



New Twists on Resist for Water Etching

By RobinBeth Faulkner

You can use any of the metal clay lump formulas with this technique. You can apply the resist with a fine small paintbrush or use a template. The new take is that you are not using wax as the title suggests but are using nail polish instead. This will still burn off in a kiln and to a smaller degree with a torch.

1. First, do your design, keep in mind the size of the final piece. If you are using a template you have three choices:

- Use a pre-cut template (usually brass)
- Use a commercial stenciling template
- Cut your own template.

You do this by finding or drawing a design and transferring that design to a sheet of clear plastic. I use the plastic from prepackaged items like food containers. This plastic is stiff, clear, and free. You can also purchase blank stencil templates at an art supply store. Using a small X-Acto knife, I cut out most of the design, leaving enough in between the elements to hold it together.



2. Roll out the PMC to five cards—thicker if your etching will involve multiple layers. Allow the metal clay to dry, then position the stencil where it appeals to you. Choose a bright color of nail polish and a small stencil brush. Using small dabs, fill in the blank areas of the stencil, lift it away carefully and let dry.



3. The etching process uses a sea sponge and a small container of water. Dampen the sponge and squeeze out the excess water. It should be damp, but not dripping wet.



4. Wipe the sponge gently across the PMC. After a few strokes, you will see the area around the design starting to lower. Rinse the sponge and squeeze out the excess water. You will notice that the metal clay slip starts to collect in the water. After you are done, with the etching process, allow the water to evaporate and you can collect the metal clay and rehydrate it.



5. Continue the process of wiping a damp sponge across the metal clay until you have achieved the desired depth. Set the piece aside to dry. Position the stencil on another section of the PMC panel that complements your design and apply a different color of nail polish. This will easily let you know which level you are on. When the resist is dry, repeat the process of wiping with a damp sponge.



6. Another coat of nail polish in a third color will give you a third layer if your piece of metal clay is thick enough. You don't want to go through the back of the piece with the sponge and water, unless this is what you intended from the start.

7. Dry completely and you are ready to fire. The nail polish will burn off in the kiln. If there remains a small residue after firing, this will come off with a brass brush.

An alternative to using a stencil is to paint the nail polish directly on a stamp, then use that to make the pattern on dry PMC. I don't use this method because removing the polish with acetone can ruin the rubber of the stamp. If you have a stamp design that you particularly like, stamp the design onto a sheet of plastic and cut it out from there, altering the design to make it your own.

