

PARTY ON!

JULIA RAI

Stand out at the Christmas party with this earring and cuff statement piece, which uses a double-sided mould to create the focal floral dangle. Team this with a simpler, complementary stud or dangle earring on the other ear, a pendant and a hair stick to create a perfect party ensemble. There are techniques here for beginners through to intermediate level metal clay artists. Learn how to make a stud earring by embedding Sterling silver in metal clay, use Art Clay Silver 950 to create a strong ear cuff and dry set cubic zirconia to add some party sparkle.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- 30g fine silver metal clay
- 5g Art Clay Silver 950
- Silver clay paste
- Silver clay syringe
- 3mm cubic zirconia
- 20cm x 0.8mm Sterling silver wire
- 3mm x 1mm Sterling silver wire
- 6cm Sterling silver chain
- Sterling silver earwires
- Earring scroll
- Triangular wire bail
- Jumpings
- 3 x crystal or glass beads
- 6mm diameter wooden/bamboo knittingneedle (size 4)
- Daisy cutter and mould set
- Small daisy cutter
- Paint palette
- 0.8mm, 1mm, 2mm and 3mm drill bits
- 8mm and 4mm nesting brass tubes
- Paintbrushes
- Firing tools
- Polishing tools
- Cutters and pliers



PHOTOGRAPHS: LAUREL GUILFOYRE, JULIA RAI

HOW TO MAKE

1. Lightly oil a piece of smooth Teflon, the cutter and both sides of the mould. You may need to use a paintbrush to assist. Roll out some of the silver clay four cards thick onto the Teflon. Cut out the daisy shape and carefully place it onto one side of the mould. Make sure that the petals are accurately placed inside it. Roll a small ball of clay and place this in the middle of the daisy. This will give it a more pronounced centre.

2. Press the top of the mould onto the bottom, lining it up precisely and using gentle pressure all over the mould. Open it up and make sure the impression is good. If not, close it

again and use a little more pressure; this can take a few tries to get right. Ease the edges of the petals up with a damp paintbrush and carefully remove from the mould. Place into an oiled paint palette with the top of the daisy facing up, so it dries in a curved shape. Make three more the same way. Leave them to dry.

3. One of the complementary earring designs is a stud made by embedding Sterling silver wire in the metal clay. Take a 3cm length of 0.8mm Sterling wire and bend an 'L' shape into one end with pliers. When the first daisy is dry, turn it over and dampen the dip in the centre back with water. Press a ball of fresh clay into the dip and smooth the surface with a clay shaper. Support the daisy carefully while you do this. Hook the 'L' end of the wire into the soft ball of clay and allow it to dry.

4. The other complementary earring design features hanging daisies. Roll out silver clay four cards thick and cut out three small daisy shapes. Dry these in the paint palette to give them a little curve. Once dry, add paste texture lines to the front and back surface, allowing this to dry between sides. Add a small dot of syringe clay to

the centre of two of the daisies. Roll a small ball of clay at least 4mm across and stick this onto the centre of the other daisy using paste. Flatten the top of the ball slightly and allow this to dry.

5. Refine the edges of all the daisies. Drill a pilot hole for the cubic zirconia into the ball using a 1mm drill bit. Make this hole wider using successively larger drill bits up to 3mm to create a 'V'-shaped dip that the stone sits comfortably into. The flat top of the stone should be level with the surface of the clay. Set the stone into the dip with paste and dry. Drill a 0.8mm hole in one petal of the stone set daisy and in two opposite petals of the other two. Clean any paste off the stone.

6. The ear cuff needs to be stronger and springier than fine silver clay can provide. Art Clay Silver 950 is perfect for this as it is strong and doesn't require burying in carbon to fire. Roll the 950 silver clay four cards thick and texture. Cut a rectangle 12mm wide x 3cm long. Oil the barrel of a straight-barrelled pen and wrap the clay around this so the ends are making contact with the barrel all round. They should not touch. Hang it over a mug while it dries.





