

Treasure Boxes

by Carol Stewart

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Materials:

- small paper mache' box (approx 3")
- Sobo® glue
- 3 oz of conditioned clay (I used black Premo®)
- tools for texturing
- small amount of silver clay
- assortment of glass stones, marbles, etc.
- Rub n' Buff® in silver or metallic acrylic paint
- rag
- pasta machine (optional)

Note: Before you start, place a few of the glass stones and marbles in your oven at 275° for 30 minutes to be sure they won't crack or break when baked. The stones used in this project are flattened marbles, but I have also used regular marbles, crystals and small tumbled stones.



Step One:

Start by placing the lid on your box and tracing around the edge of it with pencil to form a guideline.

Remove the lid and coat the outer side of the lid as well as the outer edge with Sobo® glue.

Coat the outside (only) of the box to the line. Do not coat the box above the line or your lid will not fit when you are done.

Let dry.



Step Two:

Roll out your conditioned clay to a #3 setting on your pasta machine, or by hand to approximately 1/16". (I used black clay for this project because I like the contrast between the black clay and the silver finish.)

Place the bottom of the box on the clay as a guide and cut carefully around it. Press the cut piece firmly onto the bottom of the box, removing any trapped air bubbles.



Next, roll out a strip slightly wider than the side of the box from the pencil edge to the bottom of the box. Wrap this strip around the sides of the box, being sure to slightly cover your pencil edge.



Press firmly onto the sides, removing any trapped air bubbles. Try not to smooth the edge of the clay that lies along the pencil edge. Your finished box will look more like metal if this edge stays sharp.

Trim any excess from the bottom of the box. Smooth and blend all seams. Repeat for the lid, being sure to finish the edge of the lid cleanly.



Step Three:

At this point, texture the box as desired. To look like hammered metal, I've used a texture sheet. The edge of a small screwdriver or dental tool also creates a good hammered look.



Step Four:

Next, you need to back the marble with clay. Roll out the silver clay as thin as possible. If the silver clay is too thick, the marble will sit too high on the edge of the box.

Place a small piece on the back of each marble and smooth, checking for air bubbles.

Trim the silver clay to fit just the bottom of the marble. This will keep the black clay from showing through the marble and dulling the color, as well as giving the marble the look of dichroic glass.



Step Five:

Place a marble on the side of the box and push firmly to form a good seal with the black clay. This will help the marble stay on the box while you prepare a "setting" for it.

Roll out a piece of black clay at a #5 setting on your pasta machine, or approximately 1/32".

Cut a strip approx 1/4 inch wide and long enough to go around the sides of your marble.

Start by placing the strip around the edge of the marble, bridging the gap between the marble and the box. Press gently along the edge that is touching the box, trying to keep this cut edge sharp. This will hold it to the box temporarily.

Next, flatten the edge of the strip that is against the top edge of the marble to "hug" it.

Now, using a tool of your choice, texture the edge of the "setting" (this will also help secure the edge of the setting to the box). I used a leather working tool to give the appearance of rivets spaced around the edge.

Repeat these steps for all marbles placed on the box, as well as the lid.





Step Six:

Using the rest of the black clay, roll out more #5 strips, also approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, and at least as long as one side of your lid.

Place each strip along the bottom edge of the lid. Where the strips meet, you can either blend the seams, or let the cut edges show to give your box more of a handmade appearance. I finished each of these joints with more "rivets".



Step Seven:

Next, gently place the lid on your box, checking to be sure that the sides of the box meet the edge of the lid. Now is the time to take care of any gaps where the cardboard might show through between the lid and the box, but be careful not to destroy the sharp edges.

Bake, at the recommended temperature for your brand of clay, for 45 minutes.

Step Eight:

When the box has cooled, double check the fit of the lid. If there are any problems with gaps between the lid and the box, they can usually be corrected by trimming the edge with a sharp X-acto® knife.

If the lid seems to fit too tightly, take a small piece of sand paper and gently sand the cardboard edge of the box, or the inside edge of the lid. Remember that the cardboard surfaces will have a coat of finish on them and these slight sand marks won't show.



Step Nine:

Next, using a rag, apply small amounts of Rub n' Buff® to a small area of the box. Working small areas will give you more control over the finished product. (You can also brush on metallic acrylic paint, leave it for a few seconds, and then wipe it off, adjusting the drying time as necessary.)

Rub with the rag to remove excess, then buff. Repeat for all clay surfaces of the box and lid. Alcohol on a cotton swab can be used to clean the tops of your jewels and to remove excess finish in places you feel it may be too heavy.

When the clay surfaces of the box are finished, then use the Rub n' Buff® on the cardboard surfaces. Using the same finish on the cardboard surfaces as you used on the clay will give a more realistic look to your box.

Be sure to treat the cardboard gently by not rubbing too hard or you may cause it to peel.

Step Ten:

Let the box sit for 2-3 hours to completely set the finish, then cover with a coat of satin Flecto Varathane® .

You can dress up your box by cutting a small piece of felt or velvet and gluing it to the inside bottom.

Now it is ready for your treasures!



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