

Special Effects: Steel Blue Opalescent



"When I put it in the kiln it was blue. When I took it out it was the color of mild steel. When I fired it again it was blue. What's going on?"

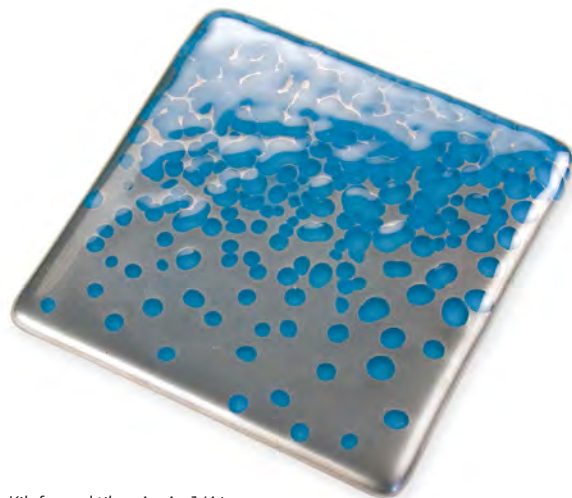
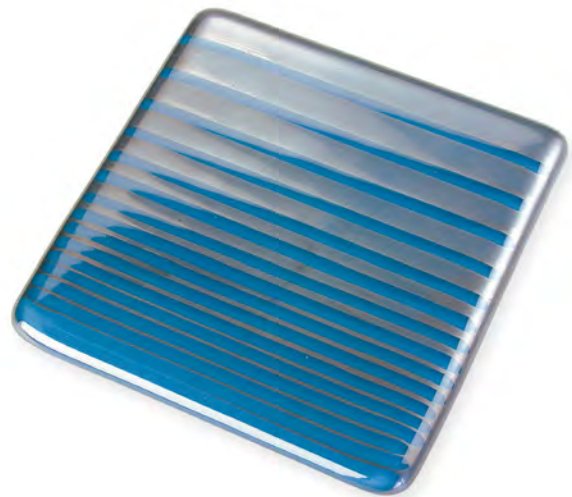
On the surface, Bullseye's Steel Blue Opalescent glass (000146) a deep teal blue. In transmission, it shows a slight shift to a deep aquamarine. But on firing, it seems to have a mind of its own.

When we were developing Steel Blue Opalescent, our quality inspectors tested it—as we test all our glass—by firing it to 1500°F (815°C) and it came out of the kiln looking as blue as when we put it in. But kilnformers soon started calling us to report the appearance a mysterious shiny silver-gray coating.

Through interviews and further testing we discovered that, in the range of 1250°F–1400°F (677°C–760°C), the surface of the sheet exposed to the atmosphere did indeed take on a shiny silver-gray coating. This effect often disappeared once the glass reached full-fuse temperatures.

We considered discontinuing Steel Blue Opalescent at that point, but kilnworkers persuaded us to keep it, having discovered exciting ways to use this special effect glass. The areas of the sheet that are not exposed to air do not develop the metallic film. Artists worked up patterning schemes that allowed them to fire Steel Blue Opalescent to two colors simultaneously—covering portions of the glass with Clear Thin sheet glass, frit, or powder, and firing to lower temperatures to maintain the metallic effect.

Steel Blue Opalescent is available in 3 mm sheets, Thin sheets, frit, powder, and rod.



Kilnformed tiles, 4 x 4 x 1/4 in.