

Chapter 1

Design considerations for jewellery

How, when, why and by whom the body adornment will be worn are the first considerations when designing. Considerations of size, scale, types of materials and function will all be affected by the answers to those questions. If the work is commissioned, then some, if not all, of these decisions will be clear. However, if the project is self-generated, these answers may emerge as research is being done, and one's own personal creativity will have a bearing upon the areas explored. The chapter on findings later in the book will help you when considering function, while the types of materials and methods you use in bringing a piece together all contribute to the end result.

Contemporary-art body adornment has become very dynamic, experimental and thought-provoking; questioning its relationship to the wearer, it is more about theatre or sculpture than function. But if you wish to make something to be worn, whatever the occasion, then function cannot be ignored.

Clay is hard but brittle, so it needs to be shaped into a form which has strength (i.e. a tube or a sphere), and should be thick enough to withstand knocks or else surrounded by a metal finding to protect it. If the form is small and strong enough (e.g. a small bead),

then a lower earthenware firing can be used. The Egyptians made very low-fired, Egyptian-paste amulets which have survived for thousands of years. High firing and the use of glaze will give a piece strength, although, as with any ceramics, breakage may occur if it is dropped onto a hard surface.

Holes should not be too near the edge of a piece, and should be made with a suitable tool when the piece is leatherhard in case cracks appear during making or drying that will be a weak spot when the piece is worn.

Shrinkage must always be taken into consideration. Clay shrinks during drying and firing, sometimes by as much as 16% (although 10–12% is more normal), so it is best to buy or make findings only after the ceramic part of the piece has had its final firing, or to take this shrinkage into account when buying or making findings. It is always better to make more ceramic elements than you need for the design, to allow for breakage or disappointing results from the firing.

When first making jewellery, you may find it easier to copy historic or contemporary pieces, making variations on a theme. Whilst being influenced by the work of others, the pieces made will nevertheless always have something of

the maker in them, and will rarely be exact replicas. However, the more adventurous or experienced may wish to find a more individual style and to start designing one-off pieces. So here are some of the things to consider when designing.

Ideas do not come out of the blue; they are developed from visual, contextual and material-sampling research. By researching other makers (contextual research), developing the ability to look and see opportunities for design ideas wherever you are, collecting images and materials (visual research), and experimenting with techniques and materials, a 'bank' of possibilities will be amassed for future use. This is how your own creative identity or style emerges. It is important to develop your skills and knowledge of different materials alongside the research, or the designs you want to make will outstrip your ability to make them. Sometimes, experimenting with materials and skills will suggest other contextual and visual research that you might not have considered relevant. It is an ongoing, two-way process.

Drawing/visual communication for 3D design

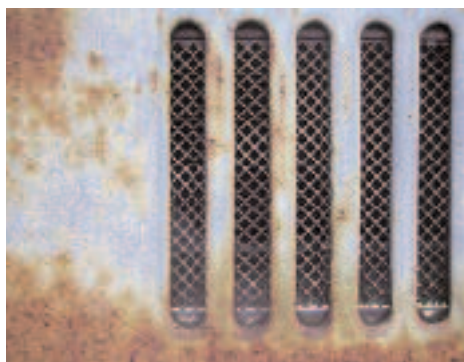
Photography, drawing, painting, photocopying, collage and materials samples are all ways of conveying design ideas. Here are some of the considerations, when using sketch/work books or when making a design sheet. Both sketchbooks and design sheets can be produced in a variety of materials and techniques which may include drawing, painting, photography, collage, materials sampling and experimentation. Sketchbooks should be used to gather visual research and to work

through ideas and design problems. They should be exciting and experimental although some ideas may not be as successful as others. Design sheets should have visual impact, should communicate the final ideas – how they work and how they will be worn on the body and 'sell the ideas' to a potential buyer.

