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[Information](#)

[Submission](#)  
[Guidelines](#)

[Mailing List](#)



[Adobe Acrobat](#)  
[version of this](#)  
[issue](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

[Reader's](#)  
[Gallery](#)

[Donations](#)

[Staff](#)

[Swaps](#)



[Please visit the](#)  
[National](#)  
[Polymer Clay](#)  
[Guild.](#)



**May 2003**  
**Volume**  
**4, Issue 5**



## [Interview with Jill Newman](#)

Elissa Powell



## [Tic Tac Toe Project](#)

Diane Black



## [Artist Profile: Carol Ziliacus](#)

Deirdre Woodward



## [Raku Techniques in Polymer Clay](#)

Linda Twohill



## [Destination: Ravensdale 2003](#)

Meredith Arnold

## [Button Swap Update](#)

Linda Hess

## Wreath Project: May

### Letters

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- [Advertisers' Page](#)
- [Advertising Information](#)
- [Submission Guidelines](#)
- [Mailing List](#)



Adobe Acrobat

version of this issue

[Home](#)

[Interview with Jill Newman](#)

[Tic Tac Toe Tutorial](#)

[Carol Zilliacus](#)

[Raku Techniques](#)

[Destination Ravensdale](#)

[Button Swap Update](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donations](#)

[Staff](#)

[Swaps](#)



## Interview with Jill Newman By Elissa Powell

Click on images for larger picture



Jill and cat Babe

About eight months ago, I began the adventure of selling my hearts at a popular online jewelry auction site, JustBeads.com. It was there that I discovered the exquisite work of Jill Newman, also known as "Tatercat" (she actually has a cat named "Tater") in auction circles. There is a unique quality to her work, as if it were a product of a separate evolution. Actually, my impression is not far from the truth!



Jill and her husband, Kevin, live in Portsmouth, a sparsely populated rural area in southern Ohio, with an assortment of felines currently numbering an even dozen (her fascination with cats is apparent in many of her creations!) A few years after leaving high school, Jill went to work as a graphic designer for a large shoelace manufacturer, where she worked for over ten years. During that period, she made Victorian-style decoupage plates, which she sold in a local gallery. Her work sold so well that she was able to quit her job to turn her art into a full-time career.



Then fate stepped in. An auto accident in 1996 caused a severe whiplash injury. After a three-year rehabilitation period during which she created very little, Jill began decoupage again, selling her works at the same gallery, but found that she was no longer able to spend long periods hunched over her work. So began a search for a new creative outlet. It was not long before she discovered those colorful little packets of polymer clay at a local crafts store. She made a few pins, which when placed in the gallery sold almost immediately!



Six months of continuous production and steady sales, and Jill began to tire of the high commissions that she had to pay to the gallery. She considered the internet as a way to reach a larger market on her own. Then, while thumbing through *Jewelry Crafts* magazine, she discovered an advertisement for the jewelry auction site JustBeads.com, and, as Jill says, "the rest is history!"



Jill's work is the product of an endless process of experimentation and discovery. She credits the uniqueness of her style to her deliberate avoidance of influence of other polymer clay artists. "There is a conscious effort to not let myself be influenced ...I don't care to have all the polymer manuals that explain this or that...I want to discover on my own," Jill says. "That way, while my work may at times resemble some technique that you have seen before, there is probably some twist or turn in the process that makes it unique because I taught myself."



Upon closer examination of Jill's work, its independent evolution is clearly evident. Each of her techniques is refined and perfected. From the intricate patterns in her mokume gane, the precision of her staining techniques in her sculpted work, to the treatment of shading and line in her "sketches" series, there is that uniqueness. "I don't feel that what I do is so complicated," says Jill. "I just do my own thing. It all seems simple to me." Hard to believe that Jill has been working with polymer clay for only two years!



Jill's creativity has been challenged lately. In its remote forest location, her home with husband Kevin fell victim to flooding, and runoff water caused severe damage. As the family endures extensive repairs and renovation, Jill's workspace consists of a card table set up in her living room/disaster zone, with boxes of supplies stacked against a wall. A fully equipped upstairs studio is in the renovation plan, but for now, she "makes do." For Jill, creativity appears to flow unimpeded, regardless of circumstances.



Jill avoids answering specific questions regarding her techniques, explaining, "Since I work so hard giving my customers one-of-a-kind items, I think I would be cheating them to give out my info." True to her word, Jill's work is truly one of a kind. She does not discount the value of learning and sharing via books, videos, workshops, and online tutorials, but says, "Don't be afraid to experiment. You know... you're making something, and that leads to an idea, and that leads to something better than what you started to make." Regarding mistakes: "Most people seem afraid to blow clay to learn...those people that never make mistakes sure are missing out."



