

PMC Sterling

The short history of PMC is marked by a rapid and exciting evolution. The first Precious Metal Clay arrived in the US in 1994 and has been followed every few years by a new version. At the PMC Conference in 2010, Mitsubishi Materials previewed the first silver alloy clay, a 90% alloy they called PMC PRO. It had the same great workability as fine silver clay, but was significantly stronger and tougher.

Unfortunately, the alloy did not resonate with some of the customers who are more familiar with the term “sterling.” As one artist said, “It has taken me years to educate people about fine silver; I just don’t have the energy to start again with an unfamiliar alloy.”

The scientists at Mitsubishi got the message, and started development of a sterling alloy. Sterling silver, a mixture of 92.5% silver with 7.5% copper, is by far the most popular alloy used in silver jewelry. It achieves the bright shine, resistance to tarnish, and workability of silver while adding strength and surface hardness. No wonder it has held its position as the preeminent jewelry alloy for centuries.

Mitsubishi starting testing their 925 clay early this year, first in their own labs and then in the studios of a few selected artists. As is usual with a new product, there were lots of details to be worked out ... working quality, firing schedules, and so on. These tests took months and are in fact ongoing. PMC Sterling will be sold only through distributors in the US for the time being. The next issue of Fusion will be published in January and will include lots of photos and detailed technical reports. For now, we include this summary of technical specifications that compares all the members of the PMC family.





Comparison of Silver Metal Clays

	ORIGINAL PMC	PMC+	PMC3	PMC STERLING	STERLING - cast -
Metal	Fine silver	Fine silver	Fine silver	92.5% silver alloy	92.5% silver alloy
Metal Content	77% clay weight	90% clay weight	90% clay weight	90% clay weight	—
Shrinkage (size)	25–30%	10–15%	10–15%	15–20%	—
Recommended Firing	1650°F for 120 min.	1650°F for 10 min. +	1650°F for 120 min.	1000°F in air / 30 min. 1500° in carbon / 30 min.	—
Elongation*	15%	30%	35%	28%	35%
Tensile Strength*	60 N/mm ²	130 N/mm ²	140 N/mm ²	190 N/mm ²	310 N/mm ²
Bending Strength*	30 N/mm ²	50 N/mm ²	30 N/mm ²	160 N/mm ²	240 N/mm ²
Surface Hardness* (Vickers)	n/a	30 HV	30 HV	50 HV	60 HV
Density*	7.9 g/cm ³	9.5 g/cm ³	9.9 g/cm ³	9.3 g/cm ³	10.4 g/cm ³

*Results may vary depending on firing and measuring conditions.

Explanation of Terms

Metal (after firing)

The first three clays are 99.9% silver. PMC Sterling contains 92.5% silver with the balance copper.

Metal Content

The nonmetal content refers to water and binder.

Shrinkage

In all clays, shrinkage occurs equally along the x-, y-, and z-axes unless the clay is constrained or restricted. The degree of shrinkage is related to the amount of binder.

Recommended Firing

Some clays offer options that balance a lower temperature against a longer soaking time. See other charts for the relative merits of the other schedules. Always fire at the highest temperature and longest time possible.

Elongation

This refers to the degree a sample can be stretched before it breaks. Relevance: A ring with a higher number can be sized by stretching.

Tensile Strength

Related to elongation, this measurement shows how much force is needed to break a sample. A higher number means the piece will be harder to break.

Bending Strength

This is a measure of how much force is needed to bend a sample. The higher the number, the more rigid the piece will be. Relevance: A ring with a high number will not bend out of shape when worn.

Surface Hardness (Vickers)

This refers to a test that measures what happens when a point of specific size is pressed into a sample. Relevance: A high number here means the surface is hard; textures and details will not wear away quickly.

Density

We can think of this as a measure of how tightly packed the crystals are. Generally the tighter the structure, the tougher the metal. In objects of a given size, a denser material will weigh more.



