



CLARA KINTSUGI

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Kintsugi kit for starters

Contents:

Bengara urushi (red dyed urushi lacquer from the sap of the urushi tree, *Toxicodendron Vernicifluum*).

NB. Keep the tube in freezer. It can remain usable for up to 1 year if refrigerated, but 3 months is guaranteed. Take out a few mins before use.

Brass Powder

Silk wadding

Milliput (Superfine White)

Wet and dry sandpapers

Devcon 5 minute Epoxy glue

Pure gum turpentine (urushi thinning agent and brush conditioner)

Acetone (glue cleanup and brush cleaning)

Paint brush for urushi (thin pointed tip)

Dusting brush for metal powder (fluffy tip)

Mixing sticks for epoxy glue and urushi and gum turpentine

Disposable gloves

Items for you to gather before starting:

Your kit

A tile or old ceramic plate or piece of coated card (e.g. from a tea/cereal packet) to use as a palette for urushi

Coated card for mixing epoxy glue

Acetone (it can be inexpensive nail polish remover) or isopropanol or ethanol 100cc (UK postage regulations prohibit postage. Included if kit not posted)

A cutter knife (UK postage regulations prohibit postage. Included if kit not posted)

Work surface (such as an A4 plastic pocket, A4 laminated card or smooth glass surface)

Kitchen paper for wiping/cleaning

A cardboard or plastic curing box (*muro* in Japanese) with lid and a cup of water or a wet cloth set inside before you start work

(The aim is to create an environment of about 80% humidity and 20-25 °C or warmish room temperature. The ideal curing environment depends on the particular batch of urushi and thickness of application, so don't worry too much; just play, practice, observe and learn).

2-3 blobs of Blue Tack or similar, to place strategically on your piece once painted, so that your piece can be placed inside the curing box without any of your urushi work coming into contact with the cardboard and getting smeared

A cup of water to wash your fingers during putty work

Your practice item

Try practicing for your first time on something that isn't precious to you. You will learn lots! An ideal first piece will have a flat/shallow/open shape, only one break and up to one small chip.

Instructions:

Preparation

Thoroughly clean the damaged areas and the entire piece (using bleach if necessary). Dry completely.

NB. After applying urushi, you will no longer be able to use bleach on the repaired item.

Attaching broken ceramic pieces

Scratch lightly along the sharp glazed edge with 400-600 grit sandpaper. Do not sand the face of the broken edges. The aim is just to take the corner off the glaze so that the urushi can stick to the ceramic along the line of the mend.

Mix equal amounts of each part of the two part epoxy glue for about 30 seconds, until thoroughly combined. Apply mixed epoxy glue onto the broken areas of pieces and make sure that these areas are compressed tightly together during gluing to avoid making thick glue joints which will distort the original shape of the piece. Compress them with your hands for about 5 to 10 minutes (maybe take these moments to notice your breath, put on some music before you start or sit somewhere you can look out of the window!).

When the glue has set well and is no longer sticky or smeary, remove any excess glue with the craft knife. You can extend the blade by several segments so that it is flexible enough to slide the flat of the blade across the surface of the mend and shorten the blade again to safely scrape the tip of the blade along the groove. Take care to work away from your body and holding hand.

Clean surface of item with acetone.

Reconstructing chipped ceramics

Using your finger tips, knead equal amounts from each block of the two part epoxy putty together for at least a minute until thoroughly combined. Use this to fill the chipped areas that need to be reconstructed. Fill any gaps along the break line with epoxy putty for a smoother result.

You can smooth out the final finish of the putty before it sets by using either a damp rag or a wet finger. Thoroughly clean any water marks from the surrounding surfaces of your piece (can easily leave matt white/milky streaks that are hard to remove once set). Wait for a minimum of 2 hours until the putty sets.

Once the putty has hardened (about 2 to 6 hours, depending on the thickness of the putty) further shaping is achieved with wet and dry sandpaper, 400 - 600 grit to rough shape and 1000 - 1500 grit to finish. Use wetted with water and take care to avoid scratching surrounding glazed areas.

Applying urushi

WARNING: urushi is a strong irritant to some people and therefore it is important to avoid direct handling to prevent contact with skin. Use of the urushi provided in this kit is at your own risk. Please wear disposable gloves and clothing that covers skin when using urushi. In the event of exposure, wipe and clean the area using oil or acetone. Please be aware that urushi is not water soluble.

