

# Fine Feathers

Make a pair of silver-clay peacock earrings



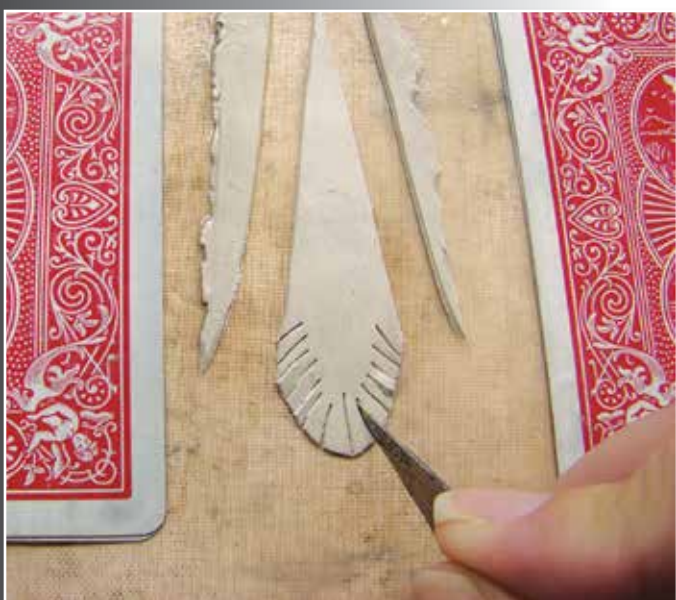
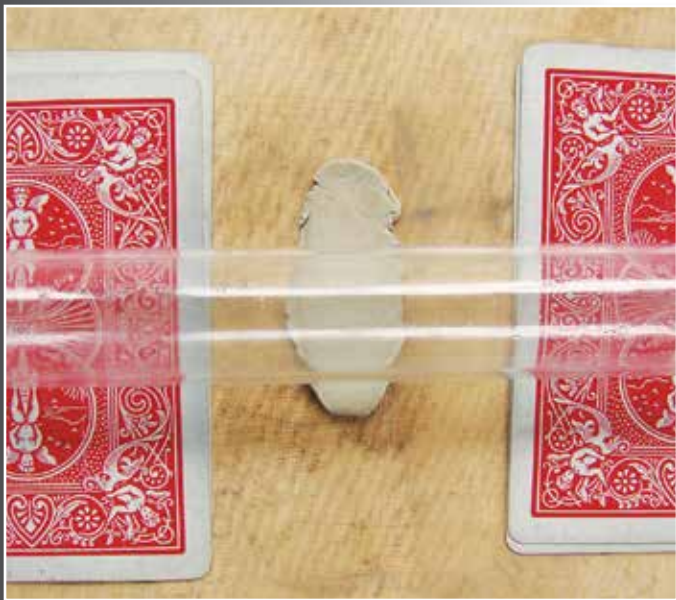
## Objectives

- Create a base design which can stand alone or work with embellishments
- Add color to silver with permanent markers
- Make a narrow channel into which other design elements may be inserted

By Catherine Randolph Hamilton

**P**rized for their brilliant colors, peacock feathers have been incorporated into jewelry in numerous ways, and for many years. Because feathers are natural, organic objects, they do deteriorate over time.

By creating a silver base which acts as both a setting and an ornamental element, you can make a pair of feather earrings which will remain beautiful even when the feathers need replacement.



## Materials

PMC Flex by Mitsubishi Materials

4 playing cards

Roller

Nonstick spray

Craft knife

Teflon sheet

Baking sheet

Fine sandpaper

Pointed tool

Fiber board or fiber felt

Tumbler with mixed shot

Yellow, green, and blue sharpie markers

E6000 glue

Scissors

Jewelry pliers

French hook ear wires

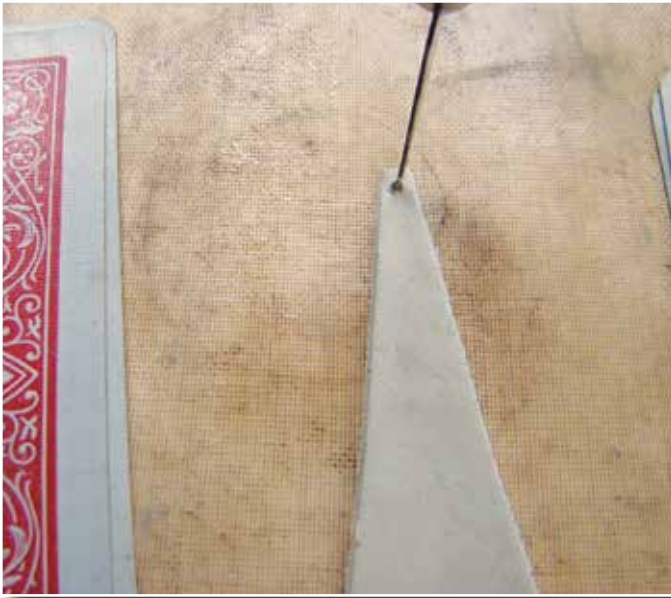
**Step 1:** Using the four playing cards, place two stacks of two cards each and position them to the right and left of your Teflon sheet such that the roller easily spans them. Lightly spray the Teflon sheet, your roller and your fingers with nonstick spray. Roll out a lump of clay into an elongated teardrop shape. Use the edge of one playing card to cut the clay shape following the diagonal lines of the sides of the teardrop and leaving the rounded lower edge intact.

