

## Feature Article: Working With Wire & Shrinky Dinks:

I have always enjoyed playing and exploring the possibilities of many types of products and techniques and have built up a huge supply of different products and tools that are not used every day. We are lucky that techniques, supplies and styles continually come in and out of fashion which helps us visit old supplies with fresh eyes and ideas.

Playing with Wire and Shrink Plastics has given me the freedom to create my own embellishments and titles, the possibilities really are endless. Here are some ideas that you may like to try too.

**Craft Wire:** comes in many different sized gauges. The larger the gauge number, the smaller in diameter of wire. So, a 26-gauge piece of wire is thinner than a 16-gauge piece. The craft wire gauge most likely found at your local scrapbooking stores are around 22 to 24 gauge thickness. Craft wires can be bent into any shape and also look great when incorporated with beads. To work with wire the following tools are handy to have; a pair of pointy pliers and a pair of wire cutters or an old pair of scissors.

**Shrink Plastics:** come in many different brands and colours. Different brands that I have come across have been Shrinky Dinks, Graftix Shrink Film, Shrink Plastic & PolyShrink. You can trace, colour, stamp, paint, die cut, punch or emboss Shrink Plastic. The possibilities are endless. Shrink Plastics usually come in A4 sheets available in - Translucent, Clear, White, Black, Matt and many other colours. Graftix Shrink Film also has an Ink Jet version available that is suitable for printing on with your Ink Jet Printer at home. These are great for making your own Suitcase Tags or Name Tags as well.

Different Brands shrink at different rates and to different thicknesses. The best thing to do is to practice shrinking your off cuts first so you can get the feel of how each brand reacts. Clear Shrink Plastic shrinks the easiest while coloured Shrink Plastic tends to be a lot more pliable in the shrink process and tends to stick on itself quite easily.

You can use a heat gun or the oven to shrink your Plastic. Use caution when handling Shrink Plastic after you have heated it, as it will be extremely hot. Wait a few seconds for it to cool before handling. Shrink Plastic shrinks from anywhere between a third to a half of its original size, depending on the brand. After shrinking, the plastic becomes thicker and harder like acrylic.

**Heating with a Heat Gun:** Use a paddle pop stick or tweezers to hold the Shrink Plastic while you heat it, however do not press too hard on the piece you are shrinking or it can leave dents in the finished piece. Do Not be afraid when it starts shrinking and curling up on itself, keep heating until it flattens back out. Shrinking your plastic is not an exact science and involves some trial and error. Inked areas on your shrink plastic tend to stick together a little more than uninked areas so hold your tweezers or stick over the inked areas carefully when shrinking.

**Heating with an Oven:** Larger and more intricate pieces shrink easier in the oven. Place a sheet of baking paper underneath and over the top of your piece/s to help keep flat. Use a couple of sheets of baking paper over larger pieces to minimise curling. Baking on a temp of around 200° for around 10 to 15 mins worked really well for me.

After you have shrunk your embellishments take an acrylic stamp block and press firmly onto the warm shrink plastic to completely flatten. Leave to cool before removing.

**Adding Colour:** Use permanent markers or permanent inks like Stazon or Alcohol Inks on your shrink plastic. Die Inks have a tendency to run and bleed when heated and may still wipe off even after it has been heated. You can stamp or write on shrink plastic before or after it has been shrunk. Colours added before the shrinking process will intensify greatly after it has been shrunk.

### Some of the techniques I have used on these Projects are:

- Creating your own Wire Templates using a block of Timber and Nails.
- Working with Wire & Beads and making your own Jump Rings.
- Creating your own Shrinky Dink Titles.
- Creating your own Embellishments with Stamping on Shrinky Dinks and Using Die Cutting systems.

**Creating your own wire template –**

You will need –

- A little block of timber big enough to fit your intended design/s on.
- Small nails either  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to 1 inch long – the nails will need the heads cut off so the wire slides off the template easily. (A good pair of wire cutters from your hubby's shed makes this job easy.)
- You can use stamps, punches, printed designs or even draw your own Designs to make a template.
- White paint or gesso and a hammer.