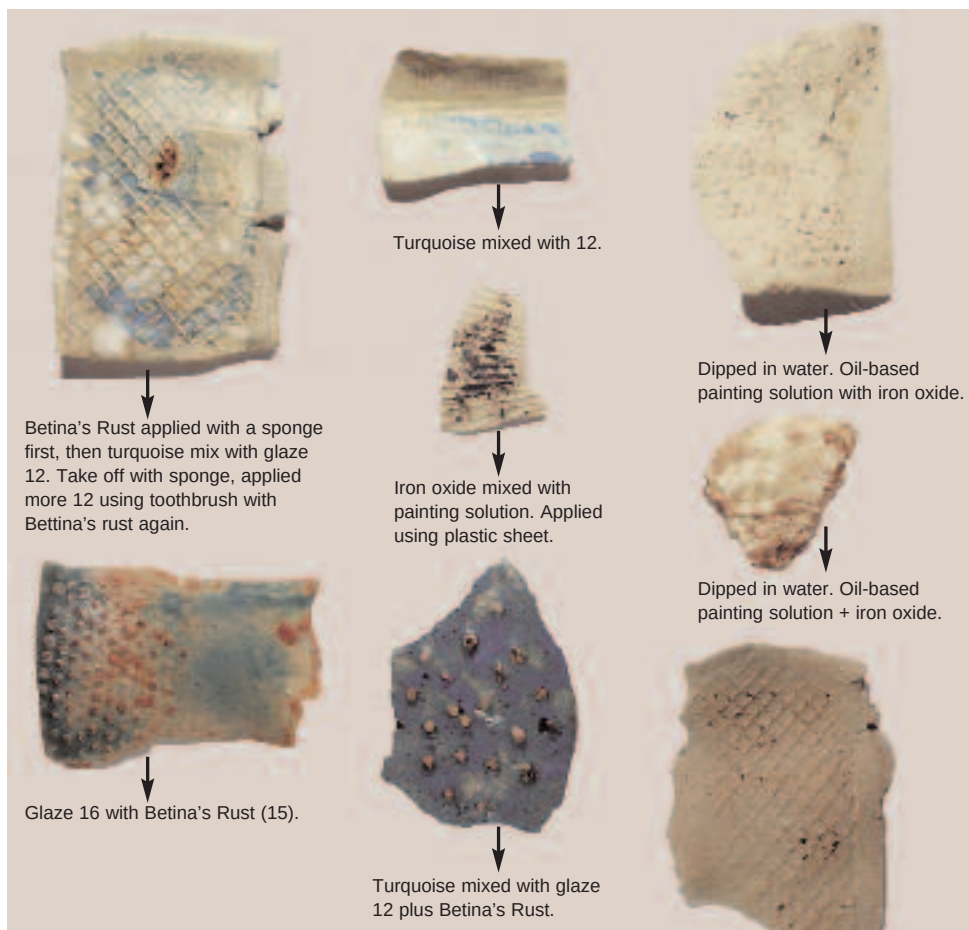
One approach to a design project: visual research and images on a theme

Photographic reference books of the kind you can find in art libraries and good bookshops can act as source books for design and may inspire your own search for visual references. The contents of these books may be organised into themes of colour, texture, form and/or structure, which may highlight the way contrasts and juxtapositions can either shock and disturb or be complementary and soothing.

At first glance topics such as fish, flowers and landscapes are fairly obvious, but if you examine close-ups and other details of these subjects, what begin to emerge are more abstract questions of colour, texture, form and structure.



Inspiration for designing – campervan bodywork. Photo: Lydia Feast.



Lydia Feast, test samples and experiments. Photo: Graham Bradbury.

Glaze recipe 12 (oxidised)

'George's' 1260°C (2300°F) Matt White

Feldspar Potash	1000g
China Clay	500g
Dolomite	450g
Whiting	70g

Glaze recipe 15 (oxidised) *

'Betina's Rust' Shiny Rust Glaze with Black Speckles where thick 1260°C (2300°F)

Potash Feldspar	580g
Quartz or Flint	180g
Bone Ash	80g
China Clay	80g
Talc	80g
Red Iron Oxide	100g

