

POLYZINE

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Recently, I received a letter from [Sarah Lajoie](#), thanking us for making Polyzine possible. She mentioned in her letter her website, where she sells miniature tiles made of polymer clay. Curious, I clicked on the link she provided to see what I would find.

When I wrote back to Sarah after looking at her site, these are the exact words I used: "WOW. WOW WOW WOW. WOW."

Sarah does indeed make and sell miniature tiles: 16 tiles to the square inch or 25 tiles to the square inch, depending on the size you purchase. People use her tiles for many purposes, including creating mosaics, items for dollhouses, and small scale replicas.



Sarah started making tiles about five years ago. She "wanted desperately" to make the Heriz pattern rug in some form of medium, but wasn't satisfied with the results of trying it in glass pieces, broken ceramic tiles, needlepoint or with beads.

She had been working with polymer clay for about fifteen years and started to experiment with ways to make the rug out of clay. "My first tiles were small squares cut with a knife and very crude, not at all precise," says Sarah. She soon



moved on to brass tubing she found at a hardware store and sharpened with a file. With this tube, Sarah says, "I was able to cut a fairly precise square one at a time."

Then her husband stepped in and used his goldsmithing skills to create Sarah's first grid cutter, which cut nine tiles at a time.

Sarah enjoyed cutting the tiles so much, she decided to start a web-based business to sell the tiles. "I enjoyed [cutting tiles] so much," says Sarah, "I asked my super computer sister, Polly, to make and design the website for the tiles." It is Polly who designed a unique feature at Sarah's site: an interactive grid that gives users access to tiles, colors, and a grid for designing patterns and computing the number of tiles in the design.



The tiles come in two sizes: $\frac{3}{16}$ ths of an inch, or 16 tiles to the square inch with a tiny gap for grout, and $\frac{5}{32}$ nds of an inch, or 25 tiles to the inch. According to Sarah, each tile has slightly rounded sides, "so that when they are side by side, they touch on the bottom, but gap at the top . . . just like 'real' tiles."

The grout Sarah uses is real grout -- the kind you can purchase at the hardware store -- but, she cautions, be sure to purchase the unsanded grout. To see an example of unsanded grout, check out Sarah's [Halloween Frame project](#) in this month's Polyzine.

Sarah still uses her old nine grid cutter by request to make the $\frac{1}{4}$ inch tiles, which now to her look huge.



The people who use Sarah's tiles are usually mosaic artists looking for a way to scale down their pictures. Since there are no ceramic tiles made this small, Sarah saw a market opportunity and seized it.

Although the clay tiles won't work for human-sized foot traffic, some people do use the tiny tiles to tile dollhouse kitchen and bathroom floors. The tiles work perfectly to scale.



Sarah points out that "virtually anything could be tiled with the polymer clay mini tiles because they do not have the weight and bulk of ceramic and glass tiles." She covered, for instance, this \$5.00 broken violin she recycled to make a wall hanging for a music room.



Sarah also makes fairies, which are also very detailed in tiny ways. "I enjoy detail," Sarah says, "and the smaller the work, the happier I am."

She began making polymer fairies to complement the tiny twig furniture she also makes, but was never happy with the wings. "I tried everything from feathers to maple seeds," says Sarah, "and finally discovered TLS - Transparent Liquid Sculpey."

Using TLS, Sarah was able to transfer her inked wing drawings onto clay to create a stained glass effect. The wings look delicate but are actually very sturdy. "I love making the fairies," says Sarah. "I hope to put entire scenes together using the fairies with other polymer clay and natural props."

Sarah's interest in miniatures has produced one of the most unique items I've seen in the polymer clay market -- miniature tiles. Her fairies are also quite lovely, and the wings are works of art. I enjoyed visiting [Sarah's site](#), and I hope you do too!