

WRAPPED DICHROIC

Combine glass and silver metal clay in this stunning pendant. *By Julia Rai*

Julia is co-director of the Cornwall School of Art, Craft and Jewellery where she teaches a variety of classes. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four.

Glass and fine silver metal clay work really well together. By combining them you can make a statement piece that includes vibrant colour and the iridescent qualities of dichroic glass. You will need a kiln to fuse small glass scraps and to co-fire fused cabochons with silver clay as glass cannot be torch fired.

MATERIALS

- 12g silver metal clay
- Metal clay paste and syringe
- Embeddable fine silver eyelet
- Jumping and chain/cord
- Scraps of dichroic or coloured glass
- Glass working tools
- Kiln paper
- Stencils and/or cutters
- Textures
- Pin tool or craft knife
- Emery board/polishing pads
- Paint brushes
- Soft, clean brass brush
- Polishing pads, papers etc



STEP 1

For this project, use small glass cabochons made by fusing cut pieces of dichroic glass in the kiln. You can make your own glass cabochons by cutting up coloured glass using standard glass tools. To work with glass you'll need a glass cutter, a cutting surface, for instance hardboard, and safety goggles. You can also buy grozing pliers and/or running pliers, which help you to break the glass cleanly.



STEP 4

This pendant is made by sandwiching the glass cabochon between two layers of metal clay, the top layer having punched out designs to show the glass. You could use a stencil that has cut out elements small enough to hold the glass in place but still show the glass cabochon. Choose one or more glass cabochons for your piece and try them out with stencils or cutters to see what works.

RESOURCES

Silver clay, embeddable eyelets: www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
Dichroic glass scrap packs, kiln paper, glass tools: www.warm-glass.co.uk
Chain, cord, jumpings: www.cooksongold.com

CONTACT

www.juliarai.co.uk
www.csacj.co.uk
julia@csacj.co.uk



68

www.craftsinstitute.com


STEP 2

Dichroic glass literally means two-coloured, so named because of its multicoloured and reflective qualities. It is more expensive than normal glass used in fusing but you only need a very small amount to make an impact. You can buy scrap packs from glass suppliers and this is a very good way of getting a variety of colours and finishes to work with. Remember to always handle glass with care!



STEP 5

Roll out metal clay three cards thick on a piece of leather so you get a subtle texture on the pendant back. Using a sharp needle tool, cut out the outline of the stencil shape. Grease the needle tool by plunging it into a piece of sponge soaked in olive oil; this prevents dragging. Cut out a hole where your glass will go, making sure it's smaller than the glass.



STEP 3

Line a kiln shelf with kiln paper; this prevents the glass from sticking to the shelf during firing. Spread out your glass pieces on the paper. For pieces less than 1cm², ramp the kiln at 800°C an hour to 809°C and hold for 30 minutes, or follow the manufacturer's instructions. Allow the kiln to cool down completely. Don't open the door or you risk thermal shock to the glass, causing it to crack.



STEP 6

Dry the back and then refine the holes using a small needle file. Roll out clay three cards thick, texture and cut out the stencil holes. Cut around the bottom part of the stencil so you get the main shape but leave a long 'skirt' so you can handle the top layer easily. Dampen the back layer, place the glass and liberally paste the back of the wet top layer.

Fashion inspiration



Paisley print blouse, £29
 Boyfriend jeans, £35
 Both www.mandco.com

Designer tips

- Making a hole behind the glass is essential to prevent stress on the cabochon during firing, as the metal clay shrinks.
- To make a glass firing in the kiln worthwhile, fill a whole shelf (or stacked shelves) with glass scraps to make lots of cabochons to use in your work.
- After firing, sort any cabochons that match into small bags so you have some for matching earrings.

www.craftsinstitute.com

69



STEP 7

Carefully place the top layer over the bottom layer with the glass in between. Sometimes it helps to use paste to stick the glass cabochons in place first. Gently ease the rest of the top layer into place around the glass. Don't press the top layer too tightly against the glass; you need some space around the glass for shrinkage.



STEP 8

Make sure the top layer is making good contact around the edges of the back layer. Use a pin tool to cut around the edges of the overhanging top layer using the back layer as a guide. You don't need to be too precise about this as you will refine the edges when it's dry. Don't worry if you get paste on the glass; this will be cleaned off later.



STEP 9

Dry completely using gentle heat like a hairdryer but avoid putting it directly onto a hot plate surface as this can shock the glass. When it's completely dry, refine the edges using an emery board and polishing pads. If the joint is visible, use syringe to fill this in and smooth with a damp paintbrush. Refine again until no sign of the joint is visible and then dry again.



STEP 10

Drill a hole down into the top of the pendant, perpendicular to the edge. Squeeze the syringe into the hole and embed a fine silver eyelet. Make some small balls by quickly rolling tiny pieces of really moist metal clay in the palm of your hand with your finger. When they are dry, paste them to the surface as embellishment. Make more than you need and store them for other projects.



STEP 11

Dry the piece completely and then use a toothpick to remove dried paste from every visible surface of the glass, even the back that is visible through the holes. Use a dry brush to remove all traces of dust from the pendant. Put a scrap of kiln paper behind the glass parts, ramp the kiln at 800°C an hour to 750°C and hold for 30 minutes or according to the manufacturer's instructions. Allow to cool slowly.



STEP 12

Use a brass brush with soapy water to brush the pendant; the glass will be fine as long as the brush is soft. For a high shine, use your own polish. With glass, tumble polish on its own so you don't risk something else bumping into the glass and chipping it. Add a jumping to the eyelet and hang on a chain or cord or string with beads in complementary colours.

Extra Projects Make earrings and a charm

EARRINGS

Make a pair of earrings using the same technique of trapping two matching glass cabochons between layers. Use cutters to punch out the top layer to hold the glass. Keep the cabochons very small so they are nice and light.

CHARM

You can also make a tiny charm in the same way and attach to a bracelet.



70

www.craftsinstitute.com