



Polymer Clay Polyzine

August 2002

Volume 3, Issue 8

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## Editor's Letter

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Dear Readers:

Welcome to the August issue of Polymer Clay Polyzine!

I hope you've all had a good end of July. This is the vacation time of the year, and it's good to lie back and give your mind and body a chance to rest deeply. Even when we love what we do (and with polymer clay, what's not to love?!), it's good to let go of everything and do nothing for a while.

After you are done doing nothing, check out the great articles and projects in this month's Polyzine!

The Questions and Answers section gets larger by the month. Sometimes we get questions we can't possibly answer (what the cheapest source for spacer beads?), but rest assured, regardless of whether we can or can't answer your question, it will appear in the next issue of Polyzine. Like Glass Attic and the Polymer Clay Central encyclopedia, we are happy to create a repository of shared knowledge.

However, we can't do the work alone -- check out the Q and A section, and if you know the answer, or have a better answer, let us know -- write to [us](#) and share that knowledge!

I've gotten my hands on some new books, so check out the book review section to see what you absolutely, mandatorily, right-now-or-I-will-die must own. Or at least check out at your nearest bookstore.

As many of you know, the July issue was very late in coming out. That's because I was on vacation for the entire month of June and returned to find my mind total chaos with no organization. That's a vacation for you. Anyhow, my time wasn't entirely wasted away on doing nothing -- I visited some French polymer clay artists. Read all about it in *Le Pâte Polymère*. Warning -- lots of pictures, so it might take some time to load.

While I was whiling away my time, Laurel Nevens was putting hers to good use. She has formed the Clayers with Disabilities mailing list, and explains her reasons and how to join in her article Clayers with Disabilities. It's a great article that will hit home for many of you -- now you have an outlet for discussion.

Want to know how to make repeating patterns out of canes? Martha Aleo has written a terrific tutorial on Geometric Canes. It was so useful to her guild that they told her to send it into Polyzine!

Finally, we round out the issue with the first installment of Face Canes -- the Eye Cane. Kim "Irish Red" Kennedy is kindly sharing with us her technique for creating a face cane, and she's doing it one element at a time. This month -- the eyes. Next month, . . . you'll need to come back for the next installment!

Thank you again for stopping by Polymer Clay Polyzine. Without your support and kindness, we wouldn't be able to continue doing what we do, so do accept our sincere appreciate, and enjoy the issue!

Deirdre

Deirdre F Woodward  
Editor

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Dear Polyzine and Alan:

Thanks for a whole new easy way to make wings.

Alice



Dear Polyzine:

I work in several different mediums from jewelry, painting, sculpting, a little metalsmithing to claying. I've struggled for a while trying to organize my studio space for it to be useful for my many uhm, interests. I have books, art supplies, hand tools, and paper clippings of ideas I want to try. I thought it would be so helpful and fun to see pictures of other clayers' studios.

Thanks!  
Tejae

Tejae:

That is a great idea -- readers, if you send us photos of your studio and a short description of how it's set up and what you like/don't like about it, we will run it!

Deirdre



Dear Polyzine,

I would like to warn all potential users of the new product Eraser Clay: even after cured it will take the finish off wood furniture. My kids made Father's Day gifts out of the clay this year; when I moved one of the pieces that had been left for a long time in one spot, it was stuck to the dresser and had melded to the finish on the wood.

Thanks for a great magazine. I look forward to each issue.

Yours Truly,  
Alisa Lehman

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Dear Polyzine:

I'm going to New York in September and wondered if there was anywhere I could find supplies, books, etc?

Marian Nyman  
Whitstable  
Kent  
UK

Hi Marian:

Thanks for writing to Polyzine. I've forwarded your message to the New York Polymer Clay Guild. I'm sure they will be able to send you to all the best places for polymer clay in New York!

As well as supplies, you should find out what galleries carried works by polymer clay artists. I understand there are several in New York that specialize in polymer clay -- you could really get a eyeful!

Have a wonderful trip,  
Deirdre



Dear Editor,

In the July Q & A, someone asked about transferring letters so they were "right-reading"; you told them about the mirror image option when printing out. I do that when using laser

prints, but you can also get reverse reading letters by using transparency film.

Just copy onto the film, then turn it over to make the transfer copy. I show this in all my classes for calligraphers, so they can use their own lettering without scanning it in.

And thanks for a great on-line magazine!  
Katherine



Dear Editor:

I love your e-zine (who doesn't?) and have checked through all the back issues for new tips and ideas. I was wondering if you have considered making an index of the articles and various topics in the Beginners Corner for us?

Or maybe incorporate some sort of search feature on your web site? It sure would make it easier to see what has or has not been covered by someone already!

Diane

Dear Diane:

Thank you for the wonderful ideas. We hadn't thought of an index for the Beginners' Corner.

Currently we haven't figured out how to write the search code (it's on the list of things to do), so the quickest way to search our site is to go to [Google.com](http://Google.com). Using the advanced search, plug in your search terms and also tell Google to search only [www.pcpolyzine.com](http://www.pcpolyzine.com).

It's a great tool, and it's helped me a number of times when I've been searching for an article I know is in Polyzine, but I just can't find!

Until we get the search function running, I hope this helps!

Deirdre



Hi!

Just wanted to jump in with my two cents' worth [regarding the creation of a manageable mailing list].

Barb, I do some very limited mailings, and had the same problem, so I copied and pasted all the addresses on the list to a Word document, separated by comma only. It is very east to delete a name or otherwise update to this document. Then when addressing the email, I simply open the document and cut and paste the entire list into the BCC field. It's low tech, quick and dirty, but is pretty effective.

