

Fact Sheet 05: wax carving



Introduction

Wax carving is another specialism within the jewellery industry. A wax model or carving provides the starting point either for a one-off bespoke piece or a production line.

Often referred to as model makers, wax carvers use a variety of waxes and other carving materials in order to achieve the final product. These are used alone or sometimes in combination with other materials. Many models must be carved in more than one piece and will require assembly once in metal to achieve the final product. The carving process for each model is different every time and can require considerable planning and preparation.

Approaching a professional wax carver

Professional wax carvers are particularly sought after within the industry and it is not always easy to find one. Ask around frequent places where wax modellers might go to get supplies and look on notice boards. Some model makers are also listed on the trade online directories listed at the end of this fact sheet.

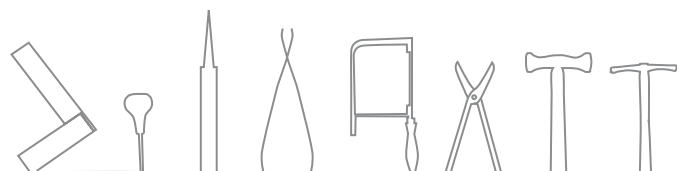
When preparing your design for the wax carver, remember that, as with any other outworker, they are charging for their time. So the more you can do at this stage to put across your

idea clearly, the better, as reworking of models will cost time and money.

For example, provide as much visual material as possible that puts across your idea. **Technical drawings** are ideal, showing the front, side and plan elevations and a perspective version of the piece you want made. Ideally provide these to scale as quite often wax carvers take measurements directly from your drawings. Add notes to the drawings that indicate what the item is, indicating positioning of any final features or findings for orientation. Make sure you include any other additional information that you think would help the modeller interpret your drawings. This would include detailed dimensions, final weight allowance, whether the piece is destined to be a one-off or if you want multiples produced, indicate where you want stones to go and how these are to be set and the size of the gemstones.

This isn't always possible with for example animals or other organic forms but you can provide overall dimensions and final weights etc.

As with other subcontractors, the wax carver's time is booked in advance, so planning ahead and indicating your time-scale is important. Small jobs can sometimes be fitted into tight schedules but you cannot depend on this.



Generally, the wax carver will sit down with you to discuss the job and resolve any design issues.

Costing and pricing

As with other bench jewellers, wax carvers charge for their time so having as much information available about your proposed design will cut down on the time you have to commission. Other on costs from the wax model will be casting costs and material costs – more of this in **Fact Sheet 06: lost wax casting**.

Most wax carvers will give you an estimate of the time your piece will take and give you a confirmed price once the piece is complete.

Wax carving FAQ

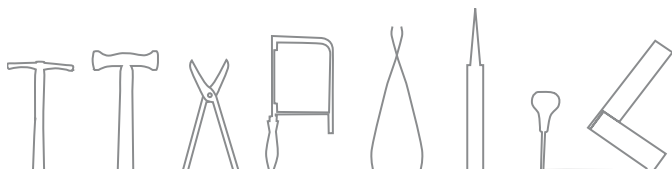
Q: What are the measurements I should supply on my drawing?

A: Length, width, height, and also gemstone sizes so positioning can be allowed for. Ideally send the stones in with the designs so the carver can see the proportions for themselves.

Q: Should I include shrinkage allowances on my drawing?

A: Not necessarily, the wax carver should be able to supply you with a model that will withstand shrinkage but discuss this at your initial meeting to make sure. You can also show your drawing to a caster to find out what they estimate shrinkage will be.

“If the quality is raised on our products then more stockists will stock them which leads to more money.”



Glossary

Visual research

A collection of images that inspire a design and help the wax carver to understand the feel of the originating idea.

Design

The actual drawing of the piece to be created in wax, which shows visually its dimensions to scale from top, side and bottom.

Wax carving/model

The final representation in wax or other carving material of the design

Master

Once the wax has been cast and cleaned up, it is ready to have a mould taken from it. It is important to keep the master in a safe place in case the mould is lost or deteriorates over time.

Mould

An impression of the master taken in rubber; it is used by the carver to produce multiple waxes for production.

Databases of industry specific trade services

The following websites hold information about trade services, equipment suppliers, products and educational courses:

benchpeg: www.benchpeg.com

The jewellery industry's leading creative and digital communications network

British Jewellers' Association Trade

Product Search: www.bja.org.uk

A membership organisation that represents the jewellery industry

Ganoksin: www.ganoksin.com

An international online resource for the jewellery industry

The Goldsmiths' Company Technical Portal:

www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk

A supplier database of trade-to-trade services and suppliers

Acknowledgements

Danila Tarcinale and Russell Lownsborough, Wax Carvers
www.waxcarving.co.uk

Martin Baker, Bepoke Wax Carver
www.martinbaker.net