1. First give your block of wood a coat of white paint (this makes it a lot easier if you are stamping your design on it.
2. Stamp, draw or glue a design onto the block of wood.
3. Use the Wire Cutters to cut the nail heads off (before hammering them around your design.)
4. Hammer some nails around your design. You don't need to add nails right around the entire design, just around the key points of the design. If you are making Flowers or Butterfly/ Dragonfly templates you will need to add a nail to the center of your design to wrap each loop of the wire around to hold the design together. Leave the center nail higher than the other nails this makes it easier to hold while you are twisting the wire around.

**Creating a Wire Butterfly or Dragon Fly Embellishment -**

1. To create a wire butterfly embellishment for example leave about 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches of wire loose at the start for the first antenna then make your first loop around the center wire, twist around the center nail then take the wire around the first wing, bring it back and loop it back around the center nail before going around the other wing on the opposite side then back around the center nail again. Repeat on the 2 back wings. Then loop around the nail at the end for the tail then bring back to the center. Loop the wire back around the center nail before leaving another 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches of wire loose for the second antenna.

2. To hold the wire design altogether cut another piece of wire about 2 or 3 inches long, then slowly lift your wire design off the template. The design will come apart at this point, to hold it altogether thread the second piece of wire through all the center loops of your design that looped around the center nail of your design. Once you have threaded all the center loops use your pliers to twist and tighten both ends of the loose wire underneath then wrap the excess around the body of your butterfly.

To finish your butterfly use a skinny round object like a crochet hook to wrap the ends of the wire around to curl the antennas or you can use your pointy nosed pliers.

3. To attach your wire embellishments to your page you can either hand stitch it on with thread or leave a bit of wire on the underside of your design to pierce through the page and bend it back like a brad on the back of the page and tape over the wire to keep in place.

4. For shapes like hearts for example you won't need a nail in the center as it just wraps around the outside of the shape.

The Butterfly and Dragonfly templates I have made using Basic Grey stamps and the flower templates were made using the Tim Holts tattered floral die cuts and an EK Flower Punch.

**Making your own Jump Rings:**

Making your own jump rings with craft wire really is quiet easy. A 22 gauge wire works well.

1. All you need to do is grab a circular object like a size 4 crochet hook and wrap the wire tightly around the crochet hook wrapping it close together. How many times you wrap the wire around will depend on how many jump rings you need. If you want bigger jump rings just wrap the wire around a pencil or something similar.

2. Then take the wire off the crochet hook and cut along one side of the spiral. I found an old pair of small scissors worked well for this; it cut them cleanly and could fit inside the spiral to cut all the rings in one hit. You should be left with perfectly round jump rings all the same size that you can add to your designs and just tighten with your pliers to close.

I hope you enjoy getting creative with Shrink Plastics and Craft Wire!

Cheers

Michelle

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## Sweet Cheeks: - Wire Butterfly's & Dragonfly's



### Materials:

**Papers:** Creative Imaginations PP, **Other:** Pink Paislee Holy Doodle Alphabet Stickers, Craft Wire – 22 gauge – Silver, Embroidery Thread, Petaloo Flowers, Fibres & Lace, Brads & Creative Imaginations Brads, Pink Paint & A Brayer, Wire Template – Created with Timber, Nails, Basic Grey Stamps and Stazon Inks.

- This is my adorable Little Niece Miss Gracie she really does have the sweetest cheeks. I have used my own handmade wire templates to make the wire butterfly and dragon fly on this layout. I also pulled apart the layers of some flowers and used the voile flowers under the butterfly and dragonfly. Cut off a few petals at the top and bottom to keep the winged shapes and place them on top of the flowers and hand stitch them to the page with embroidery thread. The background of this layout was painted using a brayer/ rubber roller. To create a Brad embellishment with a wire spiral make a small loop on a piece of wire and stick a brad through the wire loop and your flower and then your page, use a pair of pointy nosed pliers to wrap the wire loosely around your brad to create a spiral shape.