Glaze recipe 16 (oxidised) *

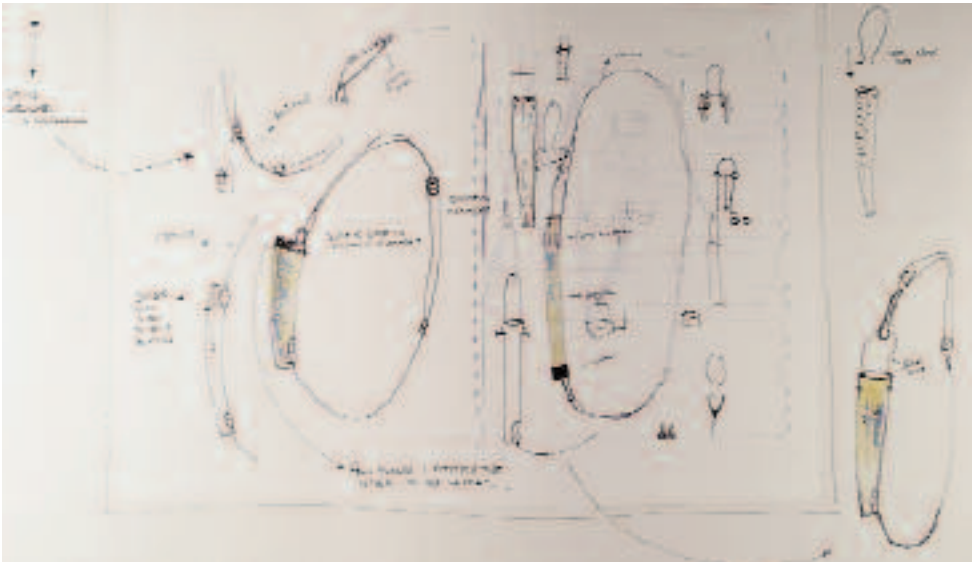
Turquoise 1260°C (2300°F)

Feldspar Potash	49g
Barium carbonate	27g
Whiting	14g
Ball clay	9g
Bentonite	1g
Copper carbonate	2.5g

** Originally Stephen Murfitt glazes, from The Glaze Book published by Thames & Hudson, 2002.*



Lydia Feast, jewellery maquettes. Top three: stoneware-fired fragments with oxide and Lydia's glazes No. 12, 15 and 16, and found cotton-covered buttons with rusty washer and rusty iron wire. Bottom four maquettes: porcelain buttons, blue enameled copper buttons with rusty iron wire and sheet fragments. Photo: Graham Bradbury.



Lydia Feast, design sheet. Photo: Graham Bradbury.



Lydia Feast, neckpiece maquettes, 2008. Rusty iron wire and fragments with oxidised copper element formed and soldered, rusty washers, buff stoneware-fired tube and fragment with turquoise stoneware glaze and iron oxide, cotton crocheted tape and found cotton-covered buttons.
Photo: Graham Bradbury.

Other, less obvious subjects can be found by looking at details of buildings, distressed surfaces, lines, crosses or circles found in the environment. Almost anything you find of interest can be developed into a theme. By starting to explore such themes, you may start to develop surprising ideas.

Lydia Feast started designing for her body adornment pieces using images of details from the bodywork of a camper van. The long thin shapes in the photo (see p.14) became important not only as a flat detail but also as a tube shape, a strong form through which the other materials or findings can be threaded. The photo on p.17 shows that Lydia developed the idea further by making maquettes, using the found materials themselves as part of the design. This way of working suggested design ideas which could not have developed in any other way. The twists in the reclaimed wire (shown on p.17) could not have been thought of unless the found materials themselves had been used in the designing process.

Testing with clay types, textures and glazes is also part of the designing process, and in the photo on p.15 a number of tests by Lydia Feast can be seen to achieve qualities she has seen in the bodywork images and the found pieces of rusty metal.

Drawings of different options and ideas help the development of the project: it is possible to work out many visual and practical problems through drawing alone, without having to make all the various permutations.

