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# art

**CELTIC ART**  
**Working**  
**With Line**



**On the Cover:**



**Why is this Celtic pattern called knotwork? Find out on pages 4-5.**

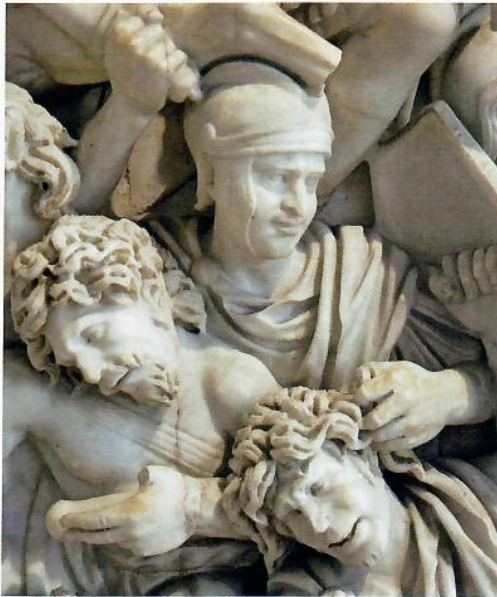
Cover: Carpet (Detail) page preceding St. Mark's Gospel with circles of interlacing design linked with angular interlacing, from *The Book of Durrow*, c. 650-700. Vellum, Irish School, 7th century. © The Board of Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland / The Bridgeman Art Library.

► **What might this Roman sculpture tell you about the way in which the Romans viewed the Celts?**

Battle between Roman and Barbarians. Detail of the Ludovisi sarcophagus, shortly after 251 CE. Marble high relief, Imperial Roman. Location: Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Altemps), Rome, Italy. Photo: Vanni / Art Resource, NY.

# Imagining the Celts

The mysterious swirling lines created by ancient Celtic artists inspire the imagination



**A**ncient Greeks and Romans used the term *barbarian* to describe people they considered "uncivilized," those who lived outside the borders of their marble cities. In the 4th century BC, Greek historians wrote about barbarians they called *Keltoi*, now known as Celts (Kelts). They described the Celts as a warlike people from northwestern Europe who decorated their bodies with swirling blue designs and lived in thatched huts like the one pictured on the opposite page (top, right). They also

► **How many different linear patterns can you spot on these Celtic hands and faceplate?**

Sheet-bronze mask and hands with dotted-line ornaments from Kroell / Schmid-Kogel, Kleinkeim, Austria, 7th c. BCE. Width 9 in. Hallstatt. Location: Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



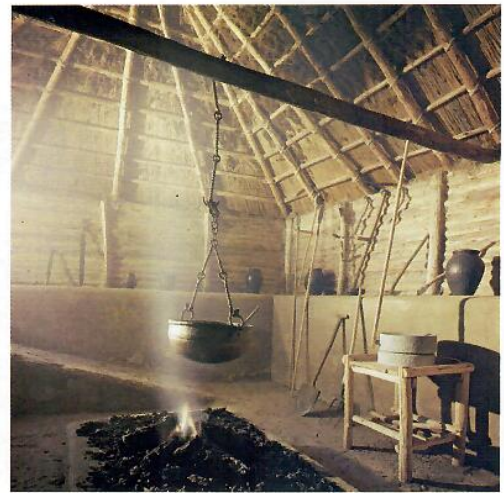


▲ **What natural images can you find in the swirling lines of this Celtic shield?**

Bronze boss from a shield, decorated in a combination of repoussé and incision style with two large birds whose wings develop into tendril motifs, found in the Thames at Wendsworth, probably thrown there as an offering to the gods, 1st or 2nd century BCE. Celtic. Location: British Museum, London, Great Britain. Photo: Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY.

claimed that the Celts let women fight in their armies—something Greeks and Romans never would have considered.

