



Fancy Flowers

Hand build ceramic blooms in a bowl

By Michael Harbridge

Objectives

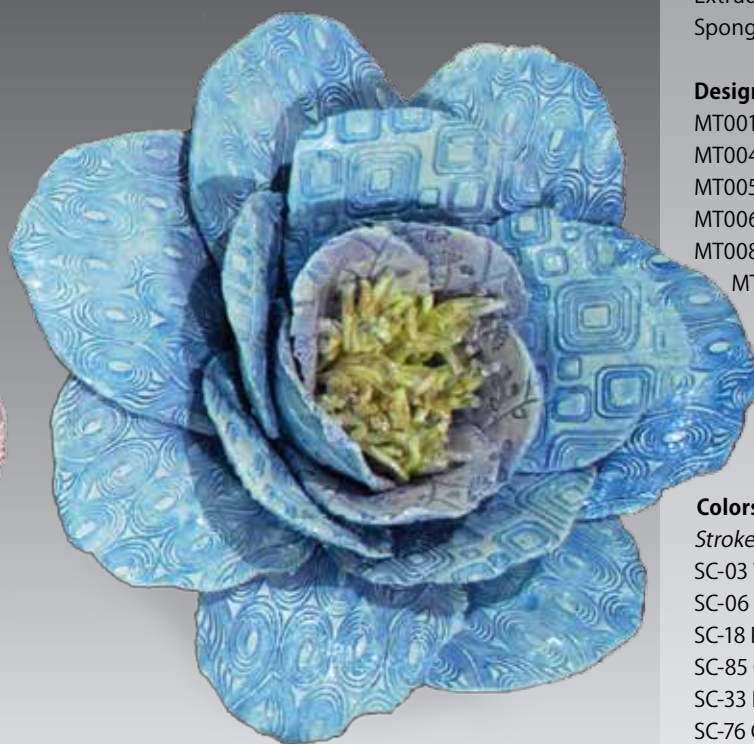
- Use bisque bowls as forms
- Create flower shapes to sit, hang, or stand
- Add textures to clay

Step 1: Flatten pieces of clay between your fingers to about 1/8 inch thickness in the shape of individual petals.

Step 2: One at a time, place each clay piece between two texture pads and press firmly from both sides. Press on the edges to taper each petal. Remove the clay and place it in the bottom of the bisque bowl and work it up the sides. Start with the outermost petals — they should be the largest.

Step 3: Continue making, texturing, and adding petals going around the bowl, overlapping each petal. Press firmly in the bottom of the bowl to attach all petals. Don't worry about losing the texture along the bottom of the petal, because those areas will be covered by the next layer of petals. Complete one row around bowl.

Step 4: Construct more petals, slightly smaller in size and with a different texture. Work these around the interior of the previous petals. Attach by pressing clay in the center. If you really mash the clay together, scoring and slip is not required.



Materials

Low-fire white clay by Continental Clay
Compatible low-fire white slip
Bisque bowl shapes of choice
Extruder
Sponge

Designer Mats by Mayco

MT001 Flower
MT004 Swirls
MT005 Retro Squares
MT006 Foil
MT008 Spiral
MT009 Scallops

Brushes by Royal & Langnickel

SG825-4 stiff fan brush
R1250-5 Aqualon round

Colors by Mayco

Stroke & Coat:
SC-03 Wine About It
SC-06 Sunkissed
SC-18 Rosey Posey
SC-85 Orkid
SC-33 Fruit of the Vine
SC-76 Cara-Bien Blue
SC-78 Camel Back
S-2101 Crystal Clear brushing glaze

Step 5: Continue making petals with various textures and adding them into the bowl until the center area is small enough to add the stamens.

Step 6: Load the extruder with clay and extrude strands of clay using the small-multiple-hole attachment. Break off the strands at a length of about 2 inches. Pinch the coils together at the bottom, and leave them loose and random in length on the ends that will stick up.

Step 7: Apply slip to the bottom of the center area where bunches of coils will be attached. Start on the outer edge of the center area and press the pinched end of the coils firmly into the slip. Continue adding bunches of coils until the area is filled in. Pull apart any areas that get clumped up.

Step 8: Place sponges or paper between any petals that want to sag during the drying process. Allow the piece to dry slowly, right in the bisque bowl.

Step 9: Once sufficiently dry, use a damp sponge or wet brush to smooth any imperfections.

Step 10: Once they're completely dry, the clay flowers can be fired right inside the bisque bowl, or removed and fired. I found it easiest to fire in the bowl. The flower is much more durable and easier to remove without breaking after it's been fired. Fire to cone 04.

