

Alchemy of fire, metal fascinates jeweler



Texture figures in the metalwork in Starr Payne's jewelry. STARR PAYNE

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Years ago, Starr Payne was told she would never look at food the same way again. As a jeweler and metalsmith, textures of even the most mundane cereals or chips, or a stray image from a television show can spark up her ingenuity. Japanese crackers especially peak her interest, almost as much as the many metal techniques she employs from the same country. Recently, she's tackled the mokume game technique, which was used in traditional swordmaking to join silver and copper together.



Starr Payne will have jewelry on display at the Seduction of Metals exhibit at LeMoyné. MARCIA JENSON

"The metals themselves have different properties so they don't always like to play nicely together," explains Payne. "You can put things in the kiln that look gorgeous going in, but when they come out you might end up with gaps between the metal or pieces looking twisted and not finished well. That's been my biggest challenge lately, but I'm going to work through it."

Payne says it was after she wandered into a bead store that she got hooked on jewelry making. From there, she took classes at Florida State University in metals and became involved with the Florida Society of Goldsmiths, not only making beads but molding the metals that surrounded them as well.

She is currently the treasurer of the organization and will be part of "The Seduction of Metals" showcase at the LeMoyné Center for the Visual Arts on display through Oct. 28.

Prior to metals and beads, Payne drew and painted her way through school, dabbling in mediums like printmaking and fiber weaving during her time at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Post-graduation she con-

If you go

What: The Seduction of Metals
When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays through Oct. 28
Where: LeMoyné Center for the Visual Arts, 417 E Call St.
Cost: Free, donations welcome
Contact: For more information, call 850-222-8800 or visit <http://www.lemoyne.org>

structed dioramas for the Milwaukee Public Museum. Payne believes this experience led her towards craft and making purposeful, interactive art.

"You can use it, touch it, and feel it," describes Payne. "I've always enjoyed weaving and jewelry because they were things that could be beautiful and also practical."

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Jewelry

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Payne prefers working with fine silver and began using the crafting medium, metal clay, in 2001. This material allows the jeweler to shape, stamp, file, cut, or sand the metal while it's suspended in a soft, dough-like substance. Once fired in the kiln, the clay-like binder burns away and all that's left is the fused together particles of metal alloys like bronze, copper, silver and steel.

Shapes and patterns are where her jewelry making thought processes naturally begin. Payne then sketches out her ideas, and from there the piece evolves as she works with the raw materials. She likes adding texture to the metal and will often incorporate beadwork or sometimes even add color with enameling during the finishing stages.

"My work tends to be more simple rather than overly ornamental," says Payne. "I make a lot of things with leaves and leaf textures, and working with shapes is more my style than anything else."

Over the years Payne has taught many metal clay classes around town and feels a pleasant symbiosis between teacher and student when new ideas

are developed in the classroom. She feels especially accomplished having many beginning students walk in with no prior experience and leave with finished jewelry.

Payne does the majority of her own work at her home's dining room table with her kiln residing in the garage. When she feels her creative juices running low, she will immerse herself in a new class. Many of the teachers that have guided her over the years include local artists like Mary Reynolds, who was one of the first artists to use metal clay. The president of the Florida Society of Goldsmiths, Marcia Jensen, is another close friend and collaborator.

In the meantime, she will continue her participation in the Florida Society of Goldsmiths, and work to expand the northwest Florida chapter. However, for the first time, entries in "The Seduction of Metals" show go beyond the panhandle region and feature jewelry and metal work from all over the state. Payne is including some of her mokume game pieces but looks forward to witnessing the many approaches to the craft.

What seduces her most about metals?

"I like the flame of the fire, taking the raw metal, and making something beautiful out of it," ruminates Payne. "It's addicting."