

FAUX WOOD INLAY

By Bob Wiley

This project is based upon a simple mica shift technique. I will discuss the mica shift technique first, then I will use that technique to make some faux wood inlay pieces.



Supplies:

- Premo pearl clay in several colors
- pasta machine
- clay shaper
- sharp blade
- round cookie cutter

STEP ONE:

To do the faux wood mica shift, start with a piece of a Premo Pearl clay. This can be any color or even a blend of several of the colors.

Most of the images seen in this demo use a blend of Premo Gold Pearl, Premo Red Pearl, and Premo Green Pearl. This mix is mostly gold with just enough red and green to darken it.

Set the pasta machine to its thickest setting and run the clay through several times. Fold the clay in half after each pass and put the fold in the rollers first to minimize the air bubbles.

After a few passes the surface of the sheet of clay should be smooth with a consistent shine to it.

(In the photograph to the right, the sheet of gold is laying on top of another sheet of darker clay.)



STEP TWO:

Next roll the clay into a log. The clay in this picture is the same gold clay as above, only rolled into a log.



STEP THREE

Now twist the log. Really twist the log.

Ideally, the twists should be 1 to 3 millimeters apart. The image has been enlarged to show the detail of the twists.



If the clay breaks while twisting, just press the two ends together, hold the seam with one hand and twist the clay with the other hand. You may need to change hands to ensure that the entire log twists. Eventually, the two ends of the break will stick together.

Even if they do not at this point, the ends will stick after the log is run through the pasta machine.

STEP FOUR

Once the log is thoroughly twisted, set the pasta machine to its thickest setting, lay the log parallel to the rollers and run the clay through the pasta machine.

Reduce the setting and run the clay through again in the same direction. Continue to reduce the setting and run the clay through until it is at the desired thickness.

With the right color, the clay will look like a piece of wood.



Here's a close-up of a smaller piece that shows a better image of the wood grain.



STEP FIVE

To produce a simple faux wood inlay piece, make several pieces of faux wood with different colors of clay.

Also, roll out a sheet of background clay. The color of the background is not critical, I usually use black or silver. It will only be seen from the back and possibly part of the edge.

Select one of the faux wood pieces, cut one edge and place it upon the background. When placing the piece on the background, it is best to roll the piece into place. Push down gently as the clay is laid into place, which will help to reduce the trapped air.

STEP SIX

Select another piece of faux wood. Consider how it should be oriented and then cut the edge that will abut the first piece.

Place the cut edge of the second piece of faux wood clay against the first piece. Secure the faux wood clay onto the background by pressing it gently as it is laid down. Remember, you are only trying to remove the trapped air, and it is best not to leave fingerprints in the clay.



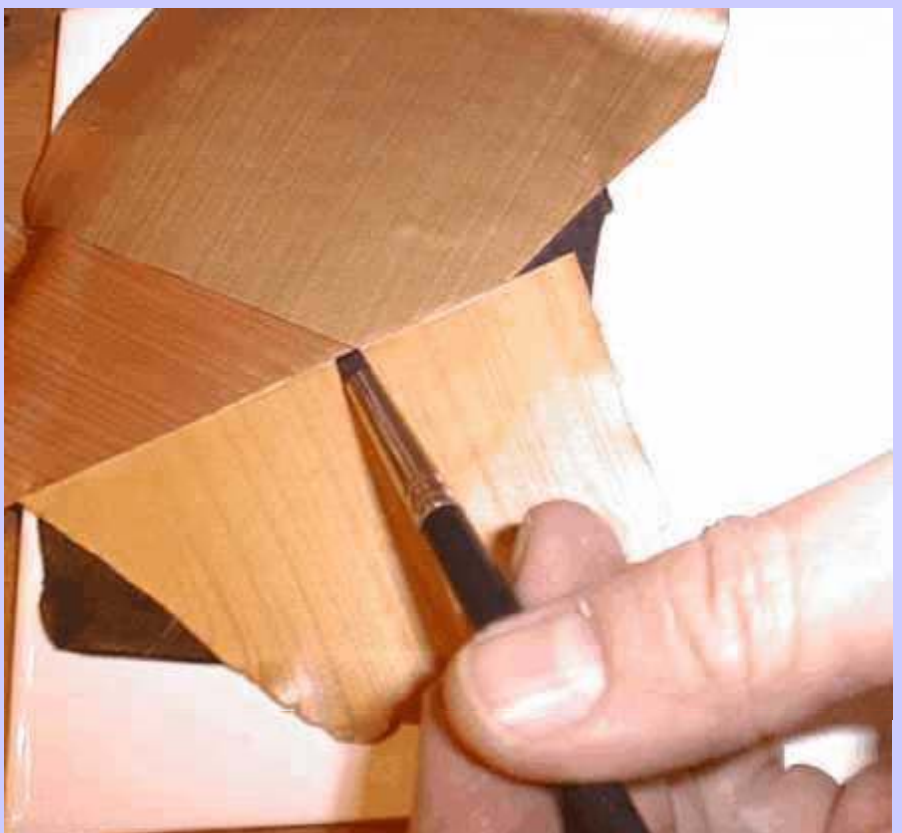
At this point, the pieces that are down can be cut as desired and the excess clay is removed.

Select a third piece of faux wood, select its orientation, cut it to fit the other pieces, and place it using the same technique as with the second.

STEP SEVEN

Once all of the clay pieces have been placed, it may be necessary to scotch the edges together to get a tighter fit. The spade clay shaper is a wonderful tool for this work.

With the clay shaper, gently push the clay pieces together. Again do not push down very hard or you will leave a mark in the surface that will require a lot of sanding to remove.



Push the pieces together along both sides of the edges until the seams are tight.

STEP EIGHT

Now, using a circle cutter, cut through all of the clay layers, including the background piece. Remove all of the excess clay.

To better adhere the pieces together, roll a brayer over the piece.

Bake the faux wood inlay piece according to the package instructions.

While it is still hot from the oven, place the faux wood inlay upon a flat surface and press down upon it with another flat object. Press firmly, as you are trying to smoosh the inlay flat.

Finally, sand, buff, attach a pin back and you will have a beautiful pin.



For a more elaborate look, create interesting patterns and use different cookie cutters.



With care and practice, it is possible to cut shapes out of one faux wood piece and inlay other faux wood pieces into your project.

To the right is an Altoid tin that was covered with a faux wood. Then using the faux wood technique with the Premo green pearl and a dragon shaped cake cutter, a green dragon was inlaid into the piece.

