

POLYMER WEEK

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CZECH FOREST BROOCH

by Pavla Čepelíková

Mushroom picking, children building magical houses in the woods, beautiful moss everywhere... For this project, Pavla Čepelíková drew inspiration from all the small things found in Czech forests — the colors, textures, and the light filtering between the trees. Enjoy this charming project and create your own Forest Brooch from polymer clay and glass inclusions.

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TOOLS & SUPPLIES

POLYMER CLAY

- Premo: terracotta, alizarin, bronze, pearl magenta, cooper, raw sienna
- Cernit: rose gold
- Liquid clay

MATERIALS

- glass inclusions – rose gold, silver, pink, white (optional)
- Sculpey UV glaze
- brooch pin
- baking paper
- aluminium foil

TOOLS

- pasta machine
- rigid blade
- texture sponge
- needle tool

TIPS & TRICKS



Glass Inclusions offer so many possibilities, some are opaque, while others are beautifully translucent. Pavla showcases a sample chart she created with the translucent types, demonstrating how differently they appear on various clay colors.

“Rose gold glass inclusions are opaque, so they look the same on any color of clay. But silver and pink are transparent, so you can achieve many shades of pebbles even with just one transparent color of inclusions. What magic!”



Start by making a ball and flattening it by hand into a pebble. Make 4-5 pebbles from at least five different colors. Create 1 big, 1 medium, and 2 small ones. My sizes are about 20 mm, 10 mm, and 5-6 mm. It's always helpful to include both darker and lighter shades. Shown here is Premo Terracotta.



Apply a generous amount of liquid clay. Sculpey Transparent will give you a nice matte finish.



Hold the pebbles with a needle tool and dip them into glass inclusions. Make more pebbles than you think you'll need, composing your final brooch is much easier when you have many options to choose from.



Place the pebbles gently on a tile and bake for 30 minutes at the temperature recommended by your clay manufacturer. The glass will sustain all baking temperatures. Make sure to clean the inclusions off your table afterwards.

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Here are the pebbles I used for this project: rosegold, pink, silver, and white. The base clay colors were terracotta, raw sienna, and bronze.



A closer look shows how beautifully the inclusions sparkle.



Don't worry about the back side, it won't be visible in the final piece.



Making the pebbles is addictive and meditative. They're beautiful on their own, and you'll find many uses for them; they can even become simple earrings.

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Prepare around 4–6 matching colors for your little forest brooch. It's easier to mix clay to match the baked pebbles with inclusions than to match pebbles to clay. Mix each color well, then prepare sheets on a medium setting.



Choose one shade for the “branches”, in this case copper. Cut 5–7 mm stripes from your colors using a rigid blade; the widths can vary to keep the design interesting. Alternate each wider stripe with a thin (1–2 mm) copper stripe.



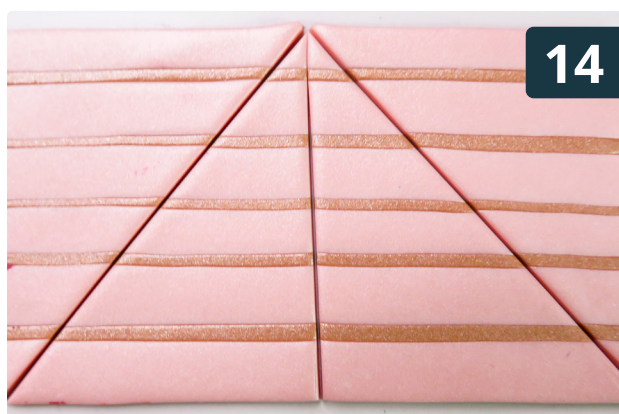
Continue building the striped sheet until you have at least 6–7 thicker stripes. The final sheet should measure approx. 70 × 80 mm.



Smooth and connect the stripes using baking paper, then trim the edges.



Cut the striped sheet into two tall, symmetrical triangles by making diagonal cuts from the bottom center to the upper corners.



Repeat the same striped-sheet process using solid colors, in this case rosegold and copper, and cut these into triangles as well.



