

POLYMER WEEK

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GLOWING CONTRASTS

by Susana Paredes

Inspired by the quiet beauty of contrasts and the soft interplay of light and shadow, Susana Paredes explores the balance between the warmth of gold elements and the gentle rhythm of flowing lines. Using the mokume gane technique, you will create subtle gradients from black to white, then add three-dimensional accents that seem to glow from within. "I'll walk you through each step so you can bring your own touch to a piece that feels both modern and elegant," says Susana.

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TOOLS & SUPPLIES

POLYMER CLAY

- black and white polymer clay
- liquid clay

MATERIALS

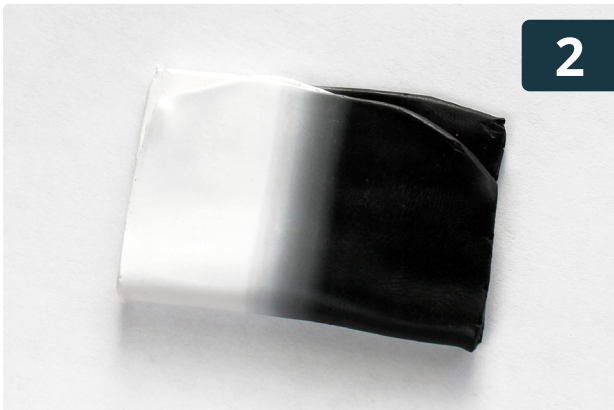
- 2 mm black cord
- cord closure
- gold color pigment
- gold glass inclusions
- 2 mm metal tube
- deli paper
- baking soda

TOOLS

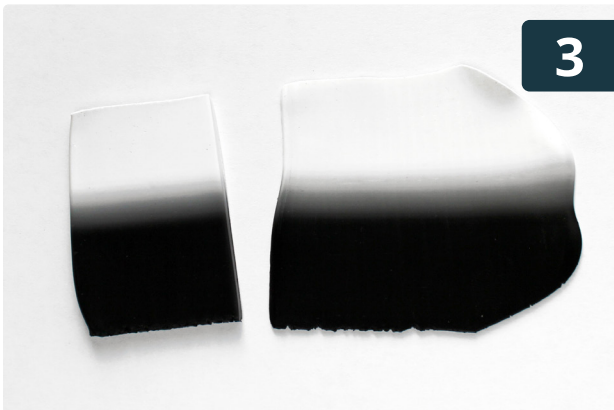
- pasta machine
- roller
- texture roller with stripes or waves
- rigid blade
- semi-flexible blade
- multipurpose blade
- scalpel
- paper template 48 × 42 mm
- oval cutter 32 × 22 mm
- micro cutters 6 mm and 9 mm
- round cutter 14 mm
- soft brush
- needle tools
- texture sponge
- acrylic block
- sandpaper
- baking tile
- tin filled with baking soda



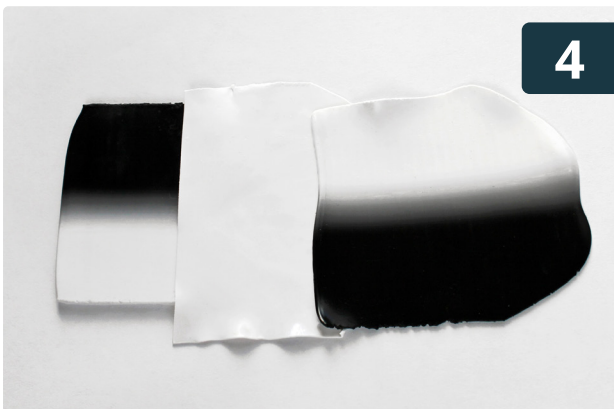
Cut a piece of white and black clay at the thickest setting of your pasta machine, each measuring about 2×10 cm. Overlap them partially (around 2 mm) to start blending the colors.



Blend the two pieces at the thickest setting of the pasta machine until a smooth gray appears in the center.



Once your blend is ready, cut a 4 cm horizontal section and keep this piece at the thickest setting. Expand the remaining piece horizontally to setting 5, as shown in the picture.



Create a thin white clay sheet at setting 7. Stack the sheets layered one on top of each other in the order shown in the photo. First, place the thickest piece with black away from you, then the white sheet over it, and then the last piece with white away from you. Make sure to align the gray center zones.



Align the gray zone sections so they meet in the center, with the white in between, as shown in the picture. Trim the excess to square off the stack.



