

Workshop review

Powdered metal clay workshop

Metal clay pioneer, Hadar Jacobson travels across the Atlantic to share her knowledge with students at the Craftworx Studios. By Tracey Spurgin

After a long year of planning, I was thrilled to welcome Hadar Jacobson to Craftworx studio to deliver two, three day back to back workshops in mixed metals. Hadar is an American who has been a pioneer in developing and working with her own brand of metal clay powders, she has worked intensively and been immensely generous in sharing her research and development of her products, techniques and her art. She regularly posts all her findings on her blog www.artinsilver.com/blog. This ongoing research record has been a source of inspiration to many metal clay artists.

The first thing that needed to be checked before the students arrived was the kiln. Hadar tested to check the sintering process, as each kiln can be different and even the location can affect the firing process. As the students arrived they had a great opportunity to look at Hadar's work, she had brought a selection of her finest jewellery and art samples with her. Hadar formally started the day with a presentation of her work, then went on to demonstrate how to mix the metal clay powders to the correct consistency. These clays are ground to such a fine powder, that they mix to a smooth paste, which can be rolled out to a very fine, thin layer.

Hadar's unique firing method

The most exciting part of the workshop for me was the knowledge that as the bronze and copper metal clays are totally compatible they can be worked together creating wonderful colour combinations. We were able to work on sample pieces, to experiment with the various combination methods that Hadar had demonstrated.

Once our range of samples were ready to fire, Hadar showed her unique firing method of making a container from fibre blanket, stitching up the corners with binding wire, making sure the fibre blanket was handled with mask and gloves. The container was filled with coco shell carbon and then the pieces were carefully

embedded in the carbon. Hadar was careful not to overload the container or the kiln. The placement of the pieces within the container and the kiln were key to the success of the firing, not too close to the edge and not near the door. The quick fire copper and bronze pieces still had a firing schedule of around two hours. After the firing had finished the pieces needed to be polished. Hadar's preferred method is to use hand held rotary tools with sanding grits, working through the progression of grits to achieve a smooth finish. To bring the contrast of colours out of the bronze and copper, Hadar used Baldwin's patina.

Combining copper and silver

Next we made copper pieces; this technique was for combining copper and silver. The copper element needed to be made and fired first, then the silver was worked onto or around the copper to form a mechanical connection as the silver and copper would not sinter. The silver was applied, dried and refined then hand torch fired into place. With three days available to work we had plenty of time to experiment with lots of samples.

Finally we used Hadar's Steel Clay, as steel is magnetic we made simple clasps that featured a magnet set into a bezel cup. The firing procedure for the steel is long and requires around 1000°C. With four kilns on the go and very hot weather the kilns were moved outdoors. They were closely monitored as the extreme temperature had flames leaping out of the venting hole at the top of the kiln.



resources

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Each of the three day workshops passed quickly and with heads full of ideas and a box full of samples everyone left with a better idea of how to get the best results out of Hadar's powdered clays.



Steel clay



Mixing metals



Copper and silver earrings



Stunning finished pieces