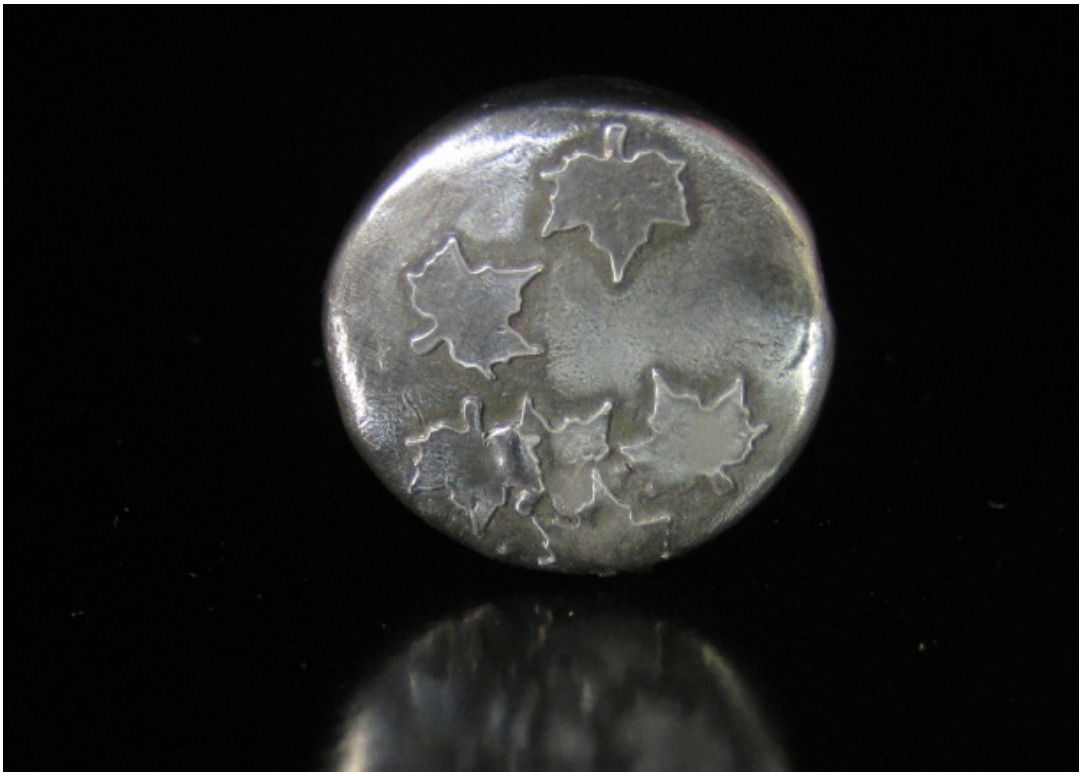
Aftosa's how-to series: *Metal Clay*
Skill level: *Intermediate/Advanced*

PMC and the versatile Bisque Bead

by Patrik Kusek

Looking for a new way to add color to PMC without learning how to enamel? Give bisque beads a try. They are a great way to add color and are as easy as using a paint brush! Not only are they beautiful, but they are economical to use as well. The versatile bisque bead is totally customizable to suit your needs. In addition to being painted any color of the rainbow, you can even carve into them to further customize the bead. Add PMC to the mix and
you'll have unlimited options to embellish, decorate or even just cover up the whole bisque bead with silver top to bottom!



This easy technique covers the beads from top to bottom with PMC slip. The bead will act as a substructure which will be lighter than solid silver. Not only is this more economical, but it is a time saver as well. Making perfectly sized beads has never been easier.

Painting the bisque bead

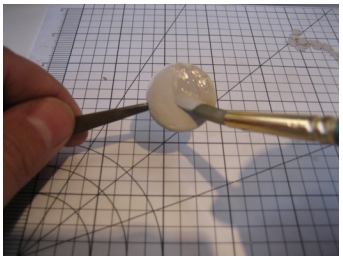


Photo 1

(photo 1) Find a tweezer or bamboo stick to put into the hole of the bead. Paint the bead with PMC 3 slip. Use broad even strokes and provide good even coverage. Paint the entire surface as well as the inside of the hole. To do this paint everything except for the one hole with the bamboo stick. Let it dry, then paint the other hole.

Dry the bead in a food dehydrator. Use care not to rest the wet bead on the drying rack or mat. Prop the bead up using kiln stilts, enameling trivets or a similar device.

Apply at least 5 coats or more of slip. Be sure to paint the inside of the holes as well otherwise the base bead might show itself after firing.

(photo 2) Sand the bead with fine sandpaper to remove any brush strokes and unwanted blemishes. Use caution not to sand too much of the PMC away during this process. If too much of the clay is removed during the sanding process it will cause a weak spot in the silver.

