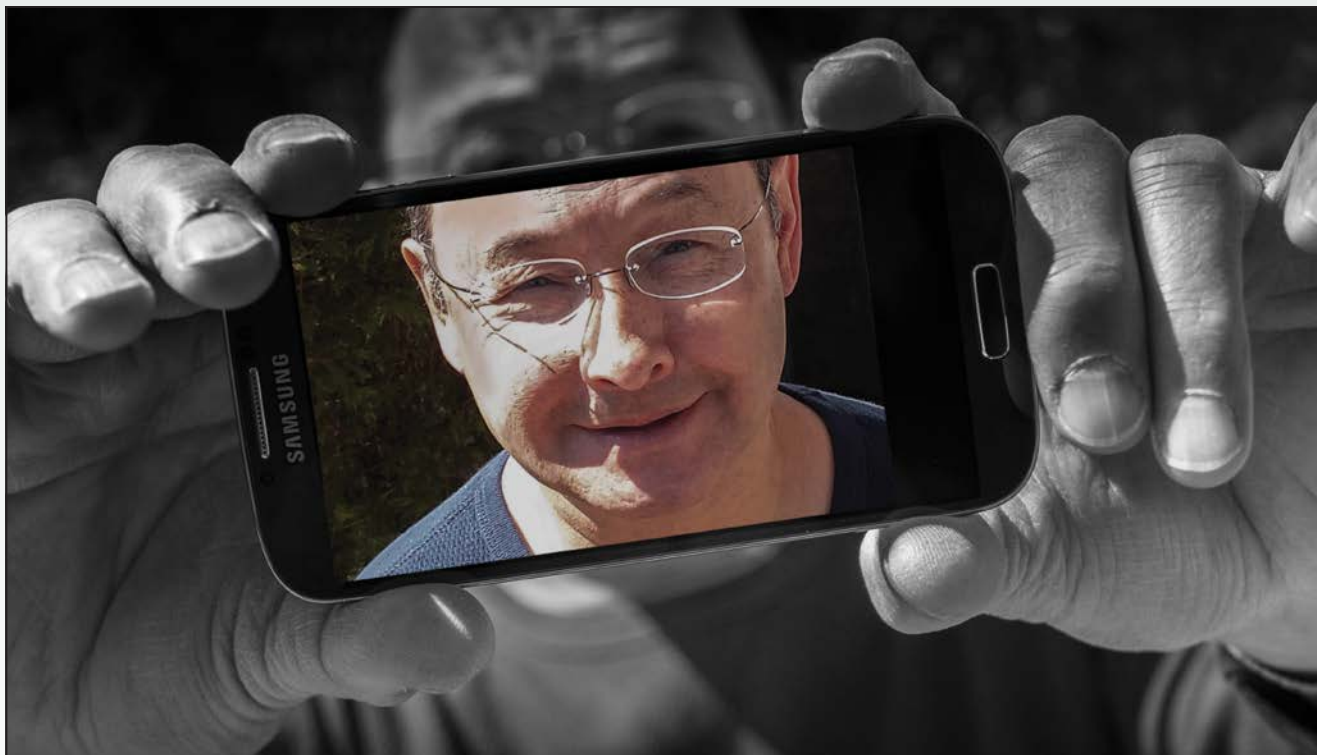


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Glass Works

By Marianna Armata





The foundation for the Glass Works Portrait Series germinated the first time I shot a portrait of someone peering through a glass object.

A few years ago, my son came to visit and found a cheap lens doubler among my photo gear “toys.” Hearing that it’s the worst lens I ever bought, he took it apart. When he did, we discovered one of the lenses inside was tack sharp, while the other was a useless piece of plastic.

He pulled the good lens up to his eye and . . . bingo! It was love at first sight.

I asked him to take it outside and do that again. The first shot, The

Photographer’s Son, won the 2nd place Merit of Excellence Award in the 2015 International Colour Awards competition and inspired the rest of the series.

The rest, as they say, is history. I was hooked!

Following the success of the first lens experiment, I decided to confront my fear of photographing people head-on. I begged, borrowed and hired models to hold all sorts of different lenses and

miscellaneous glass objects as I directed them from behind my camera.

I tried to find the most appropriate glass object for each model. My mom is a senior who needs glasses so a magnifying glass made sense for her portrait. I shot her holding a small printer’s proofing glass and a large magnifying lens. Both of these portraits did well in international competitions (1st place in the 2015 Moscow International Portrait Competition, the 2015 International Color Awards competition and was published in 2018





Photo Life “The World We Live In” feature, where it won 6th place in the “Humanity” category).

Finding the right prop was paramount. I photographed a young man holding a beer glass, but used a cellphone for a techie friend, a steamy glass pane for a lovely lady and a hand mirror for a pretty girl.

A friend brought her cat with her and I shot them together along with a goldfish in a bowl. We had a lot of fun and no animals were injured in the process. The goldfish found its way back to the pet store and the cat seemed to enjoy her brief fling with celebrity.

While most of the portraits were shot in my home studio with one Alien Bees light, a reflector and my trusty Panasonic Lumix GH2 + Leica 25mm f1.4 prime

lens, I took a few “victims” outdoors to shoot in available evening light.

The most recent portrait of a handsome young man holding a rechargeable “glowing moon” was taken at a nearby park. While I loved the intensity and the lighting on the face and hands of the model and novelty of this portrait, I didn’t really like the dull background of dark trees so I substituted them with an urban environment in post-processing. The resulting image is much more impactful.

Sometimes, I catch that moment of serendipity when the light and subject line up perfectly, as in the case of my husband catching a beam of light in a lightbulb while we were out for a walk. Yes, those little props come in handy from time to time so I bring a few along “just in case” the stars align just right.

I owe some of the success of this series to my editing skills I developed as a professional graphic designer. I learned both the art of photography and Photoshop editing on my own and honed those skills on a daily basis for 20-plus years until my retirement from the design world last year.

When it comes to photography, it’s always just for fun and never stressful. I’m a child of a scientist and an artist and love to experiment to achieve new and exciting results. I’m also very lucky to have friends and family who understand this and like to play along.

Another factor in the success of this portrait series is that I develop a comprehensive set of images which tells a more complete story than a single image could.



This is great on several levels: I develop a good collection of images on one theme and as I do each one leads to another. Case in point: my “Paper” series of mostly Post-It Notes presented in an audio visual slideshow won a 2018 CAPA Gold Medal and Best of Show in the Club AV competition, and my “Shells” series won the same accolades in the 2019 AV competition.

Any single image would not have had as much impact as the cumulative effect of the series.

The moral of this story: confront your biggest fears, find a theme that speaks to you for a comprehensive photo essay and shoot it!

I bet you will be glad you did. There is nothing better for your self-esteem and photography skills

than to challenge yourself and work the theme to your satisfaction until it makes you proud. ✨

Marianna Armata lives in Montreal and recently retired after a 37-year career as a professional graphic designer.

She is an international award-winning photographer whose work has been published in Canadian Geographic, Photo Life, Photo News, Popular Photography, DSLR Magazine, Communication Arts and Herzstück. She is a member of the Lakeshore Camera Club and her work can be viewed at passionatephotos.net.

