

POLYMER WEEK

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BLOSSOM EARRINGS

by Bettina Welker

Known for her refined sense of form, color, and composition, Bettina brings her design background into every piece she creates. This time, a pair of metal earrings inspired her years ago, and a quick sketch helped her remember the idea — eventually leading to the Blossom Earrings made from polymer clay, with plenty of variations to explore. It's time to experiment!

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TOOLS & SUPPLIES

POLYMER CLAY

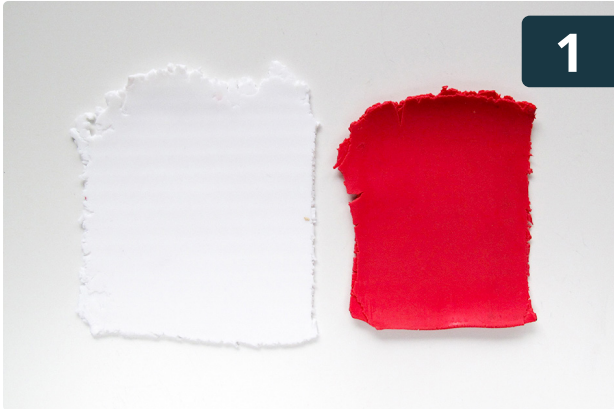
- Fimo black, translucent, carmine red
- liquid clay

MATERIALS

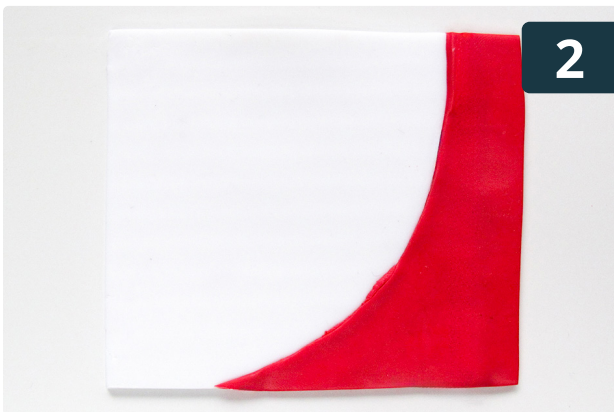
- metal jump rings (oval preferred)
- white acrylic paint
- head pins
- earring hooks
- super glue

TOOLS

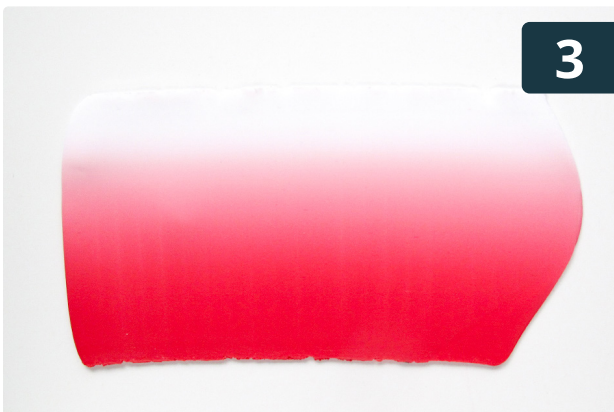
- pasta machine
- blade, scalpel
- acrylic roller
- 5 mm ball stylus
- 10 cm cylindrical glass or can for curing
- texture sponge
- hand drill with 1 mm drill bit
- wire cutters
- sanding block or sandpaper
- round nose pliers



Condition translucent clay and carmine clay. If you have it, you can work with red translucent, or mix your own by combining 6 parts translucent with 1 part red.



Roll both colors through a thicker setting on your pasta machine. Arrange the clay sheets as shown in the picture. The curved layout gives the blend a smoother transition.

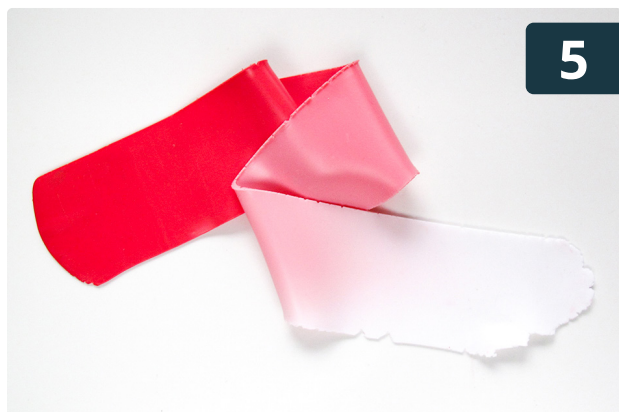


Now cut away any crooked edges and fold the sheet in half each time you pass it through the pasta machine. After about 30 passes, you will get a nice gradation.



Fold in half again and run through the thickest setting on the machine. Now reset your pasta machine to the next thinner setting and repeat the step.