The one lesson that Jill would seem the most qualified to teach: "It would do people good to isolate themselves from outside influences once in a while, to see what **they** could come up with. I think they'd be surprised!"



To see a gallery of Jill's work, go to [Tatercat](#).

To see Jill's current auctions, go to [JustBeads](#).

[Advertisers'](#)

[Page](#)

[Advertising  
Information](#)

[Submission  
Guidelines](#)

[Mailing List](#)



[Adobe Acrobat](#)

[version  
of this issue](#)

[Home](#)

[Interview with  
Jill Newman](#)

[Tic Tac Toe  
Tutorial](#)

[Carol Zilliacus](#)

[Raku  
Techniques](#)

[Destination  
Ravensdale](#)

[Button Swap  
Update](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donations](#)

[Staff](#)

[Swaps](#)



Tic Tac Toe on an Altoid Tin

By Diane Black

I began by covering the top portion of the lid with three sections of clay, but first I cleaned the metal with alcohol to remove any oils. To make the center section, I combined the yellow and black clays from one of my spiral canes, made the mixed clays into a sheet, and rolled it down onto the tin (a thin coat of white glue is sometimes used under clay on metal, but don't think I used it this time). After trimming the top and bottom of this middle section flush with the edge of the lid, I made the little positioning "nuts" so I'd know how wide the middle section needed to be.

I had decided these particular playing pieces would be "peg" style, so for the nuts I cut nine squares from a (double-thick) sheet of clay (each a little more than 1/2" square), and then cut a hole in the center of each to hold a peg (I used a plunger cutter, but a large McDonald's or Subway straw could be used instead ...twist in, then cut off portion with clay in it).

The nuts were then pressed onto the middle clay section, beginning with the center square. I rubbed the tops well with "Aztec Gold" Pearl Ex powder, then trimmed the sides of the middle section sheet so I'd have straight cuts to butt the other two sections against.

For the two side sections and their applied spiral canes I wanted to use "opposite" colors (light-dark), so one section ended up yellow/orange with cherry and black spirals, and the other purple/magenta with pale yellow, black, and olive spirals. Thin slices from the spiral canes were placed onto their respective sheets, some overlapping, then each sheet was smoothed in the pasta machine (or any roller could be used); one edge on each was cut straight so it could be easily joined to the middle section.

After coaxing all three sections together, I trimmed the whole clay top flush with the edge of the tin using an Xacto knife.

To cover the side of the lid, I cut a strip of black clay about 3/4" wide with a ruler and placed it carefully all the way around the side surface, even with the bottom, butting the raw ends on the front side (now wish I'd cut the strip a tad wider so it would create more of a "wall" on each side for the pieces not in play).

I covered the join with a pad of black clay which I pressed slightly toward the back for a secure bond (this knob makes the lid easier to open). After baking the tin at 275 for 30 minutes (I used Premo), the black clay seemed a little stark so I highlighted the top edge of the side strip and around the outer parts of the knob with gold Rub 'N Buff.

The playing pieces were each made from one oval clay ball (rolled in a wide circle between palms), two squashed clay balls, and a small rubber washer (clay pad with hole could be used instead), which were stacked and pressed together. (Be sure that playing pieces are narrow enough for fingers to fit between during play).

For one set of five pieces I used two different reds plus black for the segments, and for the other set, two yellows plus black. The bottommost clay segment had to sit in the nut hole, so before baking I made sure this part would fit easily inside. I also pressed down on the whole stack a bit

while in the nut so it would be perfectly vertical later. Then I baked the pieces at 275 for 15-20 minutes. Lastly, (though it's not necessary) I glued a bit of black felt to the inside top and bottom with GemTac white glue to protect the pieces.

There are lots of other ways to indicate where the pieces should be played on a tic tac toe board. After applying a base sheet to the tin, some possibilities might be simply putting a cane slice in each of the nine positions, onlaying some tiny ropes in a grid, using a baked clay ball or other shape to make a depression in the base sheet to hold each playing piece (if it's thick enough), making a mosaic with nine prebaked tiles pressed into a raw sheet, etc.; the playing pieces can simply sit on the surface or rest in indentions of some kind. Of course, you could always mix media and bake (or later glue on) non-polymer items as well.