The Celts had a very different way of life from that of their Greek and Roman neighbors. They also had a different style of art. In the sculpture on the opposite page (top), a Roman soldier fights barbarians. The Roman artist who sculpted the piece used **form** to create a **realistic** image, showing what someone at the battle might have seen. The face and hand plates on the left are more mysterious. Found in a Celtic chieftain's grave, these works don't reveal what the chieftain looked like. Instead, the Celtic artist who created the face and hands **flattened** them into **stylized** shapes, and covered them with **geometric linear patterns**.



▲ **While many Greeks and Romans lived in stone cities, Celts lived in thatched huts grouped together to form small villages.**

Reconstruction of La Tène house; Kitchen corner: fireplace, kettle, utensils, farm-tools. Celtic. Location: Museum fuer Vorgeschichte, Asparn an der Zaya, Austria. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

If Romans used form to define reality, Celtic artists used **lines** to abstract the natural world into intricate and beautiful designs. On the Celtic shield to the left, **organic** lines swirl

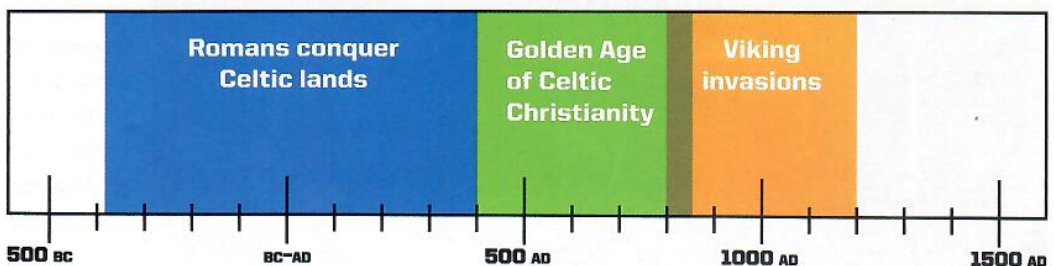
into a birdlike shape, then dissolve again into an **abstract pattern**. Such transformations suggest a more fluid, less certain world than the one seen by Greek and Roman artists.

In 51 BC, after centuries of war, the Roman general Julius Caesar conquered the Celts in Europe. After that, Celtic culture survived mainly in the British Isles, although there it also felt the influence of the Roman Empire.

The Celts had no written language, so much of what we know about them comes from the writing of the Greeks and Romans. How much should we trust such descriptions? Were Celts really warlike, or were they only fighting fiercely to defend their homes? How did they live? What did they believe? Their powerful art inspires us to imagine their lives.

## Celtic Timeline

How did Christianity spread from the Roman Empire to Celtic Ireland? Find out on pages 4-5. How did Vikings influence Celtic art? Find out on pages 6-7.



# Sacred Images

In Celtic religious art, linear variety can suggest infinity

▼ How is the image below similar to the one on the opposite page? How is it different?

Detail of the Gundestrup cauldron. This shows the Celtic god Cernunnos with deer antlers flanked by a wolf and a stag. From Gundestrup, West Himmerland, Silver. Location: National Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photo: Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY.

For the Roman soldiers who invaded England in 43 AD, the British Isles were the edge of the known world—a land of rain and mist where Celts lived in isolated huts or in tiny villages surrounded by dark forests.

The early Celts believed

that trees and animals were sacred. They worshipped gods and goddesses who represented aspects of nature. The detail below, taken from a silver pot made in the 1st century BC, shows a Celtic forest god surrounded by fantastic beasts. The **variety of lines** used by the artist creates the impression that this is a small section of an infinite forest filled with an endless assortment of creatures.

Tight **dots** make up the vines weaving behind the god's horns. A looser dot pattern covers the snake. **Diagonal hatch marks** form the stripes in the god's clothing, and **smoother** diagonals wind around his antlers.

By 60 AD, the Romans had conquered most of England and parts of Scotland, though Ireland remained in Celtic hands. Like the Celts, the Romans worshiped many gods. But in the 4th century AD, the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. This helped spread the religion throughout the Empire and beyond, to Celtic Ireland.

