



CHRISTMAS TREE BROOCH

Although a Christmas tree-shaped brooch may seem like a time-consuming project for an item that can only be worn a few days a year, Marina Andrei says, "I believe this small accessory is worth all the effort." It makes the perfect gift for someone passionate about Christmas decorations or a stylish alternative to the traditional sweater often expected at Christmas family lunches. "The happiest and most anticipated time of the year should be celebrated with fitting accessories, so I hope you'll enjoy this tutorial," she adds.

ABOUT MARINA ANDREI

Marina discovered polymer clay many years ago, but she has been drawn to handmade accessories and crafts for as long as she can remember. Working with polymer clay has a therapeutic effect on her, allowing her to express the creative and crafty side of her personality. Although she works full-time as a pharmacist, she loves spending her free time in her studio, creating polymer clay jewelry characterized by playfulness, precision, and a vibrant palette of colors.



www.instagram.com/things.i.love.byma

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PRODUCTS IN THE ADVENT CALENDAR

TEXTURE STAMP - LIMITED EDITION

Enjoy working with the Texture Stamp designed by Lucy Štruncová, featuring this geometric Christmas pattern produced as a limited edition. The set comes with both negative and positive stamps, giving you more options for your polymer clay artwork. Ideal for use with various techniques like mokume gane and hidden magic, as well as in combination with powders, paints, and other mediums.

DAS POLYMER CLAY - GREEN GLITTER, BLUE, ORANGE, RED, BEIGE

Explore Das Smart, Italian polymer clay, which comes in many different colors. In this case, Green Glitter, Blue, Orange, Red, and Beige create a good base for mixing an interesting Christmas color palette.

LIST OF TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Das polymer clay - Glitter Green, Ocean Blue, Carmine Red, Orange, Beige
- liquid polymer clay
- Lucy Struncova's Color Pigments - Gold, Red, Yellow, Teal
- gold metal leaf
- triangular cutter 6.5 cm x 4 cm
- square cutter 1 cm
- star cutter 2.5 cm
- two small round cutters 3.5 mm, 2 mm
- drills 1 mm, 1.5 mm
- nylon thread 1.5 mm
- two o-rings - inner diameter 1 mm
- sharp cutting plier
- pasta machine
- glass or ceramic tile
- rigid blade
- texture sponge
- thin needle
- cornstarch
- soft brush
- old flat brush
- coarse dry sanding screen
- texture sponge by Lucy Struncova
- fine sanding paper
- soft make-up sponge
- brooch pin
- math paper sheet, pencil, pen, ruler
- Loctite gel glue
- double sided sticky tape

- Color 1:** 1 Ocean Blue + 4 Glitter Green + 1 Orange + 2 Beige x3
- Color 2:** 2 Orange + 1 Ocean Blue + 1 Glitter green + 1 Beige
- Color 3:** 1 Blue + 1 Glitter Green + ¼ Orange + 1 Beige x2
- Color 4:** 1 Glitter Green + ½ p Beige + ½ Orange x3
- Color 5:** 1 Ocean Blue + ¼ Orange;
- Color 6:** 1 Carmine Red + ½ Orange x3

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Start by mixing 6 custom colors based on the recipes. To ensure you're using the clay from the box as efficiently as possible, you can use a 2 cm square cutter as a measure and roll the clay on the thickest setting of the machine.

Create a hollow form base for the Christmas tree form with a triangular cutter. Roll a sheet of scrap clay of 3.1 mm thickness. Place it on a glass tile, you can use a sheet of paper to burnish the clay onto the tile. Brush some liquid clay on the clay sheet.

Roll a second sheet of scrap clay, this time 2.4 mm on the machine. Place it on the cutter.



Gently push the clay with your finger so that you obtain a dome into the cutter.

Flip over the cutter with the clay attached on top of the clay sheet previously attached on the glass tile and slightly push them together, without cutting through. Gently push the edges of the upper sheet with your fingers so they stick to the bottom layer. Carefully remove the cutter.