Showcase

All the jewelry shown here was all made from PMC Sterling. The ring with gold demonstrates keum-boo with 24k foil, and the garnet in the ring in the bottom row was set after firing.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Celie Fago: 1, 2, and 4.
Tim McCreight: 3, 5, and 6.
All photos courtesy of Rio Grande.



Inspiration



Inspiration can appear anytime or in any form. Sometimes you know when it hits, and other times it slips in almost unnoticed. Inspiration can be fleeting, and often disguises itself as something else. We all know that it is possible, but the experience is different for each of us. Inspiration is a mystery.

For more than four years now, we at the PMC Guild have included a feature in Fusion that we refer to as the Visual Trigger Challenge. In each issue, we present a photo of a scene or static object, or sometimes just an abstract form, and challenge readers to make a piece of jewelry based on the image. The idea is to use the image as a starting point and then allow imagination to take over.

Each issue inspires some very good responses, and we thought it would be fun and timely to take a look at some of the successes. Fun, because there is something appealing about looking back at what folks have come up with over the years. And timely because the current Visual Trigger Challenge is our last. We will include the winners from this issue's contest in our next Fusion, but this current issue marks the last time we solicit responses.

The Challenge is a design exercise, meant to stretch a creator's brain to find ideas and sources of inspiration in unlikely or unexpected places. For this story, we talked with readers who have participated in the Challenge over the years, as well as accomplished artists and educators who make their living with their art and craft.

Our interviews have revealed some expected conclusions. Nobody tells the same story, but everybody finds inspiration in different places, from different sources, and at different times. Some draw from the same well over and over while others continually look for new sources. These are their stories.

One artist we spoke with, who works from home designing for a major jewelry manufacturer, cranks out four or five ring designs each day. For her, inspiration comes wherever she looks, but she doesn't have time to ponder or dwell. She has time only to create. She gets ideas from fashion magazines, websites and other sources. Others have the luxury of patience. Work comes only when it comes, after or while the inspiration hits.

Denise Lawn is a PMC artist from the UK. She used a Visual Trigger Challenge image from many months before in a Masters Registry project. The photo in Fusion was of cacti. As someone who used leaves and organic shapes and forms in her work, the cacti caught her attention.

"It was one of those ooh, ahh, mmm I-need-to-make-something-out-of-this moments," she said. She filed the idea away and came back to it when she made a constructed box for the Masters Registry.

"I took the visual trigger picture, scanned it into my PC and made a stamp of



the image. This became my surface pattern,” she said. She made a few tweaks and didn’t replicate the trigger image precisely. But it proved to be an appropriate starting point for her project.

Marian Ward, a certified PMC instructor from Arizona, won the first Visual Trigger Challenge for a cuff bracelet.

“The picture showed a tiny weed growing between cracks in a rock. My first inclination was to replicate the image using metal clay, but I challenged myself to go deeper and to think about what feelings the picture evoked in me. It got me thinking about life in the desert where I live,” she said.

“All the flora and fauna seem to have barbs, spikes and stingers. But if you look past the prickly exterior, the desert shows itself to be a place of great beauty, a celebration of the tenacity of life. I made my bracelet big and bold with hidden gems, just like the desert.”

Now that’s inspiration.

Patrick Kusek, a PMC artist and designer with a 25-year resume, knows when inspiration hits because he feels motivated to work. “I pick up a pencil, pick up some clay, I do something to take the momentum and move the idea forward.”

Over time, Kusek has learned not to force ideas. When necessary, he treats inspiration as a seed. He germinates it, allowing it to grow on its own. He endorses the idea of using photos for inspiration, such as the Visual Trigger Challenge, but encourages people to not to interpret a photo literally. “If you are looking at a picture of the ocean, that doesn’t mean you have to design something with waves or fish. There are many different elements of a photo to pull from. Inspiration could come from something as simple as a color combination, texture, or even a mood that the ocean scene depicts. Break it down, then process it and don’t be cliché.”