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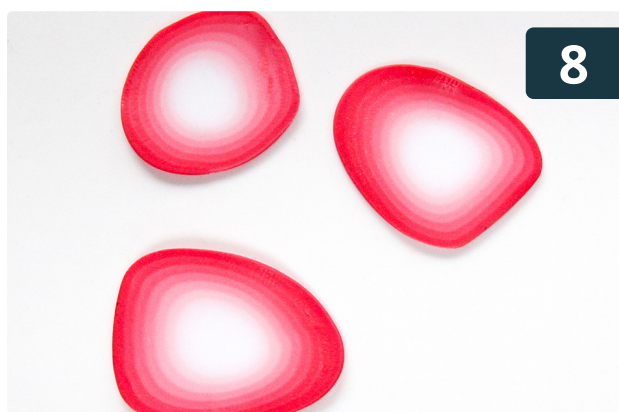
Roll the sheet as thin as possible, until your machine lets you without eating the clay inside. Maybe make some tests beforehand to check how thin you can go with your pasta machine without getting badly rippled clay.



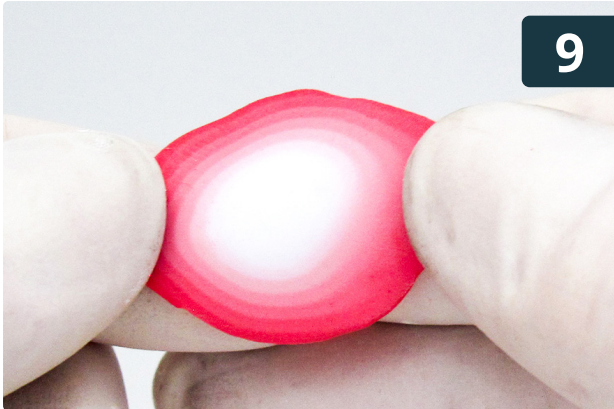
First unfold the clay strip a little and cut both the colored and the white edge straight. Starting with the white edge, roll the clay strip up on your work surface as tightly as possible without trapping any air.



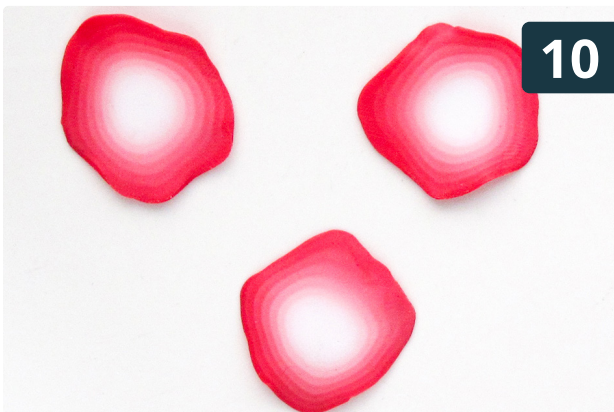
Compress the cane a little by rolling it on your work surface and cut both ends clean with your blade; your skinner blend bull's-eye cane is done.



Cut 2-3 mm thick slices from the cane.



Flatten them a little with your fingers and then feed them through the pasta machine on a medium setting. Rotate the slices and feed them through the next thinner setting. The slices should be no thicker than about 1 mm.



Use your fingertips to stretch the edges a bit thinner. We need 3 petals for each earring, so you will have to make 6 of those.

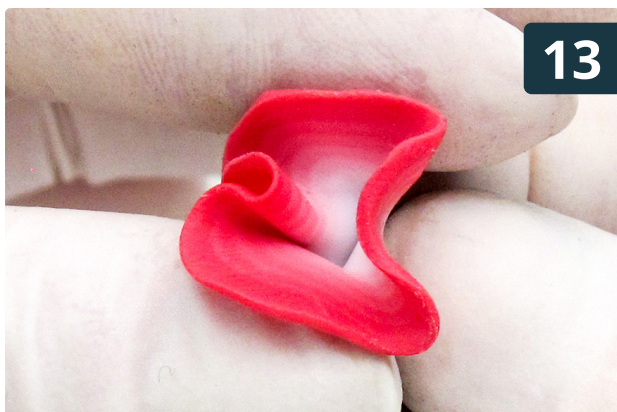


Place a petal on the ball stylus.



Use your fingertips to compress the slice carefully around the ball.

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Remove the petal from the tool and roll the base of the petal between your fingers.



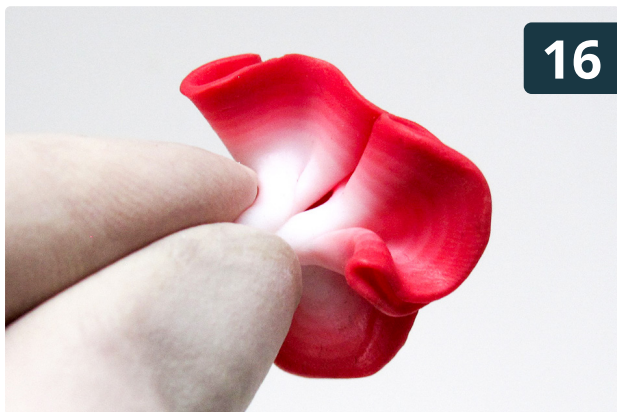
14

The white petal base has to be long enough for you to be able to grab all three petals at a time.



