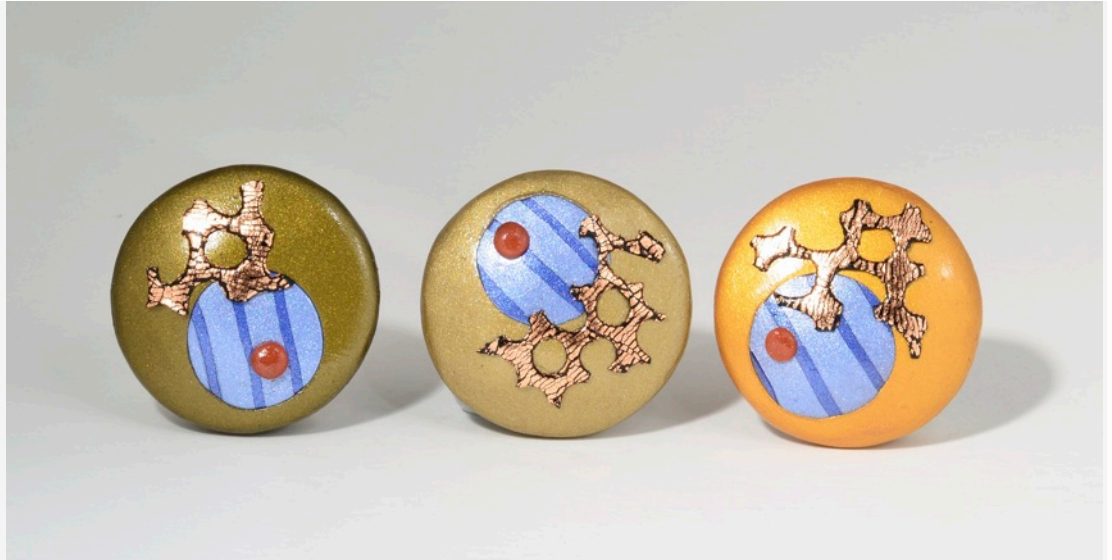
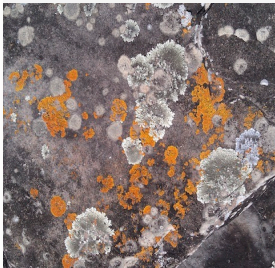


## Project: Beads for International Publication



Sometimes, my inspiration arrives in the quietest of special moments... such as finding a ball of coral-like lichen on a forest walk. It is dry and crunchy, full of pin pricks and geometric loops as if knitted. A good dousing with my drink bottle immediately caused the whole ball to spring to life. It expanded enormously and became soft, vivid and spongy.

Lichens comprise two almost inseparable organisms – a fungus and a photosynthetic partner (either an alga or a cyanobacteria). Attempts have been made to separate the two partners but neither organism thrives without the other. Nobody knows how many lichen species exist on earth. Estimates range between 13,500 and 30,000. At any rate, the partnership is so successful, lichens can colonize habitats that remain out of reach for us.

A lampworking friend emailed me with an opportunity for international artisans to submit beads for a publication of 1000 jury-selected beads. With the memory of my blue sky walk and the crusty lichen in mind, I set to work on some lentil beads.

The hardest part about the project was photographing the beads. Being lentil beads, they have a narrow edge. We held them up with tiny blobs of blu-tak but under hot lights, this would soften and they would take turns falling over before we had a chance to capture them! Anyway after many months, a tattered envelope arrived in my mailbox from abroad and there were my beads on page 406.