Step 11: Select your colors of choice for each flower. It's best to use two colors for each flower, generally a lighter shade and darker shade. Thin the colors using two parts water to one part color.

Step 12: Apply a coat of the thinned color to an entire petal. While still wet, dip the same brush into the thinned darker color and blend it into the lower part of the petal and in areas where petals overlap. Blend the colors so there is not a defined line where they meet.

Step 13: Apply one coat of Sunkissed to the stamens. Tip the stamens with Camel Back.



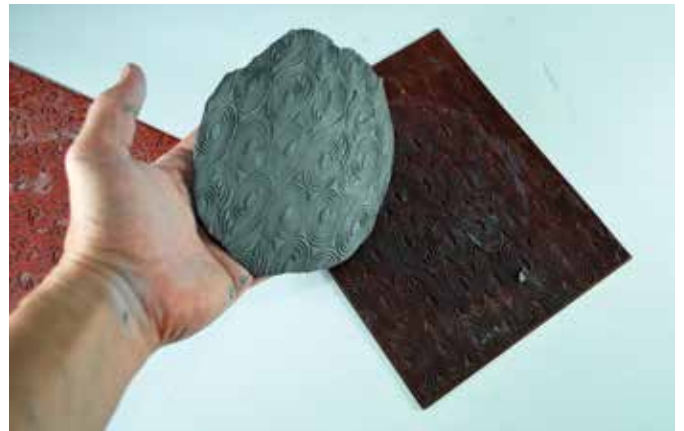
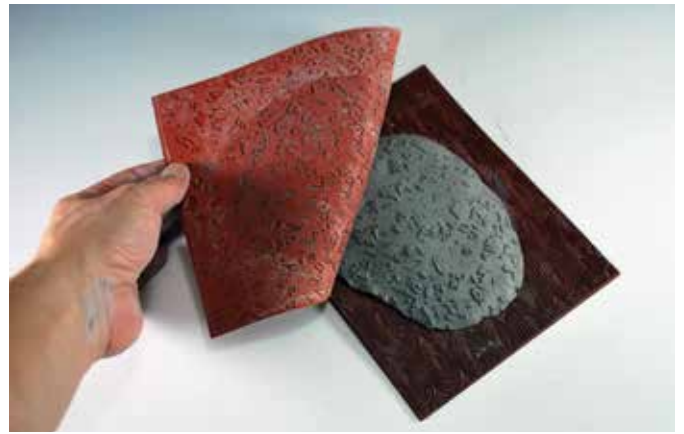
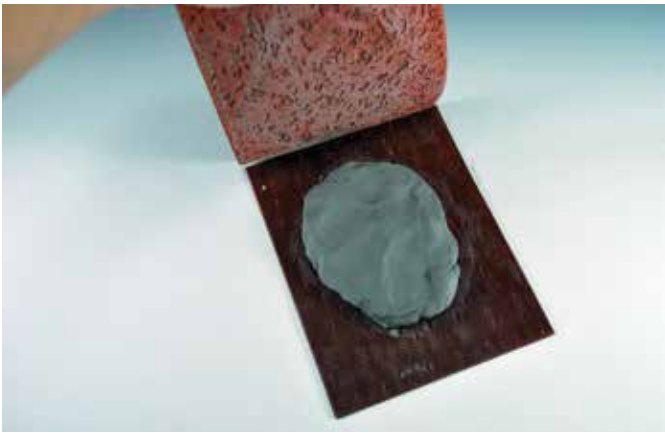
This flower was decorated with Fruit of the Vine and Orkid.



Flower petals were glazed with Fruit of the Vine and Cara-Bein Blue.



Rosey Posey and Wine About It were used on this flower's petals.



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Step 14: Lightly wipe the petals with a damp sponge to remove color from the high points of texture. Thin the dark shade of color used on the flower slightly with water and use a fan brush to splatter the flower. Let the colors dry.

Step 15: Apply two coats of Crystal Clear brushing glaze to the entire flower. Let the glaze dry completely.

Step 16: Stilt and fire to cone 06.

Advanced Methods

Create clay flower bowls and glaze them with crystal glazes for a completely different look. Or try stoneware clay and mid-range or high-fire colors.

Michael Harbridge has been teaching fired-arts workshops for more than 35 years and is the educational arts manager for Royal & Langnickel Brush and the creator of clay puzzling. He can be contacted by mail at P.O. Box 108, Iola, WI 54945, by phone at 715-281-6450, or by e-mail at info@claypuzzling.com. Visit his website at www.claypuzzling.com.

Sources

Continental Clay: www.continentalclay.com

Mayco: www.maycocolors.com

Royal & Langnickel: www.royalbrush.com

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