



ANNA MAZON

BY JULIA RAI - UK

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Polish metal clay artist Anna Mazon recently wrote a project article for MCAM, and I was so impressed with her work that I decided to find out more about her. I started by asking her about her first creative memory. "Actually it was connected with singing," she laughed. "When I was more or less three years old I started going to a kindergarten. I was always a very expressive child and not ashamed of anything, so I went to the very centre of our room and sang songs I just made up while the other children were playing around. It felt really good."

Anna lives in Kraków, Poland and clearly adores her hometown. "It's one of Poland's biggest academic and artistic centres," she explained. "It's very old—the city dates back to the 7th century—and full of wonderful monuments. It also lies near beautiful mountains that I love to hike. I'm totally in love with this city."

Anna is pretty much self-taught in metal clay. "I have an Art Clay Silver Level 1 Certification, but I got it mostly to get better prices on metal clay," she laughs. Other than that, she says, "I don't take classes. There are very few people teaching in Poland and they focus on very typical basics, so I simply don't have an opportunity. But I dream of taking classes with Celie Fago (I love her textures) and Joy Funnell (enamell) one day."

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Top: Rings from "Twigs" collection, made of Goldie Bronze™, adorned with colorful zircons. I discovered that it is especially easy to make these twigs-like, organic forms out of this new bronze clay, and I simply became addicted to making this type of rings.

Left: "Golden Road" pendant in process with the sketch I used as a reference while making the pendant.



Right: "Golden Road" – My goal with this piece was to make a scene around the beautiful labradorite, and to incorporate the stone INTO the scene. I wanted to create an illusion of perspective using the stone as a golden road, leading to a mysterious somewhere.

Bottom left: "Spell" – I carved each detail separately without using any molds. The background of this medallion is a drusy agate. The little stone between her hands is labradorite. This type of jewellery is always a great challenge for me, but also gives me great satisfaction.

Bottom right: "Dawn" – Trees are one of my favourite themes in jewellery. When I saw this lovely orange-pink labradorite I immediately thought about a new day dawning in a forest.

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I asked her how she discovered metal clay. "It was in 2008 and, thanks to online community deviantART, I came across the beautiful work of Eleonore Pieper. I was completely overwhelmed," she explained. "I had always wanted to make jewellery, but I thought it was outside of my reach; I was convinced that one needed a big, well-equipped workshop. However, in the description of her jewellery Eleonore stated that she made her work from some kind of clay. I thought, 'OK, clay or not clay, but it looks like silver, so I'll look into this stuff.' Finally I found out that this clay not only looks like silver, but is, in fact, pure silver. It was a really great discovery for me."

So what was her first piece like? "My first piece was not very impressive," she laughs. "I was so stressed. I had everything planned step by step, and I had practiced making it twice, in FIMO® and in Plasticine®. I had thought that the clay would dry almost immediately, and I was very surprised that it was pliable for quite a long time. I fired it on a gas stove with a clock in my hand, because I was convinced that if I fired it longer than three minutes something very bad would surely happen!"

Anna's influences are quite varied. "My main sources of inspiration lie in nature, fantasy books and ancient, pagan cultures. I feel that I'm influenced by many wonderful writers. For example, one of my collections was inspired by Sindarin, the fictional language that J. R. R. Tolkien created for the Grey Elves of Middle-earth," she explained. "Each piece is my interpretation of a word from this elven language. I'm also inspired by the books of Marion Zimmer Bradley, by myths, fairy tales . . . I'm also influenced by Celtic and Norse art, but I don't use it literally. I just like the feeling. Actually, I think I'm influenced by everything that has an atmosphere of magic, mystery, old ages, love of nature and mysticism."

Given these interesting influences, I asked Anna about her style. "I think that I have a certain style. It's natural, rich in details, romantic and feminine. But it definitely doesn't mean that I don't experiment and that I stick firmly to this one style. I've made quite a lot of pieces that are geometrical or tribal. It's hard to choose one 'typical' piece because I feel that my style is reflected in all my pieces."

Anna works in a studio at home. "My workshop

is simply a room in my apartment," she explains. "It's all different shades of green with birch-themed black and white accessories. By the window I have a big desk that is my main workspace. It's usually a total mess, and I regret that I can't keep it organised and tidy, but it's simply impossible for me. I have a really hard time finding things and, of course, they are always the things I need the most! It's difficult to say how much time I spend there. Some days it's 16 hours in a row, and sometimes I do nothing for a few days."

MCAM readers really enjoyed the tutorial Anna created for the magazine, and I asked her whether she teaches metal clay. "Yes, I teach, but usually individual classes because of lack of space. Recently I moved to a bigger apartment, so this will change," she said. "What I love the most is when people who aren't sure about their talent discover how very creative they are and how many ideas they have in their heads. This is pure magic." Anna also sells tutorials from her Etsy™ shop because "this is the most convenient way for people who don't live in my country" to learn from her.

Anna's advice about choosing a metal clay teacher really resonated with me. "Make sure that the person from whom you would like to learn is not only talented but also a good trainer," she said. "It's nice when a teacher knows something about the principles of andragogy—how adults learn best. Last year I attended a school for trainers and it really made me realise that knowing something about how adults learn new things makes teaching far more effective."

