

Colourful carved ring



Alcohol inks are an unusual and vibrant choice for adding colour to metal clay jewellery. By Julia Rai

resources

Metal Clay: Bluebell Design Studio
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk
 Alcohol Inks and Blending Solution: The Craft Barn
www.thecraftbarn.co.uk
 Dockyard Carving Tools: Tilgear, www.tilgear.info
CONTACT DETAILS
 Julia Rai, www.juliarai.co.uk, www.metalclayacademy.com
julia@juliarai.co.uk

EXTRA PROJECT

Beginners can make a simple pair of earrings in two layers with cut out areas for colour. A set of concentric circle cutters are a good tool for this. Cut circles three cards thick for the back and then smaller circles with holes in to make channels for the colour.

Julia runs the Metal Clay Academy and regularly teaches metal clay classes in Cornwall and London. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four. Julia loves experimenting with colours and enjoys exploring new and unusual ways of adding colour to her work. She also loves carving so this ring combines two of her favourite things. Alcohol inks are available in a range of bright and vibrant colours, dry fast and are permanent. The carved designs on this ring are enhanced with complementary colours.

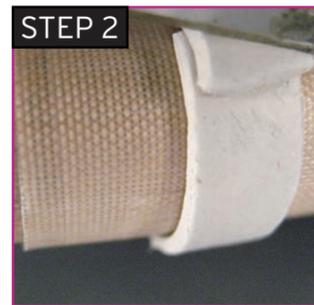
MATERIALS

- 10-20g of silver metal clay
- Silver metal clay paste
- Adirondack alcohol inks
- Adirondack alcohol ink blending solution
- Greaseproof paper
- Teflon paper
- Rolling pin
- Tissue blade
- Clay shaper
- Ring mandrel
- Ring sizer
- Cocktail sticks
- Paintbrushes
- Small piece of glass or ceramic tile
- Carving tools and/or small files
- Brass or stainless steel brush
- Burnisher
- Polishing pads and papers in a variety of grits



STEP 1

Measure your finger with a ring sizer then add two sizes to this to account for the metal clay shrinkage. Slide the ring sizer on to the mandrel and draw a line on each side of the size guide. Wrap greaseproof or Teflon paper around the mandrel and secure with sticky tape. Don't stick the tape to the mandrel or it won't slide off easily when the ring is dry.



STEP 2

Roll out the metal clay five cards thick and slightly wider than you want the ring to be. Using a straight blade, cut the clay to the width you want and long enough to wrap around the mandrel and flap over itself. At the flap over, cut through both layers and remove the excess. Using a little water and paste, stick the two ends together and gently smooth the join.



STEP 3

Leave to dry on the mandrel. It's ready when the paper slides off and the ring retains its shape. Remove the paper and dry completely. Fill and refine the join inside and out using small blobs of well hydrated lump clay on a clay shaper. Take care not to add lumps to the ring. You are just filling any gaps and spreading the clay over the surface, like spreading butter.



STEP 4

If the inside of the ring is not perfect, use paste and a cocktail stick to cover it with a texture. This is a very useful technique for refining any dry metal clay surface that isn't perfect. The thicker the paste you use, the more raised and defined the pattern will be. For the inside of a ring, use thin paste and draw a random design with a cocktail stick.



STEP 5

Lightly sand the outside so you have a good surface to carve onto. Plan your design on paper and draw it onto the ring in pencil. If you make a mistake, rub it out with an eraser or lightly sand. Take care when carving and go slowly. Support the ring from the inside as you carve. Keep your fingers behind the carving blade to avoid cutting yourself.



STEP 6

Carve the pattern lightly first. Smooth the carved lines with water on a paintbrush or a wet finger. This will soften the lines and remove any fine scratches that can occur if the blade slips. After smoothing with water, you may need to carve some of the lines again to make them more defined. Sometimes it's easier to carve the lines if the surface is very slightly damp.



STEP 7

When you are happy with your carving, check the surface to ensure any scratches or marks you don't want are removed with a wet paintbrush. Dry thoroughly and fire. Rings take a lot of wear so it's best to fire them in a kiln at 900°C for 2 hours. This will ensure you have the strongest possible ring. Tumble polish or brass brush before you apply the colour.



STEP 8

Put a small drop of alcohol ink onto a sheet of glass or ceramic tile. Alcohol ink dries very fast so use a small drop at a time - it will dry on the glass well before you've finished painting your patterns. Use a small brush and paint down into the carving. Don't worry too much about going over the edges; they will be cleaned up at the next stage.



STEP 9

STEP 9

Allow the alcohol ink to thoroughly dry for half an hour. Polish all over the surface of the ring using the hardest grit polishing paper, usually dark green. This will remove any alcohol ink that has gone over the edges of your design. Polish the surface to the shine you want, burnish the edge.

designer tips

- Clean your glass sheet and paint brushes with Adirondack alcohol ink blending solution. Take care not to get the ink on your clothes as it stains. If you add alcohol ink to a piece and you don't like it, the blending solution will remove it
- You can remove alcohol ink from difficult to reach places by heating the piece up with a torch, the ink will burn away