Experiments with materials samples, photocopying and art materials enable the realisation of new ideas developed from photographic visual research. This

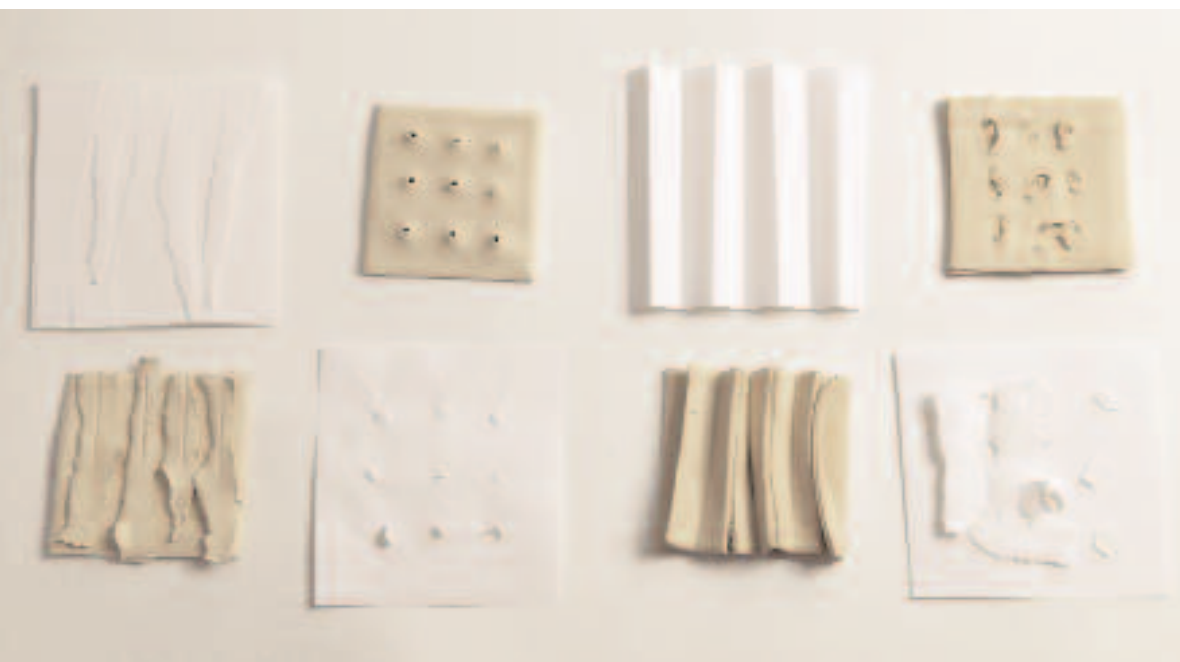
materials-handling and other 2D work may lead to more photography as the ideas develop. Also, the project is further informed by visits to good libraries, museums and galleries, to carry out more research into those contemporary and historic makers whose work echoes the qualities being explored.

Materials-handling experiments may suggest new ways of manipulating the clay, which can be made to mimic other media. Practical and design ideas can be worked out on paper, some being discarded and some further developed, so that only the better ones are actually made.

Another approach to design: A techniques-led project

The manipulation of selected materials by cutting, joining and rejoining can free up the designing and thought processes and promote new ideas. The materials-handling experiments will begin to become abstract, being partly about the qualities of the materials used and partly about jewellery. Collections of materials not usually considered for jewellery, both found and bought, can be a good starting point for jewellery design. Materials like coloured or white paper, card, plastic, fabric, newspaper, yarns, paints, crayons, photocopies, found materials like cocktail sticks, drinking straws, electrical wire, buttons, packaging materials, deconstructed urban artefacts found in skips, etc. can inspire a design. Collage, paint and drawing techniques can be used to explore possibilities as well as the manipulation of materials.

Making maquettes or models out of these materials may free up your



ABOVE Joy Bosworth, paper and clay samples showing manipulation of materials.

Photo: Dan Bosworth.

