



Victorian Bud vase

BY JULIA RAI

Make this Victorian-style bud vase with silver metal clay.



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Dolls' House PROJECT

This elegant 1:12 scale Victorian bud vase is heavily embellished in the style of London silversmith's William Comyns, who enjoyed enormous success in the 1890s. In the original sheet silver, the embellishment would have been achieved with a combination of chasing and repousse techniques. With silver clay, it is easily achieved by attaching elements to the surface of the vase.

MATERIALS

- 10g Art Clay Silver
- 5g silver clay syringe
- Small amount of thick paste
- Stiff paper
- Adhesive tape
- Sharp scissors
- Teflon
- Roller
- Playing cards
- Craft knife
- Silicone or rubber-tipped wipeout tool
- Small decorative bead or button
- Two part silicone moulding compound
- Paintbrush
- 1.5mm round brass tube
- Round cutters
- Emery board
- Small files
- Liver of sulphur (optional)

1. Make a tight, narrow cone using paper to build the vase around. Take a square of paper 70mm square and roll it tightly into a cone from corner to corner. Secure with adhesive tape. Although you are only going to use a small part of the cone, it's useful to have a long form so you can easily handle it.

2. Take 5g of silver clay and roll it out three cards thick on an oiled piece of Teflon. Carefully wrap it around the paper cone form so it overlaps itself. Cut down cleanly through both layers using a sharp craft knife. Flap the ends back and remove the excess from inside and outside then loosely replace the two cut ends.

3. Apply some water to the join area and with a 1mm flap over, stick the two layers together. With a rubber- or silicone-tipped wipeout tool, gently press the two layers together using a stitching type of mark to make sure the two layers attach. Trim the top end flat with a craft knife and leave to dry.

4. To make the base of the vase, find a small embellished button or bead, about 8mm across. Take equal sized pieces of each colour of the moulding compound. Mix them together until they are completely blended and press the bead or button down into the compound just until it is halfway in, creating a half spherical mould. Leave to cure.

TIPS

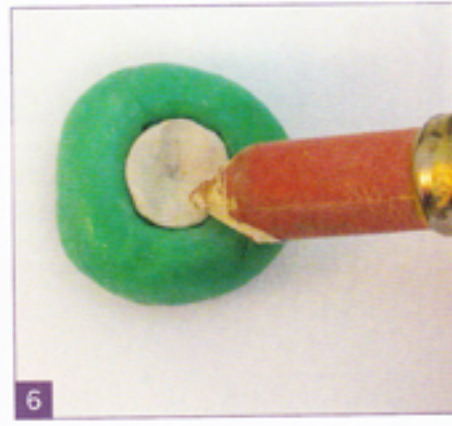
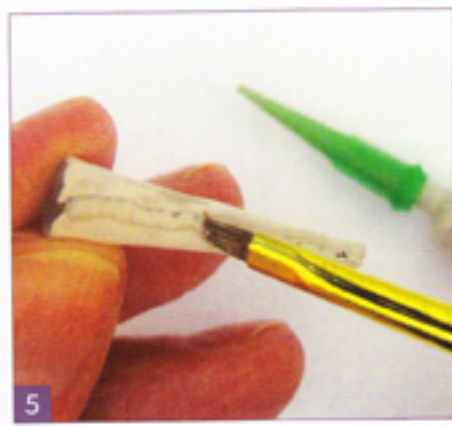
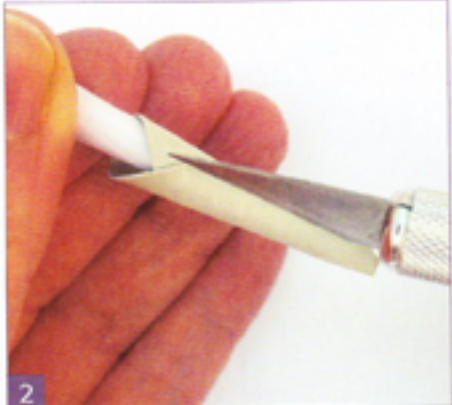
Add interest to the vase before firing by drilling holes between the embellishments to replicate pierced designs also popular in the period.

