





SILVER JEWELRY DESIGNER TERESA JARDINES

Spirit of Adventure

STRIVING FOR A CREATIVE EXISTENCE | BY BINAIFER DAVAR



Teresa Jardines

Photograph courtesy Kathy Kupka Photography

Teresa Jardines, silver jewelry designer and owner of Zia Design in Purcellville, uses silver metal clay and conventional silversmithing techniques to create her unexpected designs. She has incorporated nature, movement, attention to minute detail and asymmetry into her designs.

Although Teresa has lived in Argentina and traveled throughout Latin America and Europe, she was born in New Mexico, and her jewelry design reflects these roots. Unlike artists who use found objects to make their art, she uses the objects, such as the texture on a piece of wood, a button or a tiny gear, as inspiration for parts of her designs.

Teresa's intricate and highly-textural pieces are created from silver metal clay that has been sculpted, carved, rolled and textured before being fired in a kiln. Silver metal clay is a revolutionary medium in which atomized precious metal particles are mixed with an organic binder and water. In this raw form, its properties are similar to clay, allowing her to form each piece individually. Once fired at approximately 1,500 degrees in a kiln, the binder burns off and the metal sinters, coalescing into a solid without melting, leaving 99.9 percent fine silver. Traditional silver polishing and oxidation methods are used once the piece is fired. This medium is very versatile,



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allowing for highly sculptural designs.

Teresa embellishes many of her works with semi-precious gemstones such as turquoise, moonstone and labradorite. A number of her lovely gemstone necklaces use freshwater pearls of different shapes and sizes and have multiple strands of iridescent stones creating reflections and movement.

As a child, Teresa was captivated with her father’s science lab. He is a retired geophysicist who studied atmospheric ice formations at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. In his laboratory, Teresa was intrigued by the mineral samples and the minute tools and instruments her father used to measure, preserve and study ice samples. Teresa’s mother, a retired professor of foreign languages who also taught at the college, is an avid gardener and art enthusiast. She instilled in Teresa at an early age a love of nature and art, teaching her to grow her own garden and taking her to museums.

Teresa is driven by the idea of a creative existence, resulting in her fascination with steampunk, a genre of science fiction that has a historical setting and features steam-powered machinery rather than advanced technology. Steampunk often combines the natural world with the entrepreneurship of invention, giving way to imaginary creations with repurposed objects combined by the inventor to make mechanical



Page 28: "Life" necklace, sterling silver and deerskin cord

Page 29: "Ghost Town" bracelet, fine and sterling silver, found object

Above, left: "Secret Garden" earrings, fine silver and semi-precious stones; and "Chandelier" earrings, fine and sterling silver with labradorite

Opposite, top: "Gear Bird" pendant, fine silver; and "Gear Heart," fine silver

"Secret Garden" earrings, photograph by Teresa Jardines
All other photographs by Jack Nevitt

contraptions. For example, her silver birds may hold arrows in their beaks while having minute gears or flowers for wings. These unpredictable and playful collages are meant to bring a sense of enjoyment and wonder. It is, in essence, a physical expression of the spirit of adventure.

By combining elements from the natural world with steampunk components—exposed mechanics, kinetic elements—Teresa hopes to capture the sense of adventure that exemplifies the way she sees the world. She often juxtaposes the emotive, such as heart shapes, with industrial elements such as minute bolts and gears. As an example, her "Ghost Town" piece has the pattern of textured wood on the back and minuscule turning gears encased in a 3-dimensional silver heart. Many of her works represent the abiding reality of the human experience: the inseparable spirit and physical world, as well as the organic and inorganic worlds. Teresa's jewelry designs show us that "we are each creators and contributors to this world in a myriad of ways, enriching our experience by envisioning and making material expressions of a desire for a better world," she says.

Teresa's logo and signature piece, "Life" is particularly symbolic. It is a reinterpretation of the Native American Zia sun symbol. This necklace symbolizes the four elements of the natural world, the four seasons

and the four directions, while the spirals symbolize growth. To Native Americans, the Zia denotes the sacred meaning of life: a strong body, a clear mind, a pure spirit and a devotion to the well being of others.

Teresa's artistic journey began with experiences in virtually every medium. While her degree is in painting and drawing, she was drawn to sculpture and pottery. Ten years ago, she took a silver metal clay class and had an epiphanal moment. She realized silver metal clay and jewelry-making combined all her art training and experience. As a result, she started studying jewelry-making, a completely new medium for her.

When her job as a government contractor ended in 2009, she decided to launch her business, Zia Design. As she had no previous business experience, she had to quickly learn about running a business, creating a social media presence and participating in art shows to test market her jewelry designs.

Says Teresa, "The beauty of jewelry is that it can mean different things to different people, and the possibilities for creative design are therefore endless. I never have a hesitation about a design or project; those swirl in my head constantly and there's not enough silver in the world to execute them all." é

Teresa Jardines | www.ziadesignonline.com