Flatten the stack horizontally to setting 3. Place it over your work surface and prepare to impress the pattern by adding cornstarch to both the clay sheet and the roller.

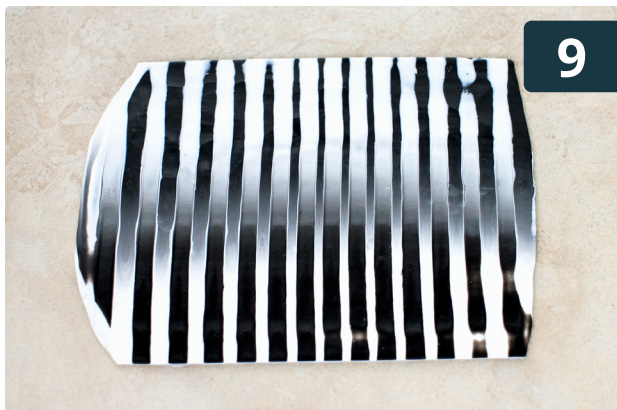


Press the roller firmly to make a deep impression and ensure the clay sheet is stuck to your work surface, making it easier to work with.



Using a semi-flexible, sharp blade, gently shave the raised areas little by little until the pattern becomes visible.

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The edges of the veneer don't need to be perfect; focus on the central part of the pattern, as this will be used to create the pendant.



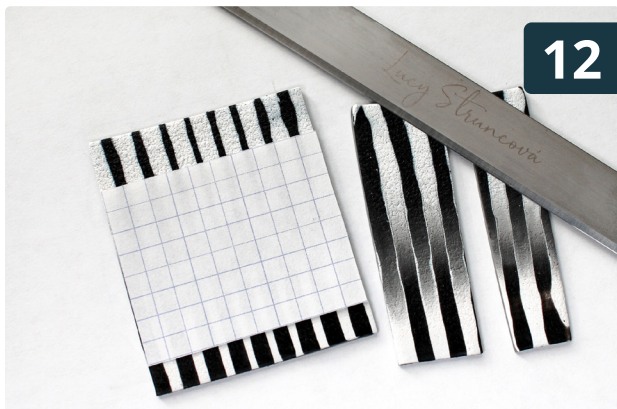
10

Once you are satisfied with the pattern, burnish the veneer gently using deli paper or a similar material over the top of the veneer.



11

Add a backing layer of black or gray clay at setting 3, then add texture to the veneer using a sponge.



12

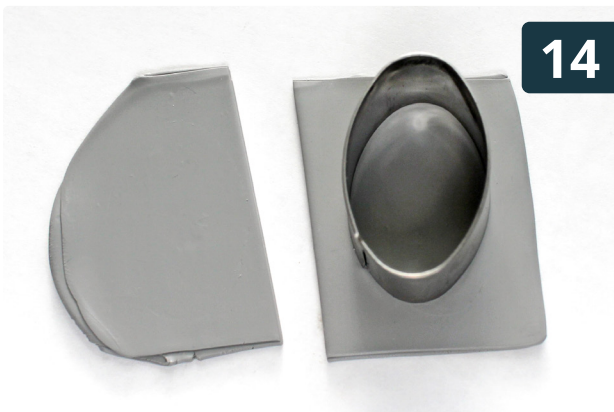
Cut a rectangle from the center of your veneer using a template approximately 48 × 42 mm.

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Position the piece with the thick black lines at the bottom. Use the oval cutter to remove the top center, leaving a half-oval shape, and set it aside.



14

Roll a light gray clay sheet to setting 3, size 6 × 4 cm, and cut it in half. Ensure each piece fits inside the oval cutter.



15

Take one half and apply gold pigment over it.



16

Spread a thin layer of liquid clay with your fingers and sprinkle gold glass inclusions all over it, pressing gently to adhere.

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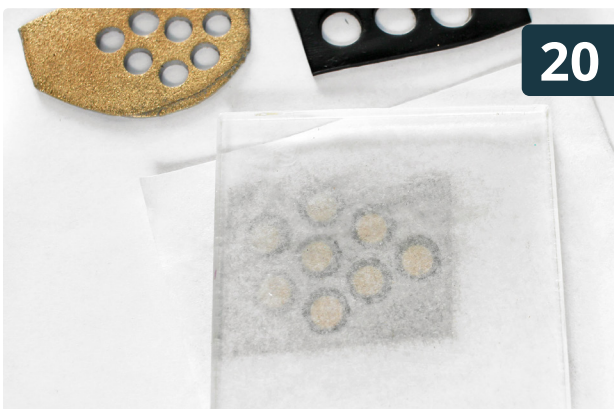
This is the texture you want to achieve for this piece.



