



“Mendhi” Hand Medallions

Designed by Marji Gates for Polyform Products



In India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, “mendhi” is a temporary art form that decorates the hands or feet for special occasions. Henna (a plant extract) is drawn onto the skin of hands or feet in floral or geometric patterns, allowed to dry, and rinsed away to leave beautiful designs which gradually wash off over a period of 2-3 days. Traditionally, this artwork was for girls and women, but more recently boys and men are partaking in this form of celebration.

Goals - Students will:

Explore the art of India.

Make decorative texture stamps with simple organic, natural or geometric shapes.

Learn to sculpt a simple hand form with spheres and ropes of clay.

Stamp symmetric or curvilinear patterns onto prepared clay hands.

Decorate hand sculptures with texture designs.

Stain cured clay to accentuate patterns and textures with traditional earth or metallic colors.

Materials:

Sculpey III in Chocolate, Green or Blue, Tan or Ivory – 1 oz. per student, as well as scrap clay in any color.

Firefly Tool Set

Clay blades are optional - teacher may elect to cut stacks for students.

Scraps of matt board, ceramic tiles, or aluminum flashing tiles, one over-proof piece per student.

ArmorAll™ Original Protectant spray with paper towel pads.

Pasta machines and table clamps, one per 4 students recommended.

Acrylic paint: Burnt sienna, burnt umber or gold. Paper towels and brushes.

Getting Started

Preheat oven to 275 °F. Test temperature with oven thermometer for perfectly cured clay.

Condition all clay by kneading until it's soft and smooth or running it through the Clay

Conditioning Machine for several passes on the widest setting. Fold the clay in half after each pass and insert the fold side into the rollers first.

Process:

1. Sample photos of mendhi are recommended to inspire ideas for designs. Students can experiment on paper first, drawing possible ideas.
2. Students will condition scrap clay for texture stamps first, rolling and stacking slabs of Sculpey clay until a block roughly 1x1x2" is achieved .
3. Students (or teacher) will cut the block into quarters to make 4 stamps, each 1/4x1/4x2".
4. Pinch and incise simple geometric shapes, leaves or flowers into the 1/4" face of these stamps. Initial work or work surface unless stamps will be shared collaboratively.



5. Cure for 20 minutes at 275° F. Cool completely.
6. Using the Green or Blue Clay create small stacks. Push the stacks in each design to create a stamp of each design. Cure the stamps created for 20 minutes at 275° F. Cool completely.



7. Students will condition and roll a 1" diameter sphere or ball of their chosen clay color, as well as a rope roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6" for the hand.



8. Flatten the sphere onto a scrap of mat board, a ceramic tile, or an aluminum flashing tile with roller. Trim away a thin crescent to form the palm of a hand.
9. Cut 4 fingers and a thumb, students using their own hands to guide the length of the fingers and placement of the thumb.
10. Spray ArmorAll™ onto a folded paper towel and use to lubricate stamps before each impression is made.
11. Testing the pressure first on scraps of clay, draw vining stems or geometric designs, and press designs into the clay, treating the fingers as a group when stamping.
12. Fingernails can be pressed in with one of the Firefly tools (mendhi can be on the palm or the back of the hand).
13. Cure 20 minutes at 275° F. Cool completely.

14. Students will smudge acrylic paint onto hand to accentuate textures and wipe away raised areas only. Make sure students wash hands and work areas immediately to avoid staining skin or work surfaces. Initial back of pieces for identification.
15. Finished designs should dry for 10 minutes. The Mendhi Hands can be glue-mounted on matt board for display, a large pin back added to make a jewelry brooch, a magnet added, or hole drilled to make a hanging medallion.