
Driftwood Mobile with Diana Fayt

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview of Driftwood Mobile

- I started making porcelain mobiles as a meditative process. I do a lot of drawing in my work, it's very detail oriented, and I really wanted to make something that was quiet that was a hanging and used light and shape, and also I really enjoy the sound that the porcelain mobiles make when the wind hits them. They make a nice tinkling sound. Throughout this process, we're going to be rolling out shapes of clay, adding texture to them, putting holes in them. And stringing them together to create balanced, delicate kinetic sculptures. ^ (calming instrumental music)

Chapter 2 - Create Shapes

Tools & materials

- I like to work with porcelain because it's a lovely clay, and you can roll it out really thin. And when you fire it in biscuit, and hang it in the mobiles, when they tinkle together, they make this really lovely sound. To make your mobiles, you're going to need porcelain clay, drywall board or a hard surface to work on. An assortment of cookie cutters, I have square ones here, and I also have round shapes as well, three different shapes. An X-Acto blade, a hole punching tool, 3/4 inch dowel, I like using the dowels because they're smaller and they're much better for rolling out delicate work, which is what we're going to be doing. A Dremel tool, with an assortment of drill bits. A white chalk pencil, some thread. I have a piece of driftwood, but you can also use a stick. Pair of scissors. A wire tool, which we'll use to cut our clay. Also you just wanna have all your tools on hand, your cookie cutters, and your X-Acto knife. Porcelain dries really quickly so we need to have it all set up and ready to go. These are not fancy, this is not a fancy setup, you can do this anywhere, all of these materials are readily available. Oh, and don't forget to have your water spritzer. We may or may not need it, but for the porcelain, sometimes you need to invigorate the surface with a little spritz of water, so you really wanna have one of these on hand.

Roll & cut shapes

- To make our mobiles, we need to start rolling out our shapes. I have here my porcelain clay, which I'm gonna use, and I have my cookie cutters. I have just really simple shapes. We're gonna cut out our shapes from the porcelain, and then roll them out, and then they're gonna become softer, more organic shapes. So let's get started. First I'm gonna slice off a thin layer from my porcelain clay. And I'm gonna take my wire cutter. And get started with a thin slice of clay. You wanna keep the clay that you're not using covered up. Porcelain can dry out really quickly, so once you've cut off your thin slice of clay to roll out, wrap up the rest of your clay, so that it won't dry out while you're making your shapes. And I'm going to take my wooden dowel. My small wooden dowel, and I'm gonna go ahead and start rolling out a slab of clay. As you can see I'm doing this on my drywall board here, which is a nice smooth even surface. And the drywall is wonderful because it's plaster covered with paper, and it, the porcelain in the clay will release off of it really easily. It won't stick. And it's also a great temporary surface if you're working on your kitchen table or somewhere where you wanna protect the surface from the clay. And I'm gonna just keep rolling this out, until I get it to about a quarter of an inch thick. It's kind of like pastry. I am rolling from the center out. It helps to move the clay out. And you wanna try and keep your slab even. And I'm gonna continue rolling it.

