

Art Clay World USA

Choosing Enamels for Metal Clay – by Pam East (Art Clay Master Instructor)

If you want to see the silver through the enamel choose a transparent color (Thompson 2000 series). For opaque coverage, choose an opaque enamel (Thompson 1000 series)

Choosing specific colors is not as straightforward as it might sound, especially when working on silver. Silver is, itself, a colorant and can affect the colors you fire on to it. For your first enameling efforts I highly recommend choosing blues or greens as these fire on silver with no problem.

The following chart is from my personal tests and will give you some guidelines for choosing enamel colors. Thompson colors not included on the chart may have shown some difficulty during my tests. The problems could have been as simple as some minor browning around the edges to severe color change. For troublesome opaques, most problems can be avoided by firing a layer of 2020 Clear for Silver on first. This can help somewhat with transparent enamels too, but it's not quite as effective since the 2020 can give the color a yellowish cast and will not always stop color change. If you want to try these colors, test them carefully first. The colors listed below should require no special handling and are safer to start with.

Enamel Color Guide	
Thompson Stock Numbers	Color
1020	Opaque Titanium White
1150 through 1180	Opaque Browns
1319, 1360, 1380	Opaque Greens
1525, 1540, 1685, 1698	Opaque Blues
1940	Opaque Steel Gray
1995, 1996, 1997	Opaque Black
2020	Clear for Silver
2110 through 2190	Transparent Browns
2220, 2222, 2230	Transparent Yellows
2305 through 2350	Transparent Greens
2410 through 2435	Transparent Blue Greens
2520, 2530	Transparent Green Blues
2610, 2625, 2650, 2660, 2680	Transparent Blues
2715, 2755, 2760	Transparent Purples
2910, 2915	Transparent Grays
<i>If you are feeling a bit more adventurous you can try the following.</i>	
1810	Opaque Buttercup Yellow Wet-pack only. Do not sift. Better over 2020.
1870	Opaque Orient Red Fire over 2020. Take care not to over-fire.
2007 through 2040	All clears work to varying degrees, but may yellow.
2835	This color is called Rose Pink, but it usually fires to a pretty transparent orange on metal clay. Use as Orange