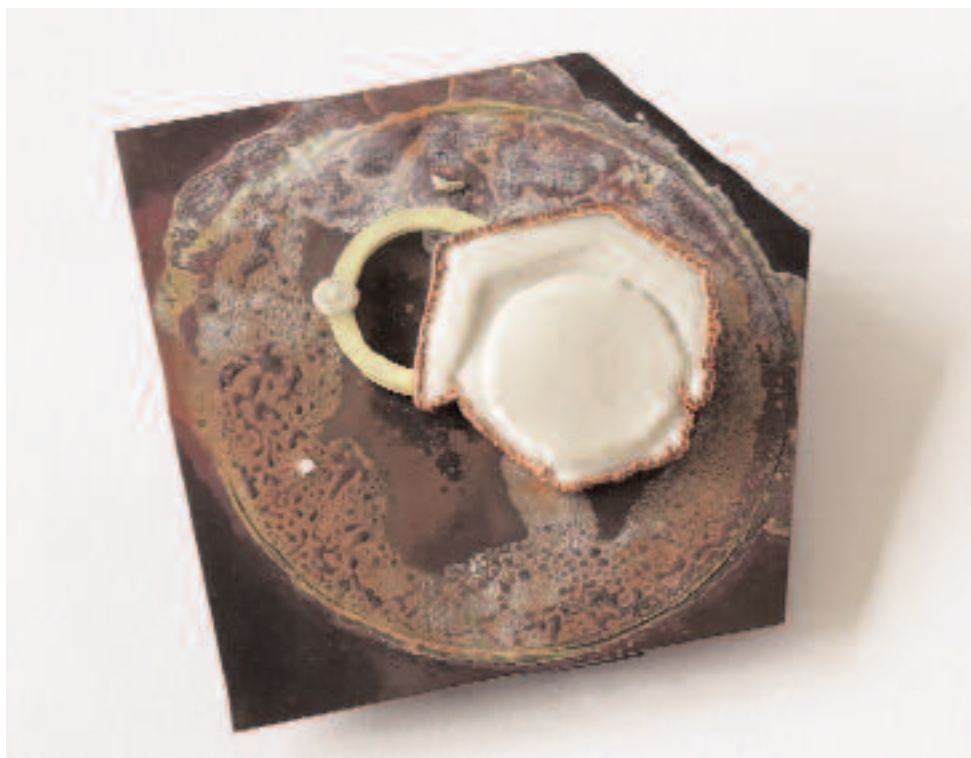
thinking and suggest solutions which could then be brought into clay. Surfaces and forms can be re-created or reinvented in clay, assuming a kind of fossil-like permanence when fired. Found or made textures can be pressed into the clay and moulds could be made from certain objects. Clay can be worked in the same way as other materials, i.e. torn, cut and rolled, but will bring its own character to the pieces made.

Selecting from the following list of materials-handling descriptions may inspire you to make: you can rip, cut, bind, tear, fold, roll, link, tie, bolt, wrap, knot, plait, twist, weave, bundle, stitch, bend, pin, layer, pile, gather or cluster.

When these experiments are used to instigate design work, you will find you



Joy Bosworth, impressions in clay made by rope and fern. Photo: Dan Bosworth.



Emma Whitney, brooch, 2009. Porcelain fragment with layers of heat-coloured and patinated metal. 70 x 60 mm (2¾ x 2⅝ in.). Photo: Dan Bosworth.

are able to make body-adornment pieces which have a fresh look. Careful materials-handling skills, rather than the inherent value of the materials used, are what give these pieces their precious quality.

Emma Whitney, inspired by the natural decay and surface qualities on ancient buildings or unwanted objects, reproduces these surfaces in her beautiful objects. She has made the brooch above by bringing together layers of heat-coloured and patinated metal with a porcelain fragment. The wires which hold the piece together are attached to the porcelain fragment

with an electroplating technique, which leaves an encrustation of copper on the back and around the edge of the porcelain. She used this technique, which is more in keeping with the piece, as opposed to the more conventional ways of fabricating a bezel or a claw setting.

Ellen Ingram's stunning neckpiece (opposite) was inspired by the word 'cluster', and brings together many elements made from silver and porcelain, cleverly exploiting and contrasting the different qualities of the metal and porcelain.



Ellen Ingram, Cluster neckpiece, 2009. Porcelain with silver-plated copper and silver wire.
Torque: 400 mm (15¾ in.), cluster: 140 x 100 mm (5½ x 4 in.). Photo: Dan Bosworth.