

SUMMER NIGHTS

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Sunshine, flowers and a dolphin feature in these pieces of jewellery. They are perfect for dressing up to enjoy balmy, tropical nights. PMC Flex or Art Clay Silver 950 both allow you to roll them thin and once dried, they are flexible enough to be used in a paper punch to create layered metal clay pieces. The resulting cells can then be used to add colour in a wide variety of ways including hot and cold enamel, paints and inks or as I've used here, glass paint. These can easily be made by beginners using simple themed punches. A little more skill may be required if the punches have multiple cutouts.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

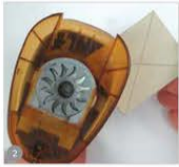
- 25-30g PMC Flex or Art Clay Silver 950
- Silver clay paste, any brand
- Paste Maker
- Glass paints
- Sterling silver chain
- Earring wires
- Paper punches
- Cutters including small nesting round cutters
- Jumpings
- 1mm drill
- Tissue blade
- Emery board
- Sanding sponge
- Paintbrushes
- Firing tools
- Polishing tools
- Cutters and pliers



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HOW TO MAKE

1. When you have chosen the punch for the pendant, roll out PMC Flex or Art Clay Silver 950 two cards (0.5mm) thick onto a sheet of Teflon. This panel needs to be large enough for your punch plus a border around the edges at least 5-10mm wide, depending on your design plus some extra so you can handle it in the punch. Trim it with a tissue blade so it is square or rectangular and put it to one side to dry naturally. Do not apply heat to dry it as this can make the panel brittle and trickier to use with the punch.

2. When the panel is dry, use a ruler to draw lines on the surface in pencil from corner to corner creating a cross showing the centre of the panel. Turn the punch upside down and put it on a flat, stable surface. Slide the dry metal clay panel into the slot and line up the centre of the punch design with the cross. Holding the panel in place with one hand, press down firmly on the cutter so you get a good, clean cut. Turn it over to release the cut out design and carefully remove the panel from the slot. Save any cut out pieces for other designs.

3. Trim the edges of the cut out panel with a

tissue blade so it is the correct size for your pendant. Roll out some more silver clay three cards (0.75mm) thick onto a sheet of lightly oiled Teflon, leather or another shallow texture of your choice. Dampen the back of the cut out panel with water and the surface of the clay with thin paste. Press the cut out panel gently onto the rolled out clay, ensuring it makes good contact at the outside edges and around all parts of the cut out design. Use the tissue blade to trim the clay slightly larger than the cut out panel to allow for shrinkage of the wet clay.

4. While the pendant is drying, make some donuts for a bail. Roll out silver clay six to eight cards (1.5-2mm) thick. Use small round nesting cutters to cut donut shapes out of the clay. Brass tubes in a variety of sizes make good small cutters. Make more than you need, dry them and then keep them in a box for future projects. When they are dry, refine the inside and outside with small files and sanding sponges so they are smooth. File one side of one donut to create a flat platform, which will stick to the back of the pendant.

5. When using transparent colour like glass

paints, it's fun to have a texture on the base of the cell. This can be achieved by using a texture plate when rolling out the clay initially or by adding a subtle, stippled texture with paste after the pendant is assembled. Use medium thickness paste and a good quality paintbrush to create a stippled texture down in the cells. Paint the paste in, then using the tip of the bristles, dab down and lift to create the texture. You can also add this texture to the surface of the panel for a more unified look to the finished pendant.

6. Once the pendant is completely dry, refine the edges with an emery board if the piece has flat edges or a sanding sponge if they are curved. File enough to ensure the back and front layers are flush and you cannot see the joint between the two. Always file along the length of the edge, not across it. This is particularly important when you are working with layers as filing across can dislodge the layers if they are not really well stuck down. If you can see a line, add some thick paste to the edge, making sure it is pushed into the joint. If the layers completely separate, stick them together again using paste. ▶

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7. Earlier this year I was teaching at the You Can Make It event in the UK organised by Metal Clay Ltd. American metal clay artist Wanaree Tanner was also teaching and she had a great tip for sticking dry pieces together, which is perfect for attaching a bail to the back of the pendant. Wanaree has found that using Paste Maker alone sticks pieces together really firmly and with none of the mess that can result from using paste. Mark where you want the bail to go with pencil, then dispense a little Paste Maker onto your work mat and dip the filed side of the donut into it. Place it on the back of the pendant, press firmly and leave to dry.

8. To make the earrings, charm and other pendants, use the same process of punching out the shapes from a dry panel, sticking this to a back piece and after drying, refining the edges. You can add a texture to the bottom of the cells or leave them smooth. Use a 1mm drill bit to drill a hole for earwires or jumpings or add a bail using Paste Maker as before. I have also added another hole to the bottom of the

dolphin pendant to add a drop bead later. When drilling holes in dry clay, support the piece from behind with your finger where you are drilling. Use no pressure; just the feel of the drill bit to drill. You can also put the piece on a rubber block to drill.

9. There are various ways to finish the edges of these pieces. You can simply leave them filed smooth so you can burnish the edges after firing for a high shine finish. You can also add a texture to the edges using paste stippled on. This is a good option if you can still see a line where the two layers meet. Carefully paint medium to thick paste on the edges and stipple with the paintbrush. Make sure there is no paste on the back or front of the piece; clean it off before it dries. You can also add a filed groove texture to the edges. If you like things ordered, measure and mark the position of each filed groove with a pencil.

10. When everything is ready, fire the pieces following the manufacturer's instructions for

the brand of clay you used. Polish the pieces using any method you like. Adding the colour is the final step. Dispense some of the glass paint onto a glass or ceramic tile and using a small paintbrush, add the colour into the bottom of the cell. Make sure you clean off any paint that gets in the wrong place immediately. Mixing colours is also possible with glass paints. Allow the paint to dry following the manufacturer's instructions. Add jumpings, earwires and chains to finish the pieces.

RESOURCES

Art Clay Silver 950, silver clay paste, glass paints and Paste Maker:
metalclay.co.uk
 Earring wires, chain and jumpings:
cooksongold.com

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