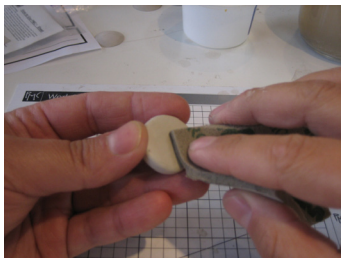


Photo 2

Adding the details

(photo 3) Use a small size craft punch to cut designs out of PMC paper. In this case I used a maple leaf punch from my scrapbooking supplies.

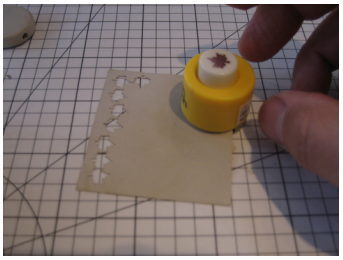


Photo 3

(photo 4) To apply the leaves to the bead, first wet the bead with a little water to activate the binder in the clay.

(photo 5) Next use tweezers to apply the PMC paper cut out shapes. Use caution: PMC paper is extremely delicate when wet. If too much water is used it will literally dissolve in front of your eyes. Once placed, PMC paper does not reposition very well, so be sure to have a game plan before applying the leaves.

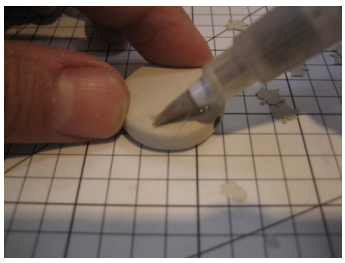


Photo 4

Dry the bead in the dehydrator or on a mug warmer.

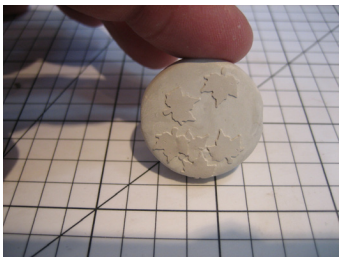
Firing the bead

I usually fire the beads on a kiln blanket or vermiculite. Fire the bead at 1650 for 10 minutes. Let the beads cool in the kiln without opening the door. I usually set the kiln to fire overnight. By morning time, the kiln is cool and I can finish my beads.

Photo 5

Finish the bead

Finish the beads in the regular fashion either by using a brass brush or with a flex shaft. If you use liver of sulfur be sure to rinse the bead in fresh water with a little baking soda to neutralize the liver of sulfur.



It's easy to add a splash of color to your designs with glaze and bisque beads. From child-like designs to sophisticated colorways, bisque beads will add a pop of color to your day!

Glaze the bisque bead

For this project we'll be using Mayco "Stroke and Coat" Glaze which can be fired at 1850 degrees (cone 06), well within the range of most metal clay kilns.

Prepare the bisque bead by lightly sanding if necessary. The bead should have a smooth, unblemished surface.

Photo 1

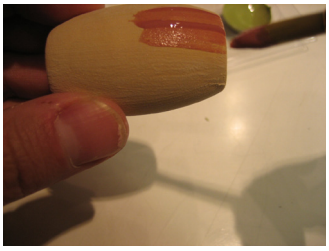


Photo 2

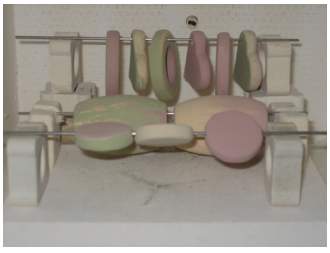


Photo 3

Be sure to mix the glaze before application by shaking the bottle or stirring the glaze to combine.

(photo 1) Use a paintbrush to apply the glaze. Use one coat for a more transparent look, and 3 or more coats for an opaque look. In this case I used the color "Tiger Tail" SC-5. Paint on coat including the hole of one side of the bead. Leave the other side uncoated. Let the bead dry thoroughly.

Paint on a second coat starting with unpainted hole, using the painted hole to hold the bead. Paint the rest of the bead with a second coat. Set aside to dry.

Paint the remaining hole, then dry.

Rinse the brush in clean fresh water.

(photo 2) Next paint half the bead with "Cinnamon Stix" SC-81. I used overlapping strokes for a layered effect and let the brush strokes show.

Let dry thoroughly.

Fire the bead

(photo 3) The beads should be fired on a wire or rod that can withstand the high temperatures of the kiln. If rods are not used, the bead glaze will fuse to the kiln shelf. I suspended the rods with kiln stilts.

Firing schedule: Ramp1) 500 degrees per hour to 1850 degrees hold for 3 minutes. When the temperature reaches 1000 degrees open the vent on your kiln for the rest of the firing. Ramp 2) 1850 degrees down to 960 degrees, then hold for 10 minutes. Let the kiln cool with the door closed until at least 200 degrees.