Like other professionals who make their living with their designs, Kusek can’t waste time waiting for inspiration to strike. He’s got to produce, and has trained himself to look for inspiration everywhere. He finds most exciting the journey to discovery.



Patrick Kusek, Fine silver, brass, gold leaf, mother of pearl.
Photo by Abby Johnston.



Kusek has developed what he calls brainstorming cards, available at his website, www.patriksstudio.com/creativity that help stimulate the creative juices. But he cautions that “sometimes you need to let things germinate. When it’s ready, it will emerge.”

Hattie Sanderson tells a similar story. She looks for inspiration in everyday life, consciously and unconsciously. It could come from a walk in the woods, a stroll through a bustling city or a visit to a museum.

Sanderson keeps a camera or sketch pad with her at all times. She makes images of things she encounters—a manhole cover or dew-covered cobweb—and jots down thoughts or ideas. She does not worry about the inspiration having deep meaning. “I just capture it because it caught my attention or sparked my interest in some way. I see it as a glimpse at my inner self and an ongoing historical chronicle of who I am, where I have been, and what I have experienced. As my life changes and evolves, so do the

things that inspire me.”

She pastes all her photos, sketches, and notes into a binder, and refers back to them when she is ready to create. She also collects beads, stones, and found objects. Together, the binder and her collection form a personal library made from her conscious and unconscious self.

“Finding inspiration from these sources is how I find my voice as an artist,” she says. My suggestion is this: “Become aware of the things you have surrounded yourself with and I am sure you will begin to see a pattern of shapes, colors, textures that you are drawn to, clues to who you are that will help you to express yourself artistically.”



Hattie Sanderson, *Honor*
Fine silver, ceramic bead, found objects.
Photo by the artist.



Editorial

Bob Keyes

It was time to reorder my life.

About a month ago, I moved out of my home of nine years to spend the last days of fall on a family island off the coast of Maine. Part of my motivation for pulling back and turning inward has to do with a desire to step away from the clutter of my plugged-in daily life to settle in with myself for a few weeks.

I still go to work every day; I still function in my mostly normal life. But my rhythms and patterns are dictated by the sunrise, the cycle of the tides, and the way the wind blows—and how hard.

I wake up most mornings by 5:00, brew a pot of coffee and get ready for work. I have hot water and electricity on the island. The heat source is a wood stove, which I use every night but only occasionally in the mornings. I cheat with a space heater.

I shower outdoors. The coldest morning so far was a tad below freezing. The hot water keeps me warm long enough to get clean, and then it's just a matter of quickly drying and dressing. I am low maintenance. By 7:30, I'm in my flat-bottom skiff rowing across a short channel to the mainland. And then I drive fifty miles to work.

In the evening I repeat the pattern. I come home to a house that is usually dark and cold, but blanketed by amazing night skies. A few days ago, while crossing late, I saw a shooting star. The wind and rain are sometimes so impressive, I've come to enjoy the spectacle and the challenge of facing them.

I saw a sunset last night that would make a painter weep.





I've seen bald eagles and fox, and there's at least one and maybe a pair of porcupines that I see most every day. They hang out under the shed or over by the woodpile. One morning, the porcupine waddled up alongside me and scampered under the house.

I have no TV and no internet. During the day at work, I am fully connected with my desktop, my iPad, and my smart phone. The news is on all around me. But I lose my phone signal during my drive down the peninsula, and on the island I am isolated and mostly out of contact. My essential items are a headlamp, a flashlight and my rain gear. A good pair of insulated rubber gloves helps keep my hands dry from the cold, wet mooring line.

This island intensive has helped me think about how I live my life, the choices I make and my place in the world. I am surprised by the things I don't miss: TV (although I still follow sports on the radio); the constant connectedness of the internet and all it entails, including Facebook and Twitter, and my endless news outlets. And occasionally, basic social interaction.