I appreciate all the great tips and sharing that goes on in this 'zine.

[Jeannie Bench](#)

Mind, Dancing



Hi!

I was wondering where to find good images of butterfly wings?

Thank You~  
Louisa

Dear Louisa:

It depends on what kind of images you are looking for -- do you want color or black and white? For either, I suggest you go to [the Altavista search engine](#) and do a search for +"butterfly wings" in the IMAGE search section. You will get lots of images of butterfly wings there.

To use them with polymer clay, you need to either have a color or black and white laser printer or transfer paper. You can also print them using an ink jet printer, then take them

to your local copy store and have them printed using a laser copier.

Deirdre



Hi

I am looking for a source that sells the butterfly cane slicer. I went to the polymersuppliesonline site but could not send them a e-mail.

Thank you in advance,

Lauren

Dear Lauren:

The only place I could find the butterfly cane slicers was at caneguru's [Butterfly Cane Slice site](#), but according to the note posted there, they aren't shipping any due to illness. Since the note was posted in 2000, it appears to me that that source for the Butterfly Cane Slicer is closed.

Can anyone hook Lauren up with a butterfly cane slicer?

Deirdre



Hi!

In reading one of the questions from the June 2002 issue I found the one from Val concerning transferring images.

I have been doing more and more with transferred images and have found that for me at least the brand of clay used makes a very big difference. In this regard I have been frustrated to no end with Premo (I can do it when the weather is dry, but with the humidity

we get here in the summer it is nearly impossible), but have found that Cernit and Kato clay work extremely well.

Thank you for all of the info!

Sharon



Hi,

It's easy to get Altoids boxes without buying them. For some reason, people who eat Altoids can't seem to throw away the tins, even though they can't think of anything to do with them. Just buy a few tins, cover them nicely, take them to work, and announce that you'll trade a finished box for "x" number of tins (I ask for 6 but usually get more than that).

You'll be drowning in tins before you know it!

Beth Curran



Dear Polyzine:

I've been making translucent beads (see the [Chrysanthemum Cane](#)) for a while, and just recently I've switched to Kato clay. For some reason, I can't get the Kato translucent to shine up nicely, like Premo and Fimo do.

Do any of your readers have an suggestions? I've sanded through all the grits, buffed my heart out, etc.

Thanks!  
Sheila



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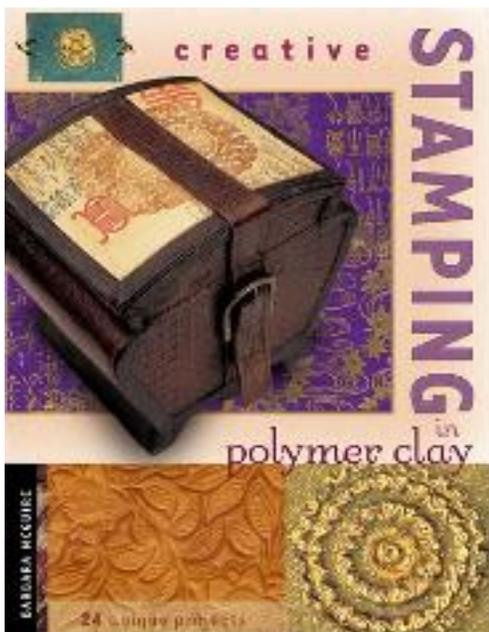
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More great books to share! I hope that you all went out and bought last month's books, but if you didn't, good news -- here are three more you will be sure to want! Maybe we should all band together and form a book club, so we can get good prices from amazon.com or one of the other on-line book vendors!

I also just discovered that my local Joann Fabric store has a bookshelf with lots of polymer clay books, and I can buy them with my Joann Fabric's 50% off coupon. If you aren't on their mailing list, head on down and get on it. The 50% coupon comes every couple of weeks, attached to their flyer.

While we are on the topic, I also used my coupon to buy two -- that's right, **two** -- craft carts on wheels. Since they retail at my Joann Fabric for \$100.00, I got two for the price of one. They are **perfect** for toting around my polymer clay supplies (and sewing supplies and scrapbooking supplies and . . .).



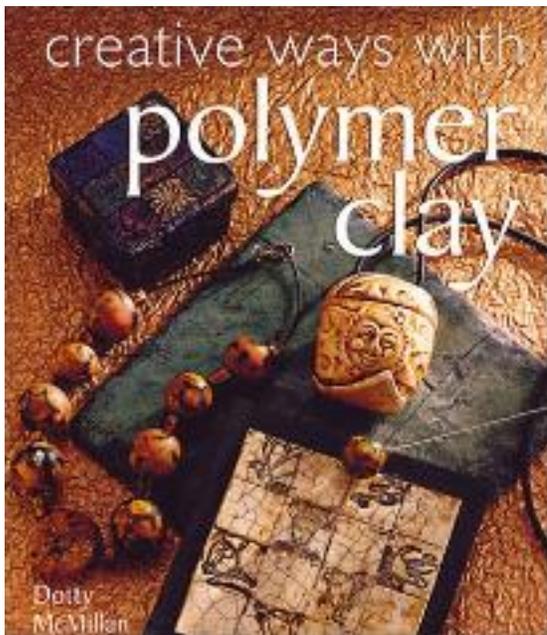
The first book is a recently published book -- Barbara McGuire's ***Creative Stamping in Polymer Clay***. Barbara is a master at what she does, and this book doesn't disappoint. It's jammed packed with all kinds of projects: stamping projects, stamping with mokume gane projects, and mixed-media-ish projects.