**Step 2:** The lower portion of the teardrop is the right shape for the “eye” area of a peacock feather. Use the craft knife to make a series of small slits (about 1/8 inch in length) around the perimeter of the rounded area, always angling the cuts so they line up from points along the outer edge to the center. Make a straight cut across the top point of the teardrop so that the metal, when fired, will not be too sharp.

**Step 3:** Use a narrow, pointed tool to make a hole in the tapered end so the ear wire may be passed through the metal. This hole should be a little larger than necessary, as the metal clay shrinks during the firing process.

**Step 4:** Lift the clay shape and gently drape the tapered top of the teardrop to the right. Continue to bring the narrow end around until it lines up above the original drape. You should be forming the beginnings of a conical shape. Bring the tip around again to the right until the point is on the underside of the design, slightly above the hollow cone you just formed. It’s OK if the edges are not perfectly aligned — in the photos you can see that the unfired clay is not meeting tightly. This is corrected easily after firing.

**Step 5:** Trim the top of the earring again with the craft knife to correct the angle of the tip if necessary. Draw in the rest of your lines to mimic the patterns in a feather by pressing lightly with the craft knife, and make small tapping motions to create an “eye” in the center. Gently separate several of the slit areas around the edge with the knife so there will be natural looking gaps in the feather, where sections have “unzipped.”





**Step 6:** Repeat Steps 1 through 5 to form a second earring, but this time drape your teardrop to the left and bring it around. The resulting design should flow in the opposite direction, giving you a right and a left earring.

**Step 7:** When you are happy with your designs, slide the Teflon sheet with your project pieces on it onto a baking sheet and place it in a regular oven. Bring the temperature to 300 degrees Fahrenheit and hold for 20 minutes. Allow the oven to cool, and then remove your project.

**Step 8:** Carefully sand and refine your project pieces. Place them on a piece of fiber board or thick fiber felt in the kiln and fire to 1650 F with a hold time of two hours.

**Step 9:** When your project has cooled, open the kiln and remove the pieces. If you need to adjust the alignment of the hollow channel, grip the sides of the earring with a pair of jewelry pliers, holding them so the earring runs parallel to the jaws, with the narrow top closest to the joint of the pliers, and squeeze gently. The earrings are only two cards thick, so gentle pressure reshapes them easily. You can also gently separate and bend the slit edges of your earrings, to give them more of a feathery appearance.

**Step 10:** Place both earrings in a tumbler and polish them. Because the design has a hollow channel, an agate burnisher or wheel will not fit inside. The mixed shot in a tumbler can access the narrow channel. When you have finished polishing the earrings, remove them from the shot and dry them carefully.

**Step 11:** Permanent marker becomes quite luminous when layered over silver. Use yellow and green Sharpies to color the face of the carved design, adding blue to the very center, along with the green. Applying the yellow first will prevent the yellow marker tip from becoming muddied by the other colors. When the marker dries, you can apply jewelry lacquer if you desire. The project piece has not been sealed. Most tarnish can be avoided by storing silver in airtight plastic bags, and permanent marker usually has to be scrubbed off.

**Step 12:** Check the fit of each peacock feather by sliding it into the channel. Trim the feathers with scissors to achieve a good fit and length. The feathers should extend below the silver (see photos). Run the cut end of each feather through E6000 glue, and slide one feather into each earring's channel.

The glue will hold the feather securely in place, and should not show at all. When the feathers need to be replaced, simply pull them out with a pair of tweezers. The silver earrings themselves are attractive and may be worn alone.

**Step 13:** Using your jewelry pliers, open the two French hook ear wires and slip the earrings onto them. Rock them closed and enjoy your new feather earrings!

## Advanced Methods

There are a number of ways to add color to silver. Instead of slitting the silver feather shapes to create detail, you could carve channels into the metal clay and apply enamels after the clay has been fired.

Using a silver syringe will allow you to create deeper channels without adding significantly to the weight of the earrings. Careful use of liver of sulfur can also produce a range of blues and golds. Try applying the solution with a paintbrush for greater control over color changes.



**Catherine Randolph Hamilton** works in a variety of media including fused glass, precious metal clays, chain maille, and oil painting. Her work has won awards and been featured in various magazines. More of her tutorials and a small selection of her work may be viewed at [www.SilverArtGlassJewelry.com](http://www.SilverArtGlassJewelry.com) She welcomes your comments and questions at [catherine@silverartglassjewelry.com](mailto:catherine@silverartglassjewelry.com) Follow her on facebook at [www.facebook.com/catherine.hamilton.9](http://www.facebook.com/catherine.hamilton.9)

**Sources**

Mitsubishi Materials: [www.mmtc.co.jp/en/products/pmc.html](http://www.mmtc.co.jp/en/products/pmc.html)



**Easily create intricate curves, designs and shapes in glass!**



**TAURUS RING SAW 3**



*The industry standard in precision glass cutting*

*Converts for portable use*

**GEMINI SAW COMPANY, INC.**  
310-891-0288 • [www.geminisaw.com](http://www.geminisaw.com)

*Jubilee* **CREATIVE**  
Precut Glass Shapes & Designs

Jubilee Creative features a full line of precut fusible COE90 & COE96 glass shapes and designs, fusible sheet glass, jewelry findings, glass molds, glass decals, and fusing supplies! Our precut glass products are proudly produced in the USA!

**Free Project Guides**



**Create A Face High Fire Decal**

Visit Us Online or Call Us! 877-845-6300

[www.jubileecreative.com](http://www.jubileecreative.com)