A friend asked me if I am lonely. I don't think I am. I see people during the day and I maintain my relationships. I just spend my time at night alone. This is a family place I have been coming to all my life. But never for a month at a time, and never going back and forth to work most days. And certainly never in November.

I didn't come here specifically to be creative. I had writing projects in mind, but I would have faced them regardless of my circumstances. It was as I began working on the stories for this issue of Fusion, I realized how my personal journey relates to the creative process.

I've taken a lot of photographs, and I'm paying more attention to things going on around me. I am more sensitive and a better observer—skills that serve me well in my job as a journalist. I am more aware. Perhaps coincidentally or perhaps not, there's a lot of writing in this issue of Fusion about self-awareness, a sense of place and purpose, and how we achieve our dreams and goals.

Ellen Wieske lives just up the coast from me in Deer Isle, Maine. She works as assistant director at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, which is revered in the craft community for its outstanding educational programs. Ellen has a lot to do with Haystack's success, and she will share her story as keynote speaker at the PMC Guild conference in June, 2012.

Ellen's personal story demonstrates her commitment to self-improvement. Born in Michigan, she worked on an automobile assembly line out of high school. She found that she enjoyed working with her hands, but not on the assembly line. She became



the first person in her family to attend college, and has enjoyed a long career as a metalsmith, educator, and arts administrator. At the conference, she will talk about our elemental need to create, to make things, and how we respond to our environment in a tactile way.

The other story I call to your attention is our spotlight on the Visual Trigger Challenge. For years now, we've included this feature in Fusion in hopes of triggering creative ideas. Guild members have come up with some fantastic pieces over the years, and we're presenting the best of the them here as a roundup. Our story includes a discussion about inspiration and creativity, and the fleeting nature of both, as well as its wonder.

Which brings me back to the island. I know my time here has changed me. It has forced new priorities into my life and helped me focus on that which is most important. These photos reflect part of my experience on the island. They are not a journal of my time, but a small album of my observations.

Bob Keyes
Nov. 12, 2011
Carrying Place Head, Phippsburg, Maine





Profile

ELLEN
WIESKE



In Ellen Wieske's jewelry class, students work with new material each day. The first day might be paper, the second day fabric. Then silver, tin, or wood. She wants her students to investigate each material and learn its personalities and characteristics. Wieske will discuss her approach to handling different materials, and how her sensitivity to her surroundings influences her artistic and personal choices. Her talk is titled "Material Practices."

Wieske grew up in Detroit where her first job was on the assembly line at Chrysler.

"I worked the early shift, 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. I put together engines for Omnis and Horizons. I started when I was 18, and I worked there for two years, which was long enough to figure out that this was not my life's journey. I decided I needed to find something else."

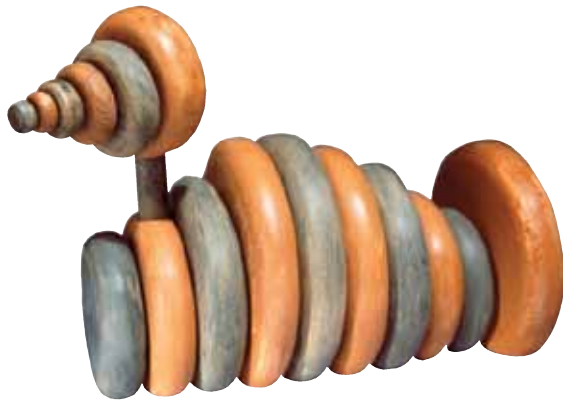
She landed a job as an apprentice for a jeweler. Her first year, she did nothing but polish rings. "The next year, my boss said, 'I will either give you a raise or move you over to the bench.' I moved to the bench, and started what became a traditional apprenticeship."

