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Gertsch Feather Cane by [Jean Sheppard](#) [Jean's Photo Gallery](#)

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I learned how to make this cane in a class taught by [Susan Bradshaw](#) and sponsored by the South Bay Polymer Clay Guild. This history of this cane is communal: Tom Jeffrey was initially inspired to create this cane after viewing art created by Linda Gertsch (December 1998 issue of Jewelry Crafts magazine). Tom later demonstrated how he creates this cane at a South Bay Polymer Clay Guild Meeting.

Susan Bradshaw was also inspired, and she taught a class that included the Basic Feather cane, a Peacock Feather cane, and a Feather Cane made with old canes. The version of the Peacock Feather cane in this tutorial has been modified by 'yours truly'... :).

I would like to give credit and thanks to all of these wonderful artists ([Linda Gertsch](#), [Tom Jeffrey](#), and Susan Bradshaw) for their inspiration. I would also like to extend great thanks to Sunni Bergeron, who converted my crude directions and pictures into a work of art and the polymer clay artists who tested the tutorial and provided valuable input: [Kellie Robinson](#), [Tania McCulloch](#), [Tonja Lenderman](#) and [Sunni Bergeron](#). If you would like to view some truly exquisite art created using the forerunner of the Feather cane, please consider visiting the web site of [Grove and Grove](#).

Supplies

- 3 ounces Color A (I used Premo Purple)
- 3 ounces Color B (I used Premo Turquoise mixed with equal amount of Premo white)
- 1 ounce Color C (sheet - I used 3 parts purple and 1 part black)
- 1 ounce Color D -- optional (I used Premo Fuchsia mixed with 2 parts of Premo White)

- Pasta machine or something to roll with
- Tissue blade or something to slice with
- Brayer (optional) to flatten with
- Clean work surface

Click on image to
enlarge



Step One:

Set up your colors for a Skinner blend and blend them together. To learn how to do a Skinner blend, go to the [Polymer Clay Central's Skinner Blend tutorial](#).

I wanted equal size bands of the two edge colors and the central blend color, so I set up the color overlap to be narrow, and not extend to the corners of the clay sheet.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Two:

Starting at the "foot" of your finished blend, roll it up into a log, with the dark color on one end (left side in this picture) and the light color on the other end (right side of picture).

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Three:

Take care when rolling it up to avoid trapping air bubbles in it.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Four:

Place your hands at each end of the log and roll it back and forth, pressing your hands so they move in toward the middle. This will end up shortening your log and making it into a short, fat plug.

It takes some time to do this without having the cane fold over on itself, so be patient and work at it slowly.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Five:

Press down on the shortened cane (now affectionately called a 'plug') with either your hands or your brayer to flatten it into a thick cube shape, and then square up the sides.

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Step Six:

Turn the plug so the dark portion is along the top. Grip the left and right sides and pull them away from each other to stretch the plug out, making the dark side and the light side longer. Or, you can use a brayer or a jar to roll back and forth across the surface.

Either way, you want to make the squashed/cubed plug into a long rectangle. Make sure you keep the shape of the rectangle and you keep the dark color on one long edge of the rectangle and the light color on the other long edge of the rectangle.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Seven:

The finished rectangle should be about 2 inches wide and about 1/2 inch thick.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Eight:

Now, **using the Color C clay (i.e. black mixed with a color)**, create a long narrow sheet of clay and place this on top of the long rectangle log. I used the widest setting on my pasta machine to create **this sheet of clay. the color overlap to be narrow, and not extend to the corners of the clay sheet.**

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Nine:

Pinch (squish) one end of the rectangle cane down to a point using your hands or your brayer, and...

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Ten:

...put the pinched (squished) end of the rectangle log into your pasta machine. Make sure your pasta machine is placed on the widest setting.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Eleven:

Carefully roll the cane through the machine. If you are rolling the cane though manually (using the handle), you have a ways to go!!

I choose to roll the cane through manually (even though I have a motor) because I can maintain more control of the long sheet as it emerges from the pasta machine.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Twelve:

Your cane will make a **very** long sheet, approximately 50 inches long and 1/8 inch thick. It helps me a lot to use a long table when I create this **very** long sheet.

