
Torch Firing Art Clay Copper

To Fire Art Clay Copper with a butane torch:

Place finished piece (no larger than an Australian 50 cent Coin and 35grams in weight) on a fibre firing brick and heat with a gas torch until cherry red – maintain this colour for at least 5-7 minutes depending on the size. Fire pieces 10grams or less and 1mm thickness for at least 5 minutes, pieces up to 25grams and 2.5mm thickness for at least 7 minutes and larger items for at least 10 minutes. Begin timing from when the piece turns cherry red and use a bushy flame rather than a pencil thin flame.

Remove the red hot piece with tongs or tweezers immediately after firing is complete and quench with cold water so that most of the oxidization layer peels off to reveal perfect copper beneath.

PLEASE NOTE: If a hot, fired piece is left to cool down naturally, the oxidized layer will thicken and with contraction, small bits may be propelled into the air. If you have fired a piece and will not be quenching it, cover it immediately after firing with a fibre blanket until cool.

Finishing Art Clay Copper

There are two steps to finishing Art Clay Copper:

Pickling: is a silversmith term for removing oxidization from metal – usually silver but also other metals. Do not be put off when you see the word “pickle”!! It is a very simple process. We recommend using commercial Sparex which works very successfully but if you have a resistance to using commercial pickle you can heat a mixture of regular vinegar, add enough salt until the mixture becomes saturated and use it as pickle.

Using Sparex – A small Pyrex dish/pot with lid or other tempered glass container works very well as a pickle container or “pickle pot”. Do not use with food after it has been used as a pickle container. Place the fired piece into a pickling solution made with Sparex and water. Heat the pickling solution to hasten the removal of firecale. Immerse in the heated pickling solution for 15 minutes or until the firescale has gone. For any remaining oxidized layers around detailed designs, we suggest using a polishing point attached to a Dremel or similar Rotary Tool.

Always dispose of pickling solution responsibly.

Finishing: After firing the piece is pure copper. It is possible to enhance its natural luster with a metal brush, burnisher, polishing points or a tumbler.

We recommend thoroughly cleaning your tumbler and tumbler media before and after polishing your copper. This will eliminate the possibility of contaminating any other metal you may use.