Prepare a black clay piece of similar size and thickness (setting 3). To create the top part of the pendant, plan the design by marking the gray piece with the oval and 9 mm cutters before cutting.



Cut enough pieces from the black and gold sheets to complete your design. Use the 9 mm cutter for the black and the 6 mm cutter for the gold. Make 9 mm holes in the gray clay and replace them with black clay, then make 6 mm holes inside the black circles to place the gold dots, as shown in the pictures.



Once your design is complete, burnish it well to ensure all elements are securely bonded.

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Gently press a sponge over the piece several times using an acrylic block to add a nice texture.



This shows how the design should look after texturing.



Roll a piece of gray clay to setting 4, about 3 × 4 cm, and poke holes with a needle tool. Press it firmly onto your work surface; this will be the back layer of the domed piece that goes on top of the pendant.



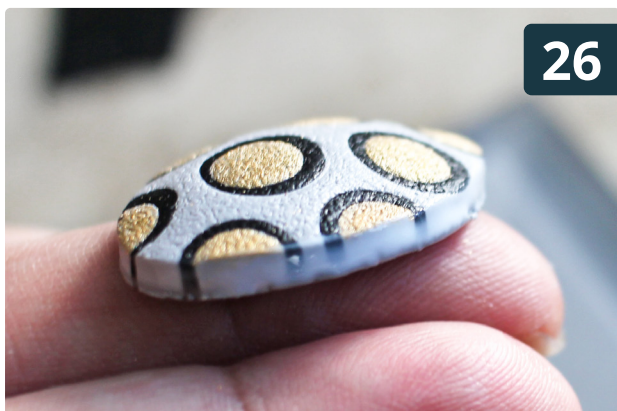
Position the oval cutter over the dotted veneer as desired, then gently dome it by pressing from below with your fingers to prepare it for creating a hollow piece.

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Place the domed piece over the clay on your work surface and cut. Add a tiny side hole in the hollow piece to release air during baking.



26

Apply liquid clay around one half of the edge of the hollow piece.



27

Over your baking tile, attach the domed piece to the top part of the pendant and press firmly to adhere, as shown in the picture.



28

Using a 14 mm round cutter, create a hollow domed piece from gray clay at setting 4.

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Add a small side hole to release air during baking. Then apply a thin coat of liquid clay using a brush, sponge, or your finger.



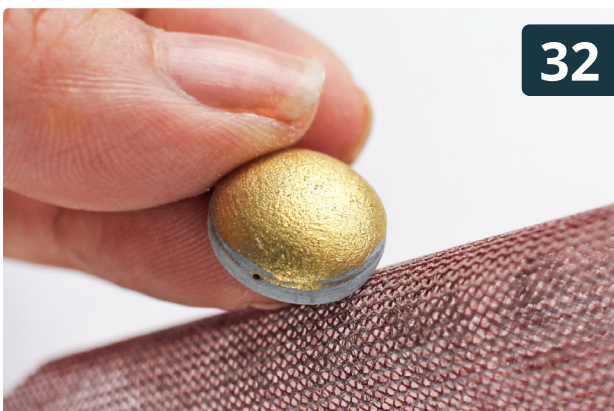
30

With a soft brush, apply gold pigment over the piece until it's no longer sticky.



31

Place the piece on the tile and bake all parts together for 30 minutes.



32

After curing, sand the edges of the small gold piece until smooth.

33



Apply liquid clay around the edges and attach a thin black clay strip at setting 6.

34



Adhere the piece to the pendant's center using liquid clay, then add decorative indentations around the edges with a needle tool. Set aside.

35



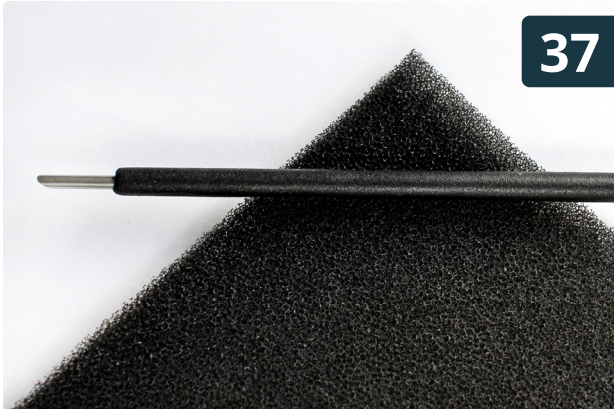
For the bails, cut a 2 × 10 cm black clay strip at setting 3. Make diagonal cuts along the top and bottom long edges with a sharp, rigid blade. Ensure it's thick enough to cover the 2 mm metal tube.

