

Personalised Christmas Decorations

A quick and easy project for gift giving

by Jenny Dowde

Christmas for many people, me included, has lost a lot of its magic, mostly due to how "commercialised" it's become over the years. Gwen, a friend of mine, maintains some of the magic by giving special Christmas tree decorations to friends and family as part of her gift giving tradition, so I thought it would be nice to borrow this tradition to share with all my Polyzine friends.



In honour of Gwen's friendship, I created this special personalised decoration for her. I chose images of roses as she has not only loved them for as long as I can remember, but has also recently planted a Rose Garden in memory of her mother.

And what would a Rose Garden be without birds and butterflies? My image source was a book of 19th Century decoupage images that were perfect since I wanted to create an antique look.

What you will need:

- Old CD
- Polymer clay in colour of your choice. I used white, but the colour depends on the effect you want to create
- Pasta machine, brayer or straight-sided bottle
- Craft knife
- Images to suit your subject, such as roses if you want to portray a Rose Garden
- Glitter or Pearl-Ex powders
- Varnish of your choice or Translucent Liquid Sculpey (TLS)
- Burnt umber acrylic paint
- Small paintbrush

Step 1:

Condition the clay and roll it out at #3 on an Imperia pasta machine (approx. 2mm thick). Thickness isn't critical; however, the thicker the base clay, the heavier the finished decoration will be.

Step 2:

Lay a sheet of paper on your work surface, then your sheet of clay. Place your CD onto the clay and roll gently with your brayer to seal. Carefully cut around the CD with the craft knife.

If you want, you can cover the reverse side with clay as well, although the silvery surface is quite acceptable left as it is.

Step 3:

Lift sheet of paper and turn the CD over. Prick any air bubbles, replace the paper and press gently down and around the entire circumference to create a slight bevel.

With the paper still in place, burnish -- without too much pressure -- from the centre out, to remove any trapped air.

Step 4:

Select and cut out your images and place them onto raw clay. When you are happy with the arrangement, give a final gentle burnish to "set" the images to the clay.

Add glitter, powder or other embellishments around the edges as required.

Step 5:

Place the piece on baking surface with a sheet of paper over the top, then a glass or ceramic tile to hold the whole thing flat while baking. Bake for 20 minutes at 130° C (275° F) or according to manufacturer's directions. Remove from oven and leave the whole 'sandwich' intact until cool.

Step 6:

To antique the piece, mix a wash of burnt umber acrylic paint and water and brush over surface. Wipe excess off immediately and repeat if necessary.

It's better to build this wash up gradually to avoid over-darkening the piece. I also sanded very gently with some 1000 grit wet and dry sandpaper to remove a little of the colour from the image.

Step 7:

Varnish with Future floor wax to protect the image, if desired. You could use a thin coat of TLS to protect the image if you prefer.

Step 8:

Glue loop of ribbon or cord to the back of the CD. You could also bake the loop on using a strip of clay.



Variations:

- Add a trim of ribbon or clay around the edge of the piece to hide the seam where clay meets CD.
- Write the recipient's name in clay or with a special pen.
- Add a handwritten quotation.
- Use Christmas-y 3-D embellishments. Now is the time to get out all those cookie cutters you've never used.
- Carve your image and antique with method of your choice.
- Texture the background and stencil on a seasonal greeting.
- Create a clay painting in an appropriate theme.
- Use cutouts to let the silvery surface show through.

The background in 'Letter to Santa' was created using my eggshell technique. Great for creating a mosaic effect! There are pics of my early experiments in this technique in Dotty McMillan's new book, *Creative Ways with Polymer Clay*.



Using an old CD for this personalised decoration idea was somewhat triggered by some recent work I did a little while ago, where I'd used a CD as the base for several pieces (see left). It's an entirely different subject matter, as it was used to advertise a workshop I'm doing next year. However, it does prove once again that the possibilities, where polymer clay is concerned, are endless.