

## Wirework Magazine Q & A – Scott David Plumlee – 9/23/10

**Artist Bio:** Scott David Plumlee has been inspiring a new generation of chain jewelers over the past decade, leading hundreds of workshops nationwide. He is the author of *Handcrafting Chain and Bead Jewelry*, *Chain and Bead Jewelry Creative Connections*, & *Chain and Bead Jewelry Geometric Connections*. A world traveler, Scott has studied ancient cultures and craft designs all over the globe and currently resides in sunny Taos, New Mexico.

**Artist Statement:** I challenge myself to create innovative chain and bead jewelry designs by utilizing curiosity as a guide and creativity as a catalyst to find new solutions to the age-old question of how to combine metal and gemstones. Over the past decade, I have found that the path of least resistance in creating new designs is simply to be aware of the possibilities within the happy accident and explore my imagination with reckless abandon. By employing the many facets of creativity, I transform intangible images in my mind from sketchbook drawings into silver wire and gemstone bead creations that are comfortable to wear and stunning to behold.

### **How long have you been making jewelry?**

I assembled my first chain pattern back in 1995, for a metalsmithing course at the Appalachian Center for Crafts, while working on a BFA in ceramic pottery. I loved metal as a medium; however the power tool and hot torch techniques that I was learning just confined me to a studio bench under buzzing fluorescent lights. The inherent simplicity of chain-making was appealing to me as a mobile craft; allowing me to step out of the studio and into the forest, where I could assemble my chain pattern under an oak tree, in the calming silence of solitude.

### **How did you get started?**

After losing my appetite for clay, I dropped out of college and traveled around the world, visiting 32 countries in five years. I took my mobile craft of chain-making with me and sat on the beach, chaining away many a rosy sunset; selling bracelets to tourists, bribing boarder guards, and a few pretty ladies along the way. After the 98/99 ski season in the Cascades, I rolled downhill to Seattle, where I began to teach my chain designs at a local bead shop in 2000. Teaching these workshops got me to create step-by-step handouts for each jewelry class, which were re-vamped after each class with the student's feedback. Eventually, I decided to combine these handouts into a book and allow my creativity to inspire more people than I could ever teach personally.

Realizing that I was lacking in a variety of needed skills, I went to college at Western Washington University to learn: digital photography, website building, graphic design, public speaking, teaching techniques, art history, business finance, and essay writing proficiency to express my thoughts eloquently. The past seven years has been a long series of teaching workshops, making jewelry, writing books, shooting millions of images, building a 200+ page website, and assembling an un-told number of jewelry kits. I am now on the verge of completing my goal of publishing five jewelry books, three travel novels, wholesaling kits worldwide through an assemble company, and being able to retire at 40 to continue my worldwide wanderlusting adventure.

### **What do you enjoy about wirework?**

I enjoy round metal wire as a base medium for chain making due to its accessibility. If I had to mine the silver ore, smelt it into a malleable metal, and then draw it into round wire; I might have given up a long time ago. I do not take it for granted that I am blessed to be given my gift of pattern recognition in a time when metal wire is easily accessible in countless gauge sizes, digital photography is possible, promotion through computers is commonplace, and printed books can be distributed world wide on a mass scale. It humbles me to realize that my career path would not have been easy ten years ago, or even possible a hundred years ago.

### **What techniques do you prefer?**

I love the assemble of chain patterns for the same reason I loved it 15 years ago; a quite, meditative, mobile craft that does not need electricity, hot torch, nor a studio jeweler's bench. The freedom to make my craft under an oak tree or lazing in a hammock on a Caribbean beach, the meditative quality of matching each breath to each jump ring's assemble, and the instant gratification of a chain pattern coming to life under your hand's empowerment. These are some of reasons why I love chain making and feel the need to inspire people with this craft's mobile freedom, meditative therapy, and personal empowerment.

### **What inspired the piece (Beaded Romanov Bracelet) that is going into Wirework Spring 2011?**

Although I had been making chain jewelry for many years, I found my unique artistic niche in the book publishing world by combining gemstone beads into chain patterns. The Romanov chain is a common knowledge pattern, so my contribution to this design was to add a gemstone bead between the two lengths of Byzantine chain; by setting the bead on a wire with a double-loop at both ends, and then building the Byzantine chain off of the double-loop of the bead setting. My second unique contribution to this design was to use very large (9mm ID) jump rings to combine each set of beaded Byzantine chain sections into a repeating pattern with a three ring spiraling Flower formation in a contrasting bronze metal to the silver Byzantine chain, to be complimented with the cherry red of the carnelian gemstone beads. So in a nutshell, my inspiration was to ask: 'How can this design be improved, enhanced by gemstone beads, or re-worked in a different way that has not been done previously?'

### **What makes this piece (Beaded Romanov Bracelet) special?**

The Beaded Romanov Bracelet was especially engineered for the introductory chapter of my 3<sup>rd</sup> published book, as a stepping stone between the straight Byzantine chain and the offset pattern of the Serrated Byzantine bracelet; to explore the many facets of how the Byzantine chain can be utilized before the reader assembles the Tripoli formation and starts to build geometric patterns. As a contentious instructor, I have always designed my books to take the reader on a jewelry journey by build upon each design's concepts and skills as the reader works through the book, so the first designs are quite simple and the last designs are very challenging.

### **What will readers like about this piece (Beaded Romanov Bracelet)?**

The mixed metals of bronze and silver jump rings that are complemented with the cherry-red carnelian beads are not just aesthetically pleasing 'eye-candy', but help to visually distinguish the different chain components for the student's eye to better understand the repetitive chain pattern. Although not immediately recognizable, there is a purposeful dialogue in the visual contrast between the silver Byzantine chain that hugs each red carnelian bead and the negative space within the large diameter bronze Flower formation; this repetition of tight, open, tight, open, moves the eye down the chain pattern length, never lingering as the next bit of visual information is a contrasting metal, color, and aesthetic interpretation.

### **What do you do when you're not making jewelry?**

Honestly, I rarely get to make jewelry anymore; and so thankful when I get a commission. I spend most of my time taking step-by-step photography, doing PhotoShop conversions, layout out my handouts and books, reading and re-reading the accompanying text, answering emails, pursuing wholesale purchases for my self-published books, getting my handouts translated into multiple languages, working with different findings manufactures, promoting my books with magazine articles, creating quarterly newsletters, updating my website, coordinating travel to teach workshops, preparing for speaking presentations, and assembling kits to teach classes nationwide.

Although I am a professed workaholic, I do take several hours each day for myself. I do a daily routine of yoga, 100 sit-ups, 100 push-ups, 100 leg lifts, vitamins, eggs over white rice, and then go for a 10 to 15 mile mountain bike at 8000 foot elevation. In the winter, I exchange my bike for snow shoeing or snow boarding at the local Taos Ski Resort, which gives a new appreciation for the word 'steep'. In the evening, I make time to relax my mind with a game of backgammon, meditation, and reading a few pages of a good book before I turn in. I have recently been forcing myself to not work on Sundays, instead I go to the local pool and swim one to two mile of laps and then go up to Carson National Park to hike a 2000' vertical trail up to the flower-filled meadows with vista views of the Sangre de Christos Mountain range.

Many thanks,

Scott David Plumlee  
[www.davidchain.com](http://www.davidchain.com)  
[info@davidchain.com](mailto:info@davidchain.com)