

designer profile

“the first time I enamelled it seemed like magic – the way the material transformed in the kiln, like pulling an intaglio print”

Jan Smith: Drawing on Metal

by dianne karg baron

Jan Smith is a BC native who graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Her work has been published in several of the Lark Books 500 series, including *500 Pendants and Locketts*, *500 Necklaces* and *500 Brooches*.

Jan's work has also been recognized with Jurors Awards from the Northern California Enamel Guild The Enamelist Society.

Tell us a bit about what originally attracted you to enamelling?

I had been a printmaker – so being able to add colour attracted me. The first time I enamelled it seem like magic, the way the material transformed in the kiln, much like pulling an intaglio print.

What type of formal or informal training have you had?

I have a BFA from NSACD, and majored in printmaking. I am primarily self-taught in jewellery, with some workshops (Maria Phillips, Jamie Bennett, Linda Darty, Elizabeth Turrell, Megan Corwin, and Andy Cooperman) and work experience (Maria Phillips, Gina Pankowski, Micki Lippe). I have been taking some classes with a German goldsmith, who is great!

What approach do you normally take in your design process?

I do sketches and coloured drawings, paper models and often use thin metal models. I work in series, exploring a concept or idea in different ways.



What is your favourite part of the fabricating process? What do you enjoy the least?

I like it all, but I guess measuring is my least favourite. I can be lazy and then I pay for it. So I learned the hard way that it isn't a short cut to skip accurate measuring. As I've gotten better at it, I've slowed down and I enjoy it more.

What have been some of your favourite pieces you've made so far?

I felt the piece entitled “9 Patch Quilt Series”, which was nine brooches in a frame, was very successful. With “Winter Garden”, I liked the combination of drawing and jewellery. I like pushing jewellery to be more than something to be admired when worn. I like the interaction with nature of both these pieces.

Do you do other types of metal work?

I've done some sculptural pieces and vessels but they were gifts or for myself. Perhaps in the future...

What or who inspires you?

Botanical forms – the colours and surfaces of rocks, boards, stones. I have recently become hugely attracted and inspired by architectural models and buildings under construction.

Do you have any mentors? What traits of theirs inspire you?

Maria Phillips: love her work, and she was very generous with her time and insights. She introduced me to enamelling and electroforming – a great educator, lots of fun. Gina Pankowski: again I love her work,

Jan Smith, *Lily Blossom I, II, III*, 2008; sterling silver, copper, 22k gold, enamel, pearls

Jan Smith, *Just Say No Locket*, 2009; sterling silver, copper, enamel, graphite, mica, organic material

I learned so much about soldering, fabrication/construction. She was a great mentor and encouraged me in many ways. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with both of them, and I feel very fortunate to have both of them as friends.

What is the one piece of advice you wish you had received at the beginning of your career?

it's not advice, *per se*, but I wish I had given myself permission to do a second degree at the UW metals department.

Have you received any awards for your work?

I've received several: the Jurors' Award, 7th International Enamel Exhibition sponsored by the Northern California Enamel Guild, received in 2004 for “Directions”; the Jurors' Award, 9th Biennial Juried Exhibition of Enamelist Society, received in 2003 for “Descending Cream Circles”; and the Award of Merit, 5th International Enamel Exhibition sponsored by Northern California Enamel Guild, received in 2000 for “9 Patch Quilt Series”.

What would you say has been your greatest challenge so far?

Myself! At times, not having an education in jewellery/metals has been challenging as I struggle to figure out the technical aspects of what I want to express. Sometimes I'm sure there is a better (more efficient) way to do things and I feel frustrated.





DO YOU WANT:
RELIABLE SERVICE?
CLEAR COMMUNICATION?
EXPERT KNOWLEDGE?
FLAT SHIPPING RATES
ACROSS CANADA?
WWW.EMPORIUMVITREUM.CA

What direction is your work taking?

I'm working on some jewellery pieces inspired by the foundations of the house we're building. I'm also working on some wall pieces that have jewellery mounted in them.

What types of relationships have assisted you in moving forward with your career?

I have been so lucky! I have had wonderful classes, great people to work for, my gallery relationships are great and my suppliers and my caster and photographer have all been great! I feel very fortunate to have lived in Seattle with such a great guild. The Seattle Metals Guild was and is a wealth of information. The people are wonderful and am glad I'm close enough to still be part of that.

Has there ever been an event or experience in your life that changed the way you felt about your work, or caused a shift in what you create?

Definitely! Meeting Maria Phillips and learning enamelling, and then Elizabeth Turrell – huge light bulb moments. Recently my husband and I have been building a home and there is a big shift in the influence of my work.

Tell us a about you as a person.

I'm an avid gardener, love cooking and having people in for dinner. I love to walk, kayak and sail. I sew and knit, and have started to felt.

What do you like about your location?

Why did you choose this area? Do you feel like you are part of a larger community?

I live on the West Coast, on Salt Spring Island. It's great – I'm on the water, the climate is temperate, I can grow artichokes and figs in my garden! It rarely snows – a treat after Halifax! I'm BC-born, from Vancouver, and came to this island on holidays as a kid. I love the mix of artists, musicians, farmers and visitors. ✎

See more of Jan's work at <http://www.metalartsguild.ca/profile/JanSmith>



Clockwise, from above:

Jan Smith, Directions Neckpiece, 2010; sterling silver, copper, enamel

Jan Smith, Circle Directions Ring, 2005; sterling silver, copper, enamel, china paints, graphite

Jan Smith, Loves Me Brooch, 2010; sterling silver, copper, 22k gold bimetel, enamel, ceramic oxides

Jan Smith, Right Now Neckpiece, 2010; sterling silver, copper, enamel



EMPORIUM VITREUM
 ENAMEL SUPPLIES FOR CANADIANS
 WWW.EMPORIUMVITREUM.CA

DISCOVER ENAMEL!
 KNOWLEDGEABLE AND RELIABLE SERVICE ACROSS CANADA

- ◆ ALL THOMPSON LEAD-FREE COLOURS CURRENTLY IN STOCK
- ◆ CANADIAN INFORMATION RESOURCES
- ◆ CLASS LISTINGS ACROSS CANADA
- ◆ EASY TO NAVIGATE WEBSITE