



Opposites attract

The flowing, iridescent colors of mother-of-pearl contrast brilliantly against solid, angular metal clay in this duo.

by Irina Miech

Perfect for artists who appreciate the gentle radiance of mother-of-pearl, this pretty set combines the softness of nacre with something a bit rougher around the edges. The pendant and matching bracelet feature delicate, flower-shaped mother-of-pearl beads placed atop small metal-clay plates—the perfect juxtaposition of soft and hard aesthetics.

The bracelet is composed of five square metal-clay elements, and the pendant consists of one rectangular element. Construct each metal-clay piece by texturizing it with an impression of lace, embedding a wire post in the clay, piercing holes for connecting links, and adding delicate syringe-clay embellishments. After adorning the metal plates with flower beads, the pieces are linked with silver wire and, before you know it, your eye-catching jewelry set is complete.

[1] Roll out the metal clay. Place 18–20 grams of metal clay onto a lightly oiled heavy plastic surface. Straddle the clay with a stack of three playing cards on each side, leaving a 1-inch (2.5cm) space between the cards and the clay. Lightly oil an acrylic roller and roll over the clay on the surface. Roll the piece approximately 1 inch (2.5cm) wide and 5¼ inches (13.3cm) long.

[2] Texture the clay. Place a piece of lace over the clay and roll over it with the roller. Peel off the lace.

[3] Cut the clay to size. Use a tissue blade to trim the clay to ¾ inch (1.9cm) wide and 5 inches (12.7cm) long. Then cut five ¾×¾-inch (1.9×1.9cm) squares for the bracelet and one ¾×1¼-inch (1.9×3.2cm) rectangle for the necklace. Work with one piece at a time, texture side up, on an oiled work surface. Keep the remaining pieces aside and tightly covered with plastic so they do not dry out.

[4] Prepare the wire. Cut six 1-inch (2.5cm) lengths of 20-gauge fine-silver wire. For each piece, bend a ⅝-inch (1.98mm) right angle at one end to create a foot, and flatten the foot with chainnose pliers.

[5–6] Embed the wire. Embed the flattened foot of the wire into the center of each clay piece. Add a line of syringe clay that circles the base of the wire and covers the foot. Gently pat it smooth with a moist brush so there isn't a noticeable bump.

[7] Make holes in the clay. Use a needle tool for this step. For the bracelet squares, make two small holes in opposite corners of each piece, ⅜ inch (2.38mm) in from the edges.

For the necklace rectangle, orient the piece lengthwise and make two holes in the top corners ⅛ inch (3.18mm) in from the top. Make five holes across the bottom of the rectangle, spacing them evenly ⅜ inch (2.38mm) up from the bottom edge.

Let the clay dry. Let the squares and rectangle dry to bone dry. Drying time can be cut down by placing the pieces on a hotplate, or use a griddle at 150–180°F (66–82°C).

[8] File until smooth. Once dry, sand the edges of the pieces with a file or emery board and smooth the holes with round needle files. The holes for the bracelet and the holes along the bottom of the pendant should be large enough to accommodate 16-gauge wire. The holes in the top corners of the pendant should be larger—approximately ⅝ inch (1.98mm) in diameter.

[9] Decorate with syringe clay. Add syringe clay to the bracelet squares in the corners that don't have holes. Use a small damp brush to lightly moisten each corner, and then add fine lines of syringe clay. Gently pat them down with the moist brush. Remember that syringe work will only show on the outermost corners, as the mother-of-pearl flowers will cover the majority of the center area.

Fire. Place all of the clay pieces onto a ceramic-fiber kiln shelf. Fire the pieces according to the metal-clay manufacturer's instructions.



Burnish the fired pieces. When the pieces have cooled, burnish them with a steel or brass brush (or steel wool) to remove the white surface color that results from firing. Tumble the pieces with burnishing compound and steel shot to create a bright shine.

Patinate the pieces. Apply a liver of sulfur patina to the metal following the manufacturer's instructions.

[10–11] Attach the flowers. Take one of the metal pieces and trim the embedded wire to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9cm) long. Slide a mother-of-pearl flower onto the wire until it rests against the metal-clay backing. Create a small loop at the end of the wire with roundnose pliers and cut off the straight part. Start forming a coil by holding the loop in the jaws of the chainnose pliers and turning. When the spiral is close to the flower, turn it at a right angle and push it down flush onto the flower. Repeat with the remaining metal pieces.

[12–16] Connect the bracelet squares. Use 20-gauge wire to make wrapped-loop beaded connectors to join the squares of the bracelet together. Slide a bead onto a 4-inch (10.2cm) piece of wire, and position it in the center. (*Editor's Note:* It is helpful to mark this place on the wire with a permanent marker.)

