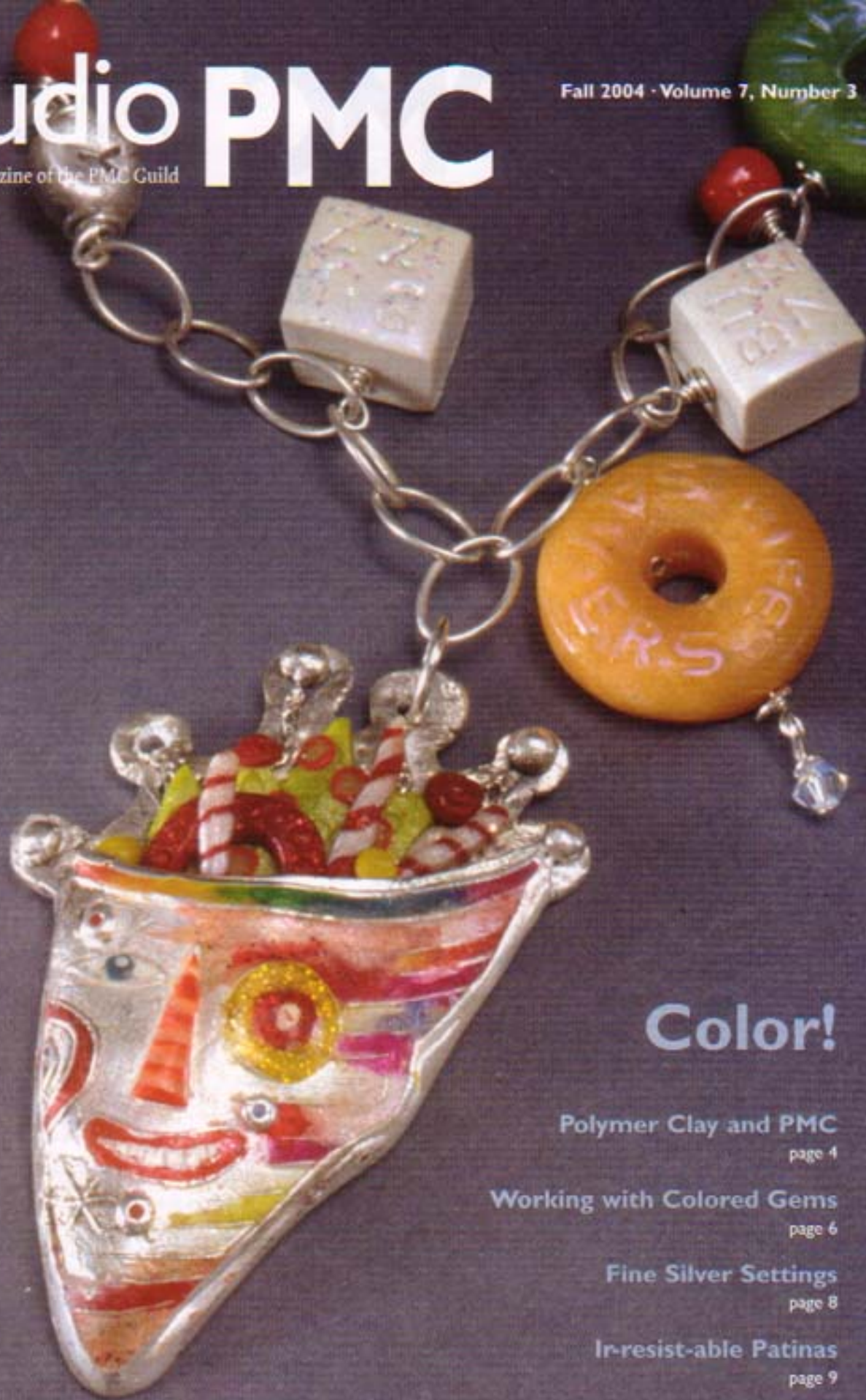


Studio PMC

Member Magazine of the PMC Guild

Fall 2004 - Volume 7, Number 3



Color!

Polymer Clay and PMC
page 1

Working with Colored Gems
page 6

Fine Silver Settings
page 8

Ir-resist-able Patinas
page 9

Ir-resist-able Patinas

by Lora Hart

I remember making magic when I was a kid. I'd draw a wild picture using every color in the crayon box, cover it with black tempera, and watch the waxy hues explode through the midnight paint. I loved it.

