HOLLOW FORM

Bring a High Polish to a Metal clay Pendant

Add drama with a pen-and-patina resist technique.

by Jackie Truty

Generous in scale, this hollow pendant has plenty of surface area to maximize the impact of its mirror finish. To make your metal clay “hollow wear,” you’ll first shape a cork clay core, then layer metal clay paste over it. After firing your pendant, you’ll give the surface a mirror finish, using some patience and the proper polishing materials. Then I’ll show you how to create a two-tone pattern on your pendant, using a simple resist technique — all you need is an oil pen and liver of sulfur.

The 3 x ½-in. (76 x 13 mm) pendant is hollow, making it light in weight, but big on style.
Make the hollow pendant

Make a cork clay form. Shape cork clay or wood clay into a symmetrical oblong form that’s approximately 3 x ¾ in. (76 x 19 mm). About ½ in. (13 mm) from one end of the form, push a drinking straw through the clay [1]. This opening will serve as the pendant’s bail. Allow the form to dry completely.

Use needle files to even the form’s shape [2], and then use sanding pads or sandpaper to smooth the form’s surface.

TIP: I like to use sanding pads instead of sandpaper, because their additional flexibility and thickness, which provides cushioning, allow them to better conform to curved shapes.

Coat the form with metal clay paste.
Use a flat-tip paintbrush to apply an even layer of metal clay paste to the entire surface of the form [3]. Allow the paste to dry completely (see the Metal Clay Dryness chart, page 4).

Apply a second layer of paste, and allow it to dry completely. Continue to add layers in this way until you’ve built up a metal clay paste shell that is a minimum of 1.5 mm (⅛ in.) thick.

NOTE: To test the paste shell’s thickness, insert a needle tool into the shell until you feel its tip come into contact with the cork. Remove the needle tool, making note of the thickness of the shell. (Repair the hole with paste.)

Carefully remove the straw by gently twisting and pulling it out of the hole [4].

Refine and fire the form. Use sanding pads in progressively finer grits to smooth the surface of the form [5].

Then, support the form on a piece of fiber blanket on a kiln shelf, and insert the shelf into a kiln.

Fire the form according to the metal clay manufacturer’s instructions. For details, see “Firing Cork or Wood Clay,” page 3.

materials
- Metal clay paste: low-fire formula, 25 g

additional tools & supplies
- Cork clay or wood clay
- Sanding pads: wet/dry, up to 12,000 grit (optional)
- Fiber blanket
- Rotary tool or flex shaft, resin polishing tips
- Choice of:
  - Permanent marker: black
  - Oil-based marker: fine tip
  - Liver of sulfur
  - Nail-polish remover (optional)
  - Silver polish

suppliers
- Metal clay, cork clay (Art Clay World, USA, 866.381.0100, www.artclayworld.com; Precious Metal Clay, www.pmcguild.com for a list of suppliers)
TIP: Cork and wood clay produce smoke and fumes when they’re fired. Make sure your kiln is in a well-ventilated area before you program its firing schedule.

When the fired pendant is cool, tip it bail-side down and tap it with your forefinger to dislodge and remove any remaining clay ash.

TIP: Hollow forms are susceptible to denting if they are handled with too much force. Avoid striking hollow forms against hard surfaces.

Polish the pendant. Using either a rotary tool or a flex shaft and resin polishing tips in progressively finer grits, polish the pendant [6]. Give the pendant a mirror finish by wet sanding it with wet/dry sanding pads in progressively finer grits, up to a 12,000-grit finish [7].

NOTE: Do not use silver-polishing compound during this step, because it will later act as a resist, preventing liver of sulfur from patinating the silver.

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**firing cork or wood clay**

When cork or wood clays that contain any moisture are fired at high temperatures, they create steam that can cause overlying metal clay shells to crack.

To safeguard against this type of cracking:

- Ramp your kiln at 1400°F (760°C) per hour to 800°F (427°C), and hold the temperature at 800°F (427°C) for approximately 20 minutes. This allows the cork or wood clay to completely dry out and burn to ash.

- When the cork or wood clay has burned out, set the kiln to ramp at full speed to the time and temperature required in the metal clay manufacturer’s instructions.
Add a surface design and finish

Add a pattern. Using a black permanent marker or a fine-tip oil-based marker, draw your design on the pendant [8]. Make sure that your lines are solid black and that you can’t see the metal beneath them.

Add a patina. Prepare a liver of sulfur solution according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Thread a piece of scrap wire through the pendant’s bail. Holding the wire, dip the entire pendant in the liver of sulfur until the silver turns completely black [9].

Remove the pendant, and rinse it thoroughly in cold water to set the patina and wash away the marker lines. If any marker lines remain, remove them with nail-polish remover.

Carefully dry the pendant with a soft cloth. Use a dry cloth and a small dab of silver polish to lightly buff the pendant just enough to bring up the silver shine of your drawn design [10].

NOTE: Do not rub the pendant with the polishing cloth, or you’ll remove the patina.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metal Clay Dryness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of moisture; very pliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some moisture; firm, holds its shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly devoid of moisture; rigid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No moisture; can be fired</td>
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