She began stockpiling skills, and learned all aspects of her craft over time. Eventually,

she enrolled at Wayne State University and became the first member of her family to go to college. She earned her degree over a period of eight years, then enrolled in the graduate program at the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art outside Detroit. She earned her MFA in metalsmithing in 1992, and came east. She settled in the Boston area and earned her living through teaching, running a gallery, and making jewelry to sell.



Go Slow
Wood, matches.



(above)
Puzzle Duck, wood

Battleship Duck, wood.

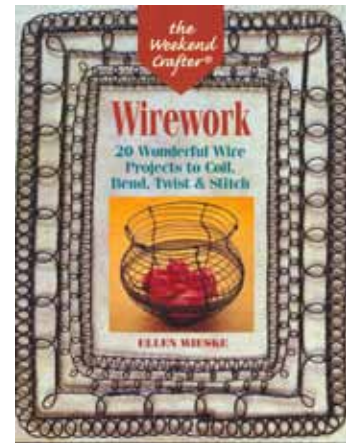


Wieske traces her interest in metalsmithing to the assembly line. As much as she disliked the nature of that job, she appreciates what it taught her about using her hands and feeling connected to a culture that encourages the act of making.

“One of the reasons I picked up the craft of metalsmithing was because it connects people to the first people who worked with their hands and tried to figure out how to use the materials around them,” she said.

Who we are and what we have become culturally and socially are based on our experiences with the material world. With so many manual labor jobs moving offshore and the production of material objects on the decline in the United States, we risk moving from a culture that is accustomed to working with its hands to one that is not. Literally, we risk losing touch, she says.

Wieske is one of those rare artists whose curiosity controls her technical skills rather than the other way around. Not content to stay within the traditional boundaries of metalsmithing, she roams freely in materials, processes, and scale. She is as likely to work in wood as metal, and in found objects as freely as with sterling sheet. One direction this has led is the ancient craft of tinker, or what the dictionary defines it “a person who makes or mends metal utensils.” Her whimsical spoons and trivets combine elegant repeating forms into practical household items. In 2001 Ellen published a book called *Wirework: 20 Wonderful Wire Projects to Coil, Bend, Twist & Stitch* through Lark Publishing.



For the last nine years, Ellen has been the Assistant Director at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine. In that position, she has met and worked with hundreds of craftspeople from around the world. It is hard to imagine a better situation in which to explore diverse materials and the unique ways artists respond to them.

“People want to make things; in fact I think they *need* to make things,” Wieske theorizes. “People want to use their hands, and not just on a keyboard or in an electronic world. We see it at Haystack all the time. When (Haystack director) Stu Kestenbaum



greet a new group of students, the first thing he asks is, ‘Who’s been here before?’ The trend is toward more and more people who have never taken a class. People want to make things.”

Wieske participated in one of the early master classes taught by Tim McCreight in the fall of 1996.

“For me, it felt like I was working with clay. I felt like I couldn’t use enough tools with it. It felt like something you could use your fingers with, more like a ceramics material.”

Still, she was glad for the exposure and has been a supporter of metal clay throughout its evolution. Haystack offered its first PMC class in 2009, and classes have been offered many times since, including a class by Patrik Kusek this past summer. The idea of adding a different material to her repertoire goes to the heart of her approach to learning—and to life.

Ellen Wieske will deliver the keynote address at the PMC Conference next June.

“I’m very excited to talk to the PMC Guild about different materials and how I look at things and how one can look at things as a maker. It doesn’t matter what material people use.”



Mohawk Plate, steel and tinware.



Salad Set, steel and tinware.



Felt and tinware beads.



Visual Trigger

In the Hollywood version, the artistic process involves long walks on a beach, generous amounts of alcohol, and cascading chords of stirring music. In practice, the effort is usually less glamorous. One of the questions non-artists most frequently ask practicing painters, writers, composers, and craftspeople is, "Where do you get your ideas?" Of course there is no single answer, and even if there were, it's really not the right question. Ideas are not out there waiting to be found, but are more typically the result of an evolutionary process that includes a lot of trial and error.

