

Glass Diversions

How to work with Copper Leaf/Foil

Copper doesn't work like Silver. You are not going to be able to put it on, encase it with some clear and keep the shiny copper color like you can with silver. When the copper comes into contact with the hot glass, it immediately turns black, like singed newspaper.

Process: I roll my bead in the copper and burnish it with my marver. Then put it back in the flame (may spark) long enough to turn it into gray/black ash. Any loose bits that aren't sticking will vaporize as soon as you put the bead back into the flame. Try to keep the copper to one layer with out overlapping when rolling it onto your bead otherwise you will get gray places that will not come off wherever you overlapped it. It will bubble and pit, keep heating it. Then encase it in any transparent color or clear.

Changing your flame from oxidizing to reducing turns the color from blues to reds. Burning it off in the flame causes the great color reactions. Sometimes you can get all the black to melt in and become blue or green, sometimes you have some black left over. Also keep in mind that you will spend a LONG time melting in all the copper leaf. If you still have too much black, it means that you have not heated it long enough. Sometimes it takes me 5 to 20 minutes to melt in the copper to get it to look the way I want. If you are going for the blues & greens, you will have much better luck if you use the leaf not the foil.

You can also try using the copper in conjunction with Thompson's white enamel. Roll the bead in enamel, then put on the copper and go back into the flame. It won't look like copper, but the color change will be quite dramatic. Play around with it to see the effects of different types of flame.

Things to note about using enamels under the copper:

- Enamel acts as a flux which reduces the temperature at which the copper releases the oxides and turns that great turquoise color.
- If you are using enamels under your copper, you don't have to heat it as long to get a nice reaction.

The resulting turquoise area of color is transparent and the color of the enamel underneath will change the tint of the overlaying turquoise color.

Just a few things to keep in mind:

- The hotter and longer you heat it, the better the outcome.
- The more copper you use, the longer you have to heat it.
- If you see any dark spots on the bead while it's in the flame, concentrate the heat on those till they disappear. If you don't take care of them in the flame, the bead will have spots of gray or black ash so really heat those! The more copper you add, the deeper your end color results will be.
- Be sure that your ventilation is very good and consider wearing a respirator. Copper is considered more hazardous than gold, palladium, silver.

Have some fun with it and try putting some silver leaf on top of or underneath your copper leaf. This will give you some beautiful mossy, organic greens in addition to the light turquoise of the copper.