

Broken Magnet Souvenir

<jensoriginalsewbroiderydesigns.yolasite.com>

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On a recent visit to New Zealand, my friends brought back some mementos, including this fridge magnet.

It was a grand trip, an adventure for their whole family including the grandkids, and for my friends themselves, a nostalgic return to a place where they lived for a year when they were young.



This fridge magnet is made of resin, so it's rather heavy, and it mounts to the fridge with a single ceramic magnet, attached low on the back, where it's off-centre.

These ceramic magnets aren't terrifically strong, and one alone is not quite adequate to hold the weight of the ornament; in addition, the resin material is pretty brittle and easily shattered. The result is predictable, even inevitable.



The inevitable came to pass last week, when my friend's six-year-old granddaughter accidentally knocked the magnet to the floor while pinning one of her own drawings to the fridge.

My friend wouldn't have minded, but the little one, having made the trip with her grandparents, was devastated at having broken what to her was a treasured memento.

Don't worry, said Grandpa. I know someone who has lots of glue (!). That's how the broken ornament ended up in my studio.



I'm sure there are other glues that are suitable for repairing resin pieces, but among those I've tried, I've found that tacky glue works best.



I organized the pieces to determine the best order for gluing, then ran a bead of tacky glue along each broken edge, pressed them together til the glue grabbed, and set them aside to cure. Done!

Or maybe not. Turns out there was a bit more to this repair than simply gluing the pieces back together.



First, once I got the first couple of pieces reattached, I discovered that there was a chip missing just above the kiwi's head.

I filled the gap with a tiny bit of air-dry clay from the dollar store, applied with a toothpick. I've used this material before on repairs of resin ornaments and figurines, and it has held up well.



When the clay had dried, I touched up the repair with a bit of yellow acrylic paint so it would not be visible at a glance.



Second, part of the reason that the thing fell off the fridge in the first place is that the ceramic magnet on the back is not quite strong enough to hold the heavy resin ornament, and worse, it's off-centre, so the piece is unbalanced.

To give it better hold, I used Goop to affix a second ceramic magnet, positioning it in the upper corner of the ornament. This second magnet, gleaned from my stash, nearly doubles the magnetic strength, and also corrects the weight imbalance.



Third, I took the precaution of further strengthening my repair with a decouped layer on the back of the magnet. Resin is a brittle material, prone to breakage, and I thought this added decouped layer might help hold my repair together and perhaps discourage similar cracks in the future.

To reinforce the back, I glued on a piece of 24 lb printer paper, trimmed to fit the ornament back. Once the glue had dried, I covered the paper backing with a layer of matte Mod Podge.

I'm not sure how clear it is in the photo, but one giveaway is that the ornament back is now a uniform colour, and you can no longer see the crack lines where I glued the resin piece together. And if you look closely, you can see where I trimmed the paper around the openings in the ornament. The new backing is hardly noticeable, but I hope it will add some additional strength to the ornament.

I suppose my extra interventions weren't absolutely necessary: I could simply have glued the pieces together and left it at that. But I believe that the additions I made will give the ornament a longer life.

It will be less likely to fall off the fridge now, and if it does, it will be just a bit less likely to smash apart. Best of all, my friend's little granddaughter is feeling a whole lot better.