7. Slide the dry cuff off the pen. Check the width of the cuff against your ear to ensure it is the size you want. If it is too wide, sand the edges using wet and dry paper to take off some of the width. The ends should be around 3mm apart. This will be adjusted to fit the ear after firing if necessary. Carefully sand the edges using a file and create a gentle curve on each of the ends so the cuff will be comfortable to wear. Drill a 1mm hole about 5mm from the edge opposite the opening for a jumpring.

8. For the pendant, take one of the dry moulded daisies and refine the edges. Roll out silver clay five cards thick and cut some donuts using nesting brass tubes to make a bail. The outside of the donut should be 8mm across and the hole 4mm across. Make more than you need as they can easily break. When the donut is dry, refine the sides and edges and file a flat platform on one side

of the donut. Stick the flat edge of the donut onto the back of one of the daisy petals with paste.

9. Drill a 1mm hole in the remaining two moulded daisies, one for the earring and one for the hair stick. The firing schedule for all the pieces except the stud earring is the ACS 950 schedule, which is suitable for all the fine silver pieces. Nestle the two large and three small daisies in fibre blanket. Support the bail of the pendant with the fibre blanket so the pendant retains its curve and the bail fires straight. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions and programme the kiln to heat at full ramp to 500°C and hold for 30 minutes, then heat to 850°C and hold for an hour.

10. To fire the stud earring with the Sterling wire embedded, the schedule needs to be at a low temperature and fired quickly to ensure the

Sterling wire does not become brittle – so fire at 700°C for 30 minutes in the kiln. Allow it to cool slowly or quench in cold water. The wire will be oxidized after firing, so remove the oxidization by soaking it in warm citric acid or jeweller's pickle. The pickle will be quicker, but citric acid is more environmentally friendly. You can also remove the oxidization using sanding sponges.

11. To create the stud earwire, trim it to 10mm long and file the end smooth. The wire anneals during the firing process so requires hardening. Harden it by gripping the full length in pliers and twisting it a quarter turn. Move the pliers halfway up the wire and twist again, then grip the tip of the wire and twist again. Check if it's hard enough and if not, twist again. Polish all the pieces using your favourite method; wire brush, tumble polish and/or use a power tool with radial brushes.

12. To make beaded components for the earring and hair stick, take the 3.5cm Sterling wire, file one end smooth and bend a loop into the same end using round nose pliers. Thread on a crystal or glass bead that matches the colour of the cubic zirconia used in other daisy earrings. Trim the wire and file the end smooth. Bend another loop to create a double-ended bead component. Create two more of these components. Use small jumprings to connect the three drop daisies with the stone set daisy at the bottom and connect to an earwire with a jumpring.

13. Attach a jumpring to one end of a bead component. Attach this to an earwire and connect one of the moulded daisies to the other end of the bead component with a jumpring. Thread one end of the 6cm Sterling chain onto the earwire. Check that the ear cuff fits your ear and adjust the opening if necessary. Attach a jumpring to the ear cuff and add another bead component to this. Attach the other end of the chain to the bead component with a jumpring. Hang the pendant on a chain.

14. Saw off the end of the wooden knitting needle to create a stick 17cm long. Smooth the blunt end with sandpaper. Drill a hole 7mm down from the blunt end using a 1mm drill bit. Bend 3mm of 1mm wire into a 'V'-shape and bend legs on each end to create a triangular bail. Attach this to the drilled holes and then attach a bead component and a moulded daisy using jumprings. To finish the stud earring, grip the end of the stud wire about 5mm from the tip with cutters and turn the daisy to carve a notch in the wire for the earring scroll.

RESOURCES

Art Clay Silver 950: metalclay.co.uk
Wire, chain and jumprings: cooksongold.com
Daisy cutter and mould set:
cakecraftshop.co.uk
Other materials are widely available from
advertisers in this magazine

CONTACT

juliarai.co.uk
csacj.co.uk
info@csacj.co.uk

