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Fabric Charms

by Sue Bleiweiss

Fabric Charms are all the rage right now and chances are that you've probably seen something about fabric charms posted on a blog or two lately or maybe you've heard about some of the charm swaps that are circulating around. Want to make some but unsure how to go about making some for yourself? Well not only am I going to show you how easy they are to make but I'm also going to share with you how I create my layered Misty Fuse surfaces. You'll find that making these fabric charms is a lot like eating potato chips. Once you make one you won't be able to stop yourself from making more!

I like to create layered embellished surfaces using Misty Fuse and a variety of fibers, fabrics, papers and threads. These layered surfaces make beautiful fabric charms and in this article I'm going to walk you through the process of how I created the layered surface that I used to create these charms with.



Step 1 Begin by choosing a base fabric. This can be anything you have in your stash such as cotton, velvet, silk, wool felt or organza. My favorite base fabrics to work with are wool felt or organza and for this tutorial I'll be using a piece of black organza as my base fabric. The first step is to fuse

a layer of misty fuse to the organza simply by laying it on, covering with a piece of parchment paper and then ironing with a hot iron.

TIP

When fusing to a sheer open weave fabric, place a piece of parchment or teflon pressing sheet underneath the fabric as well, to protect the ironing surface



Step 2 Allow the fabric to cool for a moment and then peel back the parchment paper. Now you can start to build your layered fabric. For my first layer I started by laying on some pieces of hand dyed cheesecloth.



Then I covered the whole piece with a piece of parchment and pressed it. Now it's time to add another layer of Misty Fuse. I covered the

cheesecloth layer with another layer of Misty Fuse and then a piece of parchment paper and pressed it with the iron. Once it had cooled for a moment, I peeled back the parchment paper and began to build my second layer.

Step 3 This layer is torn strips of mulberry paper in a variety of colors. I



just rough tore them and tossed them on the fabric. Once I had them placed I covered the

whole piece again with another layer of Misty Fuse, covered it with a piece of parchment and pressed with the iron.

Step 4 On the final layer in this piece of fabric I added torn bits of silver foil and some fun threads.



Once I had these final embellishments placed on the surface, a final layer of Misty Fuse was added, covered it with a piece of parchment and pressed with the iron.

The last step is to cover the entire piece with a piece of black netting, cover with a piece of parchment and press with an iron.



The sky is the limit when creating these layered surfaces. Anything that can take the heat of the iron can be used.

This next piece was created using hand dyed soy silk fibers, fun yarns, torn organza strips and silver netting:



And this piece was done on a base of gold organza with layers made up of hand dyed silk chiffon, copper leaf, skeleton leaves, copper yarn and threads.



Once you have your surface made here's how to turn it into some fabric charms:

Step 1 Cut a piece of Timtex or other sturdy heavyweight interfacing such as Pelmet Vilene or HTC UltraFirm 'Heavyweight' Sew In Stabilizer 2 inches wide by however



long you like. I'm working with a piece that is "2x9". This will

give me 18 charms. Cut two pieces of your layered fabric the same size.

Step 2 Fuse Misty Fuse to the backside of the layered fabrics and then fuse each of the layered strips to the Timtex, one on each side.

Step 3 Set up your sewing machine for a fairly narrow zig zag or satin stitch and stitch down the long edges.



TIP

I like to run a colored marker along the edges to color the Timtex before I stitch so that I don't have to worry about any white edges showing through my stitches.

Step 4 Now cut the strip into two 1" long strips and satin stitch the long edges.



Step 5 Cut the strips into 1" squares and stitch the edges.



I like to chain stitch my 1" squares at this point and then put a dab of fray check in the corners before I clip them apart. You may wonder why I choose to do my charms this way instead of just cutting the fabric up into 1" squares and then stitching. I found that having two sides already stitched before cutting them into 1" pieces makes them a bit more sturdy and less likely to shift and move under the needle.

Once you have all the sides sewn install an eyelet and you're done!

Now you can turn your charms into all sorts of things but the first thing you may want to make with them is a charm bracelet.



To make one like the one you see at the top of this article, simply start with a length of chain. Thread a needle with some nymo beading thread secure it to the chain and pick up a few beads:



Then pick up a fabric charm.



Thread the needle back up through the beads and pull the thread up snug to the chain.

Continue working your way down the chain adding beads and fabric charms as you go. When you run out of thread, knot off and start with a new piece. Keep adding charms until you're happy with the way it looks.



You can also use your fabric charms to make earrings, as zipper or shade pulls, tie them to the fringe of a scarf, made a colorful mobile to hang in a sunny window, use them to embellish hats, tie them to your shoelaces or just put them in a bowl and admire them. If you come up with some other creative uses for your fabric charms I'd love to see them!