

# The Complex Cane and Loaf

The term **cane** is borrowed from glassworking. It refers to a glass rod or cylinder that has a pattern running throughout the length. Near Venice, on the island of Murano, a glassworking technique using these canes became a high art. It was called millefiori which means “a thousand flowers.” Canes were produced in molten glass in a large diameter and then, while molten, stretched down into small-diameter rods. This process is called “drawing” in the glass world. I call it **reduction**



50. An assortment of face and pattern chips by Pier Voulkos. The box is not made of polymer clay.

when applied to polymer clay. These glass canes with simple patterns, flowers or other images, were cut into pieces and applied to the surface of beads by melting in front of a hot torch or lamp, a technique called **lampworking**<sup>7</sup>. These techniques were used during the four hundred years of production of the beautiful Venetian trade beads that have traveled all over the world. The manufacture of glass canes is a fascinating and difficult process and was kept secret until modern times. But these same processes can be easily imitated with polymer clays. There are few other materials that can so beautifully and eas-

ily express themselves using this technique. Elaborate patterns can be built up, the borders between colors remain distinct, and the cane can be cut and reassembled to create composite patterns. The possibilities for pattern formation can be extended beyond the limits of typical glassworking.