

*Appointed Australasian Distributor Makin's Clay*

*Australian Appointed Dealer Prometheus RMP8 Kilns,*

*Prometheus Bronze Clay and Prometheus Copper Clay*

*Australasian Distributor BRONZclay™, COPPRclay™, FASTfire BRONZclay™,*

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## Hand Finishing Metal Clay - Jen Tattam

People often think that getting a fine or mirror finish on Metal Clay is almost impossible without using a rotary tool or tumbler, but that is not true. It can be challenging but with effort - it is possible. Finishing is very important and sanding each piece of a project **before** attaching the pieces together, saves a lot of frustration. When your metal clay is completely dry - begin sanding with 400 grit through to 2000 grit **sandpaper** (use the **charcoal** coloured wet and dry sandpaper that is readily available at hardware stores – (**used dry**) or my favourite, the 3m soft sanding sponges which are excellent but more pricey. Remember that you can cut the sandpaper into whatever size or shape suits your needs. Always start sanding with the roughest grit (which does most of the hard work) and then move through the grades, to the finest. The idea is to remove as many blemishes and scratches from your piece as possible before you fire it. Do this before you fire because imperfections in solid precious metal are much harder to remove. It is always a good idea to check your piece often before firing it. Look through a magnifying glass and dust the surface regularly with a soft bristled brush. After the piece has been fired - brush it well with a stainless steel or brass brush. This can be done with water and detergent – or without. It is important to then repeat the sanding process by sanding with 400 grit through to 2000 grit **sandpaper** again if you want a high shine or mirror finish. After you have been through the **sandpaper** process again - you then start to use all 6 grits of 3m **polishing papers – rough through to fine**, using as much pressure on your piece as possible, with each grade. You can use a Dremel or rotary tool to polish small hard to reach areas on the inside of circles or in deep crevice areas that you cannot get sandpaper into. With metal clay, each successive grit of sandpaper fills and closes the pores in the silver clay. I recommend using a dust mask and sanding with the help of a magnifying lamp which allows you to see tiny scratches and imperfections as you move through each level. Wash your hands at least twice when using the polishing papers because silver dust and particles can get imbedded in your skin and can cause minute scratches on a high shine. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of sanding before and after firing if you want a flawless mirror finish. With practice you will pick up tips that work best for the piece that you are working on.