METAL CLAY
CONNECTIONS
the PMC Connection quarterly newsletter

Volume 4 – July 2007
Water Etching, Carving, Negative Space and More

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Welcome to Metal Clay Connections...

Thanks to all of you for your kind words and support of our fantastic newsletter. Many people have requested subscription. Remember right now subscriptions are free. To get yours click here and just put **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject line:

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If you are already a subscriber, I would love to receive your comments about the newsletter. So do not hesitate to write me. If you have ideas, tips, techniques, projects, photos or articles you would like us to consider for MCC, please just sent them along. We look forward to your submissions. Please include your name, description of PMC work, a short bio, address, e-mail, and phone. Articles and photos should be attachments. Image resolution should be 300 dpi for a 3" by 5" image size. Mail us a CD if the image is over 4MB.

Water etching, carving and negative space will be the focus of the July issue. We are taking submissions now.

Linda Bernstein, Editor

Mission Statement

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate. To this end you will find herein some of the following areas:

- Major articles by Senior Instructors and others
- Editorial
- Interviews
- Projects
- Gallery section
- Event announcements
- Hints and Tips
- New products
- Technical information
- PMCC news
- Senior Instructor News
- PMCC Certified member news

PMC Education

PMC Connection Announces
New Educational Program

PMC Connection has now redesigned the Educational Program and even though shorter, the classes have the same techniques presented as the three day classes. We are intensifying rather than relaxing the requirements for completion of these classes.

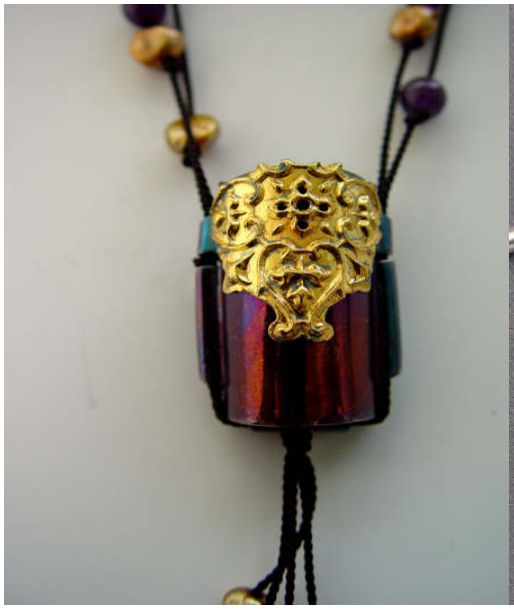
PMCC Certification
Level 1 and Level 2

Level 3 Certification
Continue your education in PMC

In the Level Three Certification class you will learn advanced techniques with PMC, making a hinged box which is carved and embellished with Keum Bo. Setting irregularly shaped cabachons will also be taught. This exciting and informative 2-day class will take you to new levels of understanding PMC.

Below you will see some of the examples of the 2 projects taught in this class. These are works by Sherry Fotopoulos, Linda Kline, Jiro Togoshi, Mary Ellin D'Agostino, Sherry Viktora, Cindy Holst, Kathy Miller, Deirdre Gan and Linda Bernstein.

Register on line here Level 3 Certification



Sherry Fotopoulos

Linda Kline

Linda Kline

Mary Ellin D'Agostino

Jiro Togoshi (Linda Bernstein's student)

Linda Bernstein

Linda Bernstein

Linda Bernstein

Sherry Viktora

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Kathy Miller (Sherry Viktora's student)

Cindy Holst (Sherry Viktora's student)

Deirdre Gan (Linda Bernstein's student)

Find a PMCC Level 3 Certification Class near you

Register on line here Level 3 Certification

Tips and Techniques:

by Alice Alper-Rein

PMC TIPS TRICKS AND TECHNIQUES FOR:
Water Etching, Carving, Negative Space and More

WATER ETCHING:

1. The first time you try the water etching technique on metal clay, prepare a piece that is at least 5-7 cards thick. The additional thickness will help you feel more comfortable about removing clay and give you some leeway as you experiment with how deep to etch without compromising the integrity of the piece. As you become more experienced with the technique, you will be better able to judge the depth of the etch (difference between the high and low relief) and will be able to begin with a piece that is considerably thinner (4-5 cards thick.)

2. When the unfired, metal clay shape is bone dry, prepare the surface of the clay to be etched using progressively finer jewelry grade polishing papers or “water-sand” the entire surface by using a fingertip to apply a liberal amount of water. Dry thoroughly.

3. Use light pressure if you decide to pencil sketch a design directly onto the bone dry metal clay to use as a guide to follow when applying a resist onto the piece or “throw caution to the wind” and apply the resist in a serendipitous manner.

4. Left over nail polish can be used as a substitute for a liquid wax resist. Choose a colorful nail polish, rather than clear. It’s easier to see.

5. Use a nail art brush, created especially for painting detailed artwork on fingernails to apply the nail polish or wax resist to the metal clay. These brushes can be purchased at beauty supply stores or on the internet. Nail art brushes have just a few bristle “hairs” for more control. They are available in very long or very short lengths.

6. When using nail polish as a resist, periodically dip the nail art brush or fine paintbrush in nail polish remover (acetone) and wipe it off on a paper towel to prevent it from overloading and to salvage the brush for future use.

7. A kistka pen (traditionally used in the Ukrainian Egg Art technique called "Pysanky," a wax-resist and dye process) can be used to apply a resist to metal clay. The reservoir is filled with the resist wax, which is then warmed over a candle flame allowing it to flow through a narrow channel onto the piece to be etched.

8. To etch the front and the back of the piece, apply the resist in a pattern on the front of the piece and allow it to dry thoroughly. Then apply the resist in a pattern on the back of the piece and allow that to dry. Use a small

wet sponge wedge to wash away clay from one side. Allow the piece to dry thoroughly and then repeat the process on the other side.

9. If only one side of the piece will be etched, resist can be painted on the back and sides of the piece to avoid these areas from being etched as water is applied to the top surface during the etching process.

10. Avoid using a heat source to dry the work when using a wax resist. Allow the piece to air dry. A heat source will melt the wax.

11. A small natural sea sponge, a common kitchen sponge cut into small wedges or a clean make-up "puff" dipped into water and rug out slightly can be used to "etch" the bone dry metal clay.

12. Try substituting a moist baby wipe for the sponge to remove clay.

13. Stop the water etching process and allow the work to air dry before continuing on if the piece becomes muddy. Begin again when the piece is bone dry.

14. For a multi-level etched piece, apply the resist to select areas. When the piece is bone dry, use the water etching technique to create a shallow etch, removing only a small amount of clay. Thoroughly dry the piece and then apply more resist to different areas. Dry and water etch again.

15. Wash out the sponge or baby wipe in a small bowl of water periodically as you work. At the end of a work session, allow the clay slip to settle to the bottom of the bowl. Pour off the clear water and add the clay residue to your slip jar.

