

# POLYMER WEEK

advent calendar



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## SHROOMIE SCULPTURE

by Olga Vyshnyvetska

This time, Olga Vyshnyvetska is sharing with you the process of creating her favourite character called Shroomie, complete with a lovely moss setting around him. Olga brings many tips and tricks along the way, including how to use floral wire and how to achieve a realistic stone effect.

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### TOOLS & SUPPLIES

#### POLYMER CLAY

- Cosclay Sculpt Medium
- Cosclay liquid clay

#### MATERIALS

- aluminum foil
- floral paper wire
- color pigments: cyan, yellow, red, black
- acrylic paints: white, black
- tissue paper

#### TOOLS

- pasta machine
- sculpting tools
- needle tools
- scalpel
- large and small ball styluses
- old bristle brush
- silicone cone or rubber brush
- paint brushes
- rock
- heat gun (optional)

1



Shape aluminium foil into a small rock with a flat bottom so it stands steady, about 3.5 cm high. Imagine Shroomie sitting on top of it.

2



Cover the entire foil shape with a sheet of Cosclay Sculpt Medium at a medium thickness setting of your clay machine. No need to make it perfectly smooth. A little roughness is perfect for a rock.

3



Take the largest ball stylus and use it like a tiny hammer. Tap the surface, creating irregular bumps and dents. Press harder in some areas and lighter in others. Let the rock shape form naturally.

4



Enhance the “happy accidents” from the tapping. Add small bits of clay to the raised areas, and deepen some of the indentations. If the foil peeks through, simply patch it with more clay and blend. You can also add a few tiny pieces around the base to create a crater-like texture. Keep some roughness visible.



Tap the rock again with the large ball stylus, but more gently this time. Bring in the medium styluses as well. Save the smallest ones for the next step.



Create smaller indentations using the medium styluses, then gradually move to the smallest. Use anything else you like: silicone or rubber brushes, needles or sculpting tools. Take your time to build an interesting surface. When you're happy with it, return to the largest ball stylus and tap very lightly to soften and distort the marks so they look more natural.



Smooth the whole surface with a thin layer of Liquid Cosclay using a paintbrush to remove fingerprints. Let it settle for a few minutes. Then take an old bristly brush, hold it perpendicular to the clay, and tap lightly. This adds tiny pores, softens imperfections and blends everything together. Let the rock rest while we prepare the moss stalks. If you have a heat gun, you may set the surface for a few minutes so you don't damage the texture later.



Cut the floral wire into small pieces, about 1.5–2 cm long. Prepare the green clay by mixing about 10 g of Cosclay Sculpt with a pinch of cyan and yellow pigment, and add a few drops of Liquid Cosclay for stickiness.

Coat one wire piece with a light layer of Liquid Cosclay. Take a tiny ball of green clay, shape it into a drop and press the wire into the pointed end. Roll it gently between your fingers to form a little icicle. Once the shape is right, blend the clay smoothly into the stem with a silicone brush.

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Add another layer of liquid clay. You can stick the wires into a cork so they stay in place. When using the heat gun, keep it on the lowest setting and hold it a bit farther away, giving the pieces just enough warmth to set the surface.

Floral wire coated with liquid clay creates a surprisingly sturdy base. The clay grips much better onto paper-covered wire, and an extra layer of liquid clay adds even more security. After baking, the pieces stay flexible, so you can pose them any way you like.

10



Take a small piece of aluminium foil and shape it into a tiny cylinder about 1.5–2 cm high.

11



Start covering it with a layer of Cosclay Firm, keeping a simple mushroom-stem shape in mind. Don't forget to add a tiny cute tummy and a little tooshie — they always work beautifully.

12



Cut out a circle about 2 cm in diameter and 3–4 mm thick, and place it on top of the stem. Blend the edges into the stem with your fingers and shape the cap so it becomes thinner toward the rim, just like a real mushroom.



13



Create two small indentations with a ball stylus for the eyes. You can make the eyes from black clay, or by mixing a bit of Cosclay Sculpt with black pigment and rolling it into tiny 2 mm balls. Give them a light set with a heat gun, then place them gently into the indentations.

14



Make two bigger cones for the legs and two smaller ones for the arms. Starting with the legs, place them in their spots and blend them into the stem body. Don't forget to add a little clay to blend them into the cute tooshie we worked on earlier. Pose them however you like to give Shroomie more life.

15



Turn Shroomie over and start shaping the gills. Use sharp tools like dental tools or silicone brushes to make radial lines, pressing a bit harder at the edges to thin them out. Add a rip or two for character. Don't mind small clay crumbs, they will help with texture later. Turn Shroomie back upright and blend the gills into the stem with a cone silicone brush, adding a few bold lines on the stem for extra detail.

16



Shape the tiniest "worms" of clay to cover the eyes from above and below, creating little eyelids. Blend them gently into the body. Take the smallest silicone or rubber cone you have and press lightly around the eyes to form an expression. Choose any emotion you like, but try to really feel it and make it believable, even for a tiny creature like this. Finish by adding a teeny-tiny mouth.

17



Take a tiny ball stylus and tap a few areas to break the symmetry and make Shroomie look more natural. Add a bit of liquid clay to the rock and press Shroomie gently into place, holding him by the cap for control. Brush a thin layer of liquid clay over everything except the cap, smoothing as you go and brushing upward along the gills. The small clay lumps from earlier will blend in nicely and add to the organic feel.