The porcelain is really beautiful. It has all this marbling in it. But it is delicate and fragile, so you do kind of have to work fast. You don't, especially if you're working in a dry climate. It can dry out really quickly. So, if you're feeling like your clay is getting a little dry, you can spritz it with a little bit of water, but not too much. You don't want your clay to be wet. Just to keep it moist. And of course if you walk away, cover it up with plastic, if you have to go do something. It's looking like the perfect thickness right now. And I'm going to estimate that it's about a quarter of an inch thick. It doesn't have to be accurate or precise. This is a very spontaneous kind of project. And then now I'm gonna go ahead and start cutting out my shapes. I have these wonderful square cookie cutters, and they're in concentric sizes. I'm gonna choose this square shape. I really love these cookie cutters that come in sizes that start from large and go to small, because then I can have lots of different sizes of this square. I'm gonna go ahead and just push my cookie cutter down into the clay. And the clay is probably gonna stick to the cookie cutter. Don't worry about it. This isn't about clean edges. I'm just gonna gently remove it. And then I'm gonna go ahead and push my little square clay shape out, and just lay it down over to the side. And I'm gonna cut out a number of these shapes. First I'm gonna cut out the big shapes. I'm working kind of fast because the porcelain will dry out, so always keep that in mind as you work. I'm also cutting out slightly smaller shapes, because we're gonna go ahead and roll these shapes out again, so they are gonna get bigger. So, it's why I chose the smaller square as opposed to a really large one, unless you want really big shapes for your mobile. Then, go ahead and choose a larger shape. So I have four squares. I'm gonna go ahead and move over to the circles now. So I can have some different shapes. Squares and circles. Really creates a nice dynamic look when you mix shapes. And I'm just breezing through this process, kind of moving in a really mechanical way of getting my shapes cut out, so that I can go ahead and start the next step. Looks like I can squeeze one more out of here. So I'm gonna do that right now. And go ahead and put that down. And then we're ready to move on and cut out more shapes from the shapes that we already cut out. I have some scraps here. You can continue combining the scraps, re-wedging them if the clay is not too dry. Roll them out again, and continue to use them so you can use up all your clay. I think I'm just gonna take my scraps, roll them up, and I'm going to put them under the plastic, just to keep them moist, and put those aside. Now we're gonna go ahead and cut out more shapes from the shapes that we first cut out from our slab. We're gonna start with the squares. And I think I'm just gonna go ahead and line them up in a row, so I can just kind of do this quickly. I'm going to use a circle, and I'm going to cut out the centers of my squares. Cut the circles out. The circle we can use, the little part. I'm just gonna take the end of my pencil and push it through. To release it from this long piece of brass pipe that I'm using as a cookie cutter. You can use any kind of shapes around. You can use plastic lids, or plastic yogurt containers. You don't have to have cookie cutters. If you have cookie cutters, of course you can go ahead and use those as well. I tend to use things from my studio to cut out the shapes. If you just look around, there are shapes all around you. You don't need to go out and buy fancy tools for this. And I've cut out my circles. And I'm gonna push those through. Put my little, we're gonna keep working on these. But I just want to get all the shapes cut out first. I'm gonna move to my circle shapes, and I think I'm gonna cut out the centers with the square cookie cutter. And I'm gonna use the smallest cookie cutter to cut out the center. Once again, eyeballing the center, and cutting the shape away. Make sure you push all the way down. Might have to pick it up and handle it a little bit. And if your clay starts to feel like it's drying out, once again you can give it a little bit of a spritz, just to keep it moist, because the porcelain does dry quickly. And continue to cut your shapes. You don't want the porcelain to be too wet, because then it will really distort when you handle it, so you wanna make sure it's nice and leather hard. A soft

leather hard, not a firm leather hard. It's kind of like making cookies, but you can't eat them. And, we're almost there. And I'm gonna go ahead and put this down. We have one more option here, to cut holes out of the center of these small squares. So I'm gonna go ahead and do that. And there's some rough bits here. I'm not worrying about that. I'm just leaving them be. I kind of like it. And when the porcelain is rolled out, once you'll see in the next step, that's gonna create a really nice frayed edge, that lends to its organic quality. And I'm gonna cut out circles out of these small squares once again. And then I'll have more little circle shapes. I like the little circle shapes. I'm working with porcelain, but you can do this with any kind of clay. It's nice to use other types of clay. I use dark brown clay sometimes, and I also use red clay. Nice to mix and match the clays, and hang your mobiles with different types of clay. You can go ahead and use high-fire, low-fire clay, mid-fire clay. There's no rule as to which kind of clay you need to use for this project.

Roll & add texture to shapes

- Okay we've got all our shapes stamped out of our slab. Now is the fun part, we're gonna go ahead and start rolling 'em out and really kind of distorting our mobile shapes. I'm gonna go ahead and just switch my drywall boards out so that these stay over here and this over here, so I have a clean one that I can do my rolling on. We're gonna do it two ways as well. We're gonna roll out on the board, but we're also gonna create a little bit of texture, and we're gonna roll out straight on top of this cotton fabric that's on the table. And it'll, the porcelain will pick up the texture. So I'm gonna show you both ways how to do that. We're gonna go ahead and start with the rolling out these square shapes. And I'm gonna take my dowel rolling pin, and I'm gonna start rolling out the shape. And as you can see, it really softens the edges. I'm gonna turn this around. My porcelain's starting to dry a little bit and it gets fragile as it dries out, so you wanna handle it carefully. And I'm rolling it thinner and just kinda letting the shapes happen. And I love that they're square, but they've got all these soft edges. I'm gonna continue rolling out my other shapes here. Think I'm gonna go ahead and move my drywall board aside and use the texture of the fabric on the tabletop to create a little bit of texture. I'm gonna do that in these small ones. Now this is a really fine weave cotton. You can use a larger weave piece of linen, anything to create a texture on there. It's really gonna look really nice with the porcelain. And these get, when you just roll them one way, the little circles they get turned into these little nice oval shapes. I'm gonna gently coax it back to flat by turning it over. You saw how it bent over the, the dowel a little bit so, once again this is starting to get a little bit dry. I roll it on both sides. And with this cotton fabric, the texture's gonna be very very subtle. Of course if you use a fabric that has a stronger weave to it, it's going to be more distinctive. When you're making your shapes and you're considering your mobile you wanna think about how many pieces you're gonna need in the mobile. So I on the average let's say you're gonna make a mobile with three strands of hanging pieces that are four long. So that would be 12 pieces, but always make extras of each shape because they always break, some of them break, so you wanna have extras to back you up. So if I'm making 12 shapes, I'll probably make, since I'm gonna make four of each different shape, I probably would do at least six of each shape. I'm gonna take my drywall board back and start rolling out this circle shape. This is gonna be really fun to watch this change once I roll it. I'm gonna give my little guys a little squirt because they're getting a little bit dry. And I'm gonna go ahead and roll this out. Now you can just roll in one direction, you can take your circle and make it into an oval. There is no rule that you have to keep it a circle shape. So now I have a nice oval shape. I might just let the shapes happen. Have to be very careful pulling it away from the drywall board so that I don't rip the corners, very gentle, and I'm gonna go ahead and lay it back down, gonna move this square