And what about a theme for the board and pieces? . . .a favorite hobby, interest, sport, holiday, season, a nursery rhyme or favorite book/story, spirals large and small, having all parts be geometric or sculpted or metallic or monochromatic...just anything at all! Try it out, and have fun.

Diane Black

[Glass Attic, polymer clay "encyclopedia"](#)

\*I have more information on ways to cover Altoid tins (including Desiree's method and a one-sheet method), as well as photo examples and other ideas for tins, on the "Covering" page at my website. To go there, [click here](#), then click on the "Metal" sub-category.

There are also ideas for other games to make with polymer clay on [this page](#).

Click on images for larger picture



It's fun to make games for kids (or for adults), and many different games can be made with polymer clay and the little tins that usually contain Altoid mints. As a bonus, the games are portable and the playing pieces can be stored safely inside.

These can be played anywhere but are especially good to take in the car or to a friend's or even to give to a hospitalized child, and are just the right size for stocking stuffers. (Altoids come in a much larger tin as well).



When I decided to make a tic tac toe game, it was really hard to choose just one way to make the board and the playing pieces because there are so many interesting possibilities. For this tin though, I decided to use whatever scraps of clay were lying around my work surface and the basics of Desiree McCrorey's tin-covering method.\*

(I eliminated her step of covering the bottom half of the tin though since mine already had a brass finish, and also the clay rope she used to cover the join).

Click on images for larger picture



I just love the look of Raku, all kinds of Raku, but particularly the rough textured, multi-colored Raku. I've tried many different techniques to duplicate this type of surface. I finally found one that I think looks surprisingly similar.

Here's the supply list you need to get started:

- black polymer clay
- micaceous iron oxide, aka Raku sauce (available at art supply stores)
- skewers/toothpicks
- Styrofoam
- stipple paintbrush or toher very stiff brush
- interference paints (blue, violet, red, orange, green, gold)
- iridescent bronze, gold, copper

To make the beaded necklace shown, I used bicone bead rollers from Sue Lee at [Poly-Tools](#). These are custom sized because I like large beads. You can use any size or shape you like though.

Condition your clay, make your beads and bake according to the manufacturer's instruction. I use black clay because I always have it around. You can use scrap clay too since you will be painting the entire bead anyway.

After baking, I do not prepare my beads in any way prior to painting. If you like, you can sand slightly for better adhesion but I'm simply too lazy!

Scoop out some micaceous iron oxide - I will call it Raku sauce from here on -- and let set up for a few minutes. This creates a better texture. I put my beads either on the end of a wooden skewer or toothpick to hold them while I paint; picking them up and placing them back in the Styrofoam as needed.

You can assembly line paint them this way.

Using a stiff stipple brush, coat the bead at least once with the Raku sauce. Don't be skimpy with this application. Sometimes I will paint the bead twice if I want lots of texture.

This acrylic-based product dries really fast and the first bead is usually dry by the time I'm

done with the last bead so you can do the second coat immediately.

When doing a second coat, pull the brush outward to leave little peaks of Raku sauce if you want lots of texture on your beads. You can also pop the beads into the oven to dry them just keep the temp low.

Now for the color! Paint a base coat of color on using one of the iridescents like gold, bronze or copper. Of course, there isn't anything stopping you from using all these colors together and not applying the interference colors. This is just a different look and opens up lots of variations.

For the Raku look though, paint a base color but don't cover the entire bead. Dab a little section here and there.

Don't worry if you think you've used too much because you can just cover it up with the next step.

Decide on which colors you would like your Raku to be and begin assembly-line painting with your first color, say interference blue. Paint all your beads with your first color. Then continue on with however many colors you have chosen.

Sometimes I have a particular color scheme in mind; say a verdigris kind of look. For this I would use iridescent gold and interference green. It's not Raku but very pretty just the same. I've also done gold and interference red (the red actually looks more pink than red). How about an antiqued look using bronze, copper and silver?

I've also used Lumiere paints occasionally if I need a particular color. They have a great deep blue and purple.

So after dabbing on your choice of colors and covering the entire bead, take a step back to see if you might want to add a bit more of your base color in case you got carried away.

I don't apply any kind of protective coating because I want the color to remain matte.

Next choose some beads to go along with your color choice, string it up and you're ready to wear your new Raku-inspired beads.

In the pictures, one necklace is strung using beads and buna cord. The other necklace is simply strung on a sterling necklace cable. You'll also see in the photos there are other shapes and applications for this technique. I've stamped into polymer, cut and shaped the bead, baked and painted them. I've also made shaped vessels, small square beads, large square beads, rounds beads. Just leave it to your imagination.

