

PERIWINKLE NECKLACE

Use a stencil to make this cutout focal element with a three-dimensional twist, teamed with beads in ocean hues. *By Julia Rai*

Julia is co-director of the Cornwall School of Art, Craft and Jewellery, where she teaches a variety of classes. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four.

Inspired by a piece of jewellery by Myia Bonner, this necklace features a pierced and textured three-dimensional focal element teamed with beads in clear, blue, green and white. It's quite fragile in the dry stage and requires a good level of experience working with metal clay but the results are worth it.



STEP 1

Choose a stencil carefully without too many cutouts. It should have a solid area across the centre where you'll attach the three-dimensional part. This needs to make good contact right across the central area, otherwise the piece will have no integrity. Choose a cutter which fits around the stencil for the overall shape. Alternatively, you can cut around the stencil shape freehand using a sharp craft knife.

MATERIALS

- Silver metal clay
- Silver clay paste
- Silver clay syringe
- Stencils and cutters
- Small piece of polymer clay
- 0.3mm clear beading thread
- Variety of beads
- Crimps and crimp covers
- Silver calottes
- Fine silver embeddable eyelets
- Clasp
- Tissue blade
- Good quality paintbrushes
- Soft, clean brass brush
- Agate or steel burnisher
- Polishing pads, papers etc
- Pliers, cutters etc
- Liver of Sulphur (optional)

RESOURCES

Silver clay, syringe, paste and embeddable eyelets:
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
 Beads, thread, findings, crimps:
www.noseksjustgems.com
 Silver calottes:
www.cooksongold.com

CONTACT

www.juliarai.co.uk
www.csacj.co.uk
julia@csacj.co.uk

Designer tips

- When cutting out stencils, keep the pin tool perpendicular to the clay so you get a clean cut.
- Make your own very fine pin tool by embedding a sewing needle into a handle of polymer clay.
- Keep the pin tool slick by pushing it into a sponge soaked in olive oil for a clean cut.

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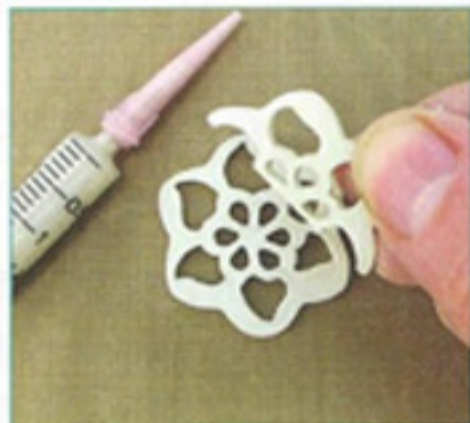

STEP 2

Roll out the clay five cards thick. With a fine pin tool, cut out the stencil and the overall shape. Don't speed the drying as the piece can warp, causing problems later. Create another stencil five cards thick. Cut across the centre with a tissue blade, making sure you have some solid areas to attach it later. Dry both halves to ensure you have a piece spare in case of breakage.



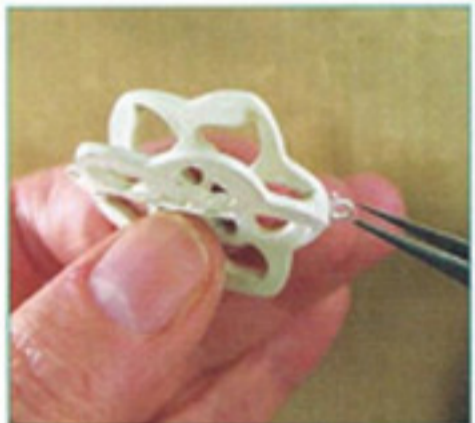
STEP 3

When the pieces are completely dry, carefully file the edges and inside the cutouts. Very small files are ideal here as they can get into tiny gaps and refine pierced elements really well. You can also use small pieces of wet and dry sandpaper. Tear off a small piece and fold it in half; take this right into corners and along inside edges. Brush off any excess dust.



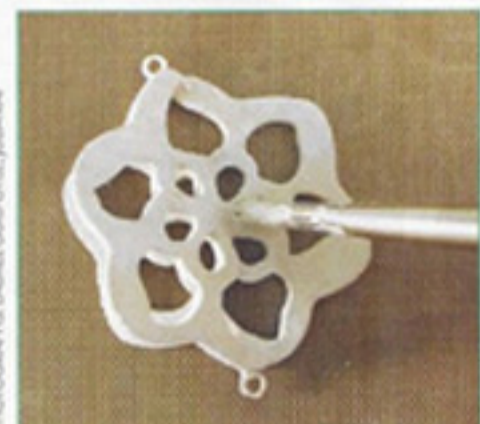
STEP 4

Fix the half pierced element to the main element across the middle. Prepare a wedge of polymer clay to support the half element during drying. Dampen the area where you'll fix the half element. Dampen the edges of the half element and apply syringe along the points which will touch the main element. Stick the half element on and lean it up against the polymer clay wedge while it dries.



STEP 5

When it's completely dry, add more syringe into the angle between both the elements to reinforce the join. Use a damp paintbrush to smooth the syringe so it looks neat. Add some syringe to the front of the join and smooth this too. To embed the eyelets, which will connect to the beaded part, squirt syringe generously into the angle and use tweezers to push the eyelet 'tail' in. Dry.



STEP 6

Refine the joins and where the eyelets are embedded, making sure they're all securely attached. Texture the surface of the whole element using thick paste and a paintbrush to create a subtle stippled effect. Alternatively, drag a cocktail stick through the paste to create a random texture. Dry thoroughly and fire at 900°C for two hours in the kiln. You can also torch-fire this if it's small enough.



STEP 7

Polish by either tumbling or hand polishing. You can oxidize with Liver of Sulphur if you like the effect. Design the bead necklace on a bead board, using a variety of sizes, shapes, effects and complementary colours with the polished silver element on one side of the design rather than right in the centre. You could use silver donut-shaped spacer beads to provide a repeating element throughout the design.



STEP 8

Cut a length of clear beading thread longer than you need. Using a crimp, attach the beading thread to one side of the silver element and crimp it shut firmly. Hide the crimp with a silver crimp cover. Begin to thread the beads and spacers in order onto this side of the necklace. When you have completed one side, repeat on the other side using beads and spacers in order.



STEP 9

Check the length of the necklace, making sure the silver element sits off to one side. This design works well sitting on the base of the neck or as a longer necklace. Check that it's balanced physically and visually and adjust as necessary. Finish each end using a crimp and a calotte to ensure the ends are very secure and neat. Add a toggle, spring ring, lobster or 'S' clasp.

Extra Projects Make earrings and a charm

EARRINGS

Make a pair of earrings using a stencil. Make sure you flip the second earring over to create a mirror image pair.

CHARM

You can also make a charm using this process but make sure there are not too many cutout parts, which may make the charm too fragile.

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