36



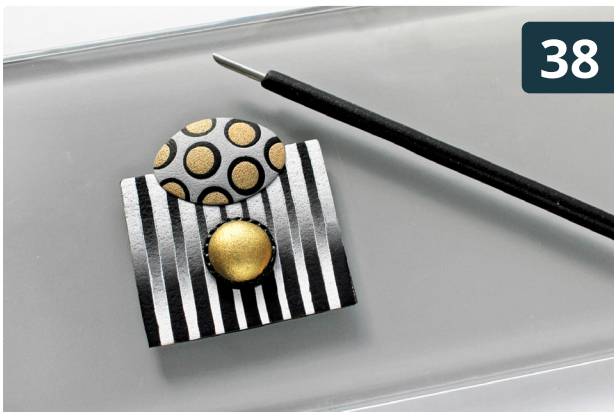
Carefully cover the metal tube, aligning the edges as neatly as possible.

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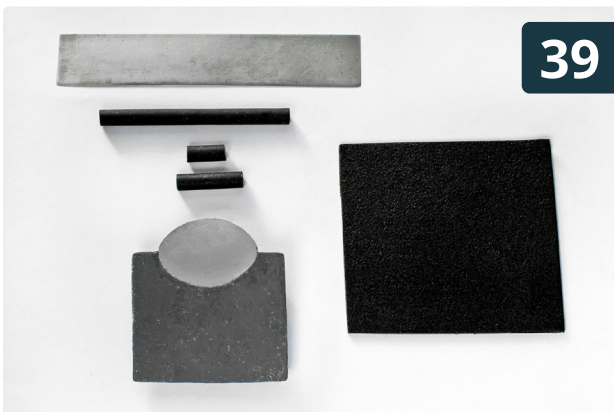
37

Roll the tube over a smooth surface for uniformity, then over a sponge for a slight texture.



38

Bake both pieces for approximately 25 minutes.



39

After curing, remove the clay from the metal tube. Using your multipurpose everyday blade, cut two small pieces of 12 mm and 20 mm, and sand the edges for a clean look. Sand the pendant's edges until smooth, and prepare a textured black clay sheet at setting 3, large enough to cover the pendant.



40

Apply liquid clay to the back of the pendant and adhere the black smooth side of the clay sheet with the textured side out. Trim off the excess clay around the edges with a scalpel.



41

Gently press the back with a sponge, making sure there is no trapped air, then texture the edges as well for a refined finish.



42

Attach the small black tubes to the top back with liquid clay, pressing them firmly onto the raw clay. Leave a 3 mm gap between the tubes, as shown in the picture.



43

Trim any excess clay from the edges again and texture them with a sponge for a neat finish.



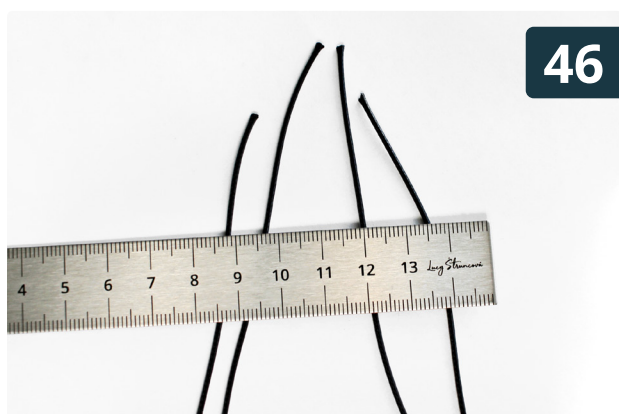
44

Add a decorative mark or your signature stamp on the back, then bake on a tin filled with baking soda for around 45 minutes.



45

After curing, thread cords of your choice through each tube.



46

Since the bails are separate, the cords will differ slightly in length. Stretch the cords straight from the pendant and cut them so they align evenly, then attach your preferred closure.



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Your pendant is now complete and ready to wear!

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FINAL PROJECT





SUSANA PAREDES

Originally Peruvian and now living in the United States, Susana Paredes lit up social media with her beautiful interpretations of the mokume gane technique. Her love for color, along with botanical and organic patterns, merges with her passion for polymer clay, constantly pushing her to explore the medium and find inspiration for new artworks and techniques.

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