Christianity allowed the Celts to see beyond the borders of the dark woods. It gave them a written language and access to books filled with the ideas of history's greatest thinkers. As Celtic missionaries traveled to through Britain and beyond to preach the Christian faith, they came across new forms of art. In Irish monasteries, Celtic monks used these complex **linear**





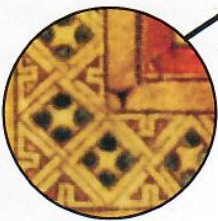
▲ This interlace design and the one on the cover are called **knotwork** because the lines that make up the pattern seem to weave together like knots.



▲ To the Celts, spiral patterns such as these might have symbolized a spiritual connection between a person's inner being and the outer world.



▲ This interlace pattern and the one that decorates the piece of jewelry on pages 8-9 are called **zoomorphs** (ZOO-oh-morphs) because these designs are based on animal forms.



▲ This **geometric pattern** is made up of **intersecting diagonals**.



designs to *illuminate* (add pictures to the text of) religious manuscripts.

The manuscript page above shows Christ surrounded by angels. The figures are drawn with simple **curving lines**. But they are framed by borders overflowing with **geometric patterns**, **intersecting diagonals**, **mirror-image spirals**, and *interlace*—a pattern made

up of a continuous, unending ribbon that weaves over and under itself. In the Celtic silver pot on the opposite page, the variety of animals and lines suggests the infinity of nature. In the work above, a seemingly endless variety of linear designs suggests the infinity of God.

Portrait of Christ from *The Book of Kells*, ca. 800 CE. Hiberno-Saxon. Ms. A16, fol. 32v. Location: Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Photo: Art Resource, NY.



▲ What natural feature might have inspired the designs on this Celtic helmet?

Celtic helmet found at Agris, Charante, 4th century BC. Iron & bronze covered with gold & inlaid with coral. Musée Archeologique et Historique, Angoulême, France / The Bridgeman Art Library.

# Battle Lines

From Roman invaders to Viking raiders, many different cultures have made their mark on Celtic art



▲ Which object on page 7 does this prow of a Viking ship, most resemble?

Animal head post from the Oseberg burial ship. Location: Viking Ship Museum, Bygdøy, Norway. Photo: Art Resource, NY.

**C**an you imagine seeing the huge animal head on the opposite page coming out of the mist followed by fierce warriors shouting in a foreign language? That's what the monks living in the Irish monastery of Innish Murray saw in 807 AD when Viking

longboats decorated with carved animal heads like this one landed on their shore. From the late 8th century through the early 11th century, Vikings from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland made sudden, brutal raids on Celtic Ireland. But although the Vikings came to steal treasure, the designs they brought with them enriched Celtic art.

Celtic artists had always borrowed *motifs*—images or designs used over and over again—from other cultures. The helmet from the 4th century BC on the opposite page (top) is decorated with **plant motifs** taken from Greek and Roman art. It is divided into rows or **bands**, and each band is filled with **dense lines** that cover every inch of space. The bottom band contains petal-like **radiating curves** that form an **abstracted flower**



**pattern.** Below it, the cheek guard is made up of **organic lines** that loop like vines.

To make the colorful jewelry seen below, 2nd century Celtic artists used techniques introduced by Anglo-Saxons, barbarians who eventually conquered England. The plaque, below (right), has an abstracted **floral motif**, while the motif of the pin to its left is animal. Complex **animal motifs** cover the entire surface of the priceless example of Celtic jewelry on pages 8–9 (shown at twice its actual size). **Mirror-image patterns** make all three pieces seem neat and orderly.

By contrast, the **interlocking lines** decorating the head on the opposite page are as unpredictable as Viking raids. Viking artists wove **thin and thick lines** into loose, **asymmetrical** designs that were dense in some areas, airy in others. Some parts of the staff on the right are covered in traditional Celtic designs, while others resemble Viking patterns. Can you tell which might be which?