## Memories of Days Gone By: Shrinky Dink Titles and Embellishments & Wire Swirls.



### Materials:

**Cardstock:** Bazzill, **Papers:** Pink Paislee PP **Other:** Pink Paislee Stamps, Making Memories Foam Flower Stamps, Delish Design Alphabet Stamps, Alphabet Stamps, Craft Wire – 22 Gauge – Black Opals – Sunburnt, Graftix Shrink Plastic – White & Clear, Ribbon, Brads & Paper Flowers, Black & Rusty Brown Stazon Inks, Black Pen

- Lots of Shrinky Dink fun on this page, just about all the little embellishments were created using Shrinky Dinks and Stamping. I have stamped the flowers and titles on white and clear Shrink Plastic using Black and Rusty Brown Stazon Inks. Once your image has been stamped wait until it dries before cutting it out. When you cut around the stamped image leave a bit of a border around your design, it just helps it stand out on your page more. If you are creating a button or a flower that you are going to add a brad through you will need to punch a hole in the shrink plastic before you shrink it. I found that it easier to get a brad through if you punch the hole twice side by side with a ¼ inch hole punch. If the hole is too small you can make it bigger with a silent setter or hole punch and hammer while it is still warm, although it is a lot more labour intensive. You can place a lot of little embellishments on a tray and put in the oven with baking paper under and over it or use a heat gun to shrink the plastic. Once the shrink plastic has shrunk you can use an acrylic stamp block to flatten your pieces while they are still warm.
- Use a border stamp down the sides of your page and opals embossing powder to add a bit more texture and shimmer to your layout. You can also colour your brads to suit your page with embossing powders. Heat the tip of a brad with a heat gun then dip into embossing powder then heat again until the powder melts and gives a smooth coverage, Repeat if it's not quiet covered. Make sure you use tweezers to hold the brad while heating!
- The black swirls were created with craft wire; you can just bend it with your fingers or use your pliers to bend it into shape. To attach them to your page bend the tips of each end of your swirl down 90 degrees then poke a hole in your page and poke the bent tip through. Bend it back like a brad on the back of the page and tape down then do the same to the other end. This lets you suspend the wire swirls anywhere on the page without having to stitch it on or use glues.

## Great Grandad's Baptism Gown 1888: Die Cut Shrinky Dink Birds, Birdcages & Butterfly's & Hand Made Wire Jump Rings.



### Materials:

**Cardstock:** Bazzill, **Papers:** Wendy Irving – Remember PP, Urban Lily – PP, Basic Grey Doily,

**Other:** Beads, Kindy Glitz & Glitter, Craft Wire – 22 Gauges – Dark Green, Clear Grafix Shrink Plastic, Tim Holts – Caged Bird Die Cut, Cuttlebug – Butterfly Die Cut, Kaiser Craft Pearls, Ric Rac & Lace, Feathers, Metallic Platinum Stazon Ink, Alcohol Inks, Dusty Attic – Chipboard Dress Form & Candelabra

- I recently came across my Great Grandfathers Baptism Gown at my Great Aunts, I didn't hesitate in taking the opportunity to photograph the gown along with the original baptism certificate dated Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1888. The 122 year old gown is still in excellent condition. The photo of him was taken at my Grandmothers wedding in 1945. This was definitely a precious and exciting find.
- I have used the Clear Grafix Shrink Film with the Tim Holtz die cuts for the bird cages, birds and a Cuttlebug Diecut for the butterflies on this layout. I also worked out a way to make quick and easy Jump rings in any colour out of Craft Wire. Simply wrap the wire tightly around something round then cut down one side of the spiral. I was surprised at how easy this was and how well it worked!
- The Tim Holtz Bird Cages were shrunk in the oven with a couple of sheets of baking paper over the top of them. I found the oven works better with larger items and the more intricate designs. I baked mine in a 200° oven for around 10 to 15 mins. If some of the bars on the cage are slightly bent after shrinking you might have to use your tweezers to straighten them up before it cools. Once cool I inked them with the metallic Stazon Ink then added blue alcohol inks over the top. Add beads to the bottom with your hand made jump rings. To make the loops for the larger beads on the bottom make a tiny loop on a piece of wire with your pointy nose craft pliers then thread your bead on (the loop on the bottom stops the bead falling off). Next make a tiny loop to the top above the bead, all you do then is just thread the top loop onto your jump ring.
- The Cuttlebug Butterflies were shrunk using a heat gun, while they are still warm you can bend the wings so they sit up. I have inked the butterflies with a blue alcohol ink before they were shrunk then added glitter to the wings and tiny beads for the bodies.
- The chipboard pieces were inked with silver ink then coated with silver Kindy glitz, finished off with the wire wrapped around them.
- The little birds were also inked with the Platinum Stazon Ink and Alcohol Inks.

