



STEP 1
Draw your design slightly larger than the final necklace element to take account of the shrinkage of metal clay. Remember that after shrinking, each cell will be smaller. If your cells are too small, it will be difficult to fill them with colour neatly. Once you have refined your design, transfer it to white paper, making sure all the lines are at least 1mm thick to replicate the syringe lines.



STEP 5
Flip the dry piece over and fill in any gaps on the back using the syringe. Do this in sections, flipping it over and pressing down gently on the piece to flatten the repairs on the back. It's very important that the back remains flat for the filling stages later. Pay special attention to the joins, which are the weakest areas. When it's dry, refine any excess paste using tiny files.

MYSTIC MERMAID NECKLACE

Test your metal clay syringe skills with this faux plique-à-jour necklace. *By Julia Rai*

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It's not surprising that mermaids feature heavily in Cornwall's mythology as it is surrounded by sea. This project uses the unique properties of syringe type silver clay to create a mermaid's tail with a network of open cells. Liquid polymer clay creates a translucent film in each cell of the tail, which is then coloured using glass paints.

MATERIALS

- 10g-15g silver metal clay syringe type clay
- Silver metal clay paste
- Fimo liquid decorating gel
- Pebeo Vitrea glass paints in yellow and green
- Pebeo Vitrea thinner
- Chain and jumprings
- Playing card
- Wide, smooth plastic tape
- Low tack smooth tape
- Cocktail sticks
- Cotton buds
- Ceramic tile
- Teflon sheet
- Good quality paintbrushes
- Tiny diamond files
- Tumble polisher
- Pliers

RESOURCES

- Silver clay syringe and paste:** www.creativeglassshop.co.uk
Fimo liquid decorating gel and glass paints: www.artifolk.co.uk
Chain and jumprings: www.cooksongold.com

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Designer tips

- The syringe can be hard to master so take some time to practise your technique and find a hold that works for you.
- Always store the syringe nozzle down in water to keep it from drying out.
- Use a damp paintbrush to remove any syringe lines that don't work as soon as possible.



STEP 2
Stick your design to a flat playing card using wide, smooth tape. You need the design to be completely covered by the tape, as you will syringe onto the tape so it is easy to remove. Put the nozzle on the syringe and trim off the end using sharp scissors so the extruded line is at least 1mm thick. This will give you a good, strong basis for your design.



STEP 3
Using the syringe, cover each line of your design with a smooth, even extrusion. Stop at the end of each line and refine as necessary. Use a damp, but not wet, paintbrush to ease the line into place and smooth out any points at the end of lines. If your paintbrush is too wet, the syringe lines will absorb the water and flatten out, so blot the paintbrush as you go.



STEP 4
When the extruded lines are dry, reinforce with thick paste. Using a good quality flat paintbrush, apply thick paste to the lines in a patting motion with the brush on its side. This will add texture and dimension to the lines as well as making them stronger. Work on a small area at a time so the lines do not become too wet and undermine the integrity of the piece.



STEP 6
Fire at 900°C for two hours so it's really strong. Tumble polish. Stick low tack smooth tape to the back of the piece, making sure it is firmly stuck to the whole design. Half fill each cell with the decorating gel, leaving one at each end open for a jumpring. Use a cocktail stick to push the gel right to the edges of the cells so there is complete coverage in each cell.



STEP 7
Bake the piece in the oven following the manufacturer's instructions to harden the gel. Remove the tape carefully. Dispense a small amount of coloured paint onto a tile and mix in some thinner. Using a fine paintbrush, add colour to the cells being careful not to go over the silver. You will clean any excess later so don't worry about this too much. Leave to dry for 24 hours.



STEP 8
Check that the paint is completely dry before doing this step. If in doubt, leave it for longer. Dip a cotton bud into the glass paint thinner and blot well. Carefully run the cotton bud over the silver cell edges to remove any excess paint. Do this slowly and carefully and avoid soaking the paint in the cells as this will remove it. Allow the cell edges to dry completely.



STEP 9
Burnish the high spots and edges of the cells using a steel or agate burnisher to achieve a high shine. Cut a ready-made chain right in the centre or add a clasp and receiver to the ends of two pieces of chain. Trim to an appropriate length. Attach a jumpring to the two empty cells and thread the end of the chain onto the jumpring. Close using chain nose pliers.

Extra Projects Make earrings and a pendant

EARRINGS

Make matching earrings by shrinking your necklace design using a photocopier and flipping to make a mirror image pair. This filling technique also works with solid metal clay with cells.

PENDANT

Create a pendant with a cut-out area and use Pebeo Fantasy Prisme effect paint over the baked liquid polymer.