◀ Can you find the dragon shape in this small pin?

Pair of dragon-shaped brooches, 1st or 2nd CE, Roman Britain, from Faversham, Kent. L. 2 1/8 in. Inv. PY 1088.70. Photo: ©British Museum / Art Resource, NY.



▲ Which design area on this staff shows a Viking influence?

Crozier of the Abbots of Clonmacnoise, County Offaly, Ireland, 12th century. Wood, silver and gold, Celtic. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland. Photo: ©Boltin Picture Library / The Bridgeman Art Library.

◀ Can you find any similarities between the designs in this plaque and designs used in the manuscript on page 5?

Fretted-bronze plaque with enameled decoration, 1st or 2nd c. BCE, Britain, Celtic, found at Paillart, Oise. Location: Musée Archeologique de Breteuil, Breteuil, France. Photo: Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY.

# Celtic Treasures

More than 13 centuries have passed since this priceless gold pin set with precious stones was created by an unknown Celtic artist



▲ Many fantastic animals appear in this complex piece of jewelry (shown at twice its original size). How many interlacing dragons, knotted snakes, and abstracted birds' heads can you find?

The Hunterston Brooch, early 8th century. Gold, Celtic. ©National Museums of Scotland / The Bridgeman Art Library.



# Contemporary Celts

These three artists bring Celtic linear patterns into the present day

## Christopher Patch

Contemporary artist Christopher Patch makes art inspired by his home state of Maine, where he grew up close to nature. In the watercolor above, the artist—whose hobby is bird watching—filled the branches of a tree with real bird species: red winged black birds, an American kestrel, hawks, and warblers. But like Celtic artists, Patch doesn't paint nature realistically. He **abstracts** it into a decorative **linear interlace**.

To make this piece, the artist folded a sheet of paper in half. He sketched a tree trunk along the folded edge and added

**curvilinear** branches that weave together to form an elegant **pattern**. He filled the branches with leaves, birds, and a hunter, then cut out the **negative spaces** between these shapes. When he unfolded the paper, he had a perfectly **symmetrical** design.

Although some of the birds are native to Maine, other images—bears, hunters, and peacocks—come from folk art. The artist wanted to show not just Maine's natural landscape, but also its history and traditions. What traditional images would you use in your work to express where you come from?



▲ Christopher Patch



## Vandana Jain

Celtic artists created **abstract** designs based on plants and animals, the objects they saw around them every day. In her piece on the left, contemporary American artist Vandana Jain did the same thing. But instead of using plant and animal motifs, she incorporated images that surround us today: corporate logos.

McDonald's logos form the design's outer ring. The Land O' Lakes logo in the center shows a Native American holding a plate of butter. By making this logo the very center of her design, the artist created a comic contrast between the American landscape as seen by Native Americans, and the chain-store-filled landscape we see today.

How many of the other logos in this design can you identify? What do you think they might represent?