16. Vent the kiln. Fire the kiln in a well ventilated area or better yet, fire the kiln outside. Both the wax resist and the nail polish will produce some smoke as they burn off during the kiln firing process.

CARVING:
1. You'll have less flaking if you carve metal clay while it is leather hard (still a bit rubbery) verses carving bone dry clay.

2. Did you know that metal clay can be carved as you draw on it with simple tools like a pencil or needle tool or the like by simply increasing the pressure used?

3. For fine control while carving metal clay use micro carving tools traditionally used by jewelers to carve wax. My favorites are the super sharp carving tools created by Kate Wolf, http://www.wolftools.biz/tools.htm Dockyard and Donna Kato also manufacture/sell their own brands of micro carving tools.

4. To make it easier to see your strokes as you carve, first lightly paint the surface of the metal clay with a diluted acrylic paint wash. As you remove material from select areas, you'll also be removing the colored acrylic paint.

5. Treat your carving tools as you would a saw blade and lubricate them with a little beeswax periodically as you carve.

6. If too much metal clay is accidentally carved away from an area, fill in the mistake with thick slip if syringe clay, dry thoroughly and proceed as planned.

7. Practice carving on linoleum, rubber carving blocks, baked polymer clay or erasers. Not only will you perfect your technique, but you'll also have a new stamp for texturing metal clay.

8. Create some “carving combs” by hammering varying amounts of long, stainless steel straight pins through ½" strips of balsa wood (any soft wood will work) I use them as texture tools by pulling them lightly, either straight across, in a wavy fashion or crosshatched on leather hard PMC. Poking the clay repeatedly with the comb also produces an interesting texture. They also work wonderfully on freshly rolled out PMC.

NEGATIVE SPACE:

1. Syringe drawing is an obvious way of utilizing both positive and negative space. Place your project idea (line drawing or clip art) under a clear page protector and trace it using the PMC Syringe like a pencil, extruding clay as you go.

2. Use a clay extruder fitted with hollow core adapters to create short metal clay tubes with a variety of inside diameters. Also extrude solid rods in various shapes. Use slip, syringe and lump clay to assemble the tubes and rods to create canes. The canes can be assembled in funky shapes. Once the canes have dried thoroughly, use a tissue blade to cut them into slices to create focal elements and components for use alone or in combination with other projects. Metal clay rods can also be made for caning by filling short lengths of straws with lump clay (oil the inside of these straws) allowing the clay to dry and then cutting away the straws. Or roll some clay “rod” snakes. Similarly, hollow tubes can be made by rolling out clay and wrapping it around oiled straws of various outside diameters. Remove the straws before assembling the canes.

3. Add some extra zing to your caning projects, as suggested in the previous tip by mixing glass enamel powder into some lump clay before creating the tubes and rods. Two parts enamel to one part metal clay. Blues and Greens work best. Dry completely before firing. Fire at 1470F-1500F for 10 minutes.

4. Use various shape files to “drill” interesting shapes through dried metal clay

5. Create hollow forms using metal clay, drill some large holes through one or more of the sides. After the structure is fired and burnished, add glass enamel powders to the inside of the form and fire again.

6. Use paper punches to create both positive and negative shapes in PMC sheet clay. Picture a pair of earrings, one with the negative cutout of a leaf and one with the positive leaf image. Use the same idea using tiny clay cutters on rolled out lump clay.

7. Use a piece of needle point canvas or brass mesh as a template grid to drill perfectly aligned holes through metal clay. Leave most of the holes empty. Set a few gemstones in some of the holes.

AND MORE SURFACE DESIGN IDEAS:
1. Use clear nail polish to paint a design onto fired and polished metal clay BEFORE applying a patina. The areas covered by the nail polish won’t darken, adding an interesting contrast to the piece. Remove the nail polish with acetone.

2. Paint a layer of PMC3 silver slip (paste) onto your work in the place you would like to add a gold element and allow it to dry. Then, make a slip from a bit of PMC Gold Clay by adding a few drops of distilled water to it. Paint 3-4 or more layers of this gold slip onto your PMC piece, over the silver slip, allowing each layer to dry before applying the next layer. Torch fire the piece and when it reaches the glowing stage continue to heat for 3-4 minutes. This method can be used on unfired or previously fired PMC. The key is to first apply that important layer of PMC3 slip underneath the layers of gold slip. Rough up the already fired piece in the areas receiving this application to create additional surface area for the slip to grab onto.

3. Simulate the look of granulation by pinching tiny bits of metal clay into granules to embellish your work. To create granules of the same size, roll out lump clay to a one card thickness and use a tiny shape cutter to divide

up the clay into equal size pieces. Pinch the tiny cutouts into equal sized granules and add them to your work with thick slip. These can be made in advance from fresh or scrap clay.

4. Use metal clay “crumbles” and shavings from dried out clay to create surface decoration. Using left over bits and pieces in this way provides an alternative to turning dried out clay into paste or trying to reconstitute it back into lump clay. Try grating a dried out lump of metal clay or chop it up into various size “crumbs” which can be sprinkled or dusted onto PMC slip for a wonderful texture on your next PMC creation.

5. Create some surface designs on PMC by creating a slip trail. Mix a pinch or two of PMC lump clay and water until it is runny. Or water down some factory made slip. Load the watery mixture into a syringe and squirt it onto your project in a serendipitous manner. Lift up the project and hold it at different angles, allowing the slip to create its own path. Dry thoroughly before firing.

6. Express yourself by typing some words, phrases, an alphabet or number pattern, etc… onto PMC Sheet using a manual or electric TYPEWRITER. This method can also be used to sign and date your work and to mark its silver content. Here’s how: Tape a piece of PMC Sheet to a piece of typing paper with as little of the tape overlapping the PMC sheet as possible. A glue stick can be used in place of the tape to secure the PMC Sheet to the typing paper. Insert the typing paper into your typewriter and type away! The textured PMC sheet can be cut into sections and added to your PMC project with PMC slip or used as is. Kiln or torch fire.

7. Weave some PMC Sheet clay and add it to your project to create additional surface texture

8. Build up several layers of different hand cut shapes from PMC Sheet clay to resemble the highs and lows of water etched clay. The layers add a lot of dimension and look particularly good after a patina has been applied.

Alice Alper-Rein
Senior Instructor
PMC Connection

Jewelry By Y2A, Ltd

Alice Alper-Rein

Water Etching on PMC

by Linda Kline

Whether you're are a fabulous freehand artist, or you simply cringe at the thought of drawing anything more than a Stick Man, water etching is an exciting way to add bold, expressive, and original artistry to your PMC designs.*

Resist is the key element in the ancient art of water etching. Throughout history, different forms of resist have been applied to various artistic mediums. Traditionally, wax was applied to block or "hold" the surface area that would be "resisting" water, ink or dye. Wax is used in batik, for instance, to resist the application of ink or dye in fabrics, and the Ukrainians are renowned for their wax resist method of intricately dying eggs.