Apply the PMC to the glazed bead

Photo 4

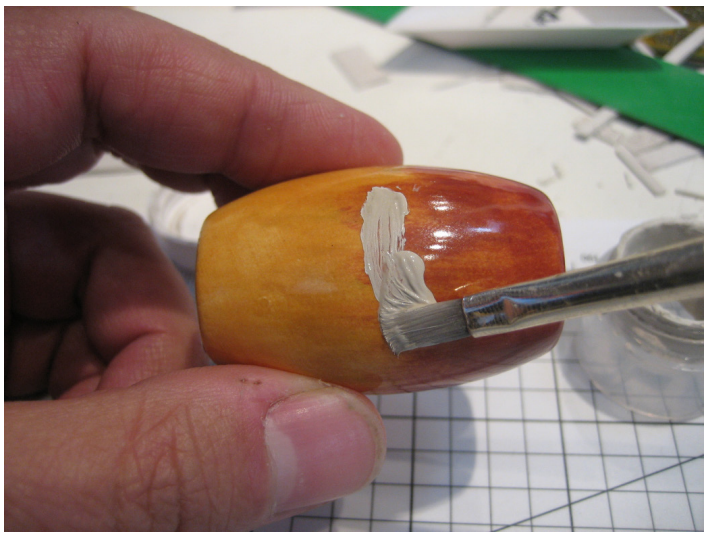


Photo 5

(photo 5) Use a brush to apply PMC3 paste to the portion of the bead where the PMC will be attached. In this case I wrapped the entire bead with PMC. Set aside to dry.

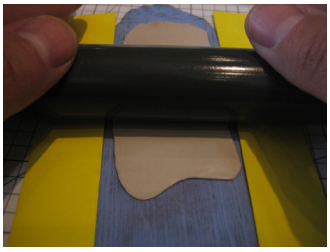


Photo 6

(photo 6) Roll out a length of PMC3, 2 cards thick, enough to completely wrap the bead. Make the strip long enough to overlap onto itself.

(photo 7) Lightly wet the slip on the bead with water and layer the PMC on top of the slip. Secure the overlapping section by adding water and holding it secure for at least 3 seconds. The water activates the binder in the clay and will make a strong bond adhering the clay to itself.

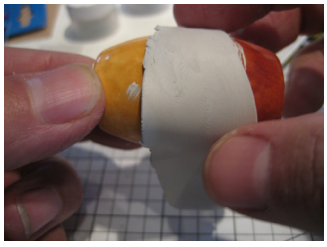


Photo 7

Remove any excess slip with a rubber tipped clay shaper or scratch lightly with a pin to remove the excess slip. Be careful not scratch the glaze.

Set aside to dry.

Fire the bead

Using the rods, fire the bead at 1650 for 10 minutes. Ramp the kiln at 1650 per hour, then hold for 10 minutes, then ramp to 960, hold for 10 minutes. Cool with door closed until temp reaches 200 or cooler.

Finish the bead

Finish in the usual manner by using a soft brass brush or alternatively use a flex shaft and brass wire wheel. The wire wheel gives more control and prevents a haze from developing on the glaze around the PMC.

If you will be using liver of sulfur to patina your piece, be sure to rinse the bead in fresh water with a little baking soda to neutralize the liver of sulfur.

Supplies

PMC 3 16 gram package

PMC 3 Slip

PMC+ Paper

Tools

Basic PMC Tool Kit

Playing cards or

Graduated Slats

Bowl of water

Metal Rods and kiln stilts

Kraft Knife

Paint Brush: Number 0

Water Brush

PMC Work Surface

Sanding Sponge Set

Pocket Needle File

Pocket Drill

Vermiculite or Alumina Hydrate

3M Dust and Mist Respirator

Kiln: Paragon SC-2 KILN or torch

Tumbler

Food Dehydrator or Warmer/Dryer

Bisque Bead Oval

Bisque Bead Pancake

Mayco Stroke and Coat Glazes

Tiger Tail 2 Ounce

Cinnamon Stix 2 oz

About the Author:

Patrik's experience in the worlds of design and fashion helped shape his creative vision and brand. He is a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising and The Academy of Art University. He worked as a Fashion Stylist at Macy's San Francisco and was the owner and Creative Director of Wallop Design Group, a graphic design and branding company. He currently is able to pursue his passion as a jewelry artist and instructor. He teaches metal clay workshops in the San Francisco Bay Area and internationally. Patrik is a member of the PMC Guild and is both PMC Guild Certified and Art Clay Certified. He is one of 9 senior instructors for Rio Grande and teaches PMC certification workshops internationally. He was a featured artist on HGTV's "That's Clever." Patrik's work has been published in numerous books and publications. He is also the recipient of the 2007 Saul Bell Award 1st place in PMC. Patrik has also recently been featured in Ornament Magazine.

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