Starting from an unfamiliar place is one way to ignite the process. For the last thirteen issues, Fusion has tried to help by providing a visual resource. For each issue, a piece was selected that in our opinion represented a genuine engagement with the image. Here is a revisit of the winners.



*Weed in granite blocks,
Maine*



**Marion
Ward**



*Museum staircase,
Illinois*



**Amy
Culp**



*Manhole cover,
Tokyo, Japan*



**Cindy
Miller**



Visual Trigger

continued



Ice on roadside grass, Maine



Louise Shadonix



Satellite view of highway intersection (Google Earth)



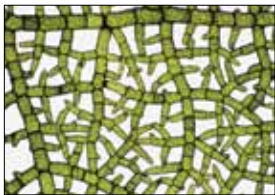
Mary Dierks



Reflections in a pond, Maine



Jeanne Wakeman



*Photomicrograph of *Microdictyon umbilicatum*, a type of seaweed.*



Olga Sanchez





Visual Trigger

continued



Train station, Granada, Spain



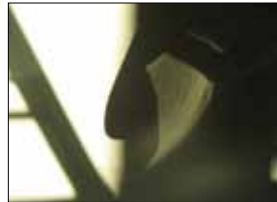
**Mary Ann
Dodds**



*Arial view of Gulf oil spill,
Louisiana*



**Siri
Di Lucca**



Shadows cast on a wall



**Delia
Marsellos
Traister**





Visual Trigger
continued



Potted plants



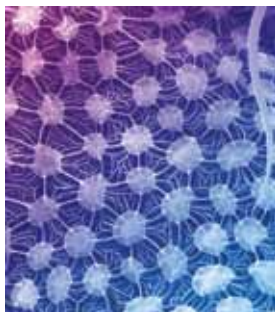
**Carol
Gregory**



Air ducts, Spain



**Heidi
Stinson**



*Weed in granite blocks,
Maine*



**Kimberley
Nogueira**

Congratulations to the winners, runners-up, and all the trigger-happy artists who have contributed over the years.

And now... one more chance...



Visual Trigger

Last Chance!

Have you taken the Visual Trigger Challenge? Maybe this is the time to take it on. Even if you don't end up making a piece, sketching some ideas triggered by the photo below might be a valuable experience.

And if you do make a piece, please send a photograph to Tech@PMCguild.com by January 11, 2012 to be considered in this grand finale competition. As always, the winner will receive \$100 of PMC. And to celebrate the Visual Trigger Series, Rio Grande has contributed a gift certificate for another \$100!





Holiday Retail

With the holidays at hand, we checked in with two experienced artists active in the retail sector. Jen Kahn makes her living selling locally near her Vermont home and through the online craft market, Etsy. She spends most Saturday mornings from May to October selling at an artist market and will be participating in four holiday shows this season. Kahn says she depends on holiday sales for a large part of her annual income. On the other hand, Celie Fago relies much less on holiday sales. She derives most of her income from teaching, and sells jewelry year round through Etsy.

We asked both about their expectations for the holidays. How do they feel about the season ahead? What kind of work are they making? How has the economy affected price points? What are they doing to make your work stand out?

Kahn's work has changed because of the cost of silver. She is working with other materials, and shying away from labor-intensive work. "I've created designs that rely less on silver. I work with more copper and brass. And I've come up with ways to do things faster," she says.

Kahn prepares for the holiday season based on instincts and experience. A leather cuff with a PMC embellishment that she introduced in the fall is selling well, so Kahn is making more in anticipation of holiday demand. Otherwise, she plans production on previous years. "I am trying to make a lot of work. I look at holiday sales from last year to see how many I should make of popular designs," she said.

Fago has lowered her expectations for holiday sales. It's not so much that she is pessimistic as much as she feels she is being realistic. "I have lowered my expectations since last year, and last year from the year before that, as it is clear to me that people are spending less each year," she said.