over here, and repeat. And this one, the center shape, turns to a nice oval shape in here, which I really like. This is the fun part. This is the magic moment in this process of just letting the shapes kind of happen. And one more here. I'm also not over-handling this. I roll it out a few times and I'm done, put it aside. I'm not trying to clean up the edges or play with them too much. So now that I have all my shapes rolled out, I wanna go ahead and I need to put holes on each end so that we can string them on the mobile. I'm gonna go ahead and start once again with the first shapes. You can actually just take all your rolled out shapes and lay them down and go ahead and punch your holes all at one time. That makes it easier. Once again, kinda working like it's a production line. I have my brass hole punching tool. It has it's a square shape. It makes a really nice clean cut in the clay, and it's also once again because the clay shrinks, and porcelain will shrink more than other clays, you wanna consider how large the size of the hole is that you're punching through. If it's too small, if you just put like a needle tool through, it could shrink and you won't be able to fit your thread through that when you're stringing it. And you don't wanna make it difficult for yourself. So you wanna make the hole a little larger than what it'll look like when it's fired. So I'm just gonna go ahead and punch a hole at the top and the bottom of my shape. And I'm also going to punch the hole in at least 1/4 inch from the edge because when you push the tool through the clay, if it's too close to the edge, it will crack, and you don't want that to happen. And this cleans out. There's a little smaller brass tool on the inside, piece of piping, that will push the little clay, the clay that got pushed up into the square. And I'm gonna go ahead and do that on all my pieces really quickly. I eyeball it, center, it's not perfect. You don't want to do them off center too much because then they will hang lopsided. Now that we have all our shapes rolled out and our holes punched, we're gonna go ahead and set them aside and dry. I'm gonna place a masonite bat on top of them. It's just a thin masonite board to hold them flat, let them dry til they're greenware. Once they're green and dry, gently collect them, load your kiln with them, and fire them to whatever temperature your clay requires.

Chapter 3 - Create Mobile

Drill holes

- So we have our bisqued porcelain pieces for our mobile, and we're ready to start stringing them. I have this really pretty piece of driftwood that I got off of the beach, that I'm going to use to hang my mobile pieces from. To get started, we need to drill some holes in our stick or in our driftwood. To show you an example of a finished piece, just to give you a sense of the balance and what it's going to look like, I have this mobile here. So we have to drill two holes in each end to string a piece of string to hang our mobile from, and then we need to drill three holes through our piece of wood to hang our mobile pieces. Of course you can drill as many holes and do as many strings as your piece of wood allow, but today we're going to do three strands. First I need to mark where I'm going to go ahead and drill my holes. And I have this white chalk pencil that I use. I like to use the chalk pencil because it just wipes away really easily. Gonna go ahead and drill two holes at the end, and I'm just make little x marks at each end. Once I have my marks, I'm going to go ahead and mark three spots in the center. Evenly spaced, because you want to keep balance in your mobile, and that looks pretty good. Once I have my marks, I'm going to go head and mark x's so I know that's my final drill spots. Now I'm going to go ahead and drill the holes through my piece of wood. I'm using a dremel tool with a pretty small bit. This one is a 7 64th bit. You want to make sure that the hole is going to big enough to string the thread through, but you don't want it so big that your thread is going to move around a lot. So I like to use as fine of a bit as I possibly can. The dremel tool is a really convenient tool to use for this project. I'm going to ahead and drill holding my piece of wood

at a 90 degree angle, and I'm going to put my drill tip through the center of the x marks, and drill straight through the piece of wood. (dremel whirring) We now have all our holes drilled and ready to string our mobile strands.