Through gorgeous photography (really, I buy all these books because the photography is so incredible!) and simple directions, each project quickly explains the process in laymen's terms with minimal fuss. McGuire covers all the usuals -- pins, necklaces, votives -- but she also tosses in some new techniques, including a disc bead process new

and very intriguing to me and a method for using polymer clay to veneer purchased objects (in her case, an imported basket, veneered with faux ivory stamped with Asian-inspired designs then colored and antiqued to match the mood of the basket -- the book jacket sports a picture of this project).

The book starts with, of course, the requisite Getting Started section, but this section has a really useful reference section imbedded in it -- McGuire has created a chart that cross-references art materials and polymer clay techniques with descriptions, applications, and cautions. It's a great reference chart for people like me who are adventurous with materials but don't have or take the time to really understand all the possibilities out there. All I need to do now is glance at this chart to see a new material or technique I can try with polymer clay. Thanks, Barbara!

*Creative Stamping in Polymer Clay*, by Barbara McGuire  
North Light Books, 2002  
ISBN: 1-58180-155-6  
Retail Price: \$22.99



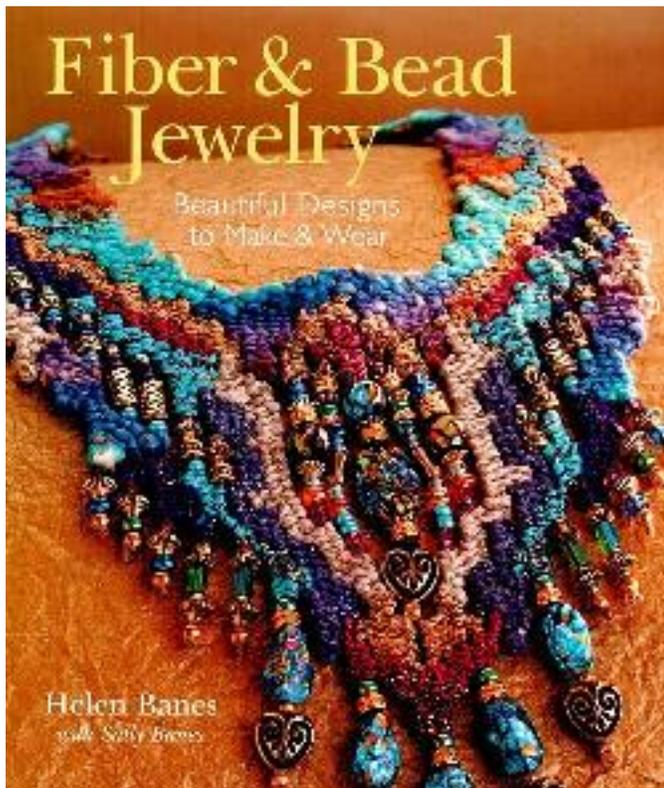
The second book is a 2001 publication -- Dotty McMillan's ***Creative Ways with Polymer Clay***. Again, another master in the field delivers a product that is as artistic as it is useful.

The book spends some time explaining and demonstrating a variety of different techniques, including some lesser known techniques such as gilding and crackling. There's also a section on how to make your own cutters, a fantastic mini-tutorial for which I can find tons of uses.

The projects in the book -- most designed by McMillan, but several designed by other artists -- are beautifully photographed but could use some more illustration -- there's a lot of text, and for those of us who are visual learners, too much text and not enough illustration can make a project fairly inaccessible.

But that's my only complaint. The projects are beautifully constructed and have a lot of variety. The usual necklaces, pins, and bracelets are featured, but so are paperweights, lanterns, tiles, masks, books, bowls, and really neat twinkle lights. In fact, some of these projects are so striking that I've been distracted from writing this review -- I've been marking projects with "must make" notes and jotting down ideas that other projects are sparking in my mind!

*Creative Ways with Polymer Clay*, by Dotty McMillan  
Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., 2001  
ISBN: 1-4027-0113-6  
Retail Price: \$16.95



Here's another book that look like it falls outside the field of polymer clay proper but might be interesting to many of us: Helen Banes' *Fiber and Bead Jewelry*.

I first became interested in fiber work several weeks ago, when I saw a necklace made out of polymer clay and **mounds** of what I think was embroidery thread. It was just stunning. Apparently, polymer clay and fiber work is a fairly popular technique, because when I opened this book, the first three photographs in the introduction were of Tory Hughes necklaces! Banes, in her introduction, also talks about how she combines polymer clay and fiber in her own artwork.

The book is an interesting combination of travel journal and how-to, with stories of visits to China, India, and other distance countries intermingled with photographs of fiber and bead necklaces inspired by Banes' visits to both the various countries and to a myriad of Washington, D.C., museums. Every couple of pages, a particular necklace is accompanied by a pattern laid out on grid paper.

Alas, there are no directions to accompany the pattern until the second half of the book -- The Elements of Design for Wearable Art. Even here, the directions for creating the necklaces presuppose a good deal of knowledge about weaving fibers together, and the following pages of patterns are again unaccompanied by specific directions.

Included in the second half of the book is also a discussion of the elements of design: scale, balance, rhythm, focal point, color, and texture. Though short, the discussion is both informative and illustrated with necklaces that truly reveal the nature of the design element under discussion.

Clearly this book is intended for readers who have more than a passing familiarity with the art of fiber work, but I strongly suggest that you check it out -- I think that polymer clay as an element in mixed media has enormous potential, and I think that mixing fiber with the clay is going to engender some really interesting techniques.