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Now arrange the three petals into a complete blossom.



16

Pinch and rotate the clay between your fingers to create a kind of tip.

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Hold the blossom upside down and cut off the tip, so the blossom can lay flat on your baking tile.



Place all the petals on a tile and cure them for 30 minutes.



While the blossoms are curing in the oven, we have time to prepare the black elements. Condition the black clay and roll it to a medium-thin setting (Atlas setting 3). Use the dull back of your blade to press horizontal lines into the clay. Of course, you can use any texture that you like in this step if you don't prefer the simple lines.



You can use regular cutters, acrylic templates, or a paper template to cut out the two tapered rectangles.

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Flip the rectangles, textured side down now, and press in the jump rings with slight pressure at the center of the top and the bottom of the rectangles.



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Flip the rectangles again and place them onto your cylindrical baking mold.



23

With your fingertips, apply the white acrylic paint to bring out the texture. Then bake in the oven at 110°C for 30 minutes.



24

When the pieces are cold, remove them from the baking mold and remove the jump rings. Sand the outer edge with a sanding sponge or sandpaper. Then apply a bit of super glue and reattach the jump rings. Let dry completely, and add a bit of liquid clay to the entire back side of both shapes.

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Roll out a thin sheet of black clay and use your texture sponge to adhere it to the back of the rectangle.



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Trim the edges with a sharp scalpel or blade.



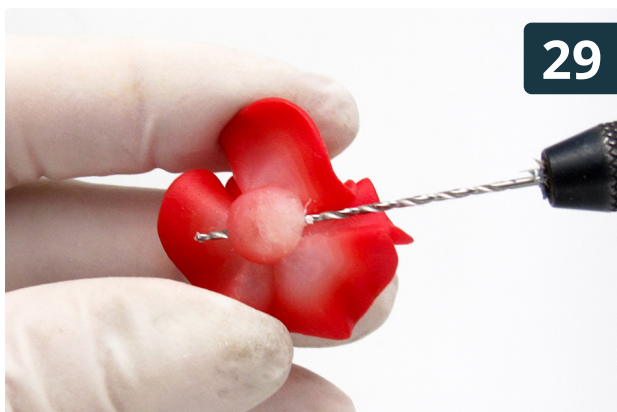
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Make sure there are no air bubbles left on the back side. Set the rectangles aside. Before we cure them, we have to complete the blossoms.



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Roll 2 small balls, around 5 mm, of translucent clay and press them onto the back of the blossoms. Now cure both rectangles and blossoms again for 30 minutes in the oven at 110 °C.



When the blossoms are cured and cooled down, drill a 1 mm hole into the back of the blossom.



Insert a head pin, cut it to about 10 mm, and use a pair of round-nose pliers to create a loop.



With a very small jump ring, attach the blossoms to the rectangles.



Attach your earring hooks to the jump rings and you're done. Your earrings are ready to wear.

Feel free to explore other color variations, such as metallic colors for the blossom, or you can also reuse any kind of bull's-eye cane you may find in your studio.

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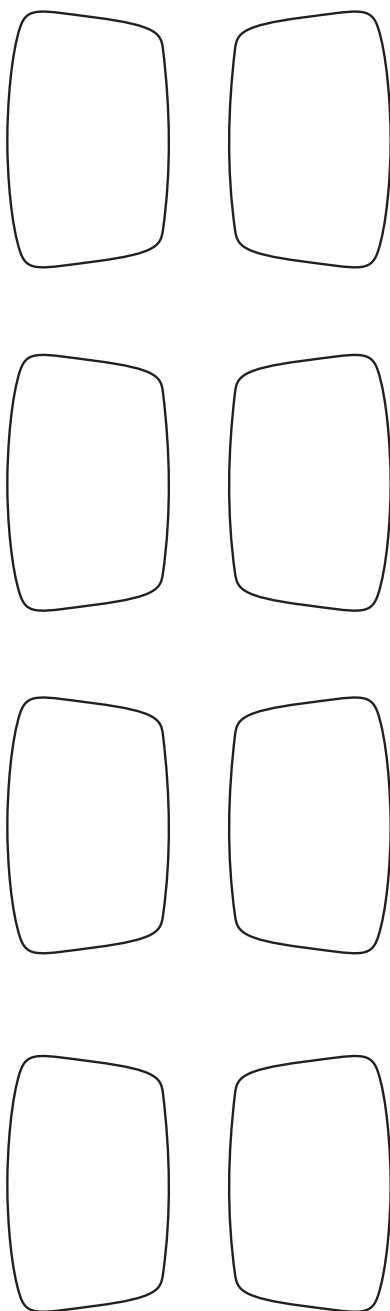
FINAL PROJECT



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TEMPLATE





BETTINA WELKER

Bettina Welker is a German graphic designer and jewelry artist who has been working with polymer clay since 2003. She is a co-founder of the Polyclaykunst.de community and an active member of several international polymer clay guilds. Her work is driven by curiosity and a constant search for inspiration in architecture, nature, art, and everyday life. Over the years, she has shared her knowledge and taught workshops across Europe and the USA.

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