As a result, she has adjusted her business plan to rely less on sales and to keep prices down -- or lower them when possible. "I have not raised my prices in three years. I will offer some kind of pre-Christmas sale, because that usually helps sales along."

"My work is a little higher priced, and Christmas has never been my strongest time of year because people need to budget and spend for the many people on their Christmas list. My sales are better in the summer than at Christmas, most years," she said.

In a recent blog post, Kahn (jenkahnjewelry.blogspot.com) offered a few pointers to retail novices getting involved in holiday shows:

- Get a good folding cart to haul your wares.
- Create a simple and inviting display, with good lighting and comfort.
- Mark your space with a bold banner to announce your presence.
- Bring materials for packaging, but keep it simple.
- Be prepared for sales. Have plenty of change on hand, and get up to speed on credit card apps for your smart phone.



Leather cuffs by Jen Kahn.



MC – 3 Retreat

Katie Hanrahan
 Northeast Ohio
 Chapter

In August of this year, the Western PA, Northeast Ohio and Columbus Chapters all joined together in Chagrin Falls, Ohio for the first MC-3 Retreat. The Retreat featured four days of workshops with nationally recognized metal clay artists, as well as nonmetal clay classes with local jewelry artists.

The three chapters are geographically close, with the Northeast Ohio Chapter located centrally to the other two. In March of this year, the three Chapters separately booked Hadar Jacobson for back-to-back workshops, with members of each of the Chapters driving Hadar from one location to the other. As a result of this series of workshops, Donna Penoyer of the Western PA Chapter came up with the idea of a combined event. The three Chapters discussed the idea and began looking into the feasibility of it. As the Retreat began to take shape, we committed to it and worked together all spring and summer to make it happen.

The retreat included six classes, an evening lecture and a pot luck social. The venue was the Valley Art Center, a full-service community art center located in an eastern suburb of Cleveland. There were 30 attendees from the Chapters' combined member-





ships, and five non-member attendees from Maryland, New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Florida.

Catherine Davies Paetz taught a class on making seamless rings using PMC Pro. It was a great class, and the first time many of us had used the newest PMC product. We carved the rings (it carves beautifully!) and then carbon fired them. I really enjoyed working with PMC Pro and will definitely work with it more in the future!



Gordon Uyehara taught 3 classes. The first was a 2-day class on his beautiful Bail Link Bracelet, where the links are joined and fired in one piece. The second class was his Cosmic Honu (Sea Turtle) pendant, a project using dry construction. In his third class, Pearl Box Ring, we constructed a ring with a hollow form with and pearl inset.

There were two non-metal clay classes offered by local artists. The Flex Shaft Fundamentals class taught us the care and maintenance of this important bench tool, and the various uses of many of the attachments. Photographing Your Jewelry showed us how to take great photos using our own point-and-shoot cameras.



Gordon was gracious enough to give a free lecture on Friday evening of the Retreat, and a pot luck social took place on Saturday evening. Both events were open to attendees and all members of the three Chapters, whether or not they were enrolled in any classes.



All who attended agreed that the Retreat was a great success! The classes were first-rate, the lecture was inspiring, and the social events were wonderful. But the best part was meeting new friends from our 'sister' Chapters (and beyond!) and sharing our love and enthusiasm for metal clay. By the end of the four days, we were all talking about plans for the next MC-3 Retreat! So keep your eyes on our blog for information about MC-3 2012. It's going to be even better!

www.metalclayclassesincleveland.blogspot.com



Japanese Conference

In October the Japanese PMC Guild hosted its second conference. Among the speakers were Americans Barbara Becker Simon and Hattie Sanderson. Both ladies made presentations at the conference, where they were well received. This was Barbara's second visit to Japan and a first for Hattie. They were graciously hosted by Mr. Kazuhiro Shibata and Mr. Taii Mizutani. As you can see, they had a great time.





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