▲ Vandana Jain



▲ **Matt Leines in front of one of his paintings.**

## Matt Leines

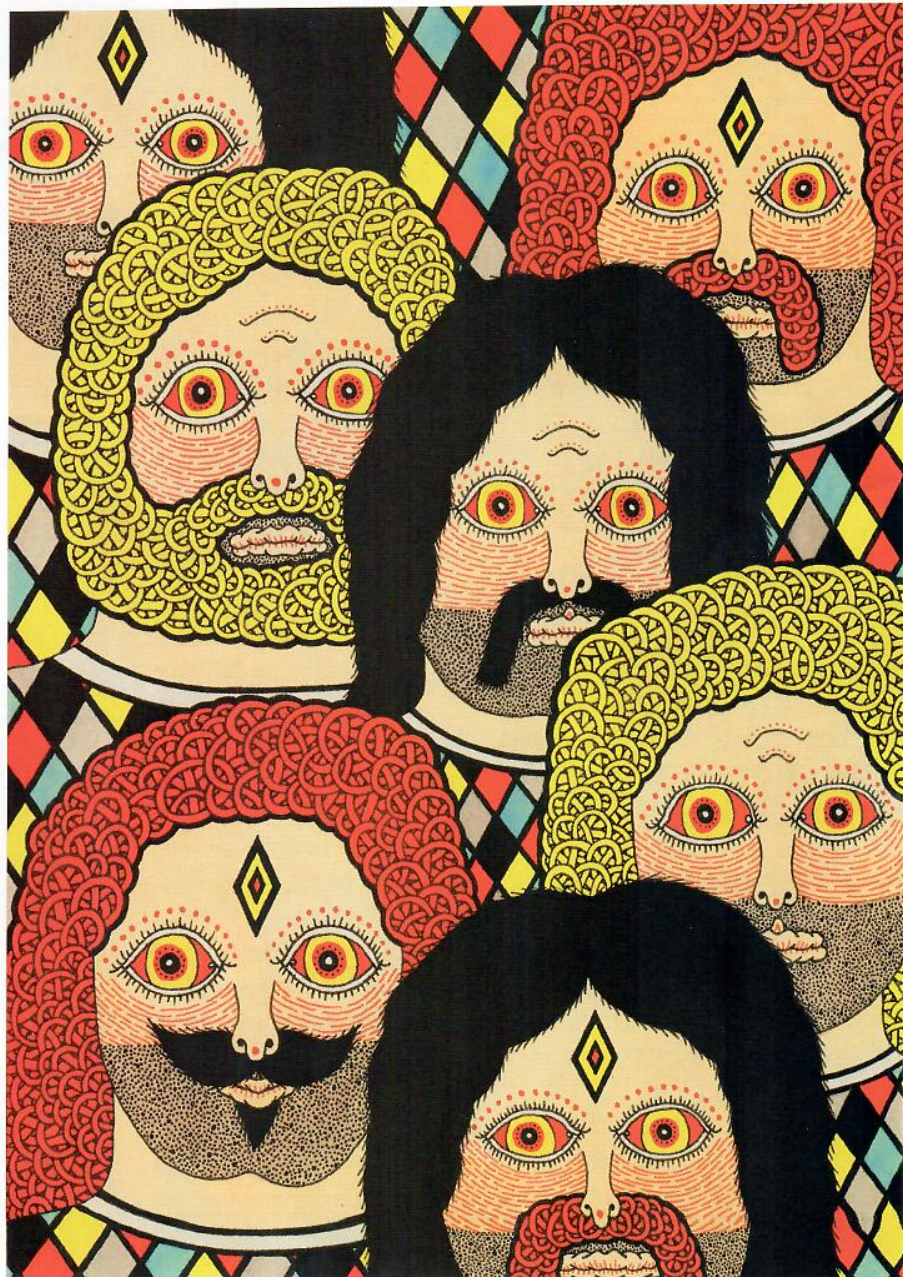
Contemporary New Jersey artist Matt Leines watches the History Channel for inspiration. He especially likes shows about Medieval Europe. His images are full of warriors who resemble Celts, Vikings, and other ancient people. Mixed in with these historical characters are warriors from the artist's personal history: professional wrestlers, He-Man, and many other characters he watched on TV or read about as a child.

In the painting below, fierce-looking men

stare out at the viewer. They are made up of simple shapes packed with a wide variety of **linear patterns**. Heavy **stippling** makes up the men's beards; **short, curved dashes** appear under their eyes; and complex **interlace** winds through their hair.

Who are these mysterious figures? Leines's paintings are like ancient artifacts, forcing viewers to imagine an undiscovered world that stretches far beyond the borders of the image itself.

**"I'm interested in folklore. Through my drawings, I've learned a lot about folk traditions."  
—Matt Leines**



Christopher Patch (b. 1974),  
*The Great Hunt*, 2007.

Vandana Jain McDonald's - *Land of Lakes*, 2002. Giclee print, 20 x 20 in.

