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polymer clay  
by an artist...  
for artists"

Donna Kato



Project Sheet

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## Cool Summer Beads

By Donna Kato

Polymer clay may be the most versatile medium in the art and craft world today. It has the ability to adapt and translate techniques from other media - such as Mokume Gane - whose origins lie in Japanese metal working traditions.

Our version of Mokume Gane features translucent colors made by mixing Translucent #12310 with three Spectral Colors. We begin by making a slab of thin layers of different colored clay.

Impressions are made by pushing tools deep into the slab, then slices are taken from the top to reveal patterns left by the impressions.

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# Cool Summer Beads

**1. Color Mixes:** Mix 3 translucent shades of Violet, Turquoise, and Ultra Blue by mixing 4 parts Translucent to one part of each color. Each color should be approximately 1/4 of a package in total when mixed.

**2. Slab:** Roll a sheet of White and a sheet of untinted Translucent through a very thin setting of the pasta machine. Roll each translucent mixed color through the thickest setting of the pasta machine. Stacking order from top to the bottom: White, followed by Translucent Violet mix, Translucent Ultra Blue mix, Translucent Turquoise mix and Translucent - a total of 5 layers.

**3.** Using Kato Clay Roller, roll and thin slab slightly, then roll through the pasta machine on the

die tool, the round, flat end of another tool, and the tip of a knitting needle.

**5.** Roll the surface smooth with Kato Clay Roller (fig. 1).

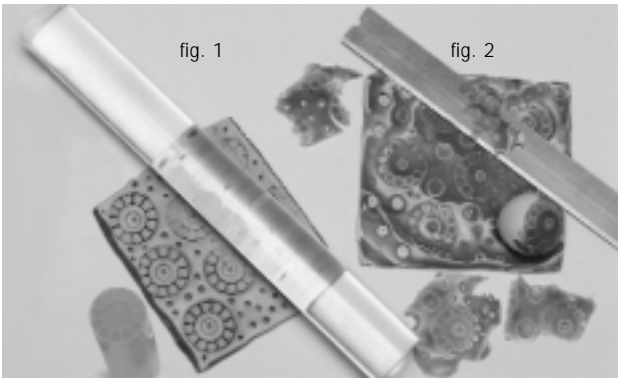
**6.** Slightly bow the Nublade and cut thin slices from the surface of the impressed sheet. Examine both sides of each slice; they are different (fig. 2).

**7.** Roll base beads using White clay. Press slices onto bead, then smooth by rolling with Kato Clay Roller or knitting needle.

**8.** Using needle tool or bamboo skewer, drill a hole in the bead. Position thumb on opposite side of bead and aim tip of drilling tool at your thumb. When you feel the tip protrude, withdraw the needle, turn bead over and re-drill from the opposite side.

## Materials:

- Kato Polyclay™ (3 oz. pkg.):  
White #12309  
Turquoise #12307  
Ultra Blue #12306  
Violet #12305  
Translucent #12310
- Kato Nublade™
- Kato Clay Roller™
- Impressing tools:  
I used an empty core from a roll of adding machine tape as my primary impressing tool
- Pasta machine
- Ceramic tile
- Cornstarch in small bowl
- Needle tool or bamboo skewer
- Polyester batting



thickest setting. Cut in half, place one half atop the other and roll through again. Repeat one more time. Cut in half and stack one half atop the other. Press slab to ceramic tile.

**4.** Liberally apply cornstarch to the adding machine tape core, which you will use to make impressions. "Wiggle" the end of the tape core into the clay, cutting almost to the very bottom. Apply cornstarch before each impression. Finish with other impressing tools - I used my nee-

**9.** Nest the beads in polyester batting and bake at 275F (135C) for 30 minutes per 1/4" (5mm) of thickness.

**10.** Optional finishes: To smooth surface, cooled beads can be wet sanded using 320, 400 then 600 grit wet/dry sandpaper in water. For a high gloss sheen, lightly buff sanded beads against a muslin wheel fitted to an electric buffing machine. For a satin sheen, hand buff sanded beads on denim or polar fleece.

- I have several work surfaces on hand. I usually use my Formica board, but, in a case such as this technique, where you want clay to remain stationary, a ceramic tile or glass is ideal.
- To sanding water, add a few drops of dishwashing soap. When sanding cured clay, use light circular motions. Sand from coarse through finer grits. To minimize sanding, make sure your piece is as perfect as you can make it, before you bake.
- Try other impressing tools such as the blunt side of the Kato Ripple Blade, a string of beads, deep cut rubber stamps or tines of a fork.

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