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Faux Porcelain Victorian Tin By C. A. Therien

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Translucent Liquid Sculpey is the key to creating the creamy luster and depth in this new faux technique.

Simulating the look of antique china, the combination of white polymer clay and TLS is remarkably deceptive – only the weight of the piece will give it away.

The project below is my version of a face powder tin often found on a Victorian lady's dressing table.

Supplies needed:

- 1 package white Premo polymer clay
- 1 Package Victorian acid-free stickers
- Translucent Liquid Sculpey
- A small hinged tin ("Altoids" or "Mini Altoids" breath mint tins work great)
- X-Acto knife or clay knife
- Wet-dry sandpaper in grits 400, 600, 800, and 1000
- Future floor polish or other clay-suitable varnish
- Paintbrush (an old one– you will dedicate this brush to your TLS only)
- Container of ice water
- Buffing tool or scrap of denim
- Aluminum foil or small scrap of mat board
- Pasta machine or Acrylic clay roller

Optional supplies:

- Sandpaper in grits 1500 and 2000
- Cotton balls and rubbing alcohol
- Clay extruder gun with small round hole

Step One: Cleaning the Tin

Empty and thoroughly clean the tin with warm soapy water. Dry with paper towels. If you desire, wipe the outside of the tin with a cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol to remove any traces of soap. Lay the closed tin onto a clean paper towel on your work surface and allow the tin to air dry before proceeding.

Step Two: Preparing the Clay

To soften the clay: break it into four sections along the scored marks. Then, using one section of clay at a time, squish and roll the clay in your hands until it becomes warm and pliable. After you have conditioned a section of clay this way, put it into a plastic baggie or bit of plastic wrap and put it in your pocket. Your body heat will keep the clay soft. Condition the next section of clay the same way, and add it to the first. Wrap the two remaining sections in plastic wrap or a plastic baggie and set aside.

Take one of the conditioned clay sections and flatten it with either the palms of your hands, an acrylic roller, or a pasta machine on the widest setting. Using your tin as a guide, flatten the clay further until you have a rectangle approximately 1/4" larger than the lid of the tin.



Step Three: Covering the Top of the Tin

Center the flattened clay on the top of the closed lid of the tin.

Working from the middle to the edges, gently smooth the clay onto the lid and over the sides, trying to avoid air bubbles.

If any air bubbles are visible as you smooth the clay, prick them with a pin and smooth the clay over the holes.

The excess clay at the corners can be either trimmed away or blended in with the rest of the clay.

To trim, first smooth the clay flat against the sides all the way to the corner. The clay that sticks out can be cut with a pair of scissors (only used for clay), a clay tool or x-acto knife, and the seam smoothed over with your fingers.

To blend the excess back into the rest of the clay, carefully press it back into the top and sides of the tin.



If you have excess clay on the lower edge of the lid, insert a clay knife into clay just above the metal rim that encircles the lid.

Following the rim, cut the excess clay from the lid, carefully cutting around hinge holes at the back to allow the hinge to move freely.

Put the clay scraps into the bag of conditioned clay. You will want these later.

Step Four: Baking the Tin

Put the closed tin onto a piece of aluminum foil or scrap mat board dedicated to baking polymer clay.

Bake the clay-covered tin in a pre-heated oven or toaster oven at 250 degrees for 20 minutes. While clay is baking, put ice and cold water into a medium-sized bowl and set near oven. Immediately after baking, submerge the baked tin into the ice water until completely cooled.

After cooling, thoroughly dry tin with paper towels.

Step Five: Covering the Bottom of the Tin

To cover the bottom and lower sides of the tin, take out the already softened clay from your pocket, including the scraps. Mix the clay together and knead it between your fingers.

Run the clay through the pasta machine or flatten by hand until the clay is a rectangle approximately 1/2" larger than the bottom of the tin.

Center the clay onto the bottom of the tin, and working from the middle towards the edges, smooth the clay over the tin.

Prick air bubbles if they appear. Treat the corners in the same way as with the lid.

To trim the clay from the lower sides of the tin, insert a knife into the clay on the upper edge of the lower sides, just below the rim that encircles the lid.

Following the rim, trim the excess clay from the lower sides, carefully cutting around the hinges at the back to allow them to move freely in the lid.

Put any scraps back into the plastic baggie. You may or may not need these later.

Bake and cool the tin as described above.



Step Six: Making the Tin Easy to Open

To make the tin easier to open, any variety of lid treatments can be used. Two examples are given here:

To put a ridge all around the tin:

Use your extra clay scraps in a clay extruder with a round hole disk. Squeeze out a rope approximately 1/2" longer than the perimeter of your tin.

Using TLS as glue, attach the rope to the back of the tin next to the hinge. Continue gluing and attaching the rope all the way around the tin to the opposite hinge.

Do not attach any of the rope between the two hinges (leaving the hinges free to operate correctly).

Carefully trim the ends of the rope so that it is cut diagonally at the hinges, allowing for greater freedom of hinge movement. Bake and cool as listed above.

To put a couple of raised knobs at the front of the tin:

Roll two 1/4" balls of clay from your scraps, and use TLS to glue each to the top and bottom center front lids of the tin, kitty-corner from one another. Flatten them slightly, bake and cool as above.

Step Seven: Sanding the Tin

Gently sand the tin, using the 400 grit sandpaper until the bumps are removed and all the edges are rounded. Set aside to dry.



Step Eight: Creating the Design

Thoughtfully plan your design using the Victorian acid-free stickers. Carefully place a central design sticker onto the top of the lid.

Using trim stickers, decorate the sides of the lid. Press the stickers on well, especially where the trim rolls onto the lid.

Step Nine: Protecting the Design

Use an old paintbrush to paint the entire lid of the tin with TLS. Use a generous amount but make sure the TLS goes on as smoothly as possible.

Set aside for 10 minutes for the brush strokes to settle, then bake for 10 minutes and cool as above.

Repeat with the bottom of the tin.

Step Ten: Sanding the Design

After the tin has cooled, begin sanding with 400-grit sandpaper. Sand the entire tin in small circular motions (rather than back-and-forth).

Work through each consecutive grit of sandpaper in order, and rinse often.

If desired, continue from the 1000 grit on to 1500 and then 2000, for the greatest smoothness and clarity of the TLS. Buff with an electric buffing tool such as a Dremel, or use a scrap of faded denim.



Step Eleven: Varnishing the Finished Tin

Varnish the lid of the tin using Future or some other clay-suitable varnish. Let dry, then varnish the bottom of the tin.

If desired, line the inside of the tin with fabric.

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