

PORCELAIN JASPER



Porcelain jasper, also called porcelanite, provides you with miniature works of natural abstract art with its soft, subtle colors of gray, pink, purple, plum, and mauve in a cream-colored background. Some stones exhibit a geometric pattern, much like the fault lines you see in a roadside cutaway, while others show "beautiful ripples and bands of color," says Bryan McMullin, G.G., manager of the Village Silversmith in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Cabs of porcelain jasper cut to the best advantage are often large—30mm x 40mm or larger—in order to make the most of the patterning. (The size is an estimate as most stones are cut freeform.) "It's hard to get an interesting ring-size stone," says McMullin. Because of their size, porcelain jasper cabs are often set in silver; in today's gold market, it's not cost effective to set a \$15 to \$40 stone in gold. However, a frame of polished silver perfectly complements the grays in porcelain jasper, making the mounting appear to blend into the stone.

When choosing accent stones for porcelain jasper, choose materials that have colors in the same pink to purple color range: garnets, tourmalines, rose quartz, sugilite.

You might also try green gems, which are the complements of the colors commonly found in porcelain jasper: green garnets, peridot, tourmalines, chrysoprase, nephrite. Because the colors of the porcelain jasper can be delicate, choose your accent stones with care so that they don't detract from the center stone. Pendants set with porcelain jasper look lovely on strands of beads such as rose quartz, pink to purple freshwater pearls, or tumbled garnets. Or combine these beads with beads of porcelain jasper.

When you choose porcelain jasper, look for an interesting pattern, recommends McMullin. Be sure the lines are "crisp, not muddy... you want good division between the colors." Also look for polish. Like all jaspers, porcelain jasper is a cryptocrystalline quartz. But because of its higher levels of impurities, its polish is not quite as high as jaspers with higher silica content, says McMullin.

Great patterning and unusual colors make porcelain jasper a good choice for designers.

SHARON ELAINE THOMPSON has studied gemology, earning both a GG and an FGA. She has written for this magazine since 1987.

STONE NOTES

PORCELAIN PRICING

Cut stones: \$150 to \$250 per gram, or \$15 to \$40 per 30mm x 40mm stone

Beads: \$12 to \$20 per 16 inch strand depending on color, patterning, shape and size of beads

Rough: \$5 and \$7 per pound

Photo: Jim Lawson

PORCELAIN JASPER CABOCHON

Turn the unexpected into a design opportunity

DEMO BY

GEORGE BAJORAS

Opening Photo: JIM LAWSON
Demo Photos: GEORGE BAJORAS

I always begin cutting with a thorough examination of the rough to determine if there are any visible fractures. This helps me decide if there are areas I should avoid during cutting, and helps me assess the size of the saw blade I should choose for slabbing. Even with careful advance planning, breaking a stone is something that can never be totally avoided. Fortunately, in many cases, an acceptable if not ideal cab can be salvaged from even the worst break, if you are open to changing direction in the middle of a project.



SKILLS YOU NEED

- basic lapidary skills

MATERIALS AND TOOLS YOU NEED

MATERIALS	TOOLS
Jasper rough	6" trim saw, various grinding wheels, leather wheel
Polishing compounds	

TRY THIS, TOO

Create an unusual piece of jewelry using this patterned gemstone

PORCELAIN JASPER PENDANT PAGE 21



(Photo 1) A visual examination of the side of the rough helps determine the best orientation to optimize the patterning in the finished cabochons.



(Photo 2) I decided to cut the rough into approximately 1/8" thick slabs to expose the unusual patterns of this jasper.



(Photo 3) I picked a slab with a good combination of pattern and color. An area of the chosen slab suggested a freeform shape, so I outlined the cabochon on the slab.



(Photo 4) I used a 6" trim saw to rough out the shape.

► Here you can see just how much of the original material becomes waste after the initial cuts are made.

(Photo 5) I started with an 80 grit diamond wheel to shape the cab to near finished proportions.

(Photo 6) I then switch to a 220 grit diamond wheel to smooth the surface of the cab.

► Unfortunately, at this point, I applied a bit too much pressure on the stone. This, combined with a concealed fracture, resulted in the partially cut cab breaking into 2 pieces. Fortunately, all was not lost, and I continued shaping the larger section. This resulted in a cab that still preserved the focal point pattern that was part of the original cab outline.

(Photo 7) The reshaped cab was further refined on a 280 grit wheel.

(Photo 8) Polishing with 600 grit refined the final shape of the stone and brought the surface to a matte finish.

(Photo 9) I used tin oxide on a leather wheel to bring out a glossy polish on the stone. Despite an early minor mishap, the attempt resulted in a striking stone ready to be mounted in a piece of jewelry.

GEORGE BAJORAS' life-long interests in stones led to his study of lapidary with master stone cutters of Idar-Oberstein, Germany, while he was in the military. He has pursued this interest for almost 40 years, and particularly enjoys the challenges of working with newly discovered gem materials.



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What jewelry makers should know about this gem

SMOKIN' STONES PAGE 20