

Designer profile

Name: Julia Rai
 Location: St Austell, Cornwall
 Occupation: Metal Clay Teacher and Artist



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 for Julia's
 project

How did you first get into jewellery making?

I took a weekend beginners silver smithing class as a birthday present to myself and really enjoyed it.

You are best known for your work with metal clay. How did you first discover this medium?

On that weekend class, the tutor talked about metal clay and I was intrigued so I took another class combining traditional silver work and metal clay. From there I was hooked!

In what ways has metal clay changed since you first began working with it in 2004?

When I started, there was only silver and gold metal clay. Now there are many more varieties like bronze, copper, steel and the newest, Sterling silver metal clay. There were also very few people teaching it, working with it and few books about it.

You frequently design jewellery projects for *Making Jewellery*, how would you describe your style?

That's a tricky one to answer! I like making hollow forms but I'm currently making more free-formed pieces. I love actually manipulating the clay and forming it by hand. And my pieces tend to be textured, as I love the variety and ease of texturing metal clay.

Which other jewellery designers do you admire?

Historically, I love the jewellery of Lalique. Contemporary designers whose work I admire are Michael David Sturlin, Wanaree Tanner and Terry Kovalcik.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Helping people to discover their creative side. Metal clay allows all kinds of people to easily make lovely jewellery and explore their creativity.

What is the metal clay Masters Registry, and what does it mean to you to be the first to achieve Registry IV?

The Masters Registry is a credential for metal clay artists. There are 50 projects, ten at each of the five levels. The projects all include metal clay but they also require artists to learn traditional metal work and jewellery making skills. The projects are sent in at each level and evaluated by a panel of experienced jewellery designers. Their feedback can be harsh at times but it has pushed me as an artist in ways I couldn't have imagined when I started. To be the first person in the world to achieve Registry IV was a great achievement, especially as the credential was established in the USA. I'm proud that a Brit achieved this level first!

Tell us about your online resource, the Metal Clay Academy

I set up the MCA following discussions with other metal clay artists about the lack of brand neutral, independent metal clay information available on the internet. The goal of the MCA is to be a worldwide source of clear and unbiased information about the different brands and varieties of metal clay, suppliers, tutorials and the training available. It's updated every day with new suppliers, teachers, tutorials and information.

If I wasn't a designer I would be...

A jack of all trades! I already wear several hats so designing is just a small part of what I do.

www.juliarai.co.uk, www.metalclayacademy.com

