

SNOWFLAKE SPARKLE

Use the unique properties of PMC Flex to create sparkling snowflake earrings. *By Julia Rai*

Julia runs the Metal Clay Academy and teaches a variety of metal clay related classes around the UK. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four. PMC Flex has a longer working time than the other silver clay varieties and also continues to be flexible once it is dry. This property allows you to use a paper punch to cut out multiple shapes easily for use as repetitive features in your jewellery. These earrings are a good example of the use of this unique property.

MATERIALS

- 10g PMC Flex
- Silver clay paste
- Small snowflake paper punch
- Cocktail stick
- Paintbrush
- 1mm drill bit
- Fine chain, jumpings and earwires
- Polishing tools

RESOURCES

PMC Flex:
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
Chain, earwires and jumpings:
www.cooksongold.com

CONTACT

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Extra Projects Make a necklace and stud earrings

NECKLACE

Make a matching necklace with punched elements linked together with chain. These elements can be made thicker by joining two punched elements together, back to back.

STUD EARRINGS

Create stud earrings by making a solid base and adding punched elements to create an interesting multi-textural design. Solder posts on after firing.



STEP 1

Roll out a sheet of PMC Flex two or three cards thick and allow it to air dry, flipping it occasionally to avoid warping. This panel can be textured but texture will be added with paste once the elements are cut out. Do not use heat to dry the Flex as this can make it brittle. You need the flexibility of the dry clay to use the paper punches.



STEP 2

Turn the paper punch upside down so you can see the cutting aperture and so you can see a firm surface. Slide the dry Flex sheet into the slot and line it up as close to the edge of the sheet as possible. Press down on the punch firmly, remove the cut shape, slide the sheet in again and line it up close to the edge and the previously cut shape.



STEP 3

Cut more shapes than you need as they break easily. Using thick paste and immediately scrape radiating lines into the paste from the centre of the snowflake to the outside. Do as much of the snowflake as you can, dry, then paint and texture the remaining part. When the first side is dry, turn over and texture the back. Dry thoroughly on a hotplate.



STEP 4

Use a 1mm drill bit in a pin vice to drill a hole in the centre part of the snowflake, about 3mm from the inside edge of the snowflake design. The outer elements of the snowflake are too thin and fragile to allow a hole to be drilled so these will hang from the middle section. Make sure your hole lines up with the intersection between two snowflake 'arms'.



STEP 5

Fire the snowflake elements at 900°C for two hours in a kiln or torch fire, taking care not to melt the fine and delicate snowflakes. Brush the surface of the snowflakes and then tumble polish. Burnish the high spots of the texture to add some sparkle. Cut fine gauge silver chain into three pieces for each earring, making each one shorter than the next - 6cm, 4cm and 2cm long.



STEP 6

Thread the three pieces of silver chain onto the loop of an earwire. Whatever type of earwire you use, ensure that the longest chain is at the back, the medium chain is in the middle and the shortest is at the front. This will ensure that it hang correctly. Use a jumping to attach a snowflake to the end of each chain. Repeat this for the other earring.

Fashion Inspiration

Pussybow blouse, £25
Pleated shorts, £25
Both www.very.co.uk



Designer tips

- PMC Flex can be used with PMC3 or Art Clay Silver paste or lump clay with no problems as they all have the same properties and firing schedules.
- Using the paper punch upside down makes it easier to cut out the shapes and also allows you to be very economical with the clay sheet.
- Do not roll the clay thicker than three cards if you want to use a paper punch as it becomes too thick to cut easily and may not fit into the punch.