Matt Leines (b. 1980), *Untitled (Group of Men)*, 2007.

Ink and watercolor on paper, 7 x 5 in.  
Courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA.

Photo: Matt Leines Portrait, 2009,  
Courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA.

# The Language of Lines

Stormi uses linear variety to express a range of emotions

**F**or Stormi Gignac, every line and shape has meaning. "Drawing is a way of releasing my emotions," she explains. "If I'm stressed or anxious, I'll draw dots, dashes, or zig zags. If I'm happy, I'll express that with loose curvy lines and swirls." Filled with intricate patterns,

Stormi's award-winning piece *Helga Smelga Dancing in the Rain* (opposite page) is a perfect example of her linear style.

A graduate of East Forsyth High School in Kernersville, North Carolina, 19-year-old Stormi is now studying fashion and textile design at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Her dream job is to design richly patterned fabrics and use them in her own line of clothing. "It never fails to amaze me what a series of lines and squiggles can become," Stormi says.

## How did you first get involved in art?

I've been drawing ever since I can remember. My mother would leave crayons, markers, and pencils lying around the house to inspire my creativity. Art became my favorite thing to do and my favorite subject in school.

## What inspired your award-winning piece?

When I drew the piece, I was inspired by my surroundings. It was rainy, and there was a gloomy light inside my house. That's why the piece is filled with blue, green, and purple—cooler and more muted colors than I would normally use.

## Why do you like to work with lines?

In high school, my art teacher taught us that lines could mean different things. A straight or lazy curvy line can feel calm. A harsh zig-

zag can feel angry. A very swirly line can feel happy. Last summer, I used some of these ideas. I worked for hours, filling every inch of a drawing with patterns. As I drew, I poured out my emotions. When I was done, all my stress was gone. Working this way felt so good, I haven't stopped since.

## How did you create your piece?

I started by drawing a very basic outline of a woman's body. Then I drew the layers of her dress, building new lines in reaction to previous lines. I added legs. If I didn't like the position of one leg, I added another one for balance and to create the right energy and movement. I drew and colored in her umbrella, her jewelry, her shoes, and her hair. Then using markers, I worked section by section, adding a variety of lines, dots, squiggles and zigzags. Finally, I used a black marker to outline and define the areas that I felt needed emphasis or cleaning up.

## What effect do you hope to have on the viewer?

My characters are silly. They have crooked smiles, sideways eyes, weird hair, funny hats, and a jumble of legs, shoes, and tights. I hope that when people see my work, they giggle like I do.

## Do you have any advice for aspiring artists like yourself?

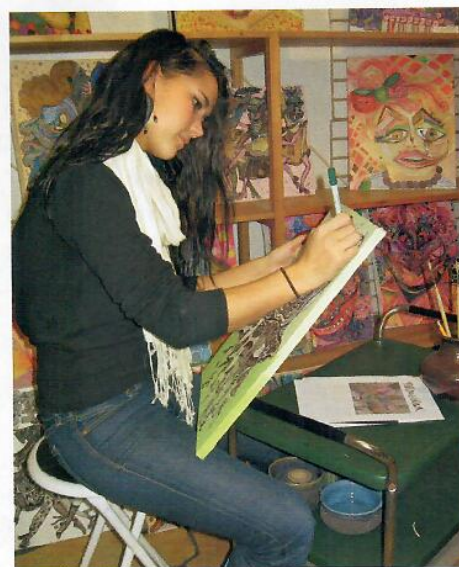
I'd say do what you love and don't worry about people's opinions about what art should be. For me, being told my art looks "weird" is quite a compliment.

**"I never use the same idea twice. I'm constantly striving for variety to create visual interest."**

**—Stormi Gignac**

Stormi won an Art Portfolio Silver Award at the *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards*. To find out more about this program, ask your teacher to call 212-343-6892, or go to [www.scholastic.com/artandwriting](http://www.scholastic.com/artandwriting).

↓ Stormi at work in her studio.



