

Enameled Wire Words – Steven James

Materials:

1 foot ArtWire – Copper 20-gauge wire
Thompson Enamel Black 1995 in a flat saucer on flat glass plate
Wire cutters, plus other wire working tools to create loops and bends
Black Sharpie marker/white paper
Kiln brick, trivet, torch, bent nose pliers, tweezers
Sifter, dust mask
Vermiculite
(Table covering – perhaps metal, however, I often just use a cookie sheet)

Directions:

- The words you create should never be longer than 2 inches.
- I like to anneal the wire first, so it is more flexible – this step allows you to manipulate the wire into your word.
- It is also helpful to draw the word first, so you're familiar with the direction you'll bend the wire. Use some of the illustrations to help you create your first set of words. Create tight connections between the letters and NEVER use more than one piece of wire.
- As you create the word, make sure to leave a small 'tail' that you will hold during the enameling process. This tail should stretch out from the beginning or ending of the word.
- You might want to practice the word creation process with cheaper, base metal wire. If you have a wire go haywire, you can use a wire straightener to start all over again.

- This process requires you to immerse the wire into the black enamel, so have your enamel ready in a shallow immersion plate.
- Set the torch to the side of the immersion plate and place the wire in the torch far end of the flame, once the wire is glowing orange, immediately dip the wire into the enamel.
- Gently tap off the excess enamel and then bring the wire back into the flame.
- Fire until the enamel has set and then immediately immerse the wire into the enamel again.
- Make sure you have an even layer of enamel throughout the piece. You might need to adjust how you immerse the wire, based on the coverage. You might also need to carefully sift enamel onto the wire, be mindful of the flame to avoid burning the sifting cup.
- Once the wire is sufficiently covered, place the project in the vermiculite and allow to cool.
- To remove the wire tail, cut it off with one swift, clean cut. You'll now fix the end of the wire, covering it with more black enamel.
- Holding project on the farthest point from the other side, place the exposed tip in the flame. Heat just THIS area and dip this area only into the black enamel. Continue to do so until this area is covered, then return to the vermiculite.

Try Something Different!

This is one of my favorite projects and I encourage designers to treat these components as wearable works of art. I think the design works well all on its own, but I also think one could layer several necklaces to create a really dramatic effect.