

Spring bud brooch



Make a textured brooch using multiple bud elements.
By Julia Rai

Julia runs the Metal Clay Academy and regularly teaches classes using all brands of metal clay in Cornwall and London. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry 3 credential. Many things influence Julia's work but the inspiration for this brooch came from the exotic natural forms seen at the Eden Project, close to her home in Cornwall. She sketches her ideas first, and then develops them in 3D using polymer clay. Metal clay is the perfect material to create flowing, organic forms like these buds.

MATERIALS

- 20-25g of silver metal clay
- Thick silver metal clay paste
- Embeddable brooch findings
- Marabu Ceramica porcelain and ceramic paint - metallic gold
- Clay shaper
- Teflon work surface
- Cocktail sticks
- Variety of drill bits - 1mm, 2mm, 3mm and 3.5mm
- Paintbrushes - fine for the ceramic paint
- Polishing papers
- Brass or stainless steel brush
- Burnisher



Extra Project

Make earrings

Make a matching pair of earrings by making two or three small bud elements and intertwining them using paste. Use a jumpring to hang them on ear wires or solder earring posts on after firing. Or instead of attaching brooch findings, add a bail to make a stunning pendant.



STEP 1
Decide how many bud elements you want in your brooch; mine has six. Divide your metal clay into different sized pieces, keeping one bigger than the rest. This larger piece forms the main bud on which the brooch is built. Keep a small amount separate for the balls. Roll the largest piece into a thick sausage then taper one end.



STEP 2
Form the main bud by pushing a clay shaper into the fattest end of the bud element. Make the bud fairly deep and the sides about three cards thick. You don't need to worry about being neat. If the clay cracks a little at the edges, this just adds to the organic look. Make sure the back of the bud is higher than the front, then put it to dry.



STEP 3
Make another bud using the second largest lump of clay. While it's still pliable, paste it to the main bud. Have fun with this bit, maybe crossing the tapered end around the main bud or attaching them side by side. Before the second bud dries completely, make a third and paste it in place. Working with damp elements will allow you to nudge them around if necessary.



STEP 4
Once all the buds are attached and dry, fill in any gaps with thick paste. It should be thick enough for a cocktail stick to stand up without moving. This paste is also used to create the texture. Spread it on and drag a cocktail stick through it, working in sections. Allow each section to dry before moving to the next. After drying, decide where to put the brooch findings.



STEP 5
The pin and catch have a screw-on embeddable part which is fired in place. Mark the position for these in pencil, choosing places where your brooch is thickest, not around the buds. Check your pin is long enough to fasten (considering shrinkage). With a small drill, make progressively larger holes 2mm deep. End with the 3.5mm drill bit.



STEP 6
Stick the screw parts into the holes using paste and blend with the surrounding texture. To prevent the screws getting full of paste, screw the finding in before pasting. Stick the catch first and dry, then stick the pin part. Fasten the pin carefully into the catch to line them up and leave to dry. The pin length will be trimmed after firing.



STEP 7
Make small balls by pinching off small bits of clay and rolling them in your palm with a finger. When dry, stick them into the bottom of the buds using paste. Carefully unscrew the brooch findings, clean up excess paste around the embeddable elements, making sure no debris falls into the screws. Dry, fire at 900°C for 2 hours in a kiln.



STEP 8
Brush the fired brooch all over using a stainless steel or brass brush. Polish the inside of the buds using polishing papers wrapped around a cocktail stick. Polish the area around the balls and into all the textures. Attach brooch findings and if necessary, cut the pin to length and file the end to a point. Use epoxy to secure the findings.



STEP 9
Add colour to the inside of the buds using ceramic paint. Mix the paint well before you start. Using a fine brush, paint the inside of the buds, taking care around the balls so they remain silver. When the paint is dry, bake in the oven at 170°C for 30 mins. Patina using liver of sulphur & polish or burnish the high spots.

resources

Metal Clay Ltd
www.metalclay.co.uk
The Chununga Tree
www.chunungatree.co.uk
Artifolk
www.artifolk.co.uk

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