To assemble the trees, use two mirrored striped triangles. Cut a thin triangle from the same color used for the branches (copper) to create the trunk, and place it between the mirrored pieces. Press gently and smooth the seams using baking paper.



Trim the bottom to refine the tree shape.

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Trim the side edges slightly to narrow the triangle.



I like to make one tree with the branches pointing up and one with the branches pointing down.



To assemble the forest, place the smaller tree on top of the larger one to determine where to cut.



Remove the top triangle section from the bottom tree and connect the pieces together.

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Add the “land” where the pebbles will sit. I used one horizontal strip in magenta and an irregular triangle at the bottom in bronze. Bake everything on a tile for 30 minutes.



Here are some color and shape variations for inspiration.



Make a few small mushrooms if you like. You can also replace them with flowers or tiny animals like a rabbit or squirrel. For mushrooms, you’ll need a thin white snake for the stem and a matching color for the cap, an olive shape or small triangle works well. Transparent clay colors also look great. Shape the mushroom and bake it. Feel free to keep the stem a little dirty, it makes the mushroom look more natural.



Here are more tiny mushrooms for inspiration. All are baked, and some are made from semi-translucent clay. You can keep the stems long and trim them later as needed.

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Add liquid clay to the back side of your pebbles. Do not use superglue, it's better when the pebbles remain movable until you decide on the final composition before baking.



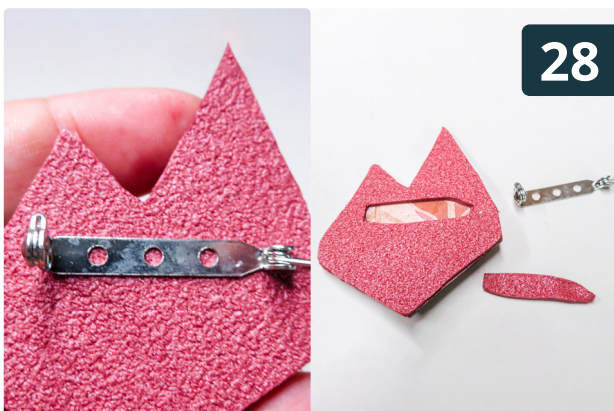
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Cover the horizontal stripe area with pebbles. Mix big, medium, and small sizes, the variety makes this simple concept visually rich. I like placing the largest pebble on one side and the mushroom on the other as a focal point. When you're satisfied with the composition, bake the piece for 30 minutes.



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Once the piece has cooled, texture a sheet of matching clay on the second-thickest setting of your machine. Cover the back of your brooch with liquid clay, place the textured sheet on top, and trim the excess.



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Mark the position of the brooch component and cut out the space for it.

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Use liquid clay to attach the brooch component and cover it with the remaining textured clay piece. Texture again with the sponge, decorate if you wish, and bake for the final 30 minutes, front side down.



Let the piece cool. Make a small nest from aluminium foil to keep the brooch level, and use UV gloss (or any gloss or resin) to make the mushroom shiny. This tiny detail adds a lovely visual effect.



You can use a ball stylus instead of a brush, as the mushroom is very small. The gloss doesn't require a UV lamp; it dries normally but still provides UV protection (great for colors that tend to fade or for alcohol ink surfaces). The gloss looks milky at first but becomes completely clear when dry. I usually apply two layers.



Feel free to experiment with different color variations. You can also use scrap sheets or sheets decorated with silkscreen or other patterns, just make sure all stripes are the same clay sheet thickness. Enjoy!

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FINAL PROJECT





PAVLA ČEPELÍKOVÁ

Pavla Čepelíková is a polymer clay artist and painter who has been working with the medium for over sixteen years, exploring its possibilities and sharing her discoveries through workshops and tutorials. Her techniques often appear intricate but are built from simple, efficient steps that fit into short creative moments. Her artwork is unmistakably colorful, shaped by a love of both vibrant and subtle shades. Pavla draws inspiration from nature, ancient art, animals, and comics, creating expressive pieces with a story behind them.

@pavlacepelikova

pavlacepelikova.com