Add texture to the cap by tapping it with a bristly brush, then nudge it into a slightly tilted shape. If you have a heat gun, set everything now, especially the area where Shroomie connects to the rock. If not, handle him with care or give the piece a very quick bake to secure it before continuing.

18



For the moss, take the rest of your green mix and add about 7–10 drops of liquid clay. Mix thoroughly so it becomes really sticky, then darken it slightly with a tiny pinch of black pigment so it is a bit darker than the stalks. Brush some liquid clay onto the spots where the moss will grow and press small lumps of the green clay onto those areas of the rock. This is also a good moment to fill any odd gaps where Shroomie touches the rock.

19



Before shaping the moss, coat it well with liquid clay. Then take a medium ball stylus and start tapping into the green lumps, mixing in the liquid clay as you go and adjusting the shape. If the clay sticks to the tool or tears, it is too dry — add a little more liquid clay and mix it in directly on the rock. We want a paste-like consistency where the clay follows the tool without breaking.

Once you have that, switch to smaller ball styluses and start shaping. Be as dramatic and playful as you like: move, twist, and pull the clay into fluffy, leafy clusters. If the consistency is right, it will follow your tools beautifully. Keep adjusting until the moss looks just right to you.

20



Take each stalk, bend it slightly, dip the bottom into a bit of liquid clay, and press it into the moss. Repeat until all stalks are placed. Your piece is ready for the final bake. Since there are some thicker areas of clay, bake it at 130°C f for at least an hour. You really can't overbake it, a longer bake is always safer.

21



From pigments, mix your own shades of color — tones of yellow, green, brown, cyan, and red. Start with a bit of white paint and add pigments to tint it. If you want a darker or more earthy tone, add a tiny amount of black or brown.

First, bring out the texture by dipping a soft brush into white paint, then wiping most of it off with a tissue so the brush is almost dry. Gently brush it across Shroomie and the stone. Try to avoid the moss, but if a little paint gets on it, that's perfectly fine.

22



Time to add some color. Start with the cap and paint it cyan. You can dilute the paint slightly with water to keep it more transparent so the texture of the cap still shows through. Dilute some cyan even more and brush a little between the gills, plus add tiny touches around the eyes.

23



Now move on to the moss. Mix a few light greenish, yellowish, and brownish tones — a bit lighter than the moss looks right now. Use these for dry-brushing across the moss, gently layering the colors. Go lighter in some areas and darker in others. From this step on, feel free to add small colorful spots to the rock using whatever color is already on your brush.





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This is also the perfect time to add some color to the stalks. Choose any shade between green, yellow, or red — whatever feels right. Dilute the paint so the base green still shows through. I usually like to keep the stalks lighter than the moss so they really stand out.



25

Now touch up the eyeballs with a bit of black paint to bring back their definition. Once that's done, take a moment to step back and see if everything feels balanced.



26

Once everything is dry, mix a darker green and brown wash and work it into all the crevices of the rock, as well as Shroomie's legs and bottom. If you apply too much, lift the excess with a tissue or clean brush.

Let the wash pool naturally in the tiny indentations, it will dry beautifully on its own. Add a few touches of yellow and green around the rock for extra life.



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When everything is fully dry, give it another light round of dry-brushing wherever it feels needed. I hope you love your Shroomie, and that creating him brought you as much joy as sculpting him brings to me.

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### OLGA'S TIPS & TRICKS

#### USING HEAT GUN

- A heat gun is very helpful when working on complex shapes because it lets you fix details before continuing.
- It works especially well for the eyes, since you can shape the expression without anything getting in the way.
- Heat-gun curing is not a real bake, so treat all heated areas as still “raw.”
- Parts set only with a heat gun can dry out or fall off the armature over time, so they will always need a proper oven bake later.
- If you have already used the heat gun on the rock, stalks, and eyes, you can skip the first bake. If not, give these parts a short, minimal bake before moving on.

#### MAKING A LOVABLE CHARACTER

- The eyes matter the most, so take your time with them.
- Prebake the eyes to work around them more confidently.
- Make the eyes black so the shapes and expression are clearer to read.
- Use a mirror to check for symmetry when needed.
- Do not rush the expression and try to really feel the emotion you want to give your character.

#### PAINTING AND FINISHING

- Painting often feels like going in circles, but that is part of the process.
- Work in thin layers and move back and forth between dry-brushing and washes.
- Only the base layers should be thicker, while everything afterwards is about small improvements.
- Think about the environment your character lives in and let it inspire the colors and textures.
- Realistic finishes take time, so be patient and let the layers build gradually.
- After finishing the main painting, take a day or two away to return with fresh eyes.
- A short break helps you see where you can push the piece further.
- Final touches can make a big difference, such as a lighter dry-brush on the cap, a muddy wash on the rock, or a small cyan wash on the eyes.

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## FINAL PROJECT





## OLGA VYSHNYVETSKA

Olga Vyshnyvetska is a sculptor from Ukraine, creating characters from polymer clay and placing them in natural, slightly magical surroundings to give them more context. She loves working with plants and rocks, adding rich textures and making them easy to paint afterwards. She is also a big fan of simple techniques that lead to impressive results without too much effort.

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