Small objects of desire

Too hot to handle?

THEO:

Wow. That's a big box.

GEORGY:

Yes, I've got a big box, but it's not quite such a big object as you think.

THEO:

Really? What is it?

GEORGY:

There you go.

THEO:

Is that the object? You're kidding.

GEORGY:

What do you think it is?

THEO:

I have no idea.

GEORGY:

Shall I give you a clue?

THEO:

Please do.

GEORGY:

Any wiser? I like to make glass jewellery. And this is my kiln, which goes in the microwave. It's an amazing piece of technology, really. The thing that really makes the this kiln work is this silicon carbide lining. Basically, this refracts all the microwaves, so it heats up to about 800 degrees incredibly fast. The longer you leave it, the rounder it gets because that's the nature of glass, it flows.

ROBIN:
Is this polystyrene around it?

GEORGY:
No, this is a special ceramic. It's very, very porous, which is why it's very brittle, as you can see.

THEO:
So there is a hole here, presumably because—

GEORGY:
That lets out the heat and it's also, when it's in the microwave, that's the way that I can see how hot it's got. So when it's glowing a nice bright orange, I can tell that it's reached temperature.

The criticism I would have of it is that on its own, you don't understand how to use it or what to do with it. For a start, you don't get this out of the kiln without wearing a pair of gloves because it's very, very hot. And you need lining paper because, otherwise, the glass would just stick to the ceramic.

JEFF:
But could this be dangerous? I mean, could you burn yourself badly on this?

GEORGY:
Absolutely, if you hadn't read the instructions.

JEFF:
So what are the regulations for using something like this in the home?

THEO:
Gloves.

GEORGY:
Well, I don't know that there are regulations as such, but I think it's the kind of thing where you have to know what you're doing.

THEO:
Do you take both pieces together? Because there is—

GEORGY:

Yes, you do.

THEO:
But this is quite unsafe because this is quite thin.

GEORGY:
If you've got gloves on, you can hold it like that, so it's not a problem.

THEO:
Why not handles? Why it doesn't have handles? I mean, I'm still wondering that it's not that safe.

JEFF:
If you put anything that's asymmetric on it, then the heat distribution—

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GEORGY:
I can't see how you could do it without it affecting the way in which it works. So—

THEO:
But maybe this should be taller maybe, in order to be more secure when you move it out.

JEFF:
The point of this is so you locate the top.

GEORGY:
Yeah, it's just to locate it.

JEFF:
Yeah, you're creating artificial problems here. If the people who use it don't have a problem, then it doesn't need fixing.

THEO:
That's right, but I'm trying to understand the reason why this is formed exactly like that and why it's not different.

GEORGY:
It's form following function in this situation.

THEO:
Yeah.

ROBIN:
I just wonder whether you could adapt this technology so you could make chips in the microwave.

[LAUGHTER]

JEFF:
You mean microchips.