

Scarfs & Bolo Ties
An Alternative

Equipment Used:

1. 25-30 gms of metal clay – I'm using Art Clay Silver.
2. Paste Type
3. Syringe Type with medium nozzle
4. #2 flat artist brush
5. #2 round artist brush
6. Non-stick work surface – Teflon, Tuff Card, Ceramic Tile, or other
7. Roller frames, plastic slates, or playing cards
8. Clay roller of your choice
9. Clay pick for cutting clay
10. Clay cutter
11. Hobby knife
12. Ultra Fine Sharpie marker
13. 600-1200 grit wet/dry sandpaper
14. Course/Fine sanding sticks
15. Tweezers
16. Heat source to dry clay – food dehydrator, electric grill, or air dryer
17. Heat source to sinter the clay – programable kiln
18. Means to burnish project – magnetic burnisher, burnishing tumbler, etc.
19. Flower flexiMold – (Available from Art Clay World)
20. Large oval cutter
21. Empty syringe to extrude clay

22. Scarf Clip(s) – (Available from rockymountainwestern.com)
23. Tension Clasp Bolo Clip(s) – (Available from rockymountainwestern.com)
24. Braided bolo cord – (Available from rockymountainwestern.com)
25. Two Part Jeweler's Epoxy – (Available from rockymountainwestern.com)
26. Diamond or steel ball burs
27. Diamond or steel setting burs
28. Arrowhead, around 35mm long – (Available from Amazon)

Introduction

The purpose of this article isn't so much about how to make a specific piece of jewelry, but how to display your pieces differently. I noticed that after taking several metal clay classes, reading a number of metal clay books, and watching metal clay videos, the only way that a pendant was presented was to hang it from a bail on a chain or make a broach out of it. Those can be nice presentations, but they are not the only ways. Two other ways that I will present here are the scarf and bolo tie sliders. I'll also discuss how to use a few products that you may have never used.

A Little History

There are a number of articles that you can find on the internet to give you an overview of the history of scarfs and bolo ties. I've been only able to find two books that go into great detail about the history and fabrication of scarf & bolo tie "sliders":

1. "Bola Tie – New Symbol of the West," by "Bola-Bill" Kramer, Northland Press/Flagstaff 1978 (Out of Print, but copies can be found online)

2. "Native American Bolo Ties," by Diana Pardue, with Norman Sanfield, Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico 2011

Both of these books are excellent. Both are well illustrated with hundreds of photos. Lots of great ideas for metal clay artists. After reading these books from cover to cover and everything I could find on the internet, I've come to the conclusion that there is no agreement among the authors as to an accurate timeline as to when the scarfs and bolo ties were invented or by whom. You might have noticed in the title of the two books referenced above, that one is using the spelling "Bola" and the other "Bolo." They can't even agree upon the name 😊 The Bola (Bolo) tie is the official state neckwear in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The first book listed above was written by an author in Arizona. He swears the proper term is "Bola." In Arizona they actually have (had?) a group called "The Bola Tie Society of Arizona" that had around 400 members in its hay day. I couldn't find a current webpage for the society. Their goals included promoting "bola" ties and elevating its status to the official state neckwear. Barry

Goldwater wrote the introduction to the book. Those of you who are old enough to remember Barry Goldwater (he ran for president of the United States in 1964, and was an Arizona senator), can probably remember he always wore a bola tie.

The author contends that the bola tie was invented by one Victor E. Cedarstaff, a silversmith from Arizona in 1954. He tried to patent "his invention," but it was denied. The Boy Scouts of America had similar "slides" that they had used for years on their scarfs (neckerchiefs). In 1959 he received a patent for a different type of slide he invented. He called it a "Yoke."

Moving forward to the second book there are photos from the early 1800's that have captured men & women wearing bola (bolo) ties. Photography was invented in the early 1800's in France. This is the earliest recording of a bola (bolo) tie I could find. Obviously, the Bola Tie wasn't invented in Arizona in 1954.

There are museums in Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico devoted entirely to Bola (Bolo) ties. Hundreds are on display. Bola (Bolo) ties range in price from $20 retail for a mass-produced knock-off to $6,000-$10,000+ for handmade ties. Most of today's high end Bolas are made by Hopi, Shawnee, Cherokee, Huron, and other Indian tribes. They have been doing silversmithing since the 1800's.

Today women tend to wear Bola Ties at informal events with informal attire. Men on the other hand wear them with casual attire to full formal attire, including tuxedos. If you pay attention, you'll see some professional athletes, actors, politicians, and just everyday folks wearing them. In the United States they became popular after World War II.