Put a piece of cling film on top of your hollow form and cut through using the same cutter.



Remove the clay excess and make a small hole in the hollow form using a fine needle. Leave the hollow form attached to the glass tile.

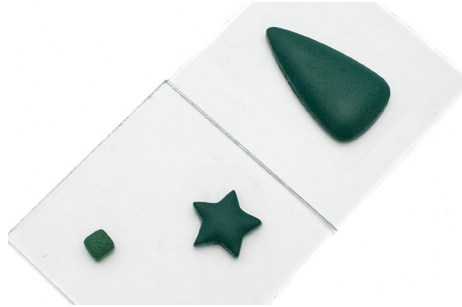
Repeat the instructions from previous steps and make a hollow star shape using the needle.

Make a tiny trunk for the tree. For this, roll a sheet of clay (color 1) on the thickest setting of the machine. Roll it again, at the same setting, together with a texture sponge. Cut it in half.

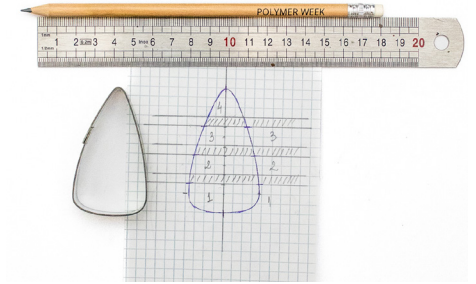
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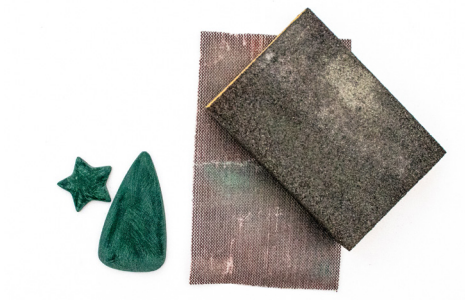
Place one half on a glass tile, texture down, and gently adhere it to the tile. Brush some liquid clay on it. Take the other half, place it on the small square cutter, make a domed shape using your finger, place it on top of the other half and cut through both sheets, removing the excess clay.



Bake all the three hollow shapes at 115°C for 30 minutes.



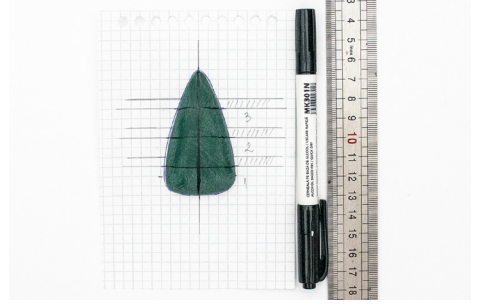
Draw the contour of the triangular cutter on a sheet of graph paper. Mark the vertical axis of symmetry. Draw three equal 0.5 wide strips by tracing 6 longitudinal, parallel lines. These lines split the area of the Christmas tree form into 4 parts separated by equal strips.



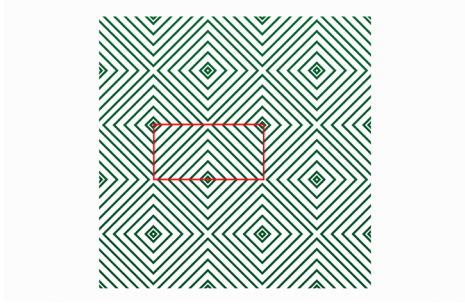
When your hollow forms are baked and have cooled down, sand the rough edges of the tree form and star bases using a dry sanding sheet and a sanding sponge.



Using a fine drill, make a vent hole on the back of both forms.



Place the hollow tree form on your previously made sketch and with the help of a ruler and a permanent marker draw some guide lines on the polymer base.



This is the part of the pattern from the Texture Stamp you will use to decorate the Christmas tree form.