*Fiber and Bead Jewelry*, by Helen Banes with Sally Banes

Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., 2002

ISBN: 1-4027-0073-3

Retail Price: \$14.95

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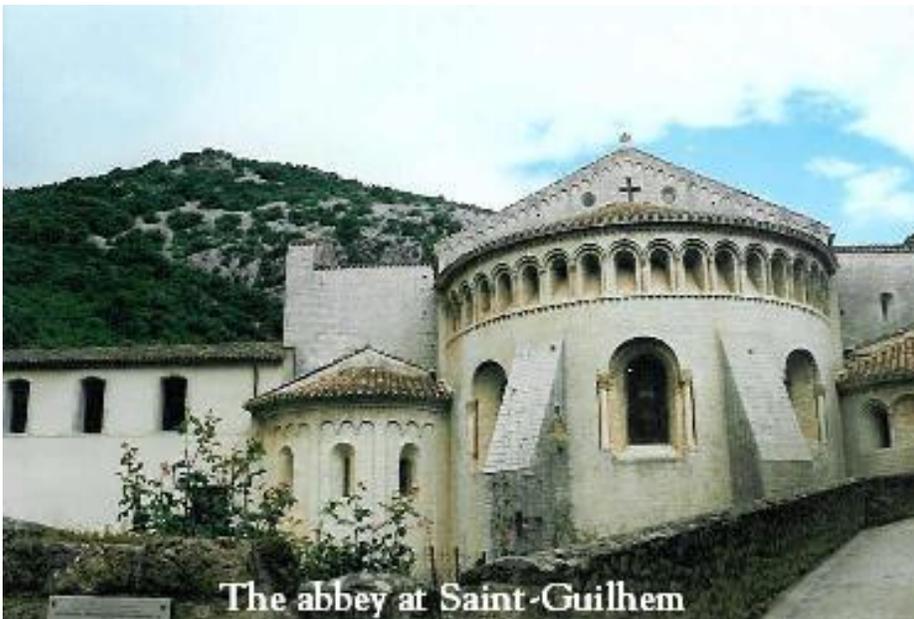
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## Le Pâte Polymère By Deirdre F Woodward

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It started out as wishful thinking, really. I'd get an e-mail now and then from a French woman, then from another French woman. At one of the Baltimore Polymer Clay Guild meetings, I met a third French woman visiting a friend in Annapolis. Every now and then, I'd think, wouldn't it be cool to see what the French are up to with polymer clay, but then the thought would drift away as nonchalantly as it came.

Then my husband announced that we were going to spend a month in France -- he would be teaching and I would be *en vacances*. What better way to spend my vacation than visiting French polymer clay artists! An e-mail here and there, and before I knew it, I was on my way to Saint-Guilhem-le-Desert to stay with Xtine (pronounced Christine) Alibert and to meet my pen pals Chris Lajoinie and Claudine Peyrat (see the [Reader's Gallery](#) to see more of their work).

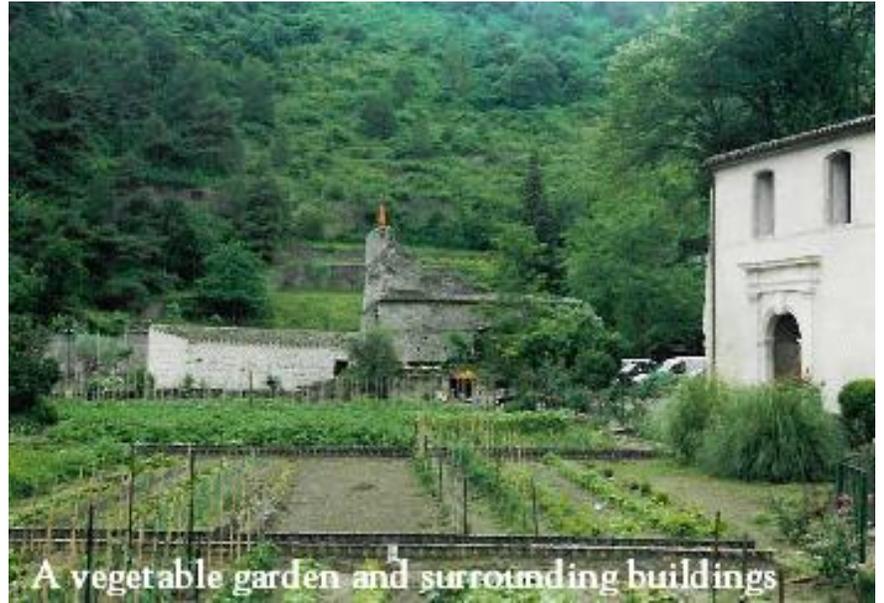


Saint-Guilhem is an extraordinarily lovely hamlet in the south of France, roughly an hour from Montpellier. This small town, built around an abbey founded in 804 by Guilhem, Count of Toulouse and cousin of Charlemagne, is so exceptional that it is protected by the United Nations as a treasure to all of humankind.

As you can well imagine, the homes are all stone and the streets delightfully narrow (*etroite*, for those of you interested in boning up on your French). There are only about 300 residents in Saint-Guilhem, and I was lucky enough to get to spend two nights at the home of one of them: Xtine Alibert.



Narrow street and stone homes



A vegetable garden and surrounding buildings



Xtine Alibert

Xtine, who has a Ph.D. in molecular biology, used to live in the United States, and now lives in Saint-Guilhem where she runs a small store selling beads and her own polymer clay works. When she visits the United States, Xtine also holds polymer clay workshop.

When I asked her how she transitioned from molecular biology to polymer clay, Xtine told a story very familiar to many of us: "I started to play with polymer clay as a hobby." Xtine wore the jewelry she made from polymer clay, and soon people were asking her to sell them her pieces.