Thread shapes & finish

- Before we start stringing our mobile pieces, we need to figure out our design, so let's go ahead and get started with that. I have all my bisque porcelain pieces here and I'm gonna go ahead and lay them out in different configurations, just to play with the design to see how I want my mobile to look. For this demonstration, I'm gonna be just stringing one strand, but if you have three holes in your piece of wood and you wanna string three strands of your pieces, of course, you're gonna lay out your design accordingly. One thing to consider when you're stringing your mobile strands is that you want to keep them balanced, so you want to mix the shapes and sizes evenly, so that you don't have a heavier end to your mobile and that way, it will stay balanced when you hang it. So, I have my design here. I think I like this, with the large and small pieces mixed together. I have my thread here, and this is a flax linen thread, that is very strong. It won't last forever, but it will last for a good period of time. I also love it because it's a very natural look. It really looks great with the driftwood and with the white porcelain, and it doesn't overpower the design. I'm going to measure out my pieces of thread. I'm gonna add a little extra, just to give myself a little leeway. I can cut it off in the end. So, once I get my length, considering space in between my pieces, I'm going to go ahead, hold the thread where I want to cut it, and cut my first strand of thread. And then I'm gonna cut two more strands of thread the same exact length, using the first strand of thread that I cut as my measurement. Just pull it together. And then cut. And one more for my third strand. And I'm gonna just snip that. We're gonna put our pieces of string down. Let's go ahead and cut our hanger string. And consider how long you want it to hang the drop, from wherever you're hanging your mobile from. So, I think I would like mine to be about this much, and I'm gonna double that so that the hanging part of this is really strong. Once I have my hanger, I'm gonna go ahead and twist my two strands together, so that they become one thick strand of thread. And this will create a nice strong hanger. It's double strength, which is always good for anything that's hanging. And it'll still stay inconspicuous as well. I'm gonna go ahead and tie a small knot in this end. Just to keep the twist together. And do the same on the other end. My holes are large enough so that these knots won't make a difference when I string them through. I'm gonna go ahead now and string that through. And I'm going to start from the top of my piece of wood, where I made my X marks, and I'm going to feed the thread through that hole. And grab the thread on the other end and pull it through. Once I've pulled it through, I'm gonna go ahead and tie that off to secure it in place. And how I'm doing that, is I'm just wrapping it around the wood. And tying it off. And I'm gonna tie it a nice little knot. You can even double knot it just to make sure that it's good and secure. I'm gonna pull that string up so that the knot is on the top of the wood, and once again, I'm going to feed the end of my thread through the hole, same way I did the last hole. I'm grabbing it on the other side and pulling it through. And once again, I'm going to knot off this side. Snip off the excess of thread from the ends of your tied knots from your hanger. And we have our hanging thread. Ready to start stringing our pieces together. I'm going to take one of my strands of thread. And I'm going to space out my pieces with even spaces between each piece, and with enough space that you're gonna leave between the top of the wood and the beginning of the top piece of your mobile pieces. That looks good and I have a little extra at the end here, which is good. Once I figure that out, I'm gonna leave my pieces on the table, I'm not going to move them, so I know how far they're gonna go. I'm going

to go ahead and pick up the thread and feed it through the top of the hole of your first piece, and bring it through. And once again, check your length once you've done that, to make sure it's okay. But then I'm gonna tie off the top. One. Bringing my thread around. Actually, tie a half knot. And then string it through the bottom hole. On the bottom, you don't need to tie a knot. Lead your thread to the next piece, thread it through the top hole, from the back to the front. Keeping your spacing. And tie a half knot once you have your spacing. And continue the process until you have all your porcelain pieces threaded on your string. So, once again, I'm threading from back to front. Pulling the thread through. Tying a half knot. Bringing the thread down. On the bottom hole, from front to back. And then I'm just going to tie it off with a double knot to keep it secure. All strung together. Hold it up and we have our first strand. You wanna go ahead and string your other two strands before you string all three of them to your driftwood. To string your mobile piece, you need to pick up your hanging wood, and turn it so that the string that's hanging is away from you. I'm going to feed this piece of thread through the end hole until it comes out the top. Grab it. And tie it off the same way we did our hanging ties, by wrapping the thread around and tying a double knot. I'm gonna tie one more knot for security and peace of mind. Here's the first strand. Go ahead and string your other two strands. Also, there's probably a little extra thread. You want to clean that up by snipping those off. The little tails. I have a finished one over here with all three strands. As you can hear them make that wonderful tinkling sound. Go ahead and hang them up in a quiet corner of your home and enjoy. (jingling)