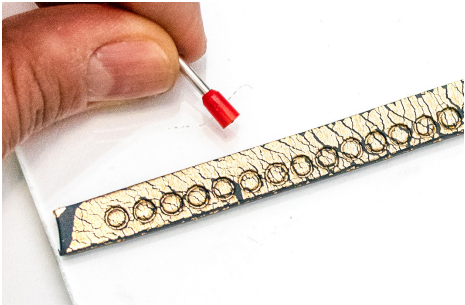


Roll 4 sheets of clay from the colors 1, 2, 3 and 4 on 1.5 mm thickness on the machine. Imprint each color with the texture in the box so that you find the region marked with a red frame in the middle of each sheet.



Roll a sheet of clay (color 5), 1.5 mm thick. Cover it with metal leaf and burnish it very well using a piece of paper so that the leaf adheres well to the clay. Cut this sheet of clay into at least 3 strips.

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Imprint each strip of clay covered with metal leaf with the back of a small 3.5 mm round cutter, without cutting all the way through the clay.



Now take a smaller 2 mm round cutter and cut circles in the middle of those imprinted before.



Detach each strip of clay from the glass tile using a rigid blade and if any of the tiny cut circles remain stuck in the strip, take them out with a needle. Now make 2 clean cuts in order to get a straight strip, about 0.5 mm wide.



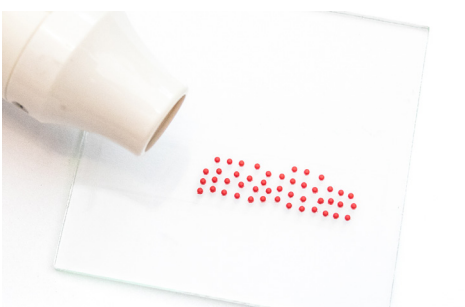
Brush the upper part of the tree form base with some liquid clay and carefully place one thin strip of clay following the guiding line.



Cut the clay excess from the back using a sharp rigid blade.



Roll a sheet of clay (color 6), 1.8 mm thick. Adhere it to a glass tile, place a piece of cling film on top and cut several small circles using the same cutter you used to cut the circles in the strips of clay covered with metal leaf.



Remove the clay excess and partially bake the tiny circles using a heat gun. If you don't have a heat gun, simply bake the circles in the oven for 30 min.

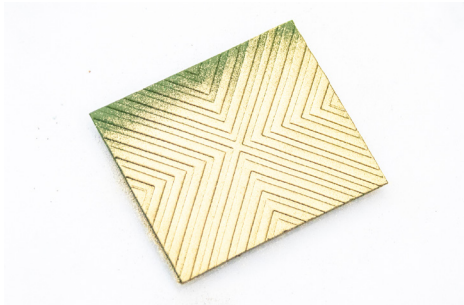


Add a tiny amount of liquid clay in the holes of the gold strip and insert a red circle in each hole. A needle can be a helpful tool. Brush a small amount of liquid clay on top of the strip, so that the metal leaf is protected.



Cover one of the sheets of clay textured from previous steps with gold pigment using a soft brush.

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You don't have to keep the whole sheet, only the region of interest and a bit extra on all sides. Make a clean cut at the bottom. Keep stamp pattern orientation in mind.



Brush some liquid clay on the tree form, above the gold strip, and cover the top area with the sheet of clay from the previous step.



Cut the clay excess from the back.



Repeat previous steps using another textured colored sheet of clay.



This time brushing some liquid clay on the tree form beneath the gold strip.



Brush some liquid clay beneath the textured part added in the previous step and add another gold strip of clay. Repeat previous steps.



Continue covering the tree form by adding another sheet of textured clay and a third gold strip. Repeat previous steps and cut the clay excess from the back. Bake again the partially covered tree form for 15 min at 115 °C.



Once the partially covered tree form has cooled down, you can move on and cover the rest of it with the last textured colored sheet. Repeat the previous steps to complete the front of the piece. Leave it aside for now.



