

PORCELAIN AND SILVER PENDANT

Black coloured porcelain and silver clay paste make a dramatic statement in this lightweight, elegant pendant.

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.

The toughness and translucence of porcelain has been used in fine china for centuries but its use in jewellery isn't so common. Porcelain requires a specific pottery type kiln to fire as the temperatures required are so high. Porcelain blanks are available from some suppliers and can be combined with silver clay to make dramatic statement pieces like this pendant.

MATERIALS

- Porcelain pendant blank
- Silver clay syringe with a range of nozzles
- Silver chain, silk or leather thong
- Oval jumpring
- Good quality paintbrushes
- Soft, clean brass brush
- Agate or steel burnisher
- Pliers



Easy Project

Designer tips

- If you do go over the edge of the cell, use a very wet, clean paintbrush to water down the paste. You might get away with it, but it's better to work slowly than to risk it.
- Make sure you keep your hands very clean while working. If you get paste on your hands and touch the porcelain, you'll end up with paste where you don't want it.
- If you want to make your own porcelain beads or jewellery, you'll need a pottery kiln, which can fire up to 1,200-1,300°C or make friends with a local potter and see if they will fire your pieces for you.
- CSACJ run classes in working with porcelain for making jewellery.

Extra Projects Make a charm and earrings

White porcelain makes very light and translucent earrings, perfect for daywear. Use the same technique to add silver clay to an embossed pattern. You can use gold paste in the same way as the silver syringe, adding a gold accent to a charm or earrings, which is great on black porcelain.



STEP 1

Choose your blank carefully for this project. You need something with deep cells, which can be filled or painted with silver clay syringe. Using unglazed porcelain creates a rougher surface than glazed porcelain and accepts the metal clay very well. Silver looks great with plain white porcelain for everyday wear but against black coloured porcelain, it takes on a new drama, which is great for evenings.



STEP 2

The surface of this blank is a combination of rough and smooth parts and even the smooth areas are porous and can't easily be cleaned. You must work very cleanly when combining metal clay with unglazed porcelain. If paste or water with paste in it goes somewhere you don't want it to, it will stick and stay. Use a good quality paintbrush to dampen the cell you are working on.



STEP 3

Choose an appropriate sized nozzle for your syringe, making sure it will fit down into the cell you want to fill. If the nozzle is too large and syringe clay goes over the edge, it is very hard to clean off, especially on rougher textured areas. Work slowly and precisely as this really does need a steady hand and plenty of time. Fill in a small area with some syringe clay.



STEP 4

While the syringe is still wet, smooth it down with a damp paintbrush. Use good quality paintbrushes, which are the right size for the cell to ensure precision. You can smooth the syringe lines out very well or leave some texture if you prefer. Make sure you work within the cell and do not come up over the edge. Fill a little more and smooth it out again.



STEP 5

Dry the piece slowly using gentle heat. Don't use a hotplate as this may crack the piece. Kiln fire only at 700°C for 30 minutes and leave the door closed until it has completely cooled to avoid thermal shocking the porcelain. When it's cool, dry brush the silver parts with a clean, soft brass brush. This is fine for black pieces but white ones can discolour so only burnish them.



STEP 6

Burnish the silver using an agate or steel burnisher, picking out any high spots if you chose to leave texture in the silver. Take care not to press too hard on the piece. Although fired porcelain is tough, it's still china and if you're very rough with it or try to bend it, it will break. Add a jumpring of an appropriate size for the piece and a leather cord, silk thong or silver chain.

RESOURCES

Porcelain blanks: www.csacj.co.uk
Silver clay syringe:
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
Chain, silk thong, jumprings:
www.cockatooold.com

CONTACT

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