Wear disposable gloves before removing the cap of the urushi tube. Place a drop of urushi on a palette and add a tiny drop of turpentine to dilute the urushi, and mix well with the mixing stick. Using the fine paintbrush, practice painting a few fine, steady lines on your urushi palette. You can try using the pinky finger of your painting hand to steady your brushwork. Now get into a comfy position, remember to breathe and apply a smooth, thin layer to the mended area you wish to coat. Any exposed putty or glue remaining on the repair should be covered with urushi to seal the surface.

Urushi will thicken on the palette during extended use, it may shrink and occasionally wrinkle when drying; a drop of turpentine can be added and mixed into the urushi to thin it down so you can keep working with it.

Place the urushi coated repaired ceramic in a humid box, using Blue Tack to support the piece so your urushi work is protected. Depending on the temperature, humidity and the thickness of application, urushi will normally surface cure enough to apply brass powder in approximately 10-30 minutes.

Shortly before the urushi has completely set it will be ready for the application of the brass powder, it is important not to miss this moment. The urushi palette can be used as a test piece to check powder adherence. If you wish to achieve smooth surface, please apply urushi more than once at least 12 hours apart for each application, sanding lightly with 1000 - 1500 grit wet and dry before each application. You can apply as many layers as you wish.

Cleaning your brush.

As soon as you finish applying the urushi, clean the brush with acetone, turpentine or plain vegetable oil by repeatedly patting the brush side-on into a puddle of the liquid on your work surface and then gently squeezing or 'scraping' out the liquid and the urushi with the urushi mixing stick. Do not use water. You can use acetone on nylon brushes, but always apply a drop of turpentine at the end to keep them maintained. You can also clean and maintain your brushes using only turpentine or plain vegetable oil and storing them with a little oil left on the bristles. If you do finish with oil, you must rinse with turpentine before use as oil stops urushi from curing.

Applying the brass powder

Place the packet containing the brass powder in the centre of a clean white sheet of paper so that it is ready for use.

Unfold the packet carefully, weigh down the two springy corners with small weights (e.g. coins or pebbles).

Dip the tip of the dusting brush into the powder, and tap the handle of the brush to gently dust the powder onto the urushi until the painted area is fully covered. Take care not to allow the brush to touch the surface of the urushi. Dust off the excess powder using this same brush, collect the unused powder and replace it in the original wrapping paper. Return the item into the box.

There is no need to wash the dusting brush, tidy it away and use it again (as with the silk wadding). If you go on to learn how to apply other metals, it is advisable to keep a separate brush and wadding for each type of metal powder to avoid cross contamination of materials. These brushes enjoy being used, will last a long time and, it is said, will even produce a higher quality finish after repeated use.

First polishing of the metal powder

Remove the item from the box after one hour or so. Using the silk wadding, make a small ball with your fingertips and gently use it to dust off the surface. It is important to have a light touch in achieving this, so avoid stroking too hard. The silk ball will have become impregnated with the metal powder, keep it in a sealed bag, so that it can be used to dust and polish over and over again. Return the item into the drying box.

Further polishing of the metal powder

24 hours / 7 days...

Leave the item in the humid box for at least 24 hours in order to allow the powder to set into the surface of the urushi. Polish the surface with the silk wadding several more times more during this 24hour period.

After a week, the urushi will normally have fully set, carefully wash the finished item in hand-warm water. using a soft sponge. Any excess urushi and powder can be removed with acetone. The repair is now complete.

Remember, visual irregularity is part of the charm of kintsugi, so your work is probably perfectly right just as it is. However, If there are any areas you would really like to do again, you can use sandpaper to carefully abraid the area and repeat from filling or application of urushi.

Care guide

Kintsugi is art with purpose – with a little care any piece mended with kintsugi can still be used. Of course, the pieces are somewhat fragile and the brass can be rubbed off with rough treatment, so here are some pointers:

- Treat your kintsugi mindfully and gently.
- Japanese tableware is designed with chopsticks in mind. Use of metal cutlery on a kintsugi piece is not recommended.
- Do not place your piece over direct heat or steam, or in the microwave or oven.
- Wash with tepid water, or you can use a 5% solution of gentle washing up liquid to water.
- After washing, dry thoroughly with a dry towel. Do not leave the piece in water.
- Never use the dishwasher or the finish will come off and lacquer work may start to lift away.
- Do not use a hard sponge, brush, scourer or a harsh cleanser when you wash.
- If you want to stack several pieces, place a sheet of cloth or kitchen paper between each layer. If you have a piece on display, you could stand it on a cloth rather than a hard surface. If it slides across the surface, there is a risk any metal finish will be scraped away.