Xtine (left) is wearing one of her trademark necklaces -- an explosion of twisted wire and beads

The hobby bourgeoned into a full-time occupation, and Xtine found herself being accepted into craft shows around the United States. She knew about a craft show in Nimes, also in the south of France, so she applied. She was accepted into the show and her pieces sold well, so after some time, she decided to settle in Saint-Guilhem to work on and sell her pieces.

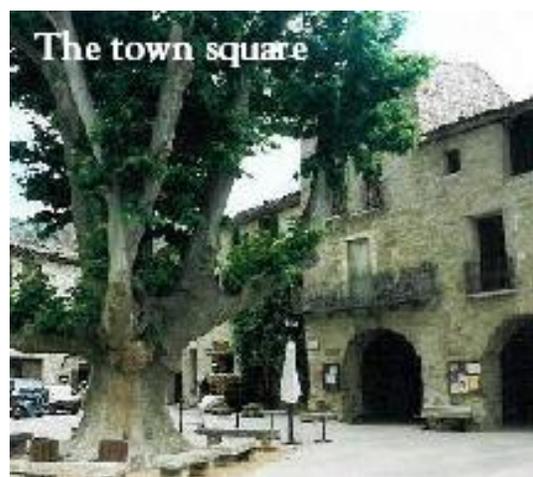
Saint-Guilhem, Xtine told me, is an ideal town for her shop, which sells beads, both purchased and hand-made, beading kits, earrings, necklaces, rings, vases, and many other items both polymer and non-polymer. Although small, Saint-Guilhem is very touristy, attracting thousands of visitors every year. Xtine's store, right next to the town square and across from the hotel, is in an ideal location (of course, in a town this size, all locations are ideal!).



The day I arrived, the town was locked into a cold spell with intermittent rain -- unusual for a June day. No matter -- I was excited to meet the other French women who were on their way from various locales.

I didn't have to wait for long -- Chris Lajoinie soon arrived from Toulouse and Claudine Peyrat from Cannes, and we spent some time in Xtine's home, roughly equivalent to what we in Baltimore would call a rowhouse, but only if rowhouses were made six centuries ago, with vaulted ceilings and plank doors.

The language switched between French and English as the four of us got to know each other better. I had met Xtine once before, and Chris and Claudine never. The three French women knew each other only slightly better, as they were all members of the French polymer clay list, *Créationfimo*.



After a lovely salad of fresh greens and summer vegetables, we decided to go to Xtine's store, where we would be met by another polymer clay artist, Xtine's friend Josiane Daubard.

It was drizzling just slightly as we made our way through the narrow passageways of Saint-Guilhem to the town square and into Xtine's shop. As cold and threatening as it was outside, we thought we would have the shop to ourselves for the afternoon.

Customers crowding into  
Xtine's store



Apparently, a little chill doesn't daunt the tourists who come to Saint-Guilhem, because the shop was busy from the moment Xtine opened the door to let the four of us in.

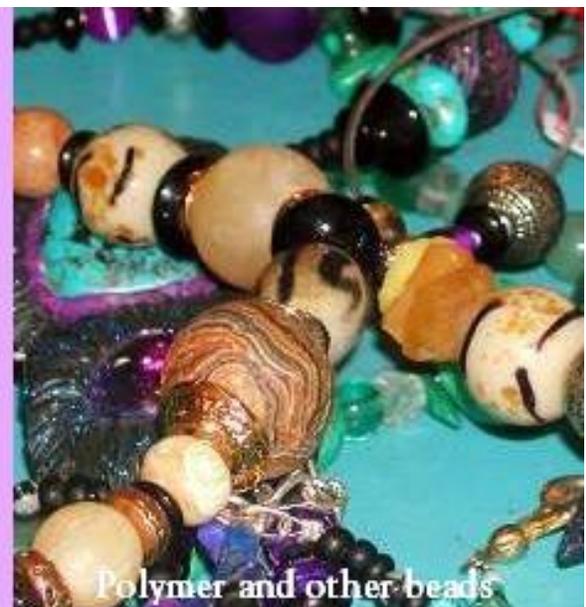
Mosaic vases in polymer clay



Xtine's vases



Josiane Daubard, Xtine's friend, was a wonderful surprise since she was unknown to all of us except Xtine. Tall and slender with mounds of blonde hair, Josiane has been selling her work for 12 years. And such work -- lots of glass, stones, and earthy tones characterized her work, which also featured chunky textures and, incongruously, feathers -- but the mix worked wonderfully to produce very sophisticated necklaces and rings.



Josiane's necklaces

Photos by Chris Lajoinie

Josiane sells her work at crafts fairs in large towns like Reims, in the north of France, Grenoble, near the Alps in the east of France, and Nimes, in the south. As it was explained to me, she sells out of *les chalets*, little wooden houses from which artists sell their wares, usually around the holidays. I still can't quite picture it -- Does the artist bring the house? Does the town provide the house? Are they permanent, like the miniature medieval village near Annapolis that plays host to the Maryland Renaissance Festival every year? -- but it does sound awfully quaint, sitting in a small wooden house, snow gently falling, Christmas carolers in the distance, customers wandering in and out.



Josiane's feather necklaces and large bead necklace

N.B. Chris Lajoinie just told me that *les chalets* are little wooden houses usually rented out by the town organizing the fairs, which occur usually around Christmas.

Also with a box full of treasures was Claudine Peyrat, who by day is a professor of computer science. Although she's only been working with polymer clay for a short time, Claudine showed us some very professional pieces like the necklace at the left, which she created using [Karen Lewis' \(aka Klew\) drum beads](#) as an inspiration

Claudine's work is very much inspired by the ocean, as she lives on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Below, Claudine models a bracelet and a necklace she made that evoke the ocean with the plant-like strings of seed beads mixed with polymer starfish and shells.



