



Julia Rai

Awe-Inspiring Master of Metal Clay



Featured Artist

by Tes Shea

Julia Rai

Entrepreneur and Gifted Artist

Have you met or heard of Julia Rai? If not, then I'd like to be the one to introduce this delightfully focused artist to you!

She captured my attention in the very early stages of my fascination with metal clay. Her artistic resume is quite impressive. Her many accomplishments include being Director and Web designer of the popular website, Metal Clay Academy. If you haven't visited this site, you should! In fact, I recommend you make an appointment with yourself to spend a nice afternoon or evening cruising through the many wonderful articles and opportunities this site offers metal clay enthusiasts. I think you will appreciate the store which features some of the funniest/cutest products for metal-clayers. There will be more about Julia's other accomplishments at the end of this article, and on the website.

I hope Julia didn't think I was interrogating her with my questions about how she approaches the business of being a full-time working artist. After all, many of us, I think, would LOVE to be full-time artists. So from that perspective I asked, and Julia shared her story with me.

Always a crafter who enjoyed learning new things, in 2004 she took her first class in working with Fine Silver. She was immediately hooked, and by 2007 she began teaching.

Her background in business was beneficial as she began to build and shape her business around the concept of teaching others and sharing her love for metal clay.



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For Julia, one of the things about metal clay which keep her interested is the immediacy of the material. The satisfaction of creating anything in clay is quick! And, the materials allow for designs which can be accomplished with fewer materials, and more quickly, than any traditional metal-smithing techniques. She really favors using metal clay to build her three-dimensional designs. She calls it kitchen table art, because anyone can create in metal clay with items found around in the kitchen!

Silver is probably her favorite clay to work with because it is so fool-proof. Currently, she is experimenting with the new Sterling Silver Clay. She does work with the other brands and styles of clay. Julia likes the patinas you can create with the base metals.

Inspiration for Julia comes from the world of science fiction and fantasy films. She appreciates the magical worlds of sci fi and will often stop a movie to make a quick sketch of some shape or figure which intrigues her. Her favorite artist is Roger Dean, an international artist and designer, well known for his album covers from the 70's.

You won't find a lot about Julia's family on any of the websites she is featured. This part of her life she prefers to keep separated from her professional life. Her family supports her, and is creative in their own fashion, but currently do not share her love of working with metals. Luckily for them, Julia cheerfully gives her metal clay creations to family and friends.

Mayan Bead

Pearl Leaf Necklace



We had a chance to discuss her work in the Metal Clay Masters Registry Program. Julia was the first artist to attain level 3, and again first to level 4, her current level in the program.

Julia told me this prestigious program has led her to learn a variety of creative techniques she might not otherwise have tried. It has also motivated her to evaluate and challenge her design skills. There have been many conversations with her mentors about what makes Good Design versus Personal Taste.

I liked this rather obtuse concept, because it really does make you think! What is it that makes Good Design? How does that relate to Personal Taste? Julia told me that Tim McCreight advised her to "Ask yourself what it is about a design you like."

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This year Julia plans on completing Level 5 of the Masters Program. This is the highest and final level of the program. She plans to continue learning and will be taking a class at the upcoming PMC Conference with Terry Kovalic.

You'll also be able to learn from her as she continues to present classes. As a prolific writer, Julia's plans include more articles and tutorials.

In parting, I asked Julia to share some words of wisdom for artists just starting out. Julia said "Think about what you want to do, learn all you can and at the end of the day... be the best you can."

And, "Choose carefully where you put your work. Enter those shows and events attended by people who will appreciate the time, beauty and skill of the work you offer."



Pyramid Ring

Julia Rai – <http://www.juliarai.co.uk>
 Roger Dean – <http://www.rogerdean.com/>
 Tim McCreight – <http://www.brynmorgen.com/>
 Terry Kovalic – <http://www.terrykvalic.com/>
 Metal Clay Academy – <http://www.metalclayacademy.com/index.html>
 Metal Clay Masters Registry Program – <http://www.mastersregistry.com/>



Julia's work has been featured in a number of publications including *PMC Guild Annual* and *The Art and Design of Metal Clay Jewelry Calendar*. She was on the jury that selected the work for inclusion in the *Calendar* for 2011 and had work included in the *calendar* for 2012. Her work was included in the *Crafthaus New Directions: Powder Metallurgy (Metal Clay)* in a *Sheet Metal World* book. She has exhibited her work at the *UK PMC Symposium 2009*, the *PMC Conference Cultural Messages Exhibition 2010*, the *Bead Dreams Exhibition 2010 and 2011*, and on the *Metal Clay Masters Registry website*. She won third prize in the *Bead Dreams Competition 2010* and first prize in 2011 in the metal clay category. She was a finalist in the prestigious *Saul Bell Design Award Competition 2011* in the metal clay category and she won first prize in the metal clay category of the *British Bead Awards* in 2011.