Being an advocate of the KISS system of jewelry design (Keep It Sweet and Simple), I've found nail polish a modern and simplified version of resist that is ideal for use with PMC. It's easy to find, easy to use, and easy to clean up! Any color of nail polish will work, as it burns out completely in the kiln.

I draw my images directly onto the bone-dry clay with a pencil and then use a very fine paint to apply the nail polish. Once the polish is dry, a wet sponge pulled across the surface of the clay will pull clay away from the areas beyond the painted surface. The more clay you remove, the more pronounced the raised image becomes. It's even possible to achieve a multi-dimensional look by etching and applying subsequent coats of resist. Water etched surfaces are nicely complimented and offset by background coloring using patina (LOS), glass paints, or even enameling.

While PMC3 and PMC+ both worked well in the water etching process, I found I had more consistent results when using PMC+. Practice with both products until you find your own personal favorite. Remember to make your design slightly thicker than you normal since you are removing clay as your etch away at your design.

You will need:

PMC+ or PMC3
Playing Cards
Exacto Knife
Small Natural Sea Sponge
Nail Polish
Fine Point, Delicate Paintbrush
Pencil
Nail polish remover for clean up

1. Prepare your work surface with Badger Balm or a light application of olive oil.
2. Roll out the PMC+ clay to 5 playing cards thickness for earrings, 7 for a pendant. (I make my slabs slightly thicker than I would for a normal pendant or earring because you are etching away the surface of your clay and you don't want your pieces to get too thin.)
3. Apply texture to the reverse side of the clay.
4. Cut the shape of your earrings or pendant using a template or "cookie" type cutter.
5. Build a bail or make a hole in the top of the earring or pendant with a very small straw, OR dry thoroughly and then use a small manual drill bit to make a hole for the ear wire or jump ring.
6. Place on a Teflon sheet or freezer paper and slowly and thoroughly dry on a buffet warmer, dehydrator or similar heating surface. Be careful that pieces do not warp or curl from drying too fast. Pieces should be bone dry.
7. Use a pencil to lightly draw your design directly onto the dried clay. You may also use carbon paper to transfer an image. The pencil mark is easily erased if you make a boo-boo or change your mind and it burns away in the firing process.
8. Pour a small amount of nail polish onto a piece of freezer paper. Use a very fine point brush to paint the nail polish onto your design.
9. Allow the nail polish to dry thoroughly.
10. Dip a natural sea sponge into a small bowl of water. Squeeze out excess water. Draw the sponge over the surface of the clay. The area that is painted with nail polish will "resist" the wet sponge. The rest of the clay will be pulled up the sponge.
11. To make your piece multi-dimensional, after wiping over the surface a few times, dry the piece and apply more nail polish. Allow the nail polish to dry thoroughly before continuing the water etching process.
12. Rinse the sponge frequently in the container of water. You'll be able to reclaim this silver later and re-use it as paste.
13. Be careful not to remove too much clay, making your pieces too thin.
14. The damp "background" area of your design may be textured using a small, stiff stippling or stenciling brush.
15. Allow the pieces to dry thoroughly.
16. File the edges, if necessary.
17. Fire to 1650 for PMC+ for 10 minutes or for PMC3, 1290 for 10 minutes.
18. Clean with wire brush, tumbler, add LOS or similar antiquing finish.

Viola! Enjoy the compliments

* If drawing, "Just aint your bag, Baby," you need to check out the copyright free art books available from Dover Press.
http://www.doverbooks.co.uk/. They may be enlarged or reduced on a copy machine and transferred to your dried clay with tracing paper and good old fashion carbon paper. They even come with CD Rom, which may be loaded onto your computer.

Water Etching on PMC Copyright by Linda Kline

Linda Kline

http://www.lindaklinedesigns.com/

Senior Instructor
PMC Connection

Aesthetic Erosion – Creating Texture with Water Etching

By Lora Hart

There are many ways to apply an original texture to metal clay. You can chemically etch a piece of copper or brass; carve a design into a slab of polymer clay or a rubber block with linoleum cutters; use the power of the sun to develop dimension in a photopolymer plate (PPP); print out an entire page of images and send it to www.readystamps.com for a professionally made, uncut sheet of rubber stamps or, for a more direct method, use the Water Etching technique to develop a truly unique design in bone dry clay utilizing simple tools that you probably have in your home right now.

A resist (see below), a bit of sponge and water is all you'll need to etch a design into fully dry PMC. The first step is to decide what shape you'd like your finished piece to be. You can practice this method with a flat item, a domed surface, a bead or even a ring. To lightly etch a single side you'll want to roll out the clay to a 4 or 5 playing card thickness. PMC Standard should be at least 7 cards thick to compensate for the greater shrinkage rate. If you want to push the limits and etch both sides of the piece, better to play it safe by starting out at least 6 -7 cards thick. Depending on the design and the intended use, you'll remove approximately one to two card thickness'. Starting with a base that's too thin or etching too deeply will negatively effect the integrity of the final design.

photo by Marsha Thomas

HOW TO DO IT

• Water etching is possible using any type of lump clay - Standard, PMC+ or PMC3, but I find it's a bit easier with PMC+. Pieces made with recycled, rehydrated clay may develop a bumpy, uneven surface - which I think is kind of interesting.

• To make the base - roll out; cut and form the clay. You can apply a fine texture to the back such as the imprint of a skeleton leaf or a very low relief brass texture sheet. Dry thoroughly, then sand the untextured surface and edges to perfection. Any flaws left to linger under the resist will appear in the fired piece.

• I like to sketch a design on a piece of paper before starting. Draw an outline of your intended shape and use a pencil to compose a pleasing image. When perfected, transfer it to the bone dry clay. If you're unhappy with part of the pattern, use a white Staedtler Mars eraser to gently remove it and start again. Don't worry about overdrawing or smudges, graphite burns away during the firing process. The clay beneath the resist will remain raised while the etched surface will be recessed - providing a perfect frame for enamel; gold (see last quarter's Metal Clay Connections); polymer; resin or patina.

• Using your preferred material, coat the back; edges and inside of holes (if applicable) with resist. This will help to protect those areas from accidental erosion. Complete the process by going over your sketch with a very thin brush or other applicator and allow it to dry thoroughly before moving on.

• Dampen a small piece of sponge or a flat, square acrylic brush and rub it across the surface to etch away the exposed clay. Too much water will soften the clay causing it to get pasty and too little just won't get the job done. Be a good Goldilocks and make sure to use the amount that's just right. If it gets wet anyway, lay a paper towel over the surface to absorb excess water and let dry before continuing. Occasionally rinse out the sponge and/or wipe off the brush to remove excess material.

TIP: Some artists like to use a natural sea sponge. I found a very thin sponge sheet in the grocery store that works very well. Experiment until you find something that works for you. Use the flat brush to access tight corners or small hollows such as the inside of a circle.