Claudine's Klew inspired beads



Bracelet: ocean life



Necklace:  
ocean theme

Photo by Chris Lajoinie

Claudine also made the two pieces below -- cats peeking out behind leaves and a Klew-inspired bead.

Cats and leaves



Photo by Chris Lajoinie

Red and green leaf bead



Photo by Chris Lajoinie

Chris Lajoinie, who inspired me to make this sojourn south, also brought a variety of polymer clay projects with her. Her work is characterized by the use of color -- and a lot of it.



Chris models her earring made from polymer clay and beads



Colorful face cane pin

Pin: Lady in the Wind



Bead and fiber necklace

Chris, who used to work for multinational firms in their tax and legal departments, now does both custom work and work she sells in stores throughout France: two in Toulouse, where she lives (*La Fontaine de Boulou* and *La Maison de la Haute Garonne*); two in Bordeaux (*Galerie Agapi* and *Galerie des Créamaniaques*, and one in Paris (*Shadé*, in the Saint Germain quarter). She also has a website: [Couleurs Zaouli](http://Couleurs.Zaouli). Here she has posted many photos of her work, showing off the colors more brilliantly than my camera was able to capture.

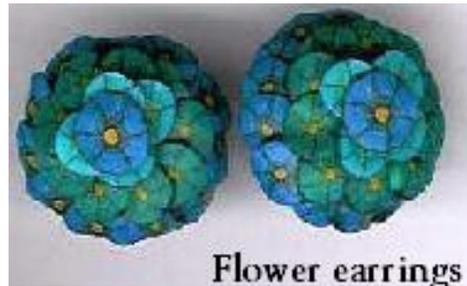
Case in point -- the necklace to the left, which Chris made, incorporates fiber and polymer clay. I am so disappointed that the picture doesn't display the depth of color in the layers on the polymer clay beads.



Xtine's box of treasures

Xtine also joined in the show and tell by pulling out a box filled with pieces she has made over the years. Note the fabulous Chanel suit, strung on a Chanel-esque chain.

Below are two pairs of earrings Xtine made -- the flowers are for a friend of mine, and the hearts are for me. Aren't the hearts wonderful?



Flower earrings

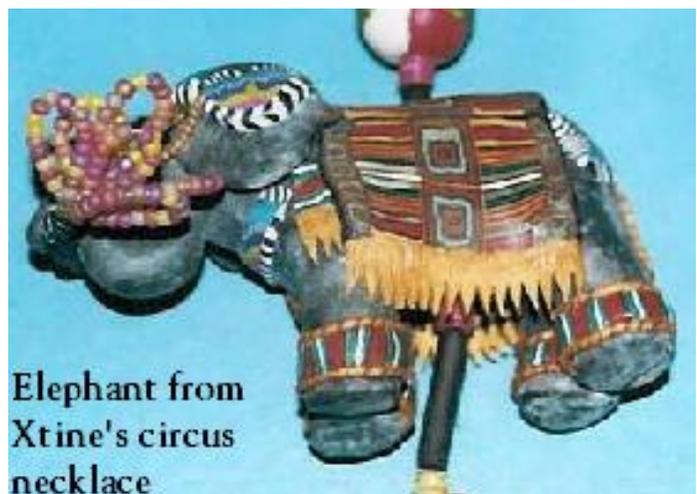


Heart earrings



Xtine modeling her circus necklace

Xtine also showed us a circus necklace she made. It was incredible. Two trapeze artists formed the center bead, and the rest of the necklace was individual circus animals, including a tiger, horse, and seal balancing a ball on it's nose. The craftsmanship was exquisite.



Elephant from Xtine's circus necklace

After spending several hours looking at each other's work (I'm sorry to say I didn't bring any with me to share), we turned to another favorite activity -- looking at books.

Claudine brought with her a copy of Georgia Sargeant and Celie Fago's new book, [Polymer Clay: Exploring New Techniques and New Material](#), which I had never seen and was delighted to look at. Also, I was introduced to a couple of Can Do books I hadn't seen before: [Images on Clay](#) and [Classy Clay with Rubber Stamps and Wire](#).

Between ogling the beads in Xtine's store, admiring all the wonderful polymer clay pieces everyone shared, and flipping through books, we were all pretty exhausted. We had promised each other we'd go out for a fancy dinner, and so we did, in the nearby town of Gignac. Dinner was splendid (a wonderfully creamy *escalope de saumon* with several side dishes, including *gateau de ratatouille*, followed by the most decadent *marquise au chocolat*, a dessert for which Chris promised she'd send me the recipe, it was so good), as was the company.

It was a wonderful weekend spent in the company of four gregarious and kind women, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat. I -- and you -- might have the chance: Xtine is thinking about holding a week-long workshop in Saint-Guilhem. If she decides yes, then watch Polyzine for forthcoming details!

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## Clayers with Disabilities: A New E-mail Discussion List By [Laurel Nevans](#) List Owner, Clayers with Disabilities

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The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) defines disability as a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." A person has a disability if s/he has difficulty walking, talking, seeing, hearing, lifting, carrying, and/or climbing stairs; if s/he has difficulty performing activities of daily living (bathing, housework, dressing, etc.); or if s/he has difficulty performing social roles (working, interacting with other adults, etc.)

A person is said to have a severe disability if s/he has difficulties performing more than one of these activities, if s/he uses assistive devices or mechanical assistance to get around, or if s/he needs personal assistance to perform activities of daily living.

