

An industrial NATURE

Leaf-textured metal clay rings and gears join in a dazzling set

by Irina Miech

I titled this jewelry set “Steampunk Forest” because it subtly combines the industrial feel of steampunk with the textural beauty of nature’s leaves. Clay punches in various sizes make creating the circles, rings, and gears a snap. Then mix and match components for the necklace, bracelet, and dangle earrings. You can vary the sizes and number of pieces to get just the look you want.



1 components • Form 6–8 g of clay into a ball. Apply a thin layer of balm to the clay, roller, and work surface. On a plastic mat, roll out the clay to the thickness of three or four playing cards.



2 Place the leaves on the clay (face up) and roll over the leaves to imprint the clay. Leave parts of the clay smooth.



3 Use clay punches to punch out circles of varying sizes. For rings, use smaller punches to cut holes in the center of the larger circles. Allow the clay to dry.



4 Use a craft knife to make connector holes (at least 1.5 mm in diameter) in all circle components and in two to three rings. Smooth the holes with a metal file.



5 Smooth the edges of the circle and ring components by gently sanding with a flexible sanding pad. Make a total of 10 to 12 components for a necklace, 11 to 14 for a bracelet, and six for earrings.



6 Use a craft knife or metal file to cut or saw gear-like edges on a few components. Fire, polish, and add a patina to the components.

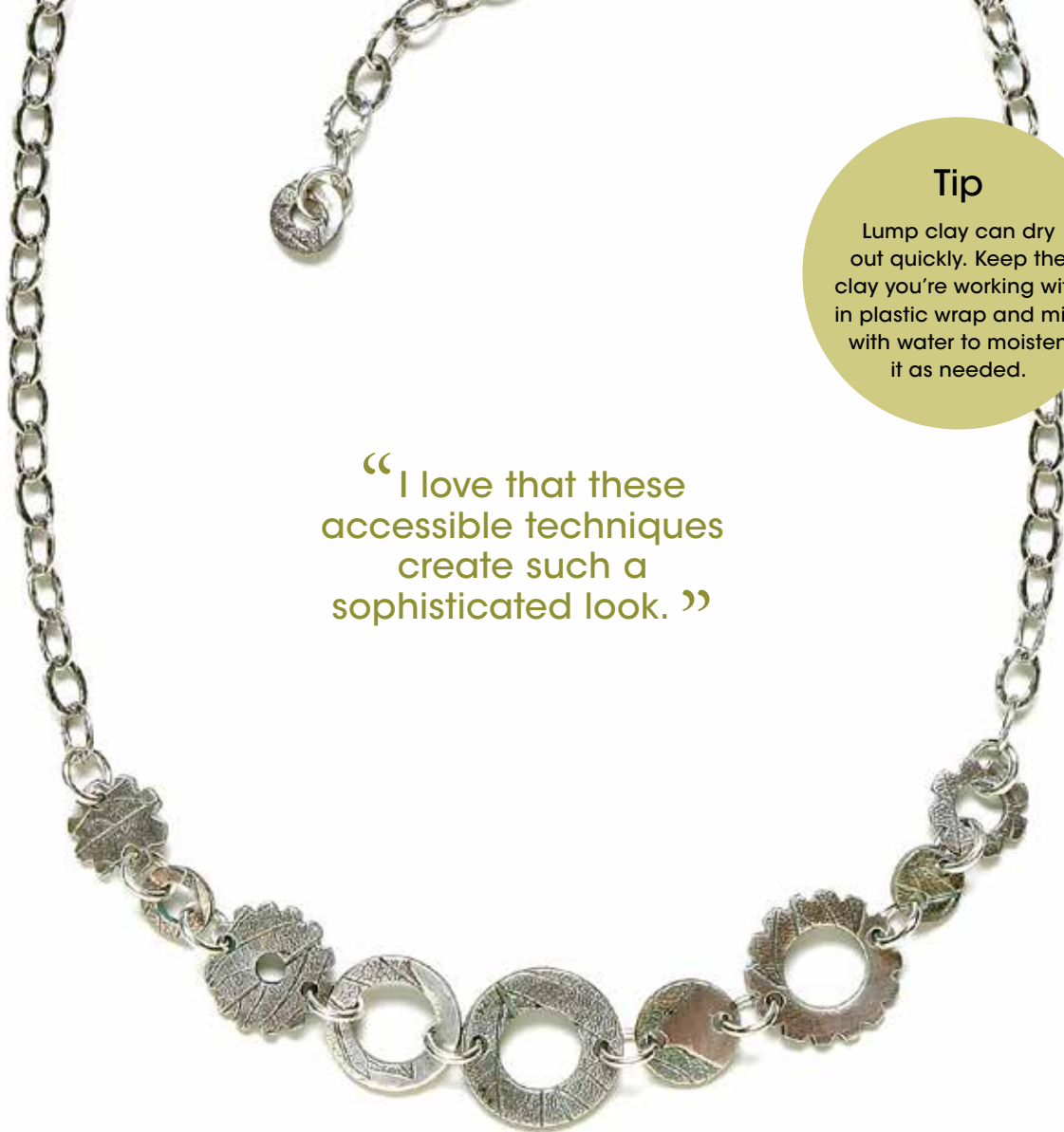


1 toggle clasp • For the loop half of the clasp: Following the component instructions, make a large ring with one connector hole.