• To produce a more dimensional etch, follow the directions above to remove only one card thickness and let dry, then apply more decorative resist in the open areas of the design and continue. The different heights will add an interesting 3-D effect. Catherine Davies Paetz uses this technique as a base for Champleve´ enameling.

• After you're done, you can pounce the end of the square brush onto the damp clay to impart a stippled texture

to the etched area. This creates an attractive contrast to the area of the design which has been protected by the resist. For an overall smooth look, make your last pass with a gentle touch and let dry. You can even carefully sand inside the etched areas with 600 grit finishing paper, just make sure you don't disturb the resist lines. Fire according to directions for the clay body you're using. There will be some fumes emanating from the burning resist so of course, proper ventilation is always a good idea.

RESIST METHODS AND MATERIALS

I've used both nail polish and acrylic paint, but prefer nail polish. You'll have more control and be able to produce a thinner, more regular line if you use a very thin watercolor brush (I use an 18/0 liner brush) instead of the one that's in the bottle. Acrylic paint and nail polish may leave a dark residue after firing, but this will disappear as you wire brush or otherwise finish the fired piece.

• Nail Polish - Pour a small amount of nail polish onto a Post It note or other scrap of paper and use a thin liner brush to apply the paint. If you over paint a line, simply wait for it to dry and use an exacto knife to gently scrape away the excess. Later, the etching process will remove any marks made by the knife. Dry the resist on a coffee cup warmer. Using fresh, dark polish works best.

• Acrylic Paint - Apply Liquitex paint straight from the tube with a thin water color liner brush Take care not to remove the paint as you etch. If it starts to lift, stop and let it dry completely. Heating the painted piece on a coffee cup or candle warmer before starting to etch will help lessen this anomaly. Refresh the painted line as needed and continue.

Michelle Ross, member of the L.A. Chapter of the PMC Guild and noted polymer clay artist experimented with the following materials with very good results.

• Rubber Stamp - Stamp an image using ordinary ink on the dry clay and re-enforce with either acrylic paint or nail polish.

• Glossy Card Stock - Use die cuts or paper punches to cut the desired shape then affix the shape to the clay with glue. Michelle used Zap A Gap. Take care not to allow the glue to bleed outside the card stock or that area will act as a resist as well.

• Silkscreen - Acrylic paint can also be applied with a silkscreen. For silkscreening, tape the screen in place over the dry sheet of clay, extrude a line of paint at the top of the design and use a credit card to squeegee through the screen. Carefully lift up the silkscreen and place the piece on a coffee cup warmer to dry. Immediately place the paint soaked silkscreen in water to clean.

• Toner Transfer - Find a copy machine that uses toner to create the desired image. Turn the image upside down on top of the clay sheet and transfer by rubbing the paper with a Q-tip soaked in acetone. Re-enforce the design with acrylic paint or nail polish.

• Bees Wax - A Kistka, designed to be used in Ukrainian Pysanky Easter egg decorating or a Tjanting batik tool can be used in tandem with bee's wax to apply thin lines of resist to the surface of the clay sheet. Always start the line of wax on a separate surface to avoid the blobs that usually occur when first using the tool. Both of these items are also available in electric versions for those who may be into the high tech thang.

• Miskit Liquid Frisket is a latex masking medium used by water color artists. Although it is commonly applied with a brush, Michelle finds that it is difficult to remove the wax no matter how quickly it is washed with soap and water. Instead she recommends using a stylus like a plastic toothpick or sewing needle. Don't use heat to set this resist. Let it air dry naturally.

• Wax - Amaco or Mayco wax, a tried and true method used by ceramicists, is easy to apply either with a brush or the 1/2 oz. bottle and .5 mm tip sold by Jacquard. Since these are water based waxes, the brush can be cleaned with warm water. Don't use heat to set this resist, if you do it'll melt! Let wax dry naturally for at least an hour.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPLIES

Kistka with Bees Wax - www.Ukrainianegg.com/frontpg.htm OR www.babsbeeswax.com/catalog
Tjanting batik tool - www.dickblick.com/zz649/04/
Amaco Wax - www.DickBlick.com

Mayco Wax - www.WholeLottaWhimsy.com
Miskit Liquid Frisket -www.misterart.com/
PhotoEZ Silk Screens - www.photoezsilkscreen.com/
Jacquard squeeze bottle - www.jacquardproducts.com/products/accessories/

Read more about it:
Step By Step Beads, September/October 2006 - Butterfly Bead, Easy Etched PMC Bead by Lora Hart
Art Jewelry Magazine, September 2006 - Water Works by Catherine Davies Paetz

Lora Hart

www.LoraHart.com

After nearly 20 years as a busy make-up artist in the entertainment industry, Lora Hart's career took a fortuitous turn when the actor's strike of 2000 put a hold on her creative hand. Inspired by a freelance job fashioning faux treasure for the "Sinbad's Seven Voyages" attraction at Japan's DisneySea theme park, she began creating jewelry made with the real bling and selling her line at fashionable galleries around town. At first a self taught artist, Lora began taking formal training in traditional silversmithing at various studios in the Southland. While experimenting with a new product called Precious Metal Clay, she fell in love with the sensuously tactile material and has been committed to furthering her knowledge and skill with this alchemous art form ever since. "I'm so grateful to have discovered such a cutting edge material just when my life path was taking an unexpected jog." Certified with all four metal clay programs, Lora enjoys teaching in and around the greater L.A. area and inspiring others to tap into their creative genius.
In addition to being a founding member of NewMetal Artists, the Los Angeles Chapter of the PMC Guild, Lora belongs to the Metal Arts Society of Southern California (MAASC) and The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG)and has been a contributing writer for Step By Step Beads, Studio PMC and TanasHabitat.com.

Water Etching
by Mickey Stuewe

Water Etching

I have been artistic my entire life. I still remember where my daycare provider kept the Play-Doh when I was three years old. I still remember how excited I was when I was allowed to play with it. When I was twelve I would create color studies with my pastels everywhere I went. In college I obtained an art minor, focusing on ceramics and art history. After college I was a computer programmer for eleven years. Then I became tired of the corporate world, so I moved from one side of my brain to the other. Life is too short to pursue what we are good at. We need to pursue what excites us. I am quite passionate about my art.

My passion for creating jewelry started with a trip to Morro Bay, California for a vacation. I walked into a bead store with the intention of making a beaded chain for my eyeglasses, but walked out of the store two hours later with my first bracelet and a head full of ideas.

I started reading every magazine on beaded jewelry that I could find. I stumbled upon Art Jewelry, which had an article on Precious Metal Clay (PMC). PMC is clay with silver in it. I can work with it like clay, and then fire it in my kiln to create fine silver pendants, earrings, etc. PMC gave me the ability to work with the clay that I had loved my whole life.

My two favorite techniques for working with PMC are water etching and taking impressions from plants. The water etching technique is done by painting a picture on the dried clay and using water to remove the negative space. Every piece is unique since they are made one at a time.