According to the US Census Bureau, one in five Americans have a disability of some kind, and one in ten have a severe disability. Anecdotal evidence reveals similar statistics within the polymer clay community. Many internet discussion postings contain brief references to disability. Even the [National Polymer Clay Guild](#) recognizes that many of its members have accessibility needs, and is building a physical needs database in response to a growing number of requests for accessible conferences.

However, until now, there has been no place for clayers with disabilities to discuss issues specific to the world of disabilities and clay. Although folks may briefly mention disability in the context of a discussion, they never really discuss how these disabilities affect their roles as clay artists.

I am particularly reminded of this every time I get into a discussion about attending craft

shows. Folks are zealous about their favorite display materials, the best canopies, or the best way to weight their tent on concrete. Inevitably, the "best" systems are bulky and/or heavy. But the other crafters don't want to hear that a discussion participant can't lift more than 10 pounds, so soup cans filled with concrete are not a practical solution for weighting the disabled crafter's tent. In many discussions, the attitude seems to be "if you can't take doing heavy work, you have no business doing shows." This is not very helpful to the disabled crafter, especially if s/he has managed to successfully show for years without fifty pound tent weights. It is even less helpful to the disabled crafter trying to break into the show circuit.

Most polymer clay artists have devised ways to keep their disabilities from impacting heavily on their claying. Many have also discovered tools that make claying with a disability a lot easier (for example, a clayer with hand problems might not be able to clay without such tools as a food processor and a motorized pasta machine). Others have devised their own clay handles for tissue blades that make the blades much easier to use. But how do others gain access to what clayers with disabilities are doing? [Glass Attic](#) includes disability-related tips and adaptations within its numerous resources. However, they are buried within the thousands of general tips and resources delineated on the site. Previously, there was no central resource for disability-related clay information, nor was there any specific place to direct disability-related questions about polymer clay. The Clayers with Disabilities Discussion List hopes to begin to fill that void.

It all started with an innocent comment I made on a discussion list: I referred to myself as a member of the "clayers with disabilities" group. I meant I was among the many clayers out there who had a disability, and wasn't actually referring to an organized group. Still, I received a flurry of e-mails in response from folks asking how to join this group. I began to realize I wasn't the only one who would benefit from such a forum.

I realized clayers with disabilities wanted a place where they could discuss how their disabilities affect -- both positively and negatively -- their claying. Clayers wanted a place that was part support group, part newsletter, part information exchange, and part tip central, where they would be free to discuss their disabilities, ask questions about how others handle certain issues, exchange tips and techniques, and kvetch about their disabilities acting up. We needed someplace where folks with arthritis, fibromyalgia, CFS, developmental disabilities, spinal cord injuries, chronic pain, and all other types of disabilities were welcome to discuss their issues.

I also realized that this community could also act as a resource for folks without disabilities who looking to share in or add to our collective knowledge. Folks such as occupational therapists, recreational specialists, art therapists, teachers, disabilities professionals, art instructors looking to accommodate students with disabilities, special educators, camp counselors, and anyone else who needs ideas or has questions about

polymer clay and disabilities could tap into this resource so that they could more effectively use clay in their therapeutic activities.

Thus, at the end of July, I started the [clayerswithdisabilities@yahoogroups.com](mailto:clayerswithdisabilities@yahoogroups.com) discussion list. The community is just starting to grow. But in order to be successful, it needs to get as many clayers with interests in this area involved as possible. PC Polyzine generously offered us this space to begin spreading the word. If you are a clayer with a disability, or have an interest in claying with a disability, we need you. Additional information about this group, why it formed, and how to subscribe can be found at [Artist Crafts](#) or at the Yahoo Group site [Clayers With Disabilities](#). Also, you can read my own [background with disabilities](#).

Many polymer clay artists have disabilities, and others would like to better accommodate clayers with disabilities in their classes and guilds. Many disability professionals would like to incorporate polymer clay into therapeutic activities but are not quite sure how to do so. Many people with disabilities are new to polymer clay, and would like to learn how to clay without being restrained by their functional limitations. Clayers with Disabilities is for such people. It is a place for clayers with disabilities to gather and discuss claying with a disability, either on a professional or hobbyist level, and how disabilities positively and negatively effect clay-related activities. And we invite all interested clayers to come and join us. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to [clayerswithdisabilities-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:clayerswithdisabilities-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). © Laurel Nevans 2002

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Geometric canes consist of triangles, squares and other geometric shapes which are cut and reassembled to produce dynamic repeating patterns of shape and color.

The basic cane components are built using contrasting colors, Skinner blends, bits of old canes, and scrap clay. The components are then cut and reassembled in a variety of ways to produce an infinite number of patterns.

This technique incorporates principles used in Donna Kato's Miracle Canes and the canes of Sara Shriver and Sandra McCaw, and borrows from other techniques used to make kaleidoscope canes and Natasha beads. All these methods are related to one another and you can use them to come up with your own unique designs.

## Geometric Cane Basics

Cane components are assembled in groups of 3, 4, 6 and 8. Shapes can be triangles, trapezoids or squares.

The geometric cane principle can be seen in

- mirror images
- butterflies
- snowflakes
- spider webs
- kaleidoscope
- Rorschach shapes
- Natasha beads

Points to remember:

1. Use contrasting colors. If you want to know how colors will look next to one another in a cane, lay them next to one another on a table and look at them from a distance of about 12 feet. If the colors remain distinct, they will look good in your cane. If they do not, then try something else.
2. When assembling your components, keep in mind that the appearance of your cane will change depending on which side of the design is on the inside of the cane and which side is on the outside.
3. When assembling the components, they will all pretty much match up with each other. Your cane will look better, however, if you try to find the best, or "true", matches.
4. You can wrap your components in a contrasting clay or leave them unwrapped.
5. Skinner blends offer many possibilities for building your basic components.
6. Bits of old cane can be used by themselves or combined with solid colors or Skinner blends to make new canes. This is just taking the Natasha bead to another level.