Stormi Bignac (b. 1950), *Helga Smeiga Dancing in the Rain*, 2008. Acrylic, 16 x 20 in.



# Decorate an Everyday Object

Use polymer clay to create a wide range of linear designs

## MATERIALS

- Clippings of Celtic designs
- Polymer clay (primary and secondary colors, white, and black)
- Rollers (1" acrylic rod or PVC piping)
- Plastic wrap (to store clay)
- Wax paper
- Packing tape
- Toothpicks (for making beads)
- X-Acto knives
- Elmer's Glue-All
- Glass baking pan (for baking clay)
- Access to an oven or toaster oven
- Oven thermometer
- Pot holders
- Metal jewelry findings (jump rings, earring fasteners, etc.)
- Various everyday objects (preferably ones that can be fired at 275°F, such as metal boxes)

**Y**ou've seen how Celtic artists used spirals, knots, and other linear designs to make everyday objects beautiful. For this workshop, you'll create your own linear designs and use them to decorate an everyday object.



### STEP 1 Prepare

Caning is a technique in which strips of colorful clay are rolled into cylinders or tubes, then sliced like

a sushi roll so that each slice contains a pattern or design. Learn about caning techniques by searching for the words "polymer clay cane," and "millefiori" on Youtube. Next, gather some Celtic patterns to use for inspiration. Finally, choose an everyday object to decorate. Sketch out ideas for cane designs and ways to use those designs to decorate your object.

**TIP:** To harden, polymer clay must be baked at 275°F. Choosing an object that won't melt when baked will allow you to fire the clay directly onto the object.



### STEP 2 Construct the Cane

Tape wax paper down to your desk to use as a work surface. Choose several



colors of clay, and knead the clay to get it soft enough for use. Using Celtic designs and your sketches as a model, think about ways to assemble your cane designs.

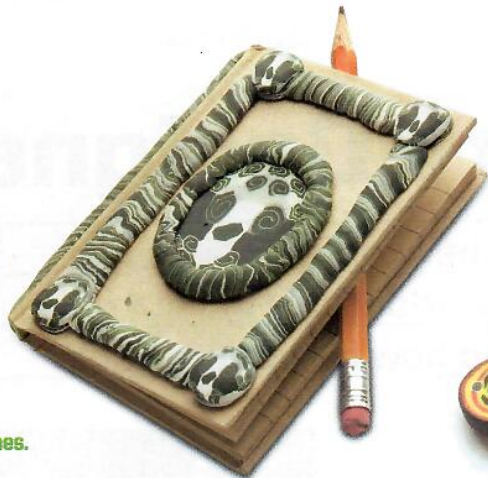
Consider rolling two contrasting layers into a spiral roll (see Sarah's necklace) or pressing a spiral roll on the table to create flat edges (see Kimberly's mirror). Once you've assembled a cane, roll it gently over the tabletop to fill in gaps and join the layers. Consider cutting canes in half lengthwise, and combining the long halves and other canes into one large, complicated cane. Challenge yourself to create designs with as much detail as possible. **TIP:** Juxtaposing layers of dark and light colored clay will create dramatic lines (see Anna's cup).



### STEP 3 Decorate the Object

When you're satisfied with your design, use an X-Acto knife to slice the cane. You'll end up with many copies of the same design, so consider trading a few cane

→ **Christian's Book**  
Christian combined spiral rolls into an organic, plantlike design. He surrounded his central design with borders made with irregular, flowing lines.



→ **Kimberly's Mirror**  
Kimberly created a geometric design by rolling layers of clear and orange clay into a spiral cane, then pressing the cane onto the table to give it flat edges. Try to figure out how she made the complex design in the center.



↑ **Sarah's Necklace**  
Sarah created a contrasting spiral design by rolling layers of black and white clay into a spiral cane. She cut off several slices, then rolled the remaining cane to reduce the design. She then combined the smaller black-and-white spirals with other colors to create a more complex cane design.



slices with your classmates. Arrange the cane slices over the surface of your object, pressing firmly to push out air pockets. Use a toothpick to poke holes in slices you wish to use as beads. Place objects in an oven to bake. (Check the directions of the clay packets for baking instructions.)

