

# WINTER BEAD APPLIQUÉ

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Working with metal clay in the dry stage provides a whole lot more options for jewellers. Planning is everything when working with dry components and thinking through the sequence of construction is crucial to a positive result. But remember, the wonderful thing about metal clay is that if something goes wrong along the way, you can just crush up the dry clay, rehydrate it and start again. The best way to learn dry construction is to make hollow beads. They are more forgiving than going straight into making open boxes as you can make the insides of hollow forms as messy as you like. Here we'll make some lentil bead earrings and a pendant with a Christmas theme plus a simple box bead, also with Christmas motifs. We will also explore using paper type clay to make the appliqué motifs.



PHOTOGRAPHS: LAUREL GUILFOYLE, JULIA RAI

## MATERIALS & TOOLS

- 30g Art Clay Silver or PMC
- Fine silver syringe type clay
- Art Clay Paper type
- Fine silver paste
- Circle cutters
- Teflon sheet
- Paper punches – Christmas theme
- Sterling silver chain
- Ear wires
- 1mm and 2mm-3mm drill
- 400-600 grit sandpaper
- Sanding sponges
- Tissue blade
- Paintbrushes
- Collapsible eye needle
- Firing tools
- Vermiculite or fibre blanket
- Polishing tools

## RESOURCES

Widely available from advertisers in this magazine  
 Art Clay Silver, silver clay syringe, Art Clay Paper Type, silver clay paste: [metalclay.co.uk](http://metalclay.co.uk)  
 Chain and earwires: [cooksongold.com](http://cooksongold.com)

## CONTACT

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## HOW TO MAKE

1. Paper type silver clay is great for adding appliqué designs to the surface of these hollow beads. I've chosen Christmas themed punches – snowflakes, holly and a Christmas tree. The pendant and earring set will have snowflakes on both sides of the beads so I've chosen two snowflake punches, one smaller than the other. Choose a round cutter a bit larger than the size of the punch. You can also use textures on the surface of the beads or add a paste and cocktail stick texture when the bead is fully constructed.

2. To make a domed form, find something round and domed like a measuring spoon. Ping-pong balls, marbles or old-fashioned light bulbs also make good forms for making domed shapes. Oil the outside of the measuring spoon. Roll out some clay four cards thick and cut out a circle for the pendant. Carefully transfer the circle to the measuring spoon. Gently press the edges down onto the spoon but don't squash them. They need to make good contact with the spoon all round. Leave to dry.

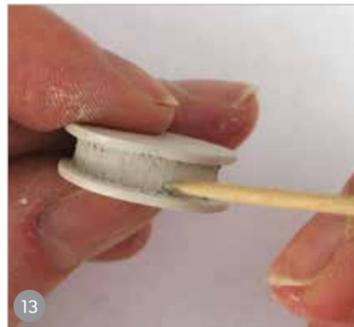
3. Put a piece of sandpaper flat down on the table. File the open edge of the dry domes until you have a flat platform all round. As you file, move your fingers around the outside of the dome so you put equal pressure on all parts of the dome as you file. Keep a close eye on how much you are filing off. The more you file, the shallower and

smaller the dome gets. This can cause problems when you come to stick the two halves together if you file one more than the other.

4. Check the fit of the two halves, turning them around individually to see which way they fit best. Put a pencil mark across the join on both halves when you find the best fit; this will help you to put them together correctly when they are sticky with paste. Dampen the flat platform on both halves and then put a line of syringe around the platform on one half. Stick them together, ensuring the pencil line matches on both halves. Press the edges firmly so the syringe clay squeezes out, but don't clean this up yet. Leave the assembled bead to dry.

5. When the bead is dry, gently sand off any lumps of dry syringe in the join, fill any gaps with syringe and smooth with a damp paintbrush. Allow to dry. Check for any more gaps and fill if necessary. Use sanding pads to smooth the surface of the bead and the joins so you have a completely clean and smooth bead. You can also use this step to correct any misshapen areas of the bead or edge by sanding it and filling as necessary.

6. Art Clay Paper type is dry out of the pack and quite rigid so is perfect for using with paper punches. Turn the punch over so you can see ▶



the cutting aperture. Slide the Paper Type sheet into the slot and line it up as close to the edges of the sheet as you can. This will help to make using punches with paper type as economical as possible. Punch out the snowflake. Line the sheet up again in the punch and cut another. Handle these with care as they will break if you bend them. Avoid getting them wet as this can cause them to disintegrate.