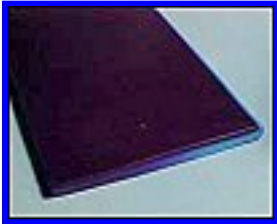
Click on image to
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Step Thirteen:

Cut the **very** long sheet into pieces about every 2 inches and set the sections aside. Do not stack them yet.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Fourteen:

Place one piece flat on your work surface. In this picture, you can see the dark to light (left to right) skinner blend underneath the Color C (darker) sheet.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Fifteen:

Put a second 2-inch piece next to the first with the **dark edge** of the second piece running alongside the dark edge of the first piece, to create an "L" shape. Butt the two pieces together.

Click on image to
enlarge



Step Sixteen:

Leaving the dark edge of the second pieces touching your work surface, fold the second piece over on top of the first piece. It helps to have three hands here - the third to keep the second piece from lifting up off the work surface, but most of us only have two... :)

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Step Seventeen:

Continue stacking the pieces in this fashion until all but one piece are together. Reserve this last piece.

Sometimes it's interesting to reverse the dark to light Skinner blend on one or more pieces as you build the feather. In this example, I reversed the Skinner blend on the 4th, 7th, and 11th sheets by putting the light edge, instead of the dark edge, on the work surface.

Click on image to enlarge

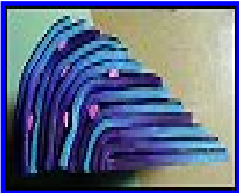


While you're stacking the pieces, you might want to add spots (bull's eye canes) or dots (snakes of one solid color) between the pieces as you create the feather.

Step Eighteen:

Gently lift the feather cane off your work surface and turn it on its side. The finished rectangle should be about 2 inches wide and about 1/2 inch thick.

Click on image to enlarge



You now see the beginnings of half a feather.

Step Nineteen:

Take the 2" piece you set aside in Step Seventeen and place it so it lays "under" the pieces that were stacked on end.

Click on image to enlarge



Step Twenty:

At this point, you may like to add a thin sheet of the color used for your spots/dots on top of the reserved piece. In this cane, I placed a narrow, thin sheet of the fuchsia/white blend across the center of the reserved piece.

Click on image to enlarge



Click on image to enlarge



Step Twenty-One:

Reduce this half-feather cane by pulling the ends away from one another, carefully stretching it. Take care to keep the thickness of the cane even.

You can place one end of the cane on the table, keeping your hand on it to anchor it, and pull while gently shaking the cane with the other hand (a little like skipping a rope). This uses the weight of the cane to do half your work for you and gives you a more even stretch.

Swap ends and continue. If you find this step too hard, go through the next three steps and reduce after the two sides are matched up.

Click on image to enlarge



Step Twenty-Two:

Cut the stretched cane in half, then pick up the two ends in the middle where you cut, leaving the cane spread out on the surface (like it's doing the splits).

Place the two ends together, carefully lining up the design so you get a perfect mirror image.

Click on image to enlarge



Step Twenty-Three:

Now flip the cane over and place the matched cut ends on the work surface so you get a "banana peel" effect. Gently, firmly and carefully close the two feather halves together, working from the your work surface up to the end.

Take care, as you close the sides, to avoid trapping any air, and try to make the bands of color match up as closely as possible.

Stretch (reduce) as desired, and slice. Tada! Enjoy your feather cane, and check out examples of other people's feather canes below.



This is an example of what you can do if you cut up the feather cane and reassemble it! The picture on the left is points placed together and the one on the right is the points facing out! Pretty nifty, hm?

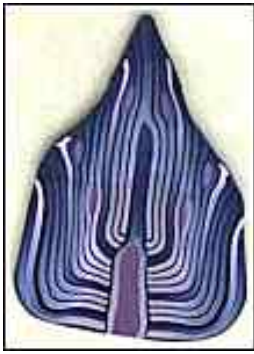


This are two more examples, both by Kellie Robinson, of what you can do with your cane.



Series of pens made by Sunni Bergeron

More Feather Canes



Kellie Robinson



Tonja Lenderman



Sunni Bergeron

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