

Art Clay Silver – General Information

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Art Clay – Silver is made up of fine silver particles (1 to 20 microns in size), water, and a non-toxic organic binder. Once the piece has been formed and dried, it is fired in a kiln, where the binding agent burns away leaving a fine silver (99.99% silver) piece that is 8-10% smaller than the original model.

The clay comes in three forms:

Clay – pillow, sheet or paper type

Syringe

Paste – water based or oil based

Art Clay – Silver is water based. Its working properties are similar to that of porcelain clay. It is flexible and accepts texture well. It dries very quickly, but can be re-hydrated – even if it dries out completely.

Characteristics of the Art Clay – Silver

- The clay is water based. If it becomes stiff while working, use a small spray bottle of purified water with a few drops of glycerin added to spray the clay. Knead the clay with the added water between sheets of plastic wrap to keep it from sticking to hands.
- Use oil, Pam spray, Badger Balm, Gardener's Salve or any non-petroleum based product to keep the clay from sticking to hands and tools. Use **MINIMAL** amounts, as too much of any of these materials added to the clay will make it not stick together.
- Take out only the clay necessary to finish the project. The remaining clay should be wrapped in plastic and stored to keep it from drying out. Keep the **wrapped clay** in a film canister with a baby-wipe in the bottom and another one on the top. For short-term storage as you are working, place the clay in a plastic sheet folded over itself inside a baby wipe folded over itself.
- The clay can be reconstituted even if it becomes completely hard. Grind it into a powder and add water. Wear a dust mask while using the flat side of a diamond cut-off wheel to make the clay into powder. While working on a Teflon baking sheet, lightly spray the clay dust with water. Use a small palate knife to mix the clay and water together. Add as little water as possible. Mix until the clay sticks together and picks up the clay from the baking sheet.
- Keep the clay indoors and out of direct sunlight. Do **not** keep it in the refrigerator.
- Do not get clay in mouth or eyes.

- The piece can be added to or reworked – even after firing – and can be re-fired multiple times.

Working with the Art Clay – Silver

Since the clay dries quickly, all tools and supplies should be set out and the area prepared **before** opening the packet.

Tools and Supplies

Plastic Sheet *
 Clay Working Tools*
 X-acto Knife or Scalpel*
 Roller*
 Guides (for thickness)
 Masking Tape
 Water (Distilled or R/O)
 Film Canisters
 Texture Materials*
 Plastic Wrap
 Paint Brushes
 Straws – a Variety of Sizes
 Spray Bottle (Water & a few drops of glycerin)

* Use Badger Balm or other non- petroleum based release agent to lubricate these items before using them with the Art Clay.

- Have a design in mind (or at least a direction) before opening the Art Clay packet as the clay dries quickly, making it less pliable.
- The clay is sticky. Use a lubricant on your hands and on any tools that come into contact with the clay. The lubricant must be non-petroleum based such as Badger Balm, Pam Cooking Spray, or Gardener’s Salve. **Do not use too much** as it will damage the working properties of the clay.
- When the clay is first opened, it may require a little kneading. Have plastic wrap pieces nearby to wrap the unused portion to keep it from drying out and to wrap around the portion being kneaded. Any clay not in use should be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap or it will dry out.
- For slab work, use roller guides for an even thickness. Generally, 1-mm thickness is recommended.
- Use a damp brush or a light spray of water to prevent cracking when folding the clay, rolling it into coils (snakes), or anytime moisture needs to be added to the clay. A small spray bottle works well for this.
- The clay accepts textures well. To create textures:

1. Roll the clay over lace / textured card stock / or other flat textured materials.
 2. Use rubber stamps to press into the clay. Use a lubricant on the stamp. Also be aware that many stamps are copyrighted and you must alter them significantly to avoid copyright infringement problems.
 3. Create textures with: string / spring on its side / corrugated cardboard on edge / sponge / curler / broken wooden stick on end / crumpled aluminum foil / Styrofoam sheet with design drawn in (press it onto the clay for an embossed design) / fabric / burlap / nylon stocking / lace / etc.
 4. Use the syringe to create linear overlay designs.
- When making a seam of joining pieces together, use Art Clay Paste or a bit of Art Clay Syringe as a “glue” to fuse the seam together. Paint a little paste on each of the pieces to be joined and then put them together. If a large void needs to be filled, use the syringe to fill the area.
 - Use **fine silver** wire for any structural elements or findings. Work the clay around the wire. Fine silver may be fired in place. Sterling Silver may be added to the piece and fired in place if the Art Clay - 650 is used and fired at the lowest temperature.
 - A small piece of cardstock can be used to form the piece on and then transport it to and from the warming tray more easily. (Playing cards work well).
 - It is best to finish the piece as much as possible while it is in its “greenware” state (completely dry, but unfired).
 - Pieces should be **completely** dry before firing. To check, lift the piece off the warming tray and place it on a piece of metal (a CD tin works very well for this). After a few seconds, move the piece to another place on the CD tin. If there is moisture residue where the piece was originally placed, it is not dry. If there is nothing, it is dry and is ready for clean-up or firing.
 - After firing, Art Clay – Silver is a solid metal object of fine silver. It can be filed, sawed, sanded, polished, or soldered to other non-ferrous metals.
 - Pieces may be re-fired multiple times. Add clay, syringe or paste to the finished piece and repeat the firing process. The new portion will shrink 8-10%. The previously fired portion will not shrink again.