

"My jewelry reflects years of telling visual stories with imagery and movement."

Metal clay Masterclass

Sian Hamilton travels to Yorkshire to Craftworx Metal Clay Jewellery School and attends a masterclass with **Terry Kovalcik**

In May I was lucky enough to get a place on a masterclass being held in Yorkshire by Craftworx, which is the studio of our regular contributor, Tracey Spurgin. She had invited Terry Kovalcik across from the USA to do a workshop on making boxes and decorating with paper clay and silver paste. The same workshop was run twice and I joined the second class of eight students on a three-day intensive to learn this interesting technique.

Terry is a well-respected member of the metal clay community in the US and has developed an amazing way of working with paste clay to build up beautiful decoration on silver clay pieces. He specialises in boxes or lockets (as most are on chains) and makes a unique hinge with paper clay.

The first day started with an introduction by Terry and the chance to see examples of his work. He ran through what we would be making by showing us a few samples of work in progress. From the outset I was very excited to be on this course as I have an obsession with boxes of any kind, from silver clay to plastic (much to my husband's annoyance re: the continuing saga of them spilling out of kitchen cupboards!). I had even designed my degree show collection around rings with secret compartments, so this theme was completely 'up my street'.

From the start, Terry told us that he works very precisely and accuracy is the name of the game for this style of piece. In this he proved to be right, as it became a battle of precision to get the box shape just right. We first worked on building a solid box, like a big bead and then we had to cut it with a piercing saw to make a lid and base, and yes, it was as hard as it sounds. There were not many people breathing in the room when the time came to cut their boxes! In truth I held my breath through so many stages that it felt like I'd done a workout by the end of each day. But in the end I did get through the cutting of my box and moved onto the next stage to make a hinge with paper clay, which is a Terry invention! This is one technique that I will be using a lot as it's an amazing way of making hinges. If you want to know the secret I'm

afraid you'll have to find another Terry Kovalcik course to attend, although he did say he was interested in writing a book, so let's hope that comes to fruition sometime soon.

The hinge was made and attached; which sounds super simple, but believe me, accounted for a good couple of hours on day two! We then went on to attach a hasp and nose to anchor the catch on the front and two 'ears' from which the box would hang by way of a chain. This whole process took up the first two days but by the end I had a pretty reasonable locket with hinge and hasp closure, so I was happy.

On day three Terry showed us his way of working with paste to 'draw' a pattern onto dry silver clay. He uses paste to build up a design, refines it with a watery paste solution and then fires the finished piece in a kiln. We had about half a day to do the decoration and it was a pretty tight deadline, but I worked hard and got the piece finished just in time to go in the kiln. It was fired up over lunch and everyone had the chance to chat and finish off other pieces if they wished. It was a little tense waiting for the kiln to finish and then cool down. But finally it happened and we all got to see our pieces. Terry had explained that there was likely to be a bit of warping, that it was normal and could be dealt with by re-shaping with wooden tools. So I wasn't surprised with the small amount of warping on my box, I was however very surprised to find my piece had bubbled on every panel, which was disappointing and I still really don't know why. Bubbling would normally be caused by the clay being a bit damp going into the kiln, which was not the case with this piece as it had been in and out of a dehydrator over three days. Terry was at a loss as to why this had happened too.

Though I ended the class disappointed with my piece; it was an amazing learning experience and I enjoyed meeting all the other students, Terry and his wife Corrin. My thanks goes out to Tracey for another superb masterclass and I look forward to many more.

RESOURCES

www.craftworx.co.uk, www.terrykovalcik.com



PHOTOGRAPHS: TERRY/CORRIN KOVALCIK



Craftworx studio



The class outside the workshop



Workshop in progress



Terry with a student