The Basics

Going back in history the scarf was the forerunner of the bola (bolo) tie. People would, and still do, wear them around their necks. Some were worn as fashionable attire, and some used as necessary attire (e.g. cowboys/girls to cover their mouths and noses to keep from breathing dust while on cattle drives). The ends of the scarfs can be held in place with a single or double knot. It can also be he held more securely in place with a decorative slide. The slide can be something as simple as a short tube or ring that you pull the ends of scarf down through, like the slides used by the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc. The slide can be something more eloquent, like a pendent that has a special clip fastened to the back. Figure 1 shows what a scarf clip looks like in the open position on the back of a metal clay pendant. Figure 2 shows it in the closed position. The ends of the scarf would be pulled down through the hole in the tear drop shaped ring, Figure 3, and then snapped shut, Figure 4. The details on how to attach the scarf clip will be explained later in this article.

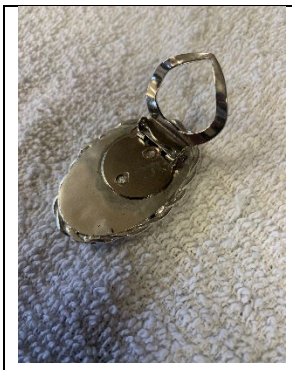

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

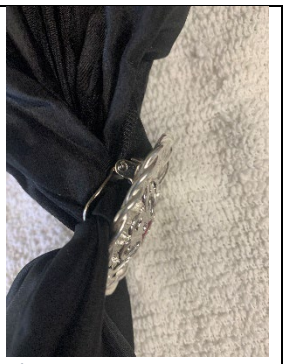

Figure 4

The Bola (Bolo) tie operates similarly to the scarf, but there are more parts. First, the Bola tie is made up of basically four parts (Figures 5-8). The cord which goes around the wearer's neck and hangs down, like a scarf. It's usually made of braided leather, around 3-4mm in diameter. The length is usually 36–50 inches, depending upon the height of the wearer and how he/she likes to hang the tips. Like a man's necktie, some like the end of the tie to be just above their belt. Some like the tie to be only 6 inches long. Then there's everything in between, just personal preference. Then there is the slider, which is the pendant & clip assembly (Figures 6 & 8). And lastly there are the tips at the ends of the cord. The clips, tips, and cord can be purchased online from www.rockymountainwestern.com. They have a large selection of parts, partially completed bolos, and fully completed bolos. They also have a couple of "how to" videos which are very helpful when you are making your first scarf or bola tie slider.

Figure 5 - Front

Figure 6 - Back

Figure 7 -Front

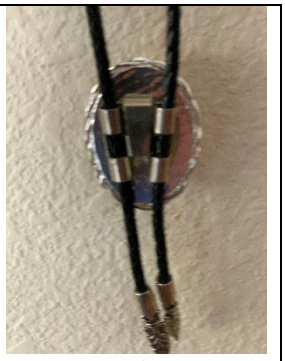

Figure 8 - Back

Fabrication

Scarf Slider with set CZ stones:

The scarf slider, shown in Figures 1-4 was made as follows:

1. Roll out some fine silver metal clay to 1mm (4 cards) thick on a work surface. I'm rolling the clay out on a 6 inch square ceramic tile. Remember to put some release on

your work surface (Figure 9). I also rolled a piece of clay into a ball and pushed it down into the flower mold you see in Figure 9 (remember the release). I then used an oval cutter (7 X 3.5mm) to cut out the main body of the pendant (Figure 9). Both the pendant and flower were then placed into my food dehydrator for around 15 minutes to start the drying process. After 15 minutes I checked the pendant & mold to see if they could be removed from the tile and mold. They were both partially dry and could be easily removed from the tile and mold. The two pieces were then left on a dehydrator shelf for two more hours to dry. This was probably an overkill, but I wanted to make sure the flower was dry all the way through. I tend to multi-task in my studio. When something is drying or getting fired, I work on other projects. Once dry I removed the greenware pieces from the dehydrator. The flower I sanded on a sheet of 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper (sand greenware dry). You can see in Figure 10 how the extra flange is separating from the main body of the flower. Once sanded, I placed the flower on top of the pendant to see how I was going to orient it (Figure 11).

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Once I had it where I liked it, I attached the flower to the pendant with syringe type. Then I used paste type to add some texture to the pendant (Figure 12) (I actually forgot to roll the pendant out on a textured surface, but don't tell anyone). Back into the dehydrator for 30 minutes. I took it out and examined the edges of the flower to make sure there were no spaces between the pendant and flower. Of course, there were, so I added more syringe type with a small brush to fill those spaces. Back into the dehydrator for another 10 minutes. Came out looking good.