Resists used under patinas can achieve a similar effect on PMC. Another dimension of design in the creative tool box, patina resists can be used on a textured surface or on a smooth one, as a focal point for all the world to admire or as a subtle secret on the back that only the wearer knows is there.

There are many variables that can come into play when using patinas, including type, temperature, time, and texture. In this article I'll focus on liver of sulfur, the most common compound used to produce a wide range of iridescent hues on silver. The rainbow of colors produced by this type of patina develop along a continuum from gold to brown, then on to rose, violet, blue, and finally black. When applied over a mirror finish, they develop uniform, saturated hues. On a textured surface, the coloration clings to the crevices and appears beautifully organic, like the surface colors on a soap bubble.

Prepare to Resist!

The patina process is the last step in the jewelry making process. After your piece has been soldered and polished, clean it with an ammonia, soap, and water solution. You may find it useful to wear latex gloves during the entire process to ensure that there are no oils from your hands preventing the ink and patina from adhering to the metal.

One of the keys to this technique lies in the use of a resist material that will withstand the chemical invasion of the patina. I recommend Speedball "Painters" paint pens, which provide the proper opacity. While Sharpie markers appear to lay down a solid, thick line of ink, when applied to metal they tend to streak and leave voids in the design.

Some other options for resists:

- Nail polish applied with a thin paint brush works well for fluid designs where a very fine line is desired.

- Electrical tape cutouts made with craft scissors or paper punches offer bold geometric shapes with clear crisp edges.

- Press-n-Peel Blue Image Transfer Film (often simply called PnP Blue) can be used to photocopy an intricate design that can then be heat-transferred onto metal. Designed for producing printed circuit boards, this is a very cool alternative transfer method for the more adventurous jewelry designer. (Visit the manufacturer, Technicks, Inc., online at www.technicks.com, for more information about PnP Blue.)

Draw your design on the PMC and wait for the ink to dry thoroughly before advancing to the next step. If you need to make changes, use a Q-tip dipped in acetone to remove the resist. For fine corrections, a toothpick will do the job beautifully. Wait for all traces of the remover to evaporate before you reapply your design. As a final cleaning before applying the patina, lightly wipe the surface of the silver (avoiding the painted areas) with denatured alcohol.

Apply the Patina

Liver of sulfur is one of the more benign chemicals that you can use in jewelry making, but common-sense precautions are the best way to put safety first. Due to the lovely scent of rotten eggs produced by liver of sulfur, work in a well-ventilated area.

Liver of sulfur is sensitive to light and air, and even small amounts of exposure will cause it to lose effectiveness. Store it in a dark, air-tight container such as a brown bottle or black 35mm film container, and only make as much solution at a time as you need.

Warm liver of sulfur may be applied to a room temperature piece, but results appear more quickly when the metal has also been heated. A pea-sized chunk of liver of sulfur dissolved in a cup of warm (never boiling) tap water will be enough to color many pieces, but the solution will become weaker as it cools. To counteract this, you can place it on a heating pad or coffee warmer. I like to use a less intense mixture (about the color of straw) and a slow reaction to



Resists permit the creation of both simple and complex patterns on the patinated surface.

make it easier to achieve a specific shade. Be aware that the sulfides produced by a solution that is too strong may be unstable and flake off as the piece is worn.

To apply the patina, make a dipping station consisting of warm liver of sulfur, hot water to warm the metal, and cool clear rinse water. A dip-and-rinse method will give you more control as the color progresses from pale gold through black. Dip back and forth between the warm liver of sulfur and cool water until you achieve the desired hue. The patina will continue to darken slightly after rinsing.

Disable the Resist

Once your creation is colored to your liking, remove the resist with acetone or nail polish remover. Viola! You now have a beautiful bright silver design where the paint pen used to be. For a final shine, you may wish to buff with a totally clean cloth or muslin wheel (no rouge or other preparation) on a Dremel or flex shaft.

*Lora Hart began her jewelry-making career in 2000, when an actor's strike left her idle in her 17-year career as a make-up artist. Since then, her jewelry has been featured in galleries in Southern California, and she has taught extensively in the Los Angeles area. She was certified as a PMC artisan in 2003, and in January began *NewMetal Artists*, the Los Angeles chapter of the PMC Guild, with fellow PMC artist Chris Brooks. Lora can be reached via e-mail at LoraHartJewels@earthlink.net.*