You can apply this application to picture frames, those shaped paper boxes, your kids, whatever. Have fun with this!

If you have any questions, contact me: [Linda Twohill](#)



[Advertisers'](#)

[Page](#)

[Advertising  
Information](#)

[Submission  
Guidelines](#)

[Mailing List](#)



[Adobe Acrobat](#)

[version  
of this issue](#)

[Home](#)

[Interview with  
Jill Newman](#)

[Tic Tac Toe  
Tutorial](#)

[Carol Zilliacus](#)

[Raku](#)

[Techniques](#)

[Destination  
Ravensdale](#)

[Button Swap  
Update](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donations](#)

[Staff](#)

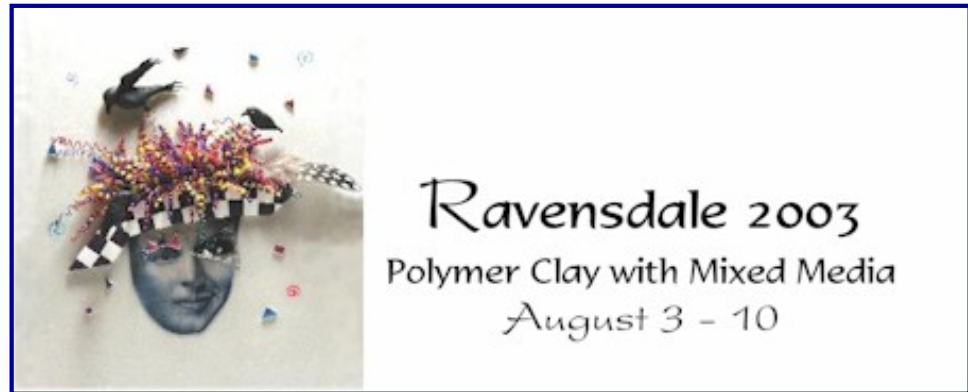
[Swaps](#)

**POLYMER CLAY**  
**POLYZINE**

Destination: Ravensdale

August 3-10, 2003

by Meredith Arnold



The Ravensdale Polymer Clay Conference has always been a total immersion experience, a week overflowing with wonderful teachers, stimulating students, the widest possible variety of classes and demonstrations, and beautiful surroundings in wooded Washington state, just 30 minutes from Seattle.

It's been three years since the last Ravensdale and the Northwest Polymer Clay Guild has decreed that it's time for another one. The theme this year is "Polymer Clay with Mixed Media." Registration for the August 3-10, 2003 event began on March 15, so if you are interested, don't delay! Complete information is available at [the Ravensdale website](#).

The classes being offered are full of spark and inspiration for the beginner to the advanced. For example, Tory Hughes is teaching *Begin at the Beginning*, a starting level class in polymer clay designed for light speed advancement of skill levels with a phenomenal instructor.

Patti Kimle is teaching an intriguing process of watercolor effects in polymer clay using alcohol based pigments, a fairly new product on the market.

Barbara McGuire is teaching a wire workshop and incredible translucent encased embedded beads. She will also teach elegant stamped, collage pins which includes tricks and tips for using Shaplets templates for fabulous finished results.

Also on the class menu, Debbie Anderson will be teaching a special process for creating porcelain-like, hollow, double-sided imaged beads. Her method requires only a single baking.

Other classes available include making polymer clay books with pockets, fun and kicky candlesticks, Lindly Haunani's version of mosaics as alternative art, and a full metal working studio combined with polymer clay taught by the ever clever Judith Skinner.

The RavenStore will be bigger and better than ever, situated in a very expansive space with two walls of windows almost floor to ceiling. Sharing the space will be The Rave exhibit on artful ways with polymer clay.

Our locale, Trinity Lutheran College, is located on forested property, perfect for a leisurely

walk or taking a quiet moment to relax at the picnic area. Many of the classrooms look out onto a Zen court yard complete with gurgling fountain, another option for reflection or a quick break.