I studied how to fuse glass, to add my own glass to my jewelry. Through the learning of this process I found that I truly enjoy working with glass. The colors of the glass also brought the love of color that I had with my color studies during childhood. Kiln carving and slumping are two of the techniques that I employ the most. I now have my own line of both functional and non-functional fused glass separate from my jewelry line.

In June of 2007 I entered my first competition for my jewelry and fused glass. My ring, Bamboo Basket received third place, my plate, Mondrian received second place, and my necklace, Bamboo Serenity received first place, all in the same category.

I plan to continue to grow as an artist so that I may continue to be a full time artist.

[Contact Mickey Stuewe] by email

[Mique Designs] is her website

Mining for Metal Clay "Gems" Online

by Margaret Schindel

I have been involved with the Internet professionally since the early 1990s, and my best friend was one of the pioneers of the online information industry long before there was a World Wide Web. I enjoy researching information online, and I'm pretty good at it by now. But when I became interested in learning about metal clay, I found that locating the most useful "gems" of information about the medium was extremely challenging.

Have you tried searching for metal clay information online lately? The members of the metal clay community are unusually generous with their expertise and discoveries, and they have published many valuable "gems" for the rest of us to profit from. But there is no single mine where you can look for them, so finding the buried treasure can require a lot of digging.

Looking for some help with "setting stones in metal clay"? If you google it (without quotes), prepare to sift through 1, 240,000 results. Trying to decide which of the many "metal clay kilns" to buy? Have fun looking through 788,000 links. And pity the poor metal clay newbie who tries to find out the differences between "PMC vs. Art Clay" (36,400 results) or, worse yet, searches for "PMC information" and gets back nearly 2 million results… the first 36 of which are about the Australian Parliament, open source software, transceivers, medical research, physics, and other topics totally unrelated to Precious Metal Clay. Since Google displays 10 search results per page (by default), and according to a recent study 62% of online users don't look past the first page of results, how many of the "gems" do we miss? Most of us would rather spend our time creating in metal clay than trying to sift through thousands or millions of pages looking for the best information on a particular topic.

Many of the world's most knowledgeable metal clay artists and educators are active on the Metal Clay Gallery on Yahoo! Groups, and some of the best "gems" are buried in the message archives. As of this writing, there are nearly 37,000 posts, and a large percentage of those contain specific, valuable tips and techniques. But if you remember seeing a particularly helpful post about a particular tip or technique, trying to find it again when you need it can be an exercise in frustration.

I'm an "information junkie," so whenever I needed to know more about a metal clay-related topic, I spent many hours (and sometimes several days) searching through all the posts I could find, bookmarking the most useful sites and pages and jotting down notes about the most valuable facts, tips and techniques I came across. A lot of similar information appeared on many of the sources, but from time to time I unearthed an unexpected precious nugget that was hiding in a page of otherwise ordinary content. And, like any other treasure-hunter, I got a thrill each time I discovered a new, unique pearl of wisdom! I sifted through my new collection, organizing, consolidating and refining gems of varying size and value and mined from many different sources to create something far more valuable than the sum of its parts that I could use for reference and just update as I learned new things or found newly-published information.

I had been looking for a meaningful way to give back to the metal clay community, whose members had willingly shared their expertise, advice and assistance with me. As a relative newcomer to the medium, I did not have any unique experience or knowledge with which to repay their generosity in the same coin. But when I learned about a new site where anyone could share information and favorite links on any topic they wished, I saw my opportunity to "pay it forward." The site had a bizarre name ("Squidoo") and called contributors' pages "lenses" instead of something more straightforward, like "guides." But it was the brainchild of brilliant and successful online marketing guru Seth Godin, whose ideas I respected, and its premise really resonated with me: "The Web ought to accelerate and even replicate that word of mouth phenomenon that works so well in the real world. There ought to be a way to leverage the power of personal recommendation online…There ought to be a way for us all to benefit from what everyone else knows. And so we built Squidoo."

I knew immediately that this was a perfect vehicle for sharing my treasure trove of precious information and links with the rest of the metal clay community. I wouldn't need to worry about coding, designing or hosting a site in order to share my "best of the best" collections with others, because Squidoo provided modules that made it easy to create bulleted lists, recommended link lists with my personal comments, and even links to my recommended products on Amazon, eBay and other online stores.

I created my first Squidoo lens as a way of making it easy for metal clay newbies to find the best answers to the questions I had when I was starting out:

- What is metal clay and how does it become precious metal?
- Who are some of the best metal clay artists?
- What are the main professional organizations and their sites?
- What are the best online resources for general educational and information about metal clay?
- How do I find a class or instructor?
- Where can I find some good projects online?
- What are the best metal clay books, videos/DVDs and magazines?
- Where are some good online sources for metal clay, supplies and tools?

When my new lens was finished, I nervously announced it on the Metal Clay Gallery board and provided a link. I wasn't sure what the reaction would be, or whether anyone would even bother to go look at it. After all, I had very limited experience in the medium compared to most of the members who posted regularly. Who would care which sites I recommended or which artists I admired most?

My fears turned out to be unfounded. I was totally unprepared for the enthusiastic feedback I received. I received compliments from several of my metal clay heroes and heroines, and some of the best teachers in the world said they planned to share my lens with their students. I was amazed, honored, and floating on air! I had always intended for it to be the first in a series, and after becoming a Certified PMC Artisan I started building additional lenses that included more of my own original content in addition to links to recommended resources. Unlike the first lens, which offered links to general information resources, the subsequent lenses offered more educational content and actionable tips about more narrowly-focused topics and techniques. One explained the differences and similarities between the two major brands of metal clay and provided the unique advantages of each formula. Another explained the different types (lump clay, paste, syringe and sheet/paper) and their uses. Another provided a smorgasbord of techniques for setting gemstones in metal clay, both before and after firing, and still another provided an extensive list of methods for adding texture to metal clay with found, purchased and home-made texturing tools. The most recent addition was a tutorial on how to weave fine silver "fabric" out of PMC+ Sheet or Art Clay Paper that evolved from a discussion on the Metal Clay Gallery. I solicited and received a lot of input and feedback from many of the talented and experienced authorities in our community,

who actively embraced the lenses as another tool for capturing and sharing as much of our collective knowledge as possible.

I began this article by discussing the difficulty of finding the best metal clay information among the millions of search results. Today, it's a lot easier to find those gems because, thanks to the help and support of the entire community, the Squidoo lenses I've developed consistently appear at or near the top of Google's search results for common searches. A Squidoo metal clay lens ranks #1 for "PMC techniques" (out of 1,020,000 results), "Art Clay techniques" (out of 1,420,000), "setting gemstones in metal clay" (out of 263,000), and "Art Clay information" (out of 1,860,000). Remember the 1,910,000 results for "PMC information" of which the first 36 were totally unrelated to metal clay? #37 is one of my Squidoo lenses. Looking for information about PMC vs. Art Clay? One of the lenses is the #4 search result (out of 36,400).