Time to move on with the other hollow base – the star form. Roll a sheet of clay (color 6), 1.5 mm thick. Brush some liquid clay on the hollow star form and cover it with the red clay. Cut the clay excess from the back.

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Cover the raw clay with metal gold leaf. Use your fingers to make the gold leaf adhere to the clay. Don't forget the edges. Use cornstarch so that the gold leaf sticks more to the clay and less to your fingers.



The gold leaf will crack and the surface will not be perfectly even, leaving parts of the red clay exposed. Use a texture sponge to lightly texture the surface, without applying too much pressure. It will help the leaf stick even better to the clay.



Check the back of the piece one more time and remove any excess clay that might appear after the sponge texturing step.



If you are happy with the brightness of the star then cover the surface with a light coat of liquid clay using a sponge. If you want less brightness and reflection of the gold leaf, apply a small amount of liquid clay with a sponge and sprinkle some color pigment in various colors on top of the star.



Bake the tree form and the star again at 115 °C for 15 min.



When cooled, tear small pieces from a fine grit sanding paper sheet and carefully sand the textured areas to reveal the pattern. Try not to touch the gold strips. Although they are protected with liquid clay, you might scratch the gold leaf with the sandpaper.



Place both shapes on a glass tile, using a piece of double sided sticky tape to secure the form to the tile. Dab a fine cosmetic sponge in liquid clay and cover the whole surface with a thin, even coat. Bake both shapes once again for 15 min at 115°C.



Both the star and the tree fronts are now completed and it's time to finish the back of the pieces.

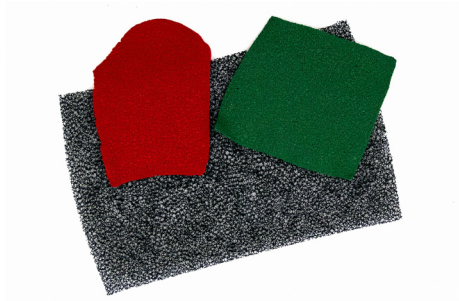


Use a coarse grit dry sanding screen to smooth the back of your pieces. Place each piece on the sanding screen and rub it well with circular motions. Check the back from time to time.

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Glue a brooch pin to the back of the tree with the hinge towards the tree top.



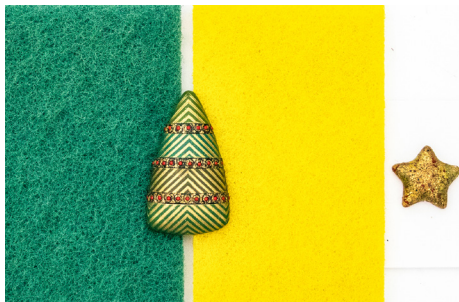
Roll two sheets of clay (color 1 and color 6), 1 mm thick, through the machine together with a texture sponge.



Flip the green sheet and punch tiny holes using a needle. Brush the back of the tree form with liquid clay and cover it with the textured green clay. Restore the small vent hole. Cut the excess from the edges and finish them as neat as possible, you will not be able to sand them afterwards.



Repeat the same process for the star, using the textured red sheet of clay.



Place the tree on two flat abrasive scrubbing sponges, with the brooch pin nested between. This method will give you the possibility to bake the back flat. The sponges will not melt in the oven. Place the star on a piece of cardboard to avoid shiny spots. Bake for the last time, at 115°C for 30 min.



To complete your tree you put all the three parts together – the trunk, the tree and the star. Use the glue and nylon thread. Nylon sticks to clay incredibly well using Loctite glue. Prepare the nylon thread, sharp cutting plier, drill bits, O-rings, and glue.



Drill holes in all the three pieces using first a 1 mm drill and then 1.5 mm, as straight as possible. Cut 2 pieces of nylon thread, 1.5 and 2 cm long. Using a needle, pour a small amount of glue into the previously made holes and then insert the piece of nylon thread. Add an O-ring before the glue dries.



Wait a bit until the glue dries and then attach the trunk and the star to the tree in the same way.

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