For the toggle bar: From clay imprinted with a leaf’s spine, cut out a slender leaf shape twice the length of the inner diameter of the large ring. Smooth the edges.



2 Using the syringe, place a strip of clay over a toothpick at the center of the back of the toggle bar. Repeat twice to make a thick loop. (The toothpick will burn away during firing). Allow to dry. Fire, polish, and add a patina to the clasp.



Tip

Lump clay can dry out quickly. Keep the clay you're working with in plastic wrap and mist with water to moisten it as needed.

“I love that these accessible techniques create such a sophisticated look.”

1 necklace • Make the components.

Open a jump ring (How-Tos) and attach two components. Close the jump ring. Use jump rings to attach 9 to 11 components.

2 Cut a 6½–8-in. (16.5–20 cm) piece of chain. Use a jump ring to attach one end of the component segment. Repeat on the other end with a 9½–11-in. (24.1–28 cm) piece of chain.

3 On the end of the short chain, use a jump ring to attach a hook clasp.

4 On the end of the long chain, use a jump ring to attach a small ring component.

Firing

A kiln — even a small one — is an investment. But kiln firing is usually the best option so, if you don't already own a kiln, bring your piece to a local bead store to fire for a small fee. Check with the store for restrictions on firing. Small components can also be torch-fired. Check out the Bead Room at BeadStyleMag.com for details.

Polishing

Burnish the fired piece with a polishing brush, or use a pad and soapy water to create a shiny surface.

Adding patina

Dissolve about 1 tsp liver of sulfur crystals or gel and 1 tsp ammonia in very hot, but not boiling, water. Use tweezers to quickly dip the metal clay pieces in the solution and then in clean, cold water. Dry the pieces. Check the color and repeat until you achieve the desired effect. You can polish off areas of the patina with a polishing pad, brush, or cloth.

1

earrings • Make the components. For each earring: Open a jump ring (How-Tos). Attach two components and close the jump ring. Use another jump ring to attach a third component.



2

Use two jump rings to attach the loop of an earring wire.



Tips

• When making the toggle, extrude the lines of clay from the syringe and lay them over the toothpick.



It will be easier to control than if you extrude the clay lines directly onto the toggle piece.

• Your finished piece will be slightly smaller; PMC3 shrinks about 12% in volume when fired. For instance, a 10 mm circle will end up slightly less than 9 mm.

2

On one end, attach three jump rings and the toggle bar. On the other end, use a jump ring to attach the loop half of the clasp.

1

bracelet • Make the components and toggle clasp. Open a jump ring (How-Tos) and attach two components. Close the jump ring. Use jump rings to attach components until the segment is within 1 in. (2.5 cm) of the finished length.



Supplies

components/toggle clasp

- ◆ PMC3 clay (24 g for the set)
- ◆ leaves
- ◆ release material such as lip balm
- ◆ craft knife
- ◆ flexible sanding pad
- ◆ kiln or torch for firing
- ◆ metal file
- ◆ clay punches in various sizes
- ◆ plastic mat
- ◆ 6-8 playing cards
- ◆ PMC3 syringe
- ◆ polishing pad or brush

◆ roller

◆ toothpick

◆ liver of sulfur (optional for patina)

◆ tweezers (optional for patina)

necklace 22 in. (56 cm)

◆ 10-12 components

◆ 16-19 in. (41-48 cm) cable chain, 6 mm links

12-14 7 mm jump rings

◆ hook clasp

◆ 2 pairs of pliers

bracelet

◆ 11-14 components

◆ 14-17 7 mm jump rings

◆ toggle clasp

◆ 2 pairs of pliers

earrings

◆ 6 components

◆ 14 7 mm jump rings

◆ pair of earring wires

◆ 2 pairs of pliers

Supplies from Eclectica,

Check your local bead store for supplies.

Irina Miech

Irina has authored several books on metal clay jewelry design, including Metal Clay for Beaders, More Metal Clay for Beaders, Inventive Metal Clay for Beaders, and Metal Clay Rings. She also teaches classes at her store, Eclectica, in Brookfield, Wis. Contact Irina at eclecticabeads.com.