7. Paint a layer of thin paste onto one side of the bead and immediately stick the snowflake onto the surface pressing down firmly from the centre outwards, to ensure good contact with the surface. Allow this to dry. Paint thin paste all over the surface covering the snowflake and the surface to ensure it is well stuck down. Make sure you don't have any thick areas of paste around the edges of the snowflake. When this side is dry, do the same on the other side.

8. When the bead is completely dry, mark the points on each side where you will drill holes for the chain. Create a notch on these marks using a small file. Use a 1mm drill to drill a pilot hole into the notch. Make sure you drill in the direction of the other hole rather than at a 90° angle to the edge of the bead. This will make threading the chain through much easier. Do the same with the other hole. Use a small round file to open the holes out further until you have a hole large enough for your chain and remember to account for shrinkage.

9. Put the bead to one side and make the earrings. With the larger bead we domed the two halves on the outside of the measuring spoon but with the smaller earring elements it's easier to dome them on the inside. Oil the inside of four spoons. Cut out circles from clay rolled out four cards thick. It's safer to do these one at a time so the circles remain moist while

you put them into the spoons. Place each circle into the spoon and press down gently in the centre so the circle makes good contact with the surface of the spoon. Leave all four to dry.

10. File the flat platform into all four sides and stick the beads together as before. Fill the joins, refine and sand the surfaces. Punch out four snowflakes using the smaller paper punch and stick these onto the beads following the same process as for the larger bead. Once the beads are dry, use a 1mm drill to drill a pilot hole in the centre of the snowflake on each side. Open this hole out using a 2mm or 3mm drill bit. Clean the hole up if necessary with a small file. You can also embellish a central hole by making small donuts and sticking these onto the finished beads. Put the earrings to one side.

11. To make the box bead, choose a circle cutter to make the central core and then choose a

larger circle cutter around 8mm to 10mm larger in diameter. This will form the two sides of the bead. Cut a piece of Teflon to the depth of the smaller cutter, wrap it around the cutter and stick with tape. Roll out a long length of clay four cards thick so it is around 1cm longer than you need to wrap around the cutter. Cut it with a tissue blade a bit wider than the depth of the bead core you want. Wrap this around the cutter overlapping the end, cut down through the overlapping clay, remove the excess and use thick paste to stick the ends together. Leave to dry.

12. Cut the larger circles for the sides of the box bead using rolled out clay four cards thick. Leave these to dry. Slide the core element off the cutter, fill and refine the outside of the join if necessary with syringe and then sand it smooth. Use sandpaper flat on the table to file each end of the core flat and even. Dampen the surface of one of the side elements and one end of the core and then use syringe to stick the core to the side. Allow this to dry and then refine the join on the outside so it is smooth. Use the same process to stick the second side onto the core. Allow the whole bead to dry.

13. File the edges of the side elements so they are even and smooth. Add a texture to the core using paste and a cocktail stick. Smooth the surface of both sides using a sanding pad. Cut a Christmas tree and holly from the Paper Type sheet using paper punches and stick these to the sides using the same process as the pendant and earrings. Drill pilot holes in the core of the bead then widen these out with a 2mm or 3mm drill bit to create a large hole in each side of the bead.

14. To fire the beads, use vermiculite in a stainless steel container and nestle the beads so they are supported. You can also use fibre blanket to cushion the beads if you don't have any vermiculite. Kiln-fire at 900°C for two hours or torch fire. When they are fired and cool, polish with a brass brush and/or polishing papers. You can tumble polish hollow beads, but you need to plug the holes otherwise they will fill up with shot. Use metallic pipe cleaners or thick copper wire through the holes to plug them during tumbling.

15. Thread chain through the holes in the pendant beads. A collapsible eye needle can help with this. Cut one side of the eye about halfway down to create a hook and then thread the needle through both holes, hook the end of the chain through the eye and pull it through. You can also use a pinch bail to hang pendant beads if you put a hole from front to back rather than in the sides of the bead. Cut two lengths of chain around 4cm long, thread them through the hole in the earring and attach to an ear wire. Alternatively, you can use 0.8mm wire to create your own earwires, which go through the centre holes front to back.