As I add new topic-specific lenses, I'm also trying to keep the existing lenses maintained and updated with new links and new content so that they are "living" resources rather than static documents. I always appreciate getting recommendations for new sites, products, articles or tips & techniques to consider for inclusion in the appropriate lens, and I hope you will send me your favorites and share new discoveries as you find them. Unfortunately, I can't include all the excellent suggestions I get or the lenses would become just one more source of the information overload they're trying to reduce. But every recommendation I receive adds another potential gem to the treasure chest.

You can find links to all my metal clay lenses on Squidoo at
http://www.squidoo.com/lensmasters/MSchindel

I invite you to explore any or all of them and I'd love to hear any feedback or suggestions you might have. If you like one or more of them, you can bookmark them and/or share them with others who might be interested by using the links at the top of the page. Other links in the left-hand column will let you save your favorites to Digg or del.icio.us with just one click. And if you find value in these lenses, please consider "paying it forward" with a link on your web site, newsletter, group or blog to let others know about this resource, which represents our "collective best" in so many areas.

Most importantly, thank you for being part of such a creative, knowledgeable and sharing community!

Margaret Schindel

Certified PMC Artisan

Owner/Designer, Polished & Put-Together

Lensmaster, Squidoo metal clay lenses

The "D" Loop Prong Setting by Deirdre Gan

This is a technique I have developed for setting faceted stones upside down in PMC.

Materials

16 grams PMC3 clay, paste, faceted gemstones (ex: oval, square), 16 gauge fine silver wire

Equipment

Texture sheets or rubber stamps, playing cards, shape cutting tools, 6 piece drill set, round & flat nosed pliers, wire cutter, sanding & finishing tools, programmable kiln, kiln shelves, and rotary tumbler.

Procedure

Prepare texture surface with oil or balm.
Open pmc3 clay package and soften with hands.
Roll out pmc3 clay between two stacks of 3 playing cards thick – texture one or both sides.
Cut outside base shape at least 1/4" larger around the gemstone being used, (plan out your design). Cut a smaller hole in center of where the gemstone will be placed in the design. (add all other holes at this time – jump ring hole & earring holes etc.)
Allow drying completely. File edges and finish base shapes.
Trace shape of the stone on clay in pencil centered over small hole cut in design.
Make d loop shaped prongs from the 16 gauge fine silver wires. Cut each wire 1/2", bend wire at center over round plier in a u shape, file wire ends slightly to flatten ends.
Mark two dots hortizontally with a marker at the top and bottom 1/16" just outside the traced pencil drawing of the stone tips on the pmc3 base. Use the u shape wire prong as a guide for placement of dots.
With the 6 piece drill set, use the largest drill bit and drill one hole of the pair of holes for the u shaped prong. Set the prong in the hole and check the placement of 2nd hole then drill. The u shaped prong should fit easily in the two holes vertically from base.
Attach u prong to dried pmc3 base by filling the prong holes from the back side of base with pmc3 paste, turn over and check that the drill holes are filled in from the front. Dip the 16 gauge wire u prong tips in paste and place in drilled paste filled holes. Set one prong at a time vertically in base. (note: keep (1) u prong with each pair of holes because the u prongs may not be uniform)
Wipe base with damp paint brush around the u prong to smooth out or remove excess paste.
Dry completely.
Do final sanding and finishing of base, to prepare for kiln.
Set the finished base shape on kiln shelf with u prongs vertical from base.
Set a small square of kiln shelve between the two "D" loop shaped prongs.
Fire pmc3 design in kiln according to kiln instructions, let cool completely.
Polish in rotary tumbler to desired finish.
Place faceted stone upside down between the two u shaped prongs. Carefully push d loop prong over one side then the other with fingers. The use the back of your wire brush and leather mallet to tighten prongs around stone.

[Deridre Gan]

An Interview with Debbie Rijns

by Linda Bernstein

Tell me a little about your life and your family.
I am a New Yorker by birth, but came to South Africa at the age of 8. My father was with Pan Am airlines and when he was transferred back to the U.S. I made a decision to stay in South Africa.
I have a son and daughter in law who live in Dubai, and by the way, I have her totally hooked on PMC! My daughter Melissa died of breast cancer 4 years ago at the age of 29, but her spirit lives on in her daughter, Delana who is now 6 years old and has her mothers smarts and her gorgeous smile. I am married to Leon, and his daughter Tamara has become my own.
Leon and I live in a small town called Smithfield in the province of the Orange Free State, named after the Dutch Prince of Orange. Because we do a lot of travelling, we enjoy coming back here after all the stress because we have no pollution, no traffic(our traffic is cows wandering across the main road) and serenity that is conducive to creativity!

What did you do before PMC?
I was a porcelain restorer, and had the joy of being able to bring damaged treasures back to their former glory. I have worked on items such as 13th century Yuan vases, huge Portuguese oil jars and the like. My speciality was Oriental porcelains, but loved working on marble and ivory, too.

How did you become involved with PMC?
I saw an ad in a magazine for silver clay while I was in Portland, Oregon several years ago and could not get my brain around the fact that a lump of claylike stuff ended up a pure silver piece. I phoned for information, did a course and was hooked good and solid.

What do you like best about PMC?
Although I love porcelain restoration, I was always working on someone elses creations. I love being able to express myself artistically, emotionally and spiritually, and being able to take an inanimate substance such as PMC and turning it into something so full of life gives me that.

What inspires you when you create?
I find joy in small things. To give you an idea, when I lived in Portland I used to work in an old laundry building that was renovated and turned into creative spaces. While walking to the studio, I noticed the cracks between the concrete sidewalk blocks. In the cracks there were so many different little scenes, some cracks had pebbles in them, some had bits of leaves and twigs, some had hairpins and nails and bits of broken birds eggs..... I am working on a series of pendants that reflect those sidewalk cracks.

What is your favorite PMC technique?
That`s a hard one. I really like it all . I do have, however, a soft spot for syringe work. Ever since I developed a way to lay down syringe lines to look like basket weave I have used that technique often to make "Treasure

Pendants". The front of the pendant has an open weave so you can put small items in it. The response to this technique has been good, and everyone asks me how I was able to weave the syringe clay.....

What advice would you give to a new PMC artist?
Have a design to work from. It saves you the frustration of opening a pack of clay and fiddling with it til it becomes dry.....Know what you want to make. (Don`t be so rigid, tho, as to not be able to tweak your design as you go along.)
Also, be open to things that may not seem to go the way you want. Many a good piece that I have made has been the result of an unexpected happening, like not knowing where to put an embellishment only to have the piece fall from my hands and it lands exactly where it should have been all along.....

What do you see as the future of PMC?
PMC can only grow from strength to strength. As more and more people work with PMC, so will the new ideas,challenges and creativity grow.
Not only metal workers are finding out about the joys of PMC. I have had gun makers want to make inlays for the handles, and painters who frame their own works and want to put embellishments on the frames. It`s amazing what the possibilities are. I only wish I could be around in the year 2100 to see what people are creating with PMC!

