

Maria Santos-Alcántara 'Pewter Art'

Maria Santos is a member of the Association of British Pewter Craftsmen. She joined because, following the launch of her website, she considered that her work in pewter would have a much larger exposure, and that it would be very useful to have the support of an organization of the standing of ABPC to guide her on her future path.

As is apparent from the interview set out below, Maria loves to work with pewter, feeling that not only does it have an enduring quality, but also that its flexibility enables her to recreate the beauty of nature in every small detail.

She is happy to take on commissions, some examples of which have been for: Christopher Peacock, Master of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers; and Reginald Denby, Master of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers. Also for Aby Eniola, Actor; and Nick Munro, Designer as well as for St Michael and All Angels Church, Dalton, Lancashire.

Details/descriptions of her work have been published in Fleur Grenier's book: *Pewter: Designs and Techniques*.

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Maria Santos and *Repoussé*

Using a combination of enamels, veneers, semi-precious stones or glass, Maria creates mirrors, boxes, photo frames and decorative panels.

Some of her commissioned work is for large mirrors with decorative pewter surrounds. No two pieces are exactly alike as no casting or pressing is involved. Each piece has been worked individually from her own designs.

Pewter and silver foil are a relatively new innovation and foil's malleability enables quite intricate and *repoussé* chase techniques to be used.

Much of the inspiration for Maria's designs comes from the natural world and the flexibility of pewter enables her to recreate the beauty of nature in every small detail.



Pewter has an enduring quality and since it does not oxidise, it requires no other care than an occasional dust.

What is your first recollection of pewter?

From when I studied in Spain at the Instituto Gabriela Mistral, Madrid. The art teacher, Isabel Martinez, introduced us to the world of art and artisans. We experienced many forms of art, including painting, mosaics and working with metals, and I just fell in love with pewter.

Where did you learn about how to use pewter?

In 1996, I returned to Madrid and enrolled in a course taught by Carmen Mora, a professional artisan and teacher; and on my return to London, I attended a course taught in London by Bonnie Mackintosh.



Top from left: Cubist Abalone Shell; and Through the Fence. bottom: Oak Tree

When did you start making pewter items, what and why?

From 1996, I started to make photo frames and mirrors, later on experimenting with designs on plaques and boxes; eventually my hobby became a full-time job. I did work at various times with brass, copper and silver, but the malleability of pewter enables quite intricate *repoussé* techniques to be used.

What inspires your designs? Where did the idea of *repoussé* work come from?



Harrogate, 2011

Much of the inspiration for my designs comes from the natural world, and the flexibility of the pewter enables me to recreate the beauty of nature in every small detail. *Repoussé* requires a great deal of skill, control, sensitivity and understanding of the pewter. It is possible to make very simple designs and shapes or more technical and challenging designs including inlays inserts and cut outs, but a well-executed design can take a great deal of time, with each mark made by hand, working from the back and the front of the pewter.

How does the price of tin affect you?

Pewter has risen quite considerably over recent years. I implemented a price increase to my customers from the 1st April to reflect the higher cost of producing my work, not just the cost of pewter, which is my major outgoing, but also the cost of boxes, frames and other materials such as enamels and semi-precious stones; also the cost of carriage of heavy items, such as rolls of

pewter, is constantly changing. However, I did manage to hold my prices for approximately the three previous years.

What is your market?

Galleries and the craft sector, with an increasing number of commissions. My market has always been where my ability to produce an exclusive and bespoke design (and recognize a customer's wants) is appreciated.

What are your current work and exhibition plans?

At the current time I am concentrating on working my way through a lot of new orders received mostly through BCTF Harrogate, and also a more than healthy amount of commissions received either through galleries as usual or via enquiries to my new website, while also supplying my regular customers, Its a juggling act that keeps me on my toes, If only I had another pair of hands.

In the near future I am taking part in an exhibition at Thirsk in the Yorkshire Dale, Art Market at the Courthouse, and the Brewery Art Centre in Kendal.

What are you looking to ABPC to do for you?

Now that I am launching my website and my work in pewter will have a much larger exposure, it would be very useful to have the support of an organization of the standing of ABPC to guide me on my future path.

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Top: Fallen Trees; and Waves and Abalone Shell.
Bottom: In the Frame; and Pines.