Kiln firing is preferable but you can also fire silver clay using a butane torch.

Round brass tubes are very useful tools. Buy a variety of sizes at hobby shops and make a nesting set held together with a large safety pin.

5. To clean up the join in the dried cone piece, use a paintbrush to dampen the join and then extrude some of the syringe-type silver clay along the join. Use the damp paintbrush to smooth the syringed line but don't worry too much as it will be filed and embellished later.

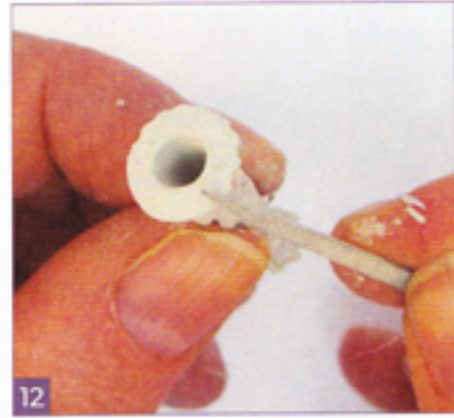
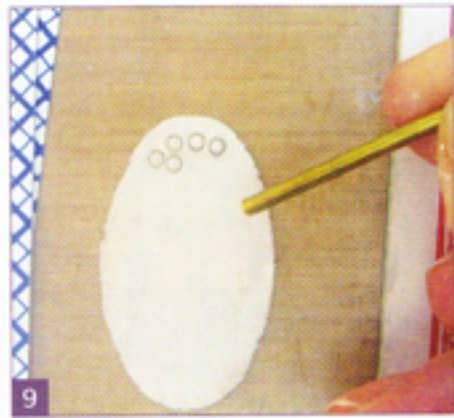
6. When the mould has set, remove the bead or button. Firmly press a small amount of silver clay down into the mould to get a good imprint. Smooth the top surface a little. You can fill the mould completely or make a small depression in the centre. Leave to harden, then pop out and dry.



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7. File a small, flat platform on the top of the dry base to attach the cone. File the bottom of the cone flat to match the base platform. File the top end of the cone so it is around 27mm high and the opening is flat. Use a blob of syringe to stick the cone to the base. Leave to dry.

8. If you find that the cone isn't quite round at the top, dampen the inside and outside where it is flat and allow the water to soak into the clay. Keep dampening the area as the water soaks in until the area becomes soft enough to ease out. Use the end of a paintbrush to gently round it and dry.

9. Draw a pencil line all around the base of the cone about 3mm above the bottom. This will be for an embellishment later. Draw two sets of parallel lines curving up and around the cone, from bottom to top, about 1.5-2mm apart. Roll out clay two cards thick and using a 1.5mm brass tube. Cut out a lot of discs.

10. Dampen the area between one set of lines. Pick up each disc with a damp brush and attach it, pressing gently onto the surface until you reach the top. Repeat until you have two lines of discs. Roll out more clay two cards thick and cut out tiny flowers using the flower cutter. Attach the flowers in the same way.

11. Pipe a decorative line of clay around the bottom of the vase using the syringe. Use a flat paintbrush to put a design into the damp syringe. Make a lip for the vase three cards thick with a cutter 3mm larger and another slightly smaller than the opening. When it's dry, stick it to the vase using thick paste.

12. Add a scalloped effect to the edge of the lip with a small file, working carefully as it is quite fragile. Score a diagonal pattern in the top surface with a file to decorate the lip. Dry and fire in the kiln at 900°C for two hours. Polish and use Liver of Sulphur to add an antique patina if desired.

RESOURCES

Art Clay Silver, paste and syringe:
www.creativeglassshop.co.uk
Two part silicone moulding compound, metal clay tools: www.metalclay.co.uk

EXTRA PROJECTS

The size can be increased to create a larger vase for bunches of flowers. This method could also be used to make an umbrella stand or a planter. Left unembellished and highly polished, this would fit a less fussy period. Bud vases often came in pairs so make two to decorate a sideboard or bedside table.



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