How is PMC different in South Africa from the US in terms of teaching and style?
It was a wonderful experience for me to be able to present a class at the PMCC Retreat. It showed me that we are right on track in South Africa regarding teaching. My students love the idea that although they are in a class situation, they have opportunity to add their own creativity to the mix.
South Africans are a little more laid back than Americans. People here are, for the most part, slow to warm up to something new. Especially something so out of the norm. But once they see the possibilities, there is no stopping them.
When it comes to style?. South Africans are in a league of their own. On the one side you have those who love the dainty, flowery and colorful. The other side likes big, bold and modern. They follow fashion trends, and love their rings!

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
In the very first class I ever taught in South Africa, I had a woman who was so nervous that when I asked her to tell us something about herself, she actually forgot her own name! She said at the beginning she had never done anything creative in her whole life and she was afraid she would not do well. After a disastrous start, she produced a reversible pendant that was so beautiful. I wish I had that piece for myself. Dawn phoned me later and told me how much her confidence had grown just from being in the class. Of course, she always had it in her, it took PMC to bring it out.
For me, everything is in the doing. To be able to see, design and create is a very special thing. To be able to share all this with others, for me, is the cherry on the cake.

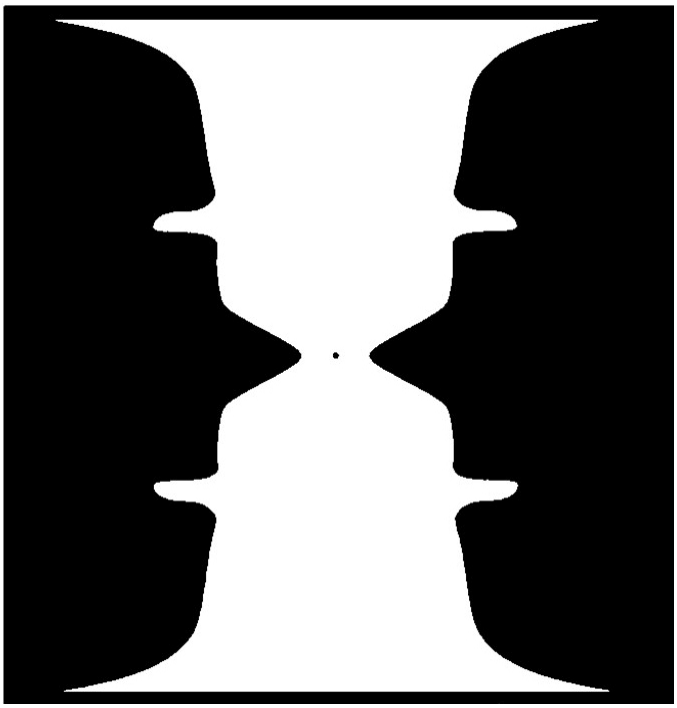
Thank you Debbie for sharing your thoughts and history. Africa is very far away for most of us but now it feels a little closer. Hopefully you will have an event we can all go to and see Africa too.

From the Editor

When Less is More… the Value of Negative Space

All art, whether two or three dimensional; whether representational or abstract; whether single or mixed media is untimately designed to create affect and effect. The role of perception as a key aspect of art is quintesential to its appreciation. The artist as communicator strives to achieve his or her goals by manipulating space, color, texture, shape and design. The tried but true expression "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" states clearly and simply the final impact of any artistic effort.

Carl Jung, the eminent and yet controversial psychiatris, best known for his archetypal theory of personality, used the term "Gestalt" or perception as a core element of his work. Perhaps he overstated the obvious by asserting that two individuals looking at the same object can see things in very different ways. While this is no surprise, it is also true that the a single individual looking at the same object from different perspectives and under different emotional states can see things in starkly different ways. One of the examples Jung used to describe Gestalt is his well known black and white drawing which, depending on how it is viewed can be seen as either a jug or as two faces.



In this case the viewers perception is affected by the "non space" or negative space. What was excluded in the design (i.e. white space) becomes a critical element of the total picture. By exclusion we have created inclusion. We have actually created something from nothing! Paradoxically we have used the power of nothing to create a visual effect that is exceptionally powerful and meaningful. Negative space is one of the most valuable tools an artist has in his or her bag of visual tricks. With it we can create varying types of perspectives as well as a variety of other visual effects. Hence, the term "negative" is actually a misnomer because in this case negative is actually a postive. But negative space in art is not the only instance of how what we cannot "see" is more powerful than what we can see. Consider, for example, the work of Impressionist painters whose skillful use of color spots and blots may not show anything to the close up viewer but which becomes staggering and emotional when viewed from a distance. By not viewing the dots and spots from up close we "see" so much more.

"Look at the Donut and not the Hole"

Only after I had been an artist for several decades did I appreciate a comment made by a speaker at my high school commencement: "When you are trying to achieve a goal, look at the donut and not the hole", he said. As a young artist this was difficult for me to understand. Now, however, after many years of developing my skills and techniques, I realize the importance and full meaning of the comment as it applies to life. In the world of art, nevertheless, while looking at the donut may be important, it is often the "hole" or the negative space that provides meaning to the work. I have learned how the skillful use of negative space in PMC work can give us something for nothing. And the additonal good news is that there are a number of clear techniques for incorporating negative space into PMC work. Negative space techniques can make larger pieces lighter as well as less costly by using less material. Additionally, negative space can add great interest to the composition when used to create depth if an open work has a solid background.

Here are some Ideas for Making the Negative Positive

Negative space can be created in many different ways. Drilling holes or carving openings in solid dry pieces is one approach. Drilling will give crisp edges. Carving openings in dry clay can be more sculptural with soft rounded or angular edges. Wet clay can also have holes punched or openings cut out with a sharp tool. The wet

piece then can be shaped, dried and refined. Consider using syringe, ropes or thin strips of clay over a 3 dimensional form, like a bead or dome, to create a design with openings.

A vessel created from paste on wood clay can have openings for viewing the inside and use that negative space. Objects can be placed inside to surprise the viewer. A vessel, such as a box with a lid can have some unexpected contents. These can be fixed or loose to entice the viewer to remove and examine them.

Open spaces can be used as focal points for small dangling beads or objects to dally. This would allow them to be seen from both sides and is an excellent technique for earrings.

Think Negative!

The next time you design a piece consider negative space as one of your elements of design. Openings, holes, spaces, slots or other shapes might be a good addition or is that subtraction? Sometimes less is more! Don't overlook the power of negative thinking.

Thanks....

Thanks to all the contributors in this issue: Alice Alper-Rein, Linda Kline, Lora Hart, Mickey Stuewe, Margaret Schindel, Jiro Hiroshi, Mary Ellin D'Agostino, Sherry Viktora, Cindy Holst, Kathy Miller, Deirdre Gan and Sherry Fotopoulos for their creativity, support and timely submission of their material.

