



With a creative mind and a careful hand, Alasha Lantinga turns metal clay into wearable works of art.

Breaking the mold

Alasha Lantinga sculpts precious metal clay into jewelry with form and funk

Alasha Lantinga comes from a family that seems to have an artistic gene. “Almost everyone in my family is creative,” she says. “My mom paints as a hobby, my uncle is a photographer, and my aunt dabbles in every creative outlet you could imagine.” After years of hard work, Alasha considers herself quite lucky to have turned her creative visions into a full-time job. She works as a jewelry artist, creating most of her original pieces with the fascinating medium of precious metal clay.

Alasha grew up in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and has been creating jewelry ever since she was a child. “I have always been artistic,” she recalls. “Even as a kid I was making jewelry with plastic beads.” In 2009, she began working for a custom jeweler where her interest in jewelry-making really began to take shape. It was at this time she was introduced to gemstone beads and precious metal findings, and from then on she was hooked.

“While working at the store, I took a course it offered in metal clay,” she remembers. That is when her distinctive technique really took off. “Metal clay is now my favorite medium to work with,” Alasha says. “I use it almost exclusively.” Precious metal clay (also called PMC or, simply, metal clay) consists of an organic binder combined with very fine particles of metal: either bronze, silver, gold, or copper. Alasha works primarily with bronze and silver.

The method of working with metal clay is a ten step process, which begins with rolling out the clay and stamping it with her chosen design. Alasha loves nature and finds herself inspired by it, so a lot of her designs involve earthy or floral motifs. “Other ideas just pop into my head,” she says. “I really love playing with different shapes and textures.”

Once a piece is formed, filed, sanded and drilled, it is fired in a kiln. Alasha’s at home workspace includes a studio and small





Bronze patinaed earrings stand ready for their gemstones.



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jewelry kiln. Bronze pieces are fired in carbon to a temperature of 1545°F, while silver is fired on an open shelf reaching temperatures up to 1655°F. The hot temperature burns off the binder and a solid metal piece results.

When the metal clay has cooled, Alasha’s vision begins to crystallize as she adds different elements and a distinctive style to each piece. The bronze pieces are manually patinaed; a process that naturally happens over time but which Alasha accelerates to give the jewelry a stunning turquoise-colored accent. She antiques some of the silver pieces by carefully blackening each crevice and polishing them, until they appear beautifully contrasted from the design.

Alasha’s unique designs were a hit at the local markets and craft fairs she would attend. Ultimately she was approached by small boutique owners who expressed interest in carrying her line. Now she primarily sells her jewelry wholesale to different independently-owned shops in several Canadian provinces, including the gift shop of the Royal British Columbia Museum.

While she loves her trade, creating jewelry in such a unique style is not without its challenges. “For instance, bronze clay can bubble or crack in the kiln,” she explains. “It can be frustrating when I put a lot of work into a piece and it ends up unusable.”

Despite the obstacles, Alasha remains undeterred. “My technique has evolved a lot since I first started making jewelry. I use more elaborate designs and am always trying to learn and incorporate new elements in my art.” As the years go on, her creations will continue to transform while remaining beautiful and unique – just like the precious metal clay from which they are formed. □