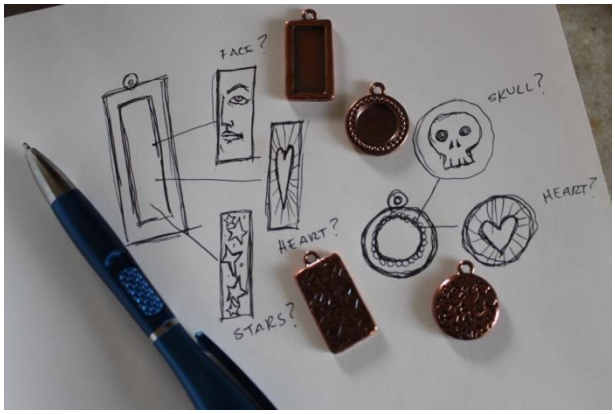
Custom Sculptural Elements
Andrew Thornton

Making Your Master

1. Start by sketching out ideas. It helps to have your bezels nearby for points of reference and for inspiration.



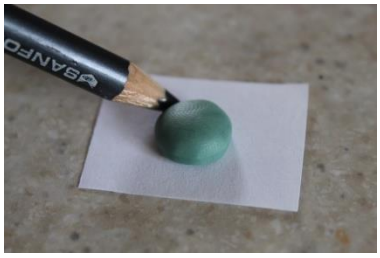
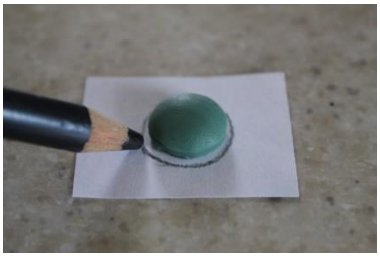
2. Condition polymer clay. To condition your clay, knead it. Work out any air-bubbles if present. Conditioning the clay helps redistribute the plasticizer in the clay and prevents cracking. Tip: I find it helpful to mix a bit of colored clay into the base clay. Once the color is even and uniform, you know you've worked the clay enough.

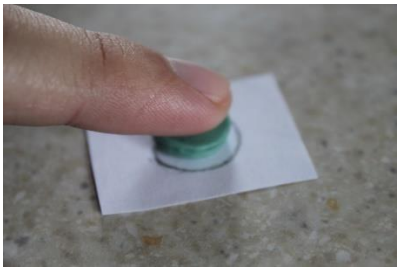


3. A quick way to measure the insert master is to roll the clay in a ball and press it into the bezel. Trim the excess clay around the edges.

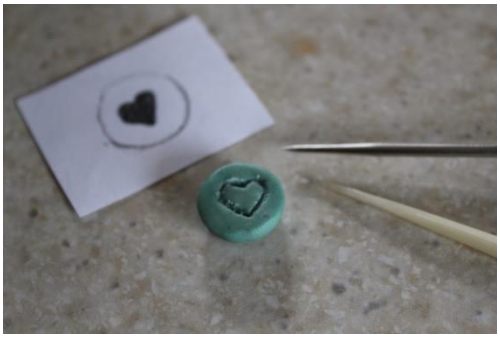


4. To transfer your design from the first step, trace the piece of clay with a dark graphite pencil. Draw your design in the center of the outline. Be careful not to make your design too close to the edge, as the outline will be slightly larger than the actual piece of clay. Press the piece of clay against the pencil drawing. The image should lift up on the polymer.




5. Start carving by tracing your transferred pencil design. I use an awl or sanded down African porcupine quill. If the clay is too soft, put it in the freezer for a few moments. This will help to create harder lines.



6. Use a Speedball linoleum carver to subtract material. It leaves a nice texture in your finished piece.

7. Bake according to manufacturer's directions. Usually at 275^0 F for 15 minutes per ¼ inch thickness.

Making Your Mold Putty Mold

1. Make sure to read instructions for your particular molding putty. Each one is different and some have different ratios to balance. In most cases, you'll measure out equal parts of Part A and Part B.
2. Mix the mold putty thoroughly. Roll the mold putty into a smooth ball. (If you have creases in the clay, it'll transfer to the surface of your creations.) Smooth the mold putty over the master. Make sure the walls are not too thin. Turn the piece over and make sure that the back of the master is level. If it is imbalanced, the cast pieces will be thicker (or thinner) on one side. I also pinch around the edge of the mold, as it helps resin from overflowing and running over the edge.
3. Allow the mold to cure for 20 minutes before demolding. I prefer to wait 24 to 48 hours before pouring resin, as it helps the molds to off-gas and limits the number of air-bubbles.

Making Fast Cast Resin Components

1. All resins are different, so please read the individual instructions carefully. The resin that I prefer to use is equal parts A and B. It sets up between 5 and 10 minutes. It is best to pour resin when it is dry and warm. If it is cold and wet, the resin might not set up properly.
2. Dust the mold with a metallic pigment powder. This will act as a mold release and also give your pieces additional color.
3. Mix equal parts A and B, scraping the sides with the craft stick until the mixture is constantly clear and there are no swirls. (If you are adding dye, add a drop to the craft stick and stir in even and completely.) Pour in prepared molds. I like to keep a few extra on hand in case there is extra resin. The resin will become opaque once it is cured.
4. Press a finger in the back of the resin piece. If it is tacky or soft, let the piece continue to cure. Once it is firm and no longer sticky, pop it out of the mold. Pulling away the edges around the piece.
5. While the resin is still curing and hasn't fully hardened, trim the excess.
6. Finish as desired with alcohol inks, Glider's Paste, acrylic paint, and or glitter.
7. Glue pieces into bezels with gel super glue.