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Thanks to Amy Ikenn for the PDF files for Volume 1, 2 & 3.

Linda Bernstein

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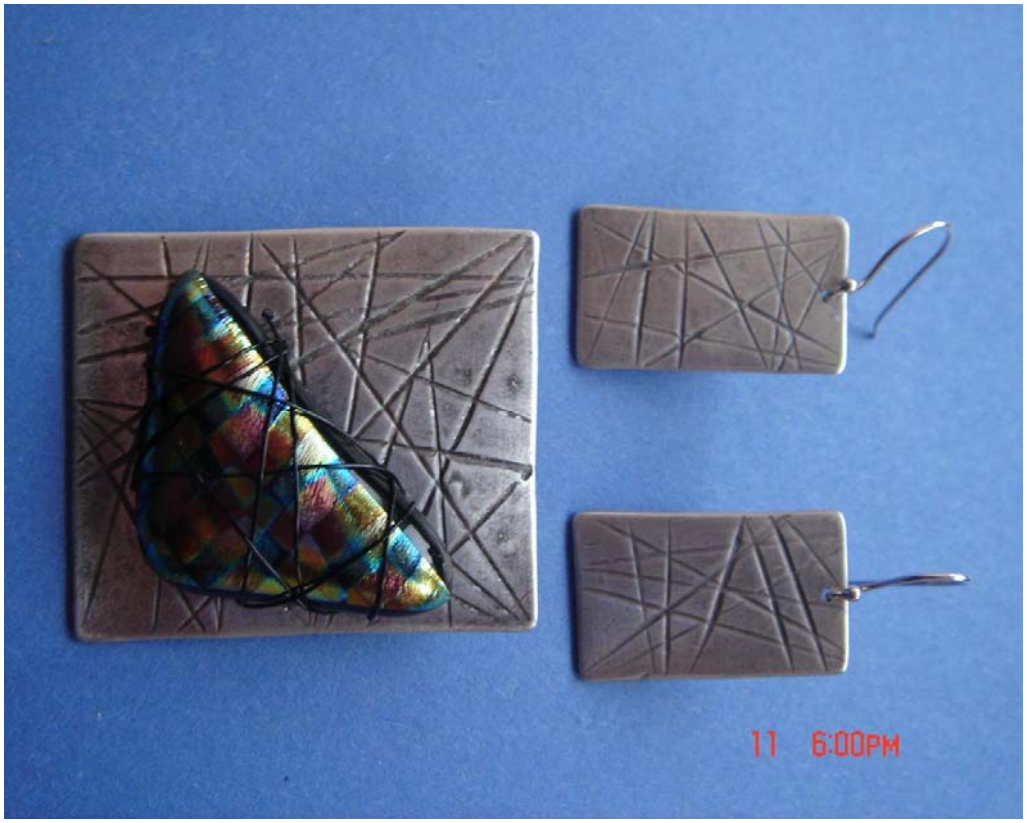
Gallery: Water Etching, Carving, Negative Space and More

Water etched and enameled

Tami's water etched stained glass pendant, signature piece, and business card image.

Tami Morrison



Carved

Rita Chevli

Carved

Rita Chevli

Carved

Rita Chevli

Carving and negative space

These pieces represent a body of work I do that is celtic and nordic influenced. I am Norwegian by heritage and much of my art jewelry reflects that heritage. I am striving to keep the ancient themes alive but in a modern way - I call this jewelry line Nordic Chic. The pieces themselves: I start with a photopolymer etching that I make from old traditional images of celtic knot patterns. I usually tweak them on my computer to get the design and shape I'm looking for. Once transferred to the clay, I let it dry just a few minutes, then start carving. The heart and the riveted piece are curved - I use wooden balls to shape a basic round curve, and carve the design as it dries in the curved shape. Then I do the finishing/filing and sanding once it's fully dried. Each piece is then kiln fired, and I either hand polish (I often like a satin finish) or tumble polish the pieces.

The celtic heart I decided to use in a necklace, and I wove the byzantine chain by hand, plus I made the clasp of metal clay.

I love working in carved and hollow forms, those are my specialties. Jewelry with dimension and movement is especially fascinating to me, as I love to play with pieces as I wear them.

Debra Carus

Carving and negative space

Debra Carus

Carving and negative space

The locket is of course, several pieces, joined with slip before firing, plus I inserted a little "secret" knot inside for interest. Once I polished and oxidized that piece, I added the bail (metal clay as well) and used sterling silver wire for the hinge (balled wire ends). I used a little balled wire for the catch piece. The riveted pendant has an oval celtic pattern bail that I fired separately, then used sterling wire to rivet to the pendant, so it swings.

Debra Carus

Rita carved on polymer and then enamelled with 2 different color schemes.

Rita Chevli

Rita carved on polymer and then enamelled with 2 different color schemes.

Rita Chevli

Water etched

Lis (Elisabeth Mahnken)

Water etched

Lis (Elisabeth Mahnken)

Glenna Wooten

Glenna Wooten

This is a bracelet and feather pendant. The entire bracelet and feather pendant where made using the water etching technique with the exception of the heart and the toggle part of the closure.

Carol Augustine

Links

PMCC Senior Instructor Sites		
Jewelry By Y2A, Ltd Alice Alper-Rein	**Artique** Linda Bernstein	**Out on a Limb** Sherry Viktora
MED'A Creations Mry Ellin D'Agostino	**PMC123** Sherry Fotopoulos	**Linda Kline Design** Linda Kline
Jericho Wind Arts Ruth J. Greening	**Atelier PAW, Inc.** Hiromi & Kent Hirakawa	**Silver Clay.com** Vera Lightstone
Eclectica Beads Irina Miech	**Precious Metal Clay.Net** Leslie Tieke	**Parkstone Studio** Donna Saint John
	Sage Studios Ann Phillippi	

PMC Related Sites	
PMC Connection	The PMC Connection website, owners of this newsletter.
PMC Guild	The PMC Guild is an educational organization founded in 1997 to promote instruction, research, teaching and exhibition of Precious Metal Clay.
Metal Clay "Lens" on Squidoo	A guide to metal clay resources (artists, instructors, classes, projects, suppliers, etc.)
PMC in Scandinavia	Distributor and Senior Instructor for Scandinavia
PMC Connection Hong Kong	Our partner in Hong Kong
Ceramic & Craft Centre Australia	PMC Distributor in Australia
The PMC Studio	Our partner in UK

Contact Information

Editorial Calendar

Submission Deadlines

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We look forward to your submissions: PMC articles, photos and more. Please include your name, description of work PMC work, a short bio, address, e-mail, and phone. Articles and photos should be attachments. Image resolution should be 300 dpi for a 3" by 5" image size. Mail us a CD if the image is over 4MB. All articles become the property of PMC Connection.

Editorial Calendar:
Oct 2007 Dichroic
January 2008 Extruding and Embedding

Deadline for submission dates:
April Issue – February 1st

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