**TIP:** If you've chosen an object that melts at high temperatures, fire the clay separately then use glue to attach it to your object.

→ **Anna's Cup**  
Anna cut her cane into four shorter pieces, then combined those pieces into a larger cane with a symmetrical design. She juxtaposed light and dark colored clay to create dramatic contrasts.





# Jewelry Designer

**Matthew Campbell Laurenza's unique jewelry is sold worldwide. Find out what inspires him and how he got started.**

## CAREER: JEWELRY DESIGNER

**Salary:** First-year jewelry designers make an average of \$30,000, depending on location, company size, and experience.

**Education:** Most jewelry designers have a bachelor's degree in jewelry design.

### Getting Started:

► Learn about everything. Matthew studied architecture, and sculpture. He's worked with glass, textiles, and pottery. "I was able to make jewelry because I had learned so much about so many different things," Matthew says.

► Take business and finance classes. Independent designers should know how to run a business.

► Try a design idea, even if everyone says it can't work. "First, you'll learn why it doesn't work," says Matthew. "Second, if it does work, you've created something new that no one else has tried."

### ART MAGAZINE: What is your job?

**MATTHEW CAMPBELL LAURENZA:** I own a design company and design jewelry for men and women. I work with precious metals and precious gems such as rubies and sapphires.

### AM: Why did you choose this career?

**MCL:** I've always enjoyed making things. When I was 13, I carved wooden figures and sold them to local museums. I just always knew that I wanted a career that would allow me to create.

### AM: How would you describe your work?

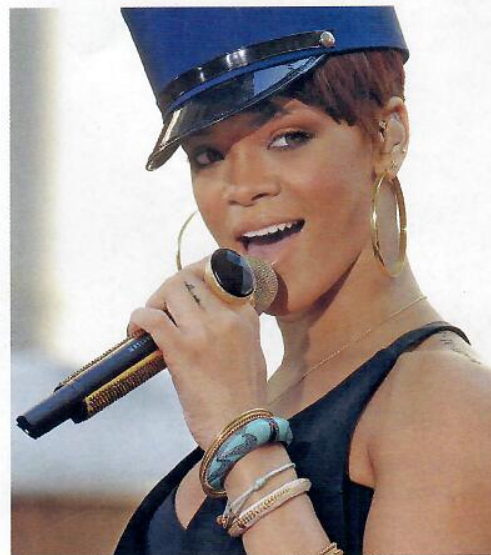
**MCL:** I think of my pieces as mini-sculptures. I give them volume, since it's the first thing the eye notices. I add lines to help define the volume and to add richness. Line patterns from historical sources can also add a sense of history. I especially like linear plant motifs. They remind me of spring.

### AM: What inspires you?

**MCL:** I travel a lot for work, and my travels have a huge impact on my designs. Learning about different cultures and their arts helps me bring a constant newness to my style.

### AM: What is your design process?

**MCL:** I develop an idea based on a certain mood. Then, I sketch it out and make a wax model. When I'm happy with it, I put it into production, and four to six months later, I present the piece to my clients.



► Matthew's jewelry has been worn by celebrities like Rihanna (shown above, wearing his bracelet) and *Gossip Girl*'s Leighton Meester.

► Matthew has decorated this unique bracelet with a flowerlike linear pattern.



### AM: What skills do you need to succeed?

**MCL:** You need a lot of energy! Running your own business takes a lot of time. You should also understand what sells. Too many designers forget the commercial side of their business and never find an audience. I actually enjoy seeing how my clients interpret my work. Someone might take a very formal piece and wear it in a casual way. People make my jewelry their own.

Jewelry: M.C.L. by Matthew Campbell Laurenza; Rihanna: @Brian Zak / Sipa Press via AP Photo Images

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