

Art Clay – Silver Rings

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Making rings in art clay has several special considerations. Remember that art clay is fine silver and the shank of a ring may need to be heavier so it will wear well. In addition, the shrinkage factor (8-10%) of the art clay must be taken into account. There are two methods to accommodate the shrinkage:

1. Size the ring 8% to 10% larger than the desired finished piece.
2. Use a plug that will not disintegrate in the kiln to fix the ring size. This will result in a thinning of the band, so the design should be thicker to compensate for that fact. Casting investment will work well.

Allowing for Shrinkage

- Find or make a mandrel to form the ring on. The mandrel may be wood, metal, plastic or any other hard material. If the correct size is unavailable, use a slightly smaller mandrel and build it up with masking tape to the necessary size.
- Use a post-it-note wrapped around the mandrel and taped tightly to itself. This will allow the ring to be slipped off the mandrel after it is dry in order to fire it.
- Finish the ring as much as possible before firing.

Making a Plug to Control Ring Size

If you find it difficult to master the size guesstimation process, It is possible to make firing mandrels that ring can be fired around to ensure the correct size.

- Use card stock to make a tube to the correct ring size. Use masking tape or clay to form a bottom and to seal the side. Be sure the tube will not leak when the investment is poured in.
- Mix the investment as to cast. Pour into the tube. Allow it to set-up (10-15 minutes). Remove the tube and tape. Allow the investment to dry completely – overnight or in a 200°F oven.
- The plug may be used as the mandrel to form the ring, but be sure to use wax paper between the ring and the investment. For firing the wax paper may be left in place or it may be removed.
- There will still be shrinkage involved in the firing process. Since the ring size will not change with the mandrel in place during the firing process, the ring should have extra thickness to compensate for the shrinkage that will occur within the piece.
- Finish the ring as much as possible before firing.