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Make Your Own Jewelry

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make your own jewelry

by Barbara Short
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If you’re one of the many who has an urge to create, but who can never quite seem to pull anything forth . . . the kind that feels particularly helpless at an art exhibit or when looking over a painter’s shoulder, then keep reading, for this article is especially for you. Don’t shy away from the words “modern jewelry,” because the secret lies in those very words.

You see, anyone can make jewelry, because the trend is toward completely original design and self-developed techniques. You say, “Oh, but I’m not particularly original.” Just stop and think a moment. Originality is all tied up with one’s own personality, and since everyone is an individual, all you do is express yourself through your own design. There aren’t any rules to follow when designing and making jewelry. If you put yourself into it, you’ll no doubt be successful.

Everything under the sun is being used as inspiration for jewelry these days. Some craftsmen are studying primitive pieces. Others are picking up pretty stones and driftwood on beaches and curious metal shapes in junk piles to use as beginnings for their jewelry. Many are concerned with polishing and setting stones. Some like to use leather thongs, hemp and naturally polished bone in combination with metals. Others are enameling, etching and oxidizing metal. What they do with all these articles to make them into fascinating pieces of jewelry depends completely upon their own fancy.

Sounds sort of complicated, doesn’t it? Well, the beginner must remember that she’s not another Cellini and must reserve the making of salt cellars for a later date. But she can do all of her work at home, over the stove and on the kitchen table.

Here’s how to go about it. First of all, find out where you can purchase jeweler’s tools, and sheets and wires of copper, pewter, brass, bronze or silver. A jewelry supply house carries all these items. Most books on making jewelry will mention supply houses one can write to. Then too, for the beginner, dime stores carry many tools, and hardware stores offer tools and copper and tin wires.

Now go to your library and read some of the books listed at the end of this article or any your librarian might suggest. Note particularly descriptions or techniques . . . how to saw, file, solder, polish, bend, coil and dap (hollow out) your metal. If you’re really

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interested, buy the simplest tools you'll need, and begin! Inexpensive tools and materials give you a chance to work and gain faith in your ability before you invest a large amount of money in your hobby.

These tools will be all you'll need for quite a while. Purchase tinsnips at your hardware store and a jeweler's saw at a jewelry supply house. A V-notched piece of wood clamped to your kitchen table will provide rigid support for sawing.

Whenever you saw a piece of metal, you'll find that the saw leaves a rough edge which should be removed with fine jeweler's files. For versatility, you'll discover that half-round files are best. They come in about seven or eight degrees of cuts, but you'll need to buy only numbers 1, 2 and 3 at first. But you might begin by using finely cut dime store files and fine manicure emery boards. You'll find it easier to file if you have a wooden ring clamp into which you can wedge your metal firmly.

To further smooth your metal, you'll use grades of emery papers and crocus cloth (cloth with an abrasive surface). Then you'll want a soft cloth or chamois-surfaced polishing stick impregnated with jeweler's rouge to give your work its final high finish.

You'll need equipment to do soldering, the process for fastening one piece of metal to another. There are two kinds of soldering, hard and soft. Soft soldering requires a lower temperature and different solder and flux than does hard soldering. Although hard solder usually does a better job, you can solder everything with soft solder. The advantage is that you may not have facilities in your kitchen to obtain heat hot enough to use for hard soldering.

You're lucky if you have a gas range, for you can attach a jeweler's blowpipe and hard solder as the professionals do. If you haven't a gas range, you can use a small alcohol torch, although most of them have flames that aren't as hot and not as easily controlled. For soft soldering, you can attach a Bunsen burner to a gas range. The trick of all torches, whether gas or alcohol, is to have enough air mixed with the gas to eliminate the red glaze in the flame.

You may solder on a charcoal block, fired clay, asbestos or wood (only for soft soldering). Any surface which reflects heat and helps maintain an even temperature without catching on fire will do. If you don't want to keep the fire department busy, you must have a metal or asbestos pad under the block to protect your table. This pad should be raised by wooden strips to let the air in between the pad and table.

As soon as you've soldered, you must drop the hot metal into a solution of water and sulfuric acid, called a pickling solution, to remove oxides caused by heat. And you'll need brass tweezers to take it out of the pickle.

Of course, you'll want to bend, hammer and drill. For this work, you'll need good jeweler's pliers, preferably without teeth on the inside that scratch metal. If your pliers do have teeth inside, chamois glued inside will prevent scratching. You may want a ball pein hammer to make hollowed out domes. As a beginning substitute, buy a dime store hammer and slip a rubber crutch tip over the face. A drill (perhaps from the basement workshop) which will take tiny drill bits is a basic essential.

From here on, you're on your own. Don't be afraid
to try new techniques, because maybe you'll accidentally come up with something completely new. That's the fun of it all. Qualities of all good design apply to jewelry: balance, emphasis, harmony, interest, order and proportion. And when you visualize your jewelry, be sure that you have an accent, a beautiful form, appropriate color and texture, and, above all, repetition. Experts advise that you adapt your design to suitable metal. They stress that although pieces may appear easily constructed, the key to their beauty is simplicity and good workmanship.

Bibliography

Her Classroom Is Statewide

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will not burn. This finish can be applied at home and the extension service promotes its use as often as possible.

The fluorescent finish worn by so many children in jackets, socks and ties has practical advantages, too. The finish makes the fabric show up when automobile lights shine on it, thus enabling the driver to see the child. This is especially valuable in the country where children must often go long distances to school.

Another finish of this same type has tiny glass spheres bonded on the back of the fabric. This also shows up when light shines on it and is used on collars and cuffs of shirts worn by people working in dangerous places.

Other fabrics which Miss Roberson shows are water repellent. Much more durable than the old water repellency, the treated fabric sheds such things as water, carbonated beverages and fruit juice. It will not shed grease stains, however.

Coat linings are being treated with milium which enables a thrifty person to buy one coat to wear during several seasons. The milium is bonded on the back of the coat lining and since it refracts the heat from the body, back to the body, it makes the coat warm and still light-weight.

Although many of the things that Miss Roberson shows have appeared in magazines or news releases before, most of them actually are just reaching the mid-west now. It is her job to acquaint the public with these new ideas and educate them as to their advantages and disadvantages.