While holding the bead in the center of the wire, grasp the wire directly above the bead with the tip of your chainnose pliers. Bend the wire (above the pliers) into a right angle [12]. Create a right-angle bend directly below the bead as well. Starting above the bead, grasp the wire with the jaws of your roundnose pliers as close as possible to the top corner of the right-angle bend. Bend the wire over the top jaw of the roundnose pliers, forming the top half of the loop [13].

Reposition the pliers so the lower jaw fits snugly in the loop (rather than the upper jaw). Bend the wire downward around the bottom of the lower jaw, forming the bottom half of the loop. There should be at least a 1-inch (2.5cm) tail of wire extending sideways from the loop [14]. Slide this loop into one of the holes on a metal square. Once the loop is through the hole, clamp the jaws of your chainnose pliers across the top of the loop, and wrap the tail of the wire around the stem several times, covering the stem between the loop and the place you would like the bead [15]. Trim the excess wire and gently press the cut end close to the wraps with chainnose pliers.

Repeat this wrapped-loop connector with the other end of the wire extending from the bottom of the bead to connect it to another square piece [16]. Also join the toggle clasp pieces to each end of the bracelet in the same way.

Create the pendant dangles. Slide $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches' worth (3.8cm) of beads onto a 3-inch (7.6cm) head pin. After you string the last bead, start a wrapped loop as you did to connect the bracelet elements. Slide the loop into the center hole along the bottom edge of the pendant.

Finish the wrapped loop and trim and tuck the wire. Repeat with the other four head pins, graduating the lengths of the dangles if you'd like.




tips on the right fit

Lengthen your bracelet by using larger or additional beads on the wrapped-loop connectors. Shorten it by using jump rings instead of wrapped-loop connectors to join the squares and/or findings, or by using smaller beads on the connectors.

Bead the strand. Cut an 11-inch (28cm) piece of .013- or .014-inch flexible beading wire. String a crimp bead onto the wire and then put the wire through a hole in top corner of the pendant. Bring the wire back through the crimp bead; you should have a tail about 1 inch (2.5cm) long. Slide the crimp bead as close to the pendant as possible; then, making sure the two wires (the main wire and the tail) are separated, use chainnose pliers to flatten the crimp down onto the wire.

String your desired pattern of beads onto this wire. When you have strung about 8½ inches' worth (21.6cm) of beads, slide on a crimp bead. Then slide the wire through the loop on one end of a toggle clasp. Slide the wire back through the crimp and through several of the beads. Pull the wire tight and flatten the crimp bead.

Repeat this process to complete the other beaded strand on the opposite side of the necklace. Your end result: a pretty bracelet and complementary pendant.

For more information on working with metal clay or wireworking, go to the *Art Jewelry* homepage and click on the link titled Basic Techniques. 

materials

- 18–20g metal clay
- Olive oil or hand balm
- 1×5-inch (2.5×12.7cm) piece of lace
- 24 inches (61cm) 20-gauge fine-silver wire
- Syringe clay
- Liver of sulfur
- Six 14mm mother-of-pearl flower beads
- 1 inch (2.5cm) 16-gauge wire (to measure diameter of holes)
- 6 or more 4mm crystal beads
- 2 toggle clasps
- Jump rings (optional)
- Five 3-inch (7.6cm) 24-gauge head pins
- Assorted beads and spacers for dangles
- 22 inches (55.8mm) of 49-strand .013- or .014-inch flexible beading wire
- 4 sterling-silver crimp beads or tubes
- Assorted 4–6mm pearls and beads for stringing necklace

tools

- Heavy plastic surface
- Deck of playing cards
- Acrylic roller
- Ruler
- Tissue blade
- Chainnose pliers
- Small paintbrush
- Needle tool
- Hotplate or griddle (optional)
- Smooth emery board or file
- Set of round needle files
- Kiln
- Tumbler, steel brush, or steel wool
- Roundnose pliers
- Wire cutters
- Crimping pliers (optional)

Resources

Irina Miech used the following products for her mother-of-pearl bracelet and pendant set: PMC+ metal clay and PMC3 Syringe (visit www.pmcguild.com for a list of suppliers), 14mm mother-of-pearl flowers, 4 and 6mm black diamond crystal beads, 6 and 8mm pearls, toggle clasps, and 1×4mm spacers. Supplies are available from Eclectica shops, located in Brookfield, WI (262.641.0910) and Mequon, WI (262.241.0911).



12



13



14



15



16

Make jewelry that makes a statement . . . your statement

Looking for projects that use different materials such as metalwork, wirework, stone, glass, polymer, and enamel? Then **Art Jewelry** is the magazine for you! Discover the secrets you need to create breathtaking pieces that express your own distinctive style like never before! Whether you want to learn a new technique, try a different material, or get ideas for your own jewelry projects, there's something for you in **Art Jewelry**!

ART Jewelry
magazine



Subscribe Today!

Order online at
www.artjewelrymag.com/promo

Enter code: I4XZ1

or call 800-533-6644

Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Central Time.
Outside the U.S. and Canada, call 262-796-8776, ext. 661.