

MICA SHIFT PART THREE

BY CARISSA NICHOLS



Carpe Polyum, Friends!!!

It's that time again. This month's technique will involve multiple colors and is really a type of *Mokume Gane* that was developed by Nan Roche. If you process the clay as we have done previously and then sand and buff your piece, you still get a lovely 3-D effect AND you get to add some color and drama to your jewelry.

Nan's Technique

I first saw the directions for Nan's quick and dirty *Mokume Gane* in a recent *Bead and Button* article. The exact issue escapes me (remember last month's comments on my brain and the Radio Shack 486 computer?) but I will try to find it for you, patient readers.

Take three contrasting colors of clay (I like to use pearl, gold and black), and run a layer of each through the pasta machine on the #2 setting. Regular black Premo is not metallic. You can either leave it alone, as it still buffs up nicely without mica, or you can add some Pearl-Ex mica powder to it.

If you plan on using plain black Premo, make sure you really condition the pearl and gold on the pasta machine so most of the mica particles are realigned and will reflect light off the surface of the clay. The pearl colors then contrast nicely with the shiny black.

(Remember that conditioning involves folding the sheet of clay in half and running it, fold down, through the pasta machine on the #1 setting until all the streaks disappear and the clay begins to shine.)

Once you condition your clay, stack the sheets together. I like to stack the colors in the order of medium, light and dark or, in this case, gold, white, and black. This tends to give more contrast between the layers once you start cutting into the clay. Use your brayer to smooth out any bubbles and make sure there is good contact between the sheets of clay.

Run the stack of clay through the pasta machine on the #3 setting. You end up with a very long and narrow strip. Cut the strip in half and stack together keeping the colors in the same order.

Repeat two more times, creating a total of six repeating layers. Once I am done with this step, I often cut the long strip into two pieces, and do a different surface technique on each one.

Put the clay in the freezer for about a half-hour. This is important in the spring and summer, as Premo can become quite soft very quickly.

Find a favorite tool with a dull edge to make a repeating pattern, or use your round-head tool from last month's technique and make a colored Acid Etch surface.

Tape down a square of waxed paper larger than your chilled clay and firmly pat the clay onto the wax so it won't move around.

Hardware stores often have a selection of brass and aluminum rods and tubes that make

a wonderful pattern of impressions. Ball-head stencils and bundled knitting needles work great if you are going for the Acid Etch look.

Make sure you are stippling (for Acid Etch) or patterning the clay very closely and cover the entire surface of the clay.

After slicing off the thin top layer of clay, you will run the sheet through the Pasta Machine on the #4 or #5 setting, as this will stretch out the pattern considerably. If you feel the clay is too thin you can always lay the sheet on top of a #2 or #3 thickness of clay to 'back' it for strength.

Suggestions for use:

As I mentioned above, I often cut my long, narrow sheet in half and do a different texture on each piece. Sometimes I will cut strips of the different patterns and fit them together for another new look.

You can use one surface as the background for a pin and cut out a shape from the second surface to place on top of the background. The colors of the piece are all the same but the shape and texture make the top piece stand out from the bottom piece.

Until next time, have fun and send pictures of what you make!

Carissa