Next, I made a double braid to place around the perimeter of the pendant. To make a braid, rinse out a clean empty syringe with water. Take a piece of clay and roll it into a small log that will fit inside the syringe barrel (Figure 13). Put the clay into the syringe and insert the plunger. Press down to expel any air in front of the clay log (Figure 14). Once you get the air out, extrude a couple lengths of clay (Figure 14). Around 5 inches of extrusion usually works well. If you make it much longer the strands of clay will break apart while you're trying to twist the two strands together. Each strand will be around 1mm in diameter. Also note in Figure 14 I put on a syringe cap when I'm not using the syringe. This keeps the clay from drying out in the tip of the syringe. Syringe caps, like syringes you can buy on Amazon for cheap.

Figure 13

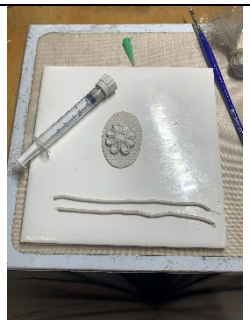

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

Next make your braid by squeezing one end of the two strands together. Pick them straight up by the squeezed ends and let them hang straight down from your thumb and forefinger in one of your hands. I'm right-handed, so use my left hand to hang the strands. I then use my right thumb and forefinger to grab the lower ends of the strands and carefully twist them clockwise to make the braid. If your new at this, you might consider brushing a little water on the strands before you start twisting. Additional water might be brushed on after you've made your braid to keep it moist and to prevent the clay from cracking.

Once you have your braid ready, use a small paint brush and apply paste type to the perimeter of the pendant. Carefully pick up your braid and lay it around the perimeter, just touching the pendant. Use your brush to move the braid around. If your braid is too short to go all the way around the pendant, no worries. The braid can be applied in several pieces (Figure 15). Once the braid is firmly placed up against the pendant cut off the ends with a hobby knife. If your braid is long enough to go all the way around, then simply overlap the ends of the braid and cut squarely across both ends of the braid (Figure 15). If your braid is too short, cut off the ends squarely with your hobby knife. The next piece of braid you use, cut off one end squarely to line up with the braid that you have already positioned around the pendant. Use paste type to attach the ends together. Once you have a braid all the way around and it looks good to you (Figure 16), apply paste type everywhere that the braid touches the pendant. Just a little will do. If you're not happy with the braid at this point – like maybe the braid isn't uniformly wound, now is the time to fix it. Worse case scenario, remove all the braid and start over. It takes a little practice to make the braid look perfectly uniform all the way around the pendant.

Back into the dehydrator for 20-30 minutes. When dry, take the pendant out and place it face down on your work surface. Again, apply paste type to where the braid touches the pendant. Back into the dehydrator for 10-15 minutes.

The last step in the greenware state is to sand it to your satisfaction and clean up where the braid ends meet. Small diamond files are great for this. If necessary, add some syringe or paste type to fill any gapes that are showing. Sanding sponges work well on uneven surfaces too.

Once your happy with the piece, it's time to set the stones. This flower has 9 spots to set stones. One in the center and eight around the center. Lay out a selection of stones that you are going to use (Figure 17). My center stone is 7.5mm and the surrounding stones are 4mm. I used a Foredom Micromoter to cut the settings with 4mm & 7.5mm setting burs.

Figure 17

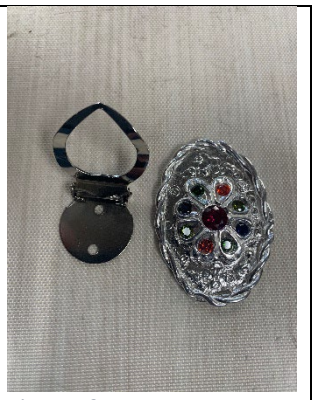

Figure 18

Once you have all the settings made, clean up any clay power that is still on the pendant. A brush works well for this purpose. Wash your hands to remove any dust/clay on hands before handling the stones. Then clean each of the stones with alcohol or acetone and let them dry. Then place all the stones in place on the flower. If there's any problem with any of the settings, now is the time to fix them.

Once all the stones are fitted properly, double check that there is no clay powder on any of the surfaces of the stones. If there is some, try simply brushing it clean with a small stencil brush. If that doesn't work, try a little alcohol on a Q-tip. It's important that there is no clay dust on any of the stones. The dust will turn into silver and fuse onto the stone's table, which looks horrible after it gets fired.

Once your happy, go ahead and fire the piece at the recommended firing schedule. With Art Clay Silver I use the lower temperature of 1200ºF for at LEAST 30 minutes. This piece is relatively big, so an hour won't hurt. This will prevent any of the stones from turning to another color you don't want. For example, if fired at 1472ºF, orange CZs with turn brown. Not a pretty color for jewelry. After firing, I let the kiln just naturally cool back to room temperature.

