

Stained Glass 101

hands-on info for the hobbyist

by Brian McMillan

Enhancing Your Stained Glass Projects with Art Clay Silver

At first, Art Clay Silver (ACS) may not sound like something that has anything to offer the stained glass artist. In this article, I hope to offer some ideas on how to use ACS to enhance your stained glass projects. Art Clay Silver is a pure metal powder mixed with nontoxic binders and water.

When fired in a kiln, or with a butane torch, the binders burn away, leaving pure, 99.9% silver. It sounds simple... and it is. Today, I would like to describe a simple project using ACS which you can use to make accents for stained glass boxes, vases, lamps or on its own as jewelry.

Brian McMillan

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leaves work the best. Look for ones with strong definition between the veins and the rest of the leaf. We have found that geranium leaves are excellent.

To make this project, you will need a 10-gram bottle of Art Clay Silver Low Fire 650 Paste Type. Take approximately one tablespoon of paste and place it in a small container. Add water, drop by drop, until it is the consistency of thick cream. Stir slowly, but don't whip, as this will cause air bubbles. For the first few coats, the paste must be thin so it will settle into all the nooks and crannies of the leaf to create texture.



Apply the paste to the underside of the leaf. Coat the entire leaf and don't create air bubbles. Allow to dry. When applying further coats, do not use a brushing motion, but rather a dabbing one, dropping the paste onto the surface of the leaf so as not to disturb the previous coats. The third and fourth coats should be a bit thicker—more like batter. The fifth to tenth coats will be undiluted—straight from the bottle. If you need to thin it out, just add a few drops of water. **Allow to dry thoroughly between coats.** After 10 coats, the leaf should have a 1 mm coating of paste and should feel substantial in your hand.



Firing The Leaf

The simplest way to fire your project is in a kiln. Just fire it up to 1200°F for 10 minutes and turn off your kiln. Alternately, you can place the piece on a fire brick and use a butane torch. If you decide to use a torch, I recommend that you get a good book—such as *Art Clay Silver and Gold* by Jackie Truty—for complete safety and operating instructions.



Once the leaf has cooled down, use a fine metal brush to remove the binders off the surface of the piece to reveal a beautiful pure silver work of art—with a big thank you to Mother Nature for her assistance.

Attaching Art Clay Silver

To attach this ACS piece to your stained glass project, I would use a drop of clear silicone sealer. Usually, the leaf is puckered out on the edges so you must use a big drop of silicone to ensure good contact. Place the leaf on the level glass surface and gently push down to ensure that the silicone makes contact with the glass and the silver—but don't bend the silver.



Now It's Up to You

With a bit of imagination, I am confident that you will be able to find many creative ways to use these silver leaves to enhance your stained glass projects.

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