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The ARTISAN LINK

April / May 2004

ANCRR: For the Artisan in Business www.ancrr.net

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"One step - choosing a goal and sticking to it changes everything."

--Scott Reed

FROM THE EDITOR

Breaking the Mold

Learning the Art of Precious Metal Clay

The terms "metallic clay" and "precious metal clay" had been popping up too frequently in my craft magazines not to take notice. As a new convert to polymer clay (fimo), I decided it was time for an all out investigation. This investigation was fueled when I found a web site in *The Crafts Report Magazine*, which not only offered product information, but also information on classes and certification to teach.

Not only did I enjoy an afternoon of browsing their web site at www.pmcconnection.com, but I also was able to send an e-mail to two of their web affiliates and begin a dialogue. I not only have a better knowledge of what precious metal clay is, but I also have some exciting news about how we at ANCR can schedule a class.

The two "web employees" were Ken Devos, the one in charge and web master, at ken1d@iline.com and Leslie Tieke, a senior instructor, at leslie@creatingtieke.com. I started my online dialogue with Ken by asking him to explain what precious metal clay (PMC) is and his response was:

"Precious Metal Clay (PMC) is a combination of fine silver powder, an organic binder (cellulose) and water. It feels and works like clay but it is not. You can shape with your fingers or simple hand tools, dry it, then fire it. The heat of the firing burns off the binder and causes the powder to fuse to itself, leaving a solid silver object."

Leslie also added that because I enjoy working with polymer clay, I would like precious metal clay. While neither Leslie nor Ken knew of any classes in Virginia, both of them did offer solutions to this situation. Leslie told us all to visit her other two web sites and sign up for a class with her in Tennessee at www.preciousmetalclay.net and www.creatingtieke.com.

Ken had another suggestion. If we could get 8 to 12 people and supply the location, PMC Connection could come to us. They will bring the supplies and instructor with the cost being \$375 per person for a three-day class. Most students like scheduling Friday to Sunday classes. We could also go to Tyrone, North Carolina, also known as Little Switzerland. Ken did warn me that in some states—not all—a student must be a member of the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies (SFMS). It is always advisable to check the SFMS link on PMC's web site, and Ken is willing to help anyone get this necessary membership.

None of this should discourage us here at ANCR, but encourage us. There is an introductory book on the web site written by Ken's wife, Mary Ann Devos, entitled, "Introduction to Precious Metal Clay." There is also a catalog of products. So, books and products could always be ordered. Sometimes it is better to take a class, but how many crafts are you self-taught in? You probably have even taught classes or friends and family those same self-taught crafts.

Precious metal clay can be used in diverse medias. It can be used not only by jewelry makers, sculptors, and potters, but by dollmakers and scrapbookers as well. Think about how that could open up new opportunities or venues for your present crafts. It could even become an opportunity for you to get certified and teach in Virginia. What a niche market you could have, since there are no PMC classes in Virginia.

Nothing else, it is always a pleasure to go online at www.pmconnection.com and look at all of the beautiful pottery and jewelry. So pick up a cup of coffee and do a little web surfing on their site. Just remember that these artists were also once beginners. Not only did they find their niche in molding clay, but more importantly they have molded out a career. A life.

Ken even helped start a regional craft network much like ANCR. He started the smallest of the five chapters of the Southwest Chapter of the Florida Society of Goldsmiths. So be encouraged. As Monica would say, "To the synergy of success."

-- Leisa Bain Good is a freelance writer and jewelry designer living in Front Royal, Virginia. She may be reached at Leisagood@aol.com or www.beadsbuttonsandbooks.com.

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