Figure 18 is the fired & tumbled pendant. I used both a rotary tumbler for a couple of hours, then a magnetic burnisher for 30 minutes. The rotary tumbler is good for large flat surfaces but can't get into the small nooks & crannies that the magnetic burnisher can, like what is occurring around the braid. Next to the finished pendant you can see the scarf clip that needs to be attached. Go to www.rockymountainwestern.com website and watch the "How to Videos." There are only two, but the videos will teach you about the various clips that are available and how to install them properly on the back of your pendants. One of the videos will also demonstrate how to assemble a Bola Tie from scratch.

This pendant could just as easily became a Bola Tie slider. Just attach a bola clip to the back instead of a scarf clip.

Bola Tie Slider with Arrowhead

The Bola Tie Slider in Figures 7 & 8 was made like the previous scarf pendant. Same procedure, roll out the clay (I used a texture plate this time) and cut out the pendant with the same oval cutter (Figure 19). While the clay was still soft I pressed the arrowhead into the clay (Figure 20) to create a seat where the stone will rest, then dried it and made a double braid as described above and attached that.

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

After firing and burnishing I treated this pendant with liver of sulphur to turn it to a bronze color (Figure 21). I then attached a bronze color bola tie clip to the back (Figure 22) and epoxied the arrowhead on the front.

After the epoxy dried overnight and I saw the end result I hated it. The pendant was just to close in color to the arrowhead. Now what? How can I take this slider apart and change the finish back to silver without damaging any of the parts? If you put it into the kiln the stone will be damaged and the bola clip will get annealed, which will destroy it and the studio would be filled with noxious fumes from the epoxy burning off.

The solution…literally? Just place the whole slider into a beaker and fill the beaker with enough of a product called "Attack," to cover the slider (Figure 23). It's available from most jewelry supply companies. Use a piece of cellophane wrap to cover the beaker (Figure 24). Attack is very volatile and will completely evaporate within an hour if you don't cover the beaker. In the alternative you could simply use a small jar that has a tightly fitting lid. Leave the container sit for 24 hours. When you come back all the epoxy will be dissolved and the pieces that were epoxied will be sitting on the bottom of the container (Figure 25).

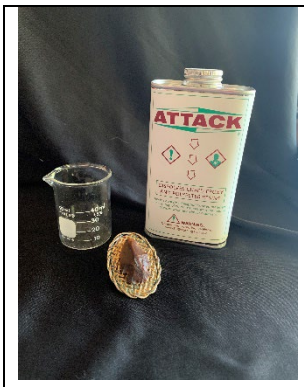

Figure 23

Figure 24

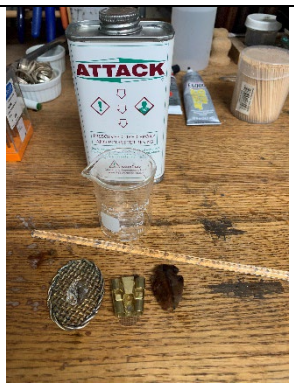

Figure 25

At this point rinse off the pieces and let them dry. I placed the pendant back in the kiln and ran it up to 1000ºF to burn off the patina, then turned it off. After the piece cooled off, I reburnished it. It was now back to the original silver color. I re-epoxied the stone in place and epoxied a silver bola clip to the back (Figures 7 & 8).

Summary

Once again, the purpose of this article wasn't to teach you how to make a specific piece of jewelry, but a couple more ways to display your jewelry. Scarf and Bola Tile sliders can be attached to just about anything that is flat on one side.

A couple of products that you may never had experience with is jewelers' two-part epoxy and a product to remove it if needed. You should now also be familiar with the components to make a scarf slider and bola slider.

Christmas is almost here. Any idea of what to make for someone special? Have fun.

Author:

Tom studied jewelry art at the Revere Academy of Jewelry Art in San Francisco, California in 2017 and graduated as a "Graduate Jeweler. Subsequent classes were taken at Silvera Jewelry School in Berkeley, California. One of those classes was an introduction to Art Clay, taught by Master Instructor Arlene Mornick. Additional Art Clay classes were taken with Arlene as well. In 2018, Tom received his Level One Certification and Senior Level Certifications. Tom teaches primarily in the Sonoma County area of California, one of the great grape growing areas in northern California. Tom's website and contact information is at: www.tessierjewelry.com

Artist Philosophy:

Discovering metal clay has been one of the greatest joys in my life. I'm just amazed at how easy it is to work with and what beautiful pieces can be created in a relatively short amount of time compared to traditional jewelry. It's like magic. I'm so looking forward to taking more art classes that can be combined with metal clay and teaching what I've learned to others.