I asked Anna about her creative process. "It depends on each piece. I always have a step-by-step plan in my head, but sometimes I make models in FIMO®, sometimes I have very detailed sketches which I cut up and use as templates, and sometimes I use rough sketches from my sketch book as a reference. I have a sketch book with lots of ideas. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and I have to draw something. The same happens when I'm on a bus, watching a movie, strolling, etc., so I almost always have a piece of paper and a pencil with me. I have so many ideas which are waiting for realisation—days are simply too short."

Anna has some unusual requirements when she's working. "When I make my jewellery, I hate silence," she laughs. "I need something else to keep

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Top left: "May Wreath" bangle. It was inspired by the atmosphere of the pagan Beltane festival. It was my first custom order, so it was a great challenge.

Top right: "Flowers Twigs" earrings, made of Goldie Bronze™, adorned with flat pearls.

Left: This pendant features one of my favourite symbols, the triskele. I made this pendant as a custom order for a wonderful fellow artist, Samantha Braund. It's also adorned with a labradorite, which is my favourite stone.

Right: "Misty Morning" pendant, from my "Herbarium" collection. Made out of Art Clay™ Silver, adorned with green quartz, blue topaz and labradorite. This collection taught me a lot about creating strong and durable openwork pieces in fine silver.

my mind busy—for example, an audio book or TV series (I don't watch them, I just listen). Thanks to metal clay I've discovered lots of really good series I never would consider watching normally. And these series and books have to be in a different language from my native Polish, preferably in English or Spanish. This way, while I'm making jewellery I also improve my language skills!"

Anna's favourite tool is a scalpel. "I use it all the time to add textures, to cut really tiny details, to make general shapes, to shape wet clay. I really couldn't make most of my pieces without it. When I make really tiny details, sometimes I feel like a surgeon!"

While I was talking with Anna it became clear that she spends most of her time creating, and the volume of work she produces is evidence of this. So I asked her

how she relaxes. "I live quite near mountains, so sometimes I hike at the weekends. I also have a little forest nearby, so I love strolling there. And I love reading good books and dancing wildly. I'm also a big fan of bonfires with my friends and sleeping in the forest—this is very relaxing."

Anna has her work in a number of places and she's given good advice for other artists who want to sell their jewellery. "First—and in my opinion the most important—don't become disheartened too soon. It took some time before people started to buy my work. At the beginning I was so disappointed; many people praised my jewellery, but very rarely did someone want to buy it. This was very frustrating. But with time it simply changed. So I think it would be a pity if I had stopped then. I also think it is very important to be a part of some com-

munities and interact with more experienced sellers. I'm a part of the Etsy Metal Clay Team, which consists of over 50 amazing artists who sell their metal clay jewellery on Etsy™. It's an opportunity for me to virtually 'meet' some wonderful people, successful artists, and to learn from them."

There are additional attributes that Anna believes are required in order to be successful. "You need *patience*, to bring what you have in mind to reality; *stubbornness*, to try again when you fail; and *optimism*, to believe that one day you'll succeed."

Anna uses some traditional techniques in her metal clay jewellery. "I solder a lot—stone settings, jump rings, wire elements, etc. I solder sterling silver elements to metal clay in places that are the most exposed to wear to add strength when a piece is worn. I have to be sure that nothing will break. Sometimes I also use simple wire wrapping techniques," she explained. "Recently I merged metal clay with soutache embroidery, a wonderful, very old technique popularized again recently by internationally acclaimed artist Dori Csengeri. I make a kind of metal clay cabochon that I prepare especially for this technique and adorn it with colourful soutache cords, stones, and tiny silver balls. This is so very relaxing. I love doing soutache embroidery, especially when I'm tired of working with metal clay by itself. The best thing about soutache embroidery is that you can make it wherever you are, lying in the grass or watching TV. It's very addictive. I'm new at this technique but I think I've fallen in love with it already."

I asked Anna where she sees her work going. "Sometimes I see that I have a general trend of 'miniaturisation'—making my ornaments smaller and smaller and more and more detailed. I have to stop this trend because one day no one will be able to see them without a magnifying glass!" she said, laughing. "But, being more serious, I hope I'll become more aware of what good design means. What I do now is mostly intuitive, and I would like to bring a general awareness of art and its history into my jewellery. So I have a lot to learn. Sometimes I feel my pieces have a brush with kitsch and I don't like it."

Finally I asked her what she still wants to achieve. "I want to do a lot of experimenting with Hadar's clays and to combine many different types of clays together and with other non-metal materials. I also want to learn more in the field of traditional metal working techniques. I want to find some time to paint and draw. I feel that I have some talent there that I neglected many years ago, and I feel quite bad about that. I also want to muster my energies and finally enter some contests! I want to teach more and maybe one day to teach in different countries."

To learn more about Anna or to purchase her work, visit:
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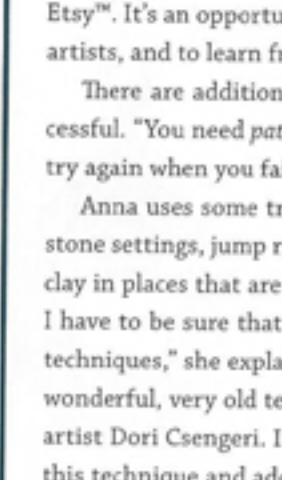
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JULIA RAI is a teacher and artist working in a variety of media. She finds inspiration in science fiction and fantasy and loves a good story where disbelief can be suspended in favour of wonder. Her practical and ultra-organised side is always vying for attention alongside her creative and messy side. Each is trying hard to learn from the other and live in harmony.



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