

Metal Clay Tassel with Swarovski Crystals Necklace – **Tammy Honaman** (www.tamarahonaman.com)

Use metal clay to create a one-of-a-kind tassel cap that is fired and ready to accommodate Swarovski crystal chatons (1088s), which are set in place post polishing. Gather up chain, Swarovski crystals, WireLace and shibori ribbon to create the tassel. Pull the tassel up into the cap to finish.

Using the Now That's a Pliers! and some 16-gauge sterling silver or sterling-silver filled wire, create figure eights. Use jumprings to join the figure eights to create a custom length of chain. Use a jumpring to connect the tassel to the chain and you are ready to go.

Materials:

- Smooth work surface
- Invisible tape
- Non-stick work surface/Teflon sheet
- Scissors
- Slik or olive oil
- Playing cards or plastic slats
- Acrylic roller
- Metal clay
- Textures
- Cool slip or olive oil
- Cutters:
- Bird, various sizes of circles, leaf – large and small
- Clay blade
- Doming surface
- Needle tool
- Water dish
- Paint brush
- Silicone tool
- Setting burs
- Salon board
- Jeweler's files
- Polishing papers
- Burnisher
- Brass brush
- 2-part epoxy
- Toothpicks
- Suitable gluing work surface
- Chatons
- Paper towels
- Alcohol, ODX or suitable degreaser
- Crimp ends with 2mm opening & loop
- Wire Lace
- Shibori ribbon
- Beading awl
- Tweezers
- Chain
- Headpins (24)
- Crystal beads and pendants
- 16 and 20-gauge sterling silver or sterling silver filled wire
- Hand held jig – NTaP! - "Now That's a Pliers"
- Wire cutters
- Chain-nose pliers
- Jumprings
- Hammer
- Bench block
- Rubber block

Creating the clay pieces:

1. Wrap the tube with a strip of nonstick sheet. Trim the nonstick sheet so there is a little overlap then seal the ends with tape

Treat the work surface, tools and hands with Slick or a little olive oil. Spray the textures with Cool Slip then let the spray dry before using or apply enough olive oil it gets into the crevices of the texture but is not a heavy coating on the surface.

2. Open the clay. Roll the clay out to 5-cards thick. Transfer the clay to a texture mat. Roll the clay out to 3-cards thick.
Move the textured clay to a nonstick work surface.

Using a blade, trim the edges of the clay so they are straight and neat. Wrap the clay around the tube then trim the ends where they overlap, cutting the clay on an angle to create an overlapping joint.

Seal the ends with water then smooth the seam.

3. Cut a small piece of clay from the excess then add it to the seam of the clay on the tube. Add water to the area then apply pressure to join the two layers together. Use the paintbrush to create a neat seam, trying not to disturb the texture too much.
Allow the clay to set up a bit then press the setting bur into the seam.

Press until the bur can't go any further or until the top of the bur is to the top of the clay's surface.

Move the bur around a bit to widen the opening; remove then repeat in a different spot. Set the tube aside and allow the clay to dry a bit before removing from the tube.

4. Roll out a new layer of clay to 4 cards thick. Transfer to a texture mat and roll out to 3 cards thick. Transfer to a non-stick work surface then cut out a circle from the clay. Then, using a small circle cutter cut out a small circle from the center of the larger circle.

Transfer the clay to the doming form.

Cut out other shapes from the remaining clay or roll out a new layer if needed. Place a hole in the shapes so they can be used as charms or pendants in your design.

5. Roll out a bit of clay to 3 cards thick. Cut out a small circle then cut out a smaller circle from the center, creating a clay donut. Transfer this shape to the center of the clay on the doming form. Apply water to the area to ensure a good join. Apply a bit of pressure to seal the two layers together. Allow this to dry completely.

Refining the dried clay pieces:

6. Using polishing papers and files, refine all dried pieces of clay. Smooth edges, enlarge the holes so they can accommodate a jumpring later and in general make them as perfect as you can get them.

Assembling the tassel cap:

7. Using a paintbrush, apply water to the underside of the domed shape. Dip the end of the clay tube into a pot of metal clay paste. Press the fresh-clay end of the tube to the damp underside of the domed clay. Hold for a bit so the two have some time to connect.

Check the join and if needed, apply more metal clay paste to ensure the seam will be sealed. Allow the clay to dry.

Once dry, check the seam (inside and out) to ensure it is sealed; if needed, apply more clay and allow to dry again.

Firing the clay pieces:

8. Once all pieces are dried and refined to a near perfect state, prepare them for the kiln.

While wearing a mask, break off a piece of fiber blanket and place a bit of fiber blanket inside the tube. Wrap a bit of fiber blanket around the tube to support the domed edge during firing.

Alternatively, you can embed the tassel cap into a bed of vermiculite.

Fire the kiln to 1650-degrees F and hold for 2 hours. Allow the kiln to cool to room temperature before removing the pieces from the kiln.

Polishing the clay pieces post firing:

9. Using a brass brush, burnish the surface of the fired pieces. To burnish to a smooth and shiny finish, use a burnishing tool or place into a tumbler with steel shot and burnishing compound then tumble until you reach the finish you like.

Adding Swarovski chatons:

10. Clean the surface of the metal so it is prepared for gluing.

Prepare a batch of two-part epoxy. Apply a small dab of epoxy to one area where you created a depression using the setting bur. Place a chaton into the epoxy. Press to ensure a good bond. Remove any excess glue before it is fully cured.

Allow the epoxy to cure fully before using the pieces in your design.

Creating the tassel:

11. Cut a length of shibori ribbon about 6-inches long. Cut this length into strips about ¼" wide. Cut a few lengths of WireLace about 6-inches long. Fold a length of WireLace so the ends are uneven. Gather the fold and insert into a crimp-tube end. Repeat for all lengths of WireLace and the shibori ribbon.

12. Cut the following lengths of chain: 4-1/4", 3-1/4" and 2-3/4". Using jumprings, add a charm to the end of each length of chain. Use jumprings to add Swarovski crystal pendants to the chain. Thread a Swarovski crystal onto a headpin then attach to the chain using a wrapped loop. Repeat to add as many beaded dangles and crystal pendants to the chain as you would like.

13. Cut an 8" length of 20-gauge wire. Begin a wrapped loop on one end. Before wrapping, open the formed loop and thread on the loops of the crimp ends and the first link on each length of chain. Finish the wrapped loop.

Add the metal clay tassel cap to the wire and pull the ribbon and chain assembly inside. Arrange the ribbons, WireLace and chain so you are pleased with the arrangement. Add a spacer to the wire then finish the wire with a wrapped loop.

Creating the chain:

14. Cut an 18" length of 16-gauge wire.

Set up the ovals or ½" rounds on the NTaP!

Anchor one end of the wire between the two shapes on the NTaP! then begin to work the wire in a "figure-8" motion until the wire runs out.

Remove the wire from the NTaP! Being careful not to pull the links apart. Using wire cutters, trim each "figure 8" away, making sure to blunt cut the ends as you go.

Adjust the shape of a figure 8, if needed. Place it onto a steel bench block. Using a ball-peen or similar hammer, strike the wire to flatten.

Repeat for all figure 8's needed for the necklace.

15. To create the pendant connector, set up the NTaP! With one ¼" round and one ½" round. Weave the wire around the ½" round twice then form one loop around a ¼" peg. Remove from the pliers, adjust the shape if needed then hammer to flatten, working strategically around where the wires overlap.

16. Connect the links together using jumprings. Add the pendant connector to the center of the necklace. Use jumprings to connect the wrapped loop of the tassel to the pendant connector.