

Yin Yang



Use photopolymer plates to create a texture for a pendant with the essence of Chinese philosophy.
By Julia Rai

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In Chinese philosophy, yin and yang are the two fundamental principles, yin being negative, dark, cold, and feminine and yang being positive, bright, hot and masculine. The Chinese believe both yin and yang are required for balance in all things. Make a yin/yang pendant to help you balance these forces in your life.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- 20g of silver metal clay
- Silver metal clay paste
- Plastic backed photopolymer plates
- UV light source
- Acetate sheets
- Soft nail brush
- Rigid board, foam and glass
- Olive oil
- Teflon paper
- Rolling pin
- Tissue blade or cookie cutter
- Clay shaper
- Drinking straw
- Paintbrush
- Brass or stainless steel brush
- Polishing pads and papers in a variety of grits
- Liver of sulphur gel

designer tips

- Always do a test when you first get a UV lamp to get the timing right for the UV exposure. The easiest way to do this is to create an acetate with numbers one to five in a line. Cover numbers two to five with a black cloth and expose number one for 30 seconds. Then expose number two and number one for another 30 seconds. Do this all the way to number five so that number one had been exposed for two and a half minutes. Check the wash out and see at which point you get a good texture.



Extra Project

Make earrings

Make a pair of earrings with a Chinese character on. These simple earrings are made with a photopolymer plate of the Chinese character for love. Or maybe you could use two Chinese characters, one on each earring spelling out a message, like love and peace.



LAUREL GUILFOYLE, JULIA RAI, POSTCARD IMAGE BY SMOKING PERMITTED

China



STEP 1
First choose your design. The internet is a good source of images or you can draw your own. Search Google Images to find yin/yang pictures or invest in a royalty free image book of designs. Make sure the design you've chosen isn't protected by copyright. You need a good strong black and white image to make a successful photopolymer plate so only select black and white designs to work with.



STEP 2
When using photopolymer plates, the black areas of the image will be the dips in the texture plate so these will then be raised when you press your plate into the clay. Decide which way round you want the design to be and adjust it on the computer. To do this, open the image in a programme like Paint and choose 'invert colours'. This switches the black and white parts.



STEP 3
Print your design onto clear acetate. The black areas should be a very dense black. Wherever there are black lines, the UV light is blocked so the photopolymer layer underneath remains soft. UV light hardens the clear areas where there are no black lines. There's a protective layer of clear film on the photopolymer sheet to be exposed so remove this and lay your acetate on top.



STEP 4
A small piece of hardboard with sponge on top and a sheet of glass will hold your photopolymer and acetate steady while you expose it to UV light. A small clip style photo frame with some kitchen sponge cut to size works fine. Time the exposure using the results from your test strip (see tips box). A small acrylic nail lamp - inexpensive from eBay - takes around three minutes to work.



STEP 5
Once the exposure time is up, carefully remove the acetate from the surface of the photopolymer plate. You may not see anything on the surface but don't worry. Run the plate under warm water with a bit of washing up liquid. Use a soft nail brush to gently remove the photopolymer from the unexposed areas. Too much heavy scrubbing may remove fine lines so be gentle and work methodically.



STEP 6
Once you've removed all the soft photopolymer, dry the plate with warm air from a hair dryer or dehydrator. Don't pat the plate with anything to dry it, you may get fluff stuck to the surface while it's wet and still slightly sticky. Once the plate is dry, if it still feels sticky, wash again and expose it to UV light for a few minutes, it's then ready to use.



STEP 7
Roll out your clay four cards thick. Oil the plate, making sure you get oil down into the texture. Place the plate on the clay and add two cards to each side of your stack. Roll in one smooth movement so the texture transfers cleanly. The two extra cards compensate for the thickness of the texture plate and prevent the final piece from being too thin. Cut around the design.



STEP 8
Dry as normal and refine the edges using sanding pads if necessary. To make the bail, roll out a thin snake of clay three cards thick. Cut a straight, long rectangle and using paste, stick it to the back of the pendant. While it is still pliable, bend it over a drinking straw and stick down with paste forming a loop. Dry thoroughly and fire with a torch or kiln.



STEP 9
Polish your pendant as normal. Photopolymer plate textures look particularly effective when oxidized using Liver of Sulphur. The new gel form of Liver of Sulphur is more stable than previous varieties and has a longer shelf life. Put a small drop of gel into hot water, dip your piece in, and then dip in cold water and check the colour. When you're happy, rinse, dry and polish the high spots.

resources

Metal Clay:
Bluebell Design Studio
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
Photopolymer plates:
Pajed
www.pajed.co.uk
Liver of Sulphur Gel: Metal Clay
www.metalclay.co.uk

UV Lamps: eBay
Search for acrylic nail lamps

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