## **Directions for Making the Cane**

The following are directions for making a geometric cane based on a four-part design.

Supplies:

- Clay: five colors plus black and white (this project uses lime green, white, black, blue, orange, purple, and yellow)
- pasta machine
- slicing blade

For this project, we start with the bull's eye cane, then combine it with other bull's eye canes to create a pattern. You will then reduce the cane and cut it into four pieces and reassemble them to make a new pattern.



### Step One:

Make a Skinner blend cane. Start with a Skinner blend made of lime green and white. Roll up with the white on the inside and the green on the outside.



### Step Two:

Slice the cane lengthwise into four pieces and sandwich layers of black clay (rolled on a medium pasta machine setting) in between.



### Step Three:

Reassemble the pieces. Make a bull's eye cane out of black and white clay. Add another layer of black and another layer of white as shown.



### Step Four:

Pinch the Skinner cane into an oval shape and place the bulls eye cane at one end.



### Step Five:

Add blue and white striped canes. The layers should be rolled on the thickest pasta machine setting.



### Step Six:

Add orange logs.



### Step Seven:

Make a Skinner blend with purple and white. Roll into a log with the white on the inside and the purple on the outside. Reduce; pinch into oval and triangle shapes, and place into cane assembly as indicated in picture.



### Step Eight:

Add Skinner blend cane made out of white and green. Note that this cane does not have black layers in it like the green Skinner cane in steps 1-3.



### Step Nine:

Roll a thin layer of black and add to the outside of the cane.



### Step Ten:

Add pale yellow as seen in photo.



### Step Eleven:

Pinch the cane into a square shape.



### Step Twelve:

Reduce the cane. When the cane is reduced to the size you want, cut it into four even lengths.

## Constructing the Complex Geometric Cane

You can get two different canes from the same base depending on how you reassemble them.



Here, you can see a cane made with the big green Skinner blend log pointed toward the center of the cane and the end with the bull's eye pointed outward.



This cane has the bull's eyes pointed toward the center of the cane and the big green Skinner blend log pointed outward. See how different it looks?

These pictures show that the more you reduce your cane, the less distinct the pattern becomes. Areas of high contrast show up more than areas of lower contrast. The only way to predict what will happen with the clay is to become more familiar with it by making a few canes yourself and seeing what works.

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## **Internet Resources**

[Glass Attic](#) contains the most comprehensive list of links and information on geometric canes that you will find in the Internet.

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## Face Cane Components

### Eye Cane

By [Irish Red](#)

[Adobe Acrobat version](#)

Face canes are fun and addicting to make. In this tutorial, I will go through the steps of making the whole face cane, one step at a time.

Experienced caners sometimes forget how lost we were when we started out, trying to remember what each technique was, so I hope I can make this easier for clayers who have never made a face cane or those who have been frustrated. To make the process easier, I am going to make one component of the face cane per month.

This month's component is the eye cane.

### Supplies:

- Clay colors for the eye: iris color, white, black, flesh tone
- Blade
- Pasta machine or roller



Draw a cartoon of the face.

This is just so you can get the proportions of the components right and not waste a lot of clay. You don't have to be an artist. As you can see by mine, I have no talent for drawing.

I usually make a small drawing, scan it and print it out larger.

## Step One:

Figure out how big the pupil needs to be, using your cartoon as a guide. Remember that you will be making **one** eye cane and cutting it in half. Decide how thick you want the cane and plan the log to be twice that length.

On the other hand, when I make the components of a face cane, I sometimes make more than I need -- such as with this eye cane -- so I have more for use later.

You decide how much you need -- either enough for one face cane or a lot for many face canes.



## Step Two:

Make a very small log of white and one of black and lay side by side. Roll out black clay and wrap around these canes to make the pupil.

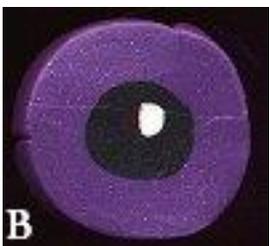
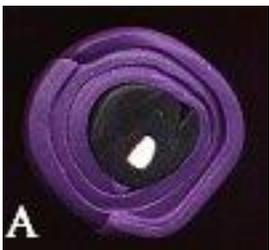
Check against your drawing to see if the log is wide enough.

## Step Three:

Roll out your eye color on the #1 setting on your pasta machine. Wrap this around the pupil, checking against your cartoon to be sure it's the right size.

I've made eyes in blue, brown and green. Just for fun, we'll call this violet. If you like, use a Skinner Blend for the irises.

Image A shows the coiling of the clay  
Image B shows how the iris looks after being cut.





#### **Step Four:**

Make a triangle of white clay that is equal to the width of the iris and twice as long. Cut in half and lay on either side of the iris.

Gently mold to sides as shown on right side. Smooth edges.

Note: some people make a wrap all the way around the irises, but I don't because I think it makes the eyes look unnatural.



#### **Step Five:**

Wrap with a thin layer of black clay. I used #5 on my Pasta Queen. You can use a thicker wrap if you want the eyes to pop, but too thick and it looks like eyeliner.



#### **Step Six:**

Roll out flesh color and place two layers on top of eye cane. Trim. Roll a small log of brown and place at one corner of eye. Lay a sheet of brown clay over and smooth.

Set cane aside to rest, if possible, before reducing to correct size.

#### **Next Month: Lip Cane**

Here are some of the face canes I've made. Note that they are not all human.



First Face Cane



First People Cane



Second People  
Cane



Second Cat Cane

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