## Sunsets – Music for the Soul: *Wire & Bead Swirls, Flowers and Trees, Shrinky Dink Titles.*



### Materials:

**Cardstock:** Black Bazzill, **Papers:** Basic Grey PP, 7 Gypsies PP **Other:** Beads & Charms, Tim Holtz – Tattered Florals Die Cut, Prima Flowers, Petaloo Flowers, Craft Wire – 22 and 24 Gauge-Copper & Gold, Clear Graftix Shrink Film, Fool's Gold Opals, Galaxy Gold Brilliance Ink, Black Stazon Silky Oak Leaf, Gold & Copper Craft Leaves, Dusty Attic – Music Score, Kindy Glitz & Alcohol Inks, Pagerz Alphabet Stencil Template - Outrageous, Wire template using Tim Holtz Tattered Florals Die Cut and EK Flower Punch.

- I love taking Sunrise and Sunset photos, I tried to capture the beauty and rich colours that is not always easy to capture the true beauty on film.
- The flowers were created with handmade wire templates using punches and Die Cuts for the designs.  
The wire loop that holds all the design together in the center of the wire flowers was poked through all the flowers and through the whole page to hold it altogether and to attach it to the page. Pull flowers apart and layer different flowers to get different looks.
- The centers of the flower swirls are easy to create. Just punch a black circle out of cardstock with a 1inch circle punch, and then poke a hole in the center. Take a length of 22 gauge wire at least 5 to 8 inches long fold a hook on one end and poke through the hole and tape the back. Next thread your choice of beads onto the wire, once you have added your beads start twisting the beaded wire in a spiral pattern from the center, keep going until you are happy with the size of your spiral, you can still add or remove beads at this point. When you are happy with the size bend the end of the wire at a 90° down on the end of the wire where the last bead sits. Then Poke a hole through the cardstock circle where the last bead sits and poke the end of the wire through and tape down. I then cut the cardstock circles down to suit the size of the bead circles.
- To create a bead tree, thread a bead through a longer piece of 22 gauge wire approx 10 to 12 inches long then fold in half and hold the wire and twist the bead so it twists the wire around. Repeat with shorter lengths and twist these around your first twisted piece. I also used a 24 gauge wire with some smaller beads, adding a few extra beads along the twist

before attaching it to the main trunk. This was then twisted around the Silky oak leaf adding extra wire to hold it together if needed.

This was then attached to the page by making two cuts along each side of the trunk through the whole page with a craft knife then thread the wire over your embellishment and twisting and taping it down on the back of the page.

- To make the Wire Beaded Swirls twist the wire into swirly shapes with the help of pointy nosed pliers then glue beads into place along the swirl with power Pritt gel or similar.
- The Sunset Shrinky Dink title was cut out using a stencil, use a permanent black marker to draw around the stencil then cut out. Ink and coat with the embossing powder on the cut out letters before shrinking. Heating with a heat gun shrinks and sets the embossing powder all in one.
- The Music for the Soul Tilte were also cut out using the same stencil, then the front of the letter was stamped with music score stamp and black Stazon Ink, then shrunk using a heat gun. To finish off the back of the letters were then inked with gold ink.
- The Music score chipboard was embossed with the gold opals. I also twisted a 24 gauge wire around the music score to add a little more texture and interest.
- Make sure you cluster all your embellishments so they connect to each other.