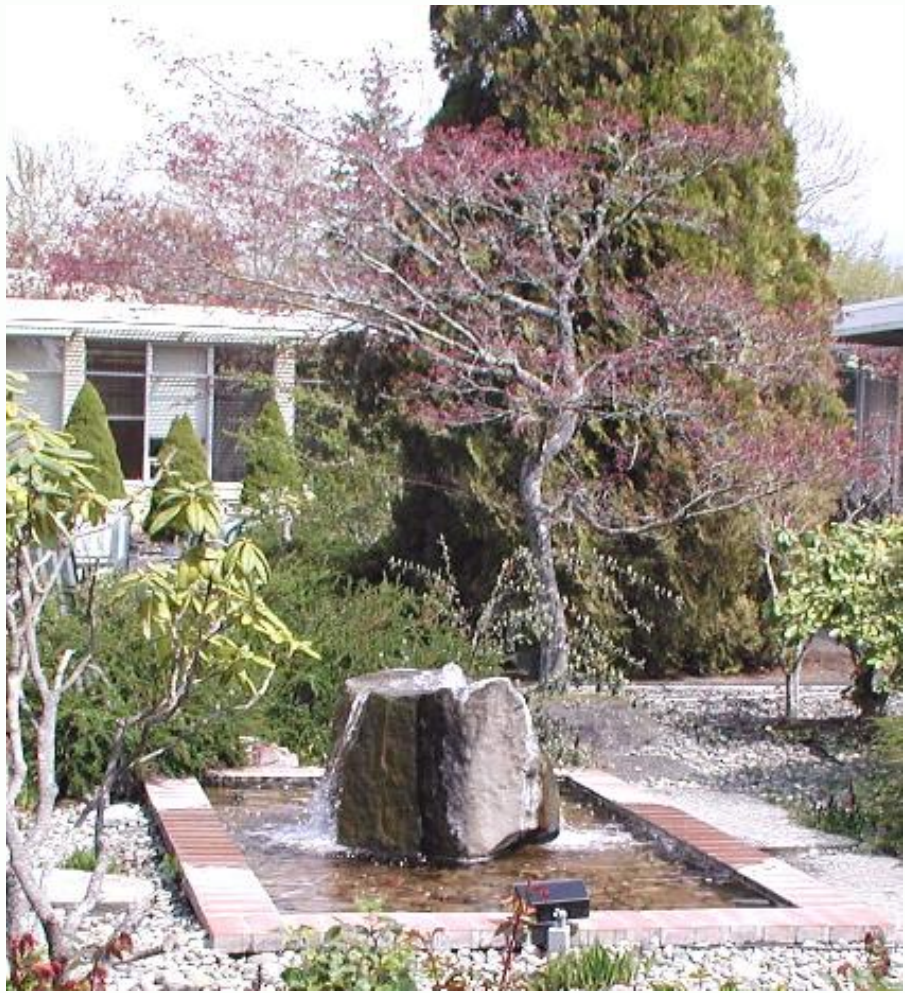


The campus is less than five minutes away from the heart of Issaquah, which features a Starbucks coffeeshop, a Michael's Arts and Crafts store, a huge rubber stamp store, unusual thrift shops, grocery, restaurants, and even one of the infamous Krispy Kreme donut stores.

There is also a wonderful state park on Lake Sammamish, just two minutes from the campus, with a public swimming area, boating, water gliding and more. The campus is less than 30 minutes from downtown Seattle and about the same distance from the airport -- an ideal site.

The cost for lodging and food (three meals a day and including the Saturday night salmon bake) at this conference ranges from \$86-\$90 per day for the full seven-night package. There are partial week, spouse, and commuter options available as well.

Don't miss out on the fun and excitement! Come join us for this great, life changing artistic event.



Zen garden on campus



## Button Swap Update

Hello one and all who participated in the button swap!

I had to write and thank everyone who sent something extra for the kids. They loved everything! The texture sheets will be fantastic for many, MANY projects in the coming months. The canes are being used to create beautiful butterflies (the first group started yesterday and were thrilled with the results). The beads will come in handy for rosaries and bracelets that we are currently working on. My mind is spinning with new ideas (for the coming months) based on pieces that were sent.

I was/am totally overwhelmed by the generosity! Thank you, thank you, thank you from me and the next generation of artists. As for the buttons....what talented people! I had the luck of getting to view all of the buttons as I gave them to the children. They were thrilled with the variety of styles and talent. One said "I didn't know we were getting buttons from professionals!" All are trying to think of ways to display their treasures.

Thanks again. Hope to meet you again in the "next" swap.

Linda Hess

[Advertisers'](#)

[Page](#)

[Advertising  
Information](#)

[Submission  
Guidelines](#)

[Mailing List](#)



[Adobe Acrobat  
version  
of this issue](#)

[Home](#)

[Interview with  
Jill Newman](#)

[Tic Tac Toe  
Tutorial](#)

[Carol Zilliagus](#)

[Raku  
Techniques](#)

[Destination  
Ravensdale](#)

[Button Swap  
Update](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donations](#)

[Staff](#)

[Swaps](#)