



Polymer Clay Polyzine

October 2002

Volume 3, Issue 10

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Editor's Letter

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Dear Readers:

The Letter from the Editor will appear shortly!

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Until then, enjoy the issue.

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Letters to the Editor

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Dear Editor:

I got so excited when I saw your article on creating a better polishing wheel that I made one. I used an old felt blanket (It was late, and I don't drive). And it worked fantastic! This is the best tip that I have received and I wish to thank you, I am polishing everything in sight.

Thank you very much!

Demara Lee

Hi,

I just read Tommie Howell's interesting article "Essence Theory and Art". Once I read that Art Deco came about by artists and designers combining Oriental art, American Indian design, and Cubism. According to the Essence theory folks it would have to follow that all Art Deco pieces are illegitimate, and I don't know who would be allowed to look at them.

There are probably other examples of that kind of mixing. Whatever happened to the "melting pot" idea! Thank you for all the valuable info your Polyzine provides.

Carol Todaro

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Dear Editor:

Some co-workers and I are working on a project -- (decorating/dressing a fiberglass bearcat, UC's mascot)-- and think that we would like to use polymer clay for some of the details. I've scoured the web and cannot determine if it is weather-proof or not. We will spray coat the bearcat when finished, but don't know if polymer clay will withstand the rigors of moisture, high and low temperatures, etc. Do you know??

Thank you for any help you can provide.

[Jennifer Vonnahme](#)

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Artist Profile of [Tere Perry](#) by Lenora B. Smith [Houston Polymer Clay Guild](#) [Adobe Acrobat version](#)

Tere Perry, polymer clay artisan and miniaturist, got her start in clay at a young age...a very young age!

One of the things she remembers most from elementary school was the time spent doing art projects, especially working with clay.



The clay of that time was the oil based, non-hardening type which always frustrated Tere in her attempts to make a lasting sculpture. "My first real sculpture was done in about the third grade, of this great little lion. I was so proud of him, and put him in my closet to keep him. Well, you can imagine how flat and squished that clay lion was when I got him out the next time!"

From then on, it was a quest to find a clay that would be durable and permanent when the sculptures were finished.

Tere's first attempt with polymer clay was in the 1970's in high school, when she used the original white Sculpey. "I loved the fact that I could bake this clay and make something that would last. The only problem was the fact that it was white, and paint didn't adhere well to it." Those first polyclay pieces were to be the beginning of a life long love of polymer clay.

After high school, Tere went on to study art in college. Her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Sam Houston State University had a specialization in advertising and graphic design, but also covered all of the other fine art classes including ceramics, sculpture and 3-D design. These basics in translating an object from what one sees into a piece of art have helped Tere in her current ventures in art.



Prior to her recent efforts with polymer clay, Tere worked in ceramic and porcelain clays, learning hand building techniques and wheel-thrown work. Her first gallery exhibit was works in ceramic, shown at Masterson Design in the River Oaks area.

More recent works have mostly been in polymer clay as Tere concentrates on scale miniatures.

The studio that Tere uses is bright and airy, filled with ample lighting and lined with plants and fountains. "I find the atmosphere there conducive to creativity. It is a calming place, where the artistic spirit can overtake the stresses of the day."

Organized and ergonomic, the area makes it easier to find a few minutes to be creative after a day that is spent at her full-time newspaper job. "With all my supplies where I can find them quickly, I can work on a project even if I have only an hour to spare."



Tere, a charter member of the Texas Association of Original Doll Artists, has found herself leaning more and more toward polymer clay for her figurines. "There is a life-like quality to the skin of these miniature people made with poly clay that just can't be captured in porcelain."

Also a Regional Coordinator for National Association of Miniature Enthusiasts, Tere has become a dedicated miniaturist, educating the public about the hobby of scale miniatures. This hobby, second in scope only to the model train hobby, is shared by miniaturists world-wide. "Polymer clay is probably the most versatile art product to have ever been found by miniaturists. There aren't many things in the real world that can't be duplicated with polymer clay."

And that is exactly what Tere attempts to do with her polymer clay work; reproduce the real world in miniature...one tiny little piece at a time!

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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.

[Part Two](#)

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Jeanne made a bead box can be used for suspending beads or laying beads on polyfill at the same time to bake. This bead box can be made in less than ten minutes. (I can make it in under 5 since I now have the scissors, box, glue, and polyfill handy!)

Irish Red

Supplies

- Small Box
- Household glue
- Four small pieces of paper or old business cards
- Pinking shears
- Fiberfill

Click on image to enlarge



Step One:

You need a small box. I use one that business cards come in, like this one.

Click on image to enlarge



Step Two:

Cut the corners of the box.

[Click on image to enlarge](#)



Step Three:

Using pinking shears or scissors with a decorative edge, cut around the edges of all four flaps.

[Click on image to enlarge](#)



Step Four:

Using four small pieces of paper and a glue, such as Sobo glue, glue the outside corner edges back in place. I used four old business cards since they were handy and fit perfectly. Do not use hot glue or you will have a mess in your oven.

[Click on image to enlarge](#)



Step Five:

Cut a piece of polyfill sheeting and place it in the bottom of the box. I make mine so it rolls up on the two long sides. Be sure, if using the polyfill sheeting with iron-on adhesive on one side, that you lay the sheet sticky side down.

[Click on image to enlarge](#)



I use long doll making needles to suspend my beads. They are very durable, do not easily bend, and come in a variety of sizes. You can also use very long needles and place them the length on the box.

The number one suggestion I have for making round beads round (or for that matter any shape) is that after you've made the bead, let the bead rest on glass or marble until cool. When cool, gently reroll or reshape.

You can easily see where it is out of round. I do several beads and go back to the first ones and put holes in and let them cool.

Hope this helps.

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I grew up in the 'Potteries' of Staffordshire, England and I suppose it's natural that I enjoy the look and feel of porcelain and other decorative ceramics. As I now like to sculpt objects in polymer clay, I suppose it was to be expected that, before long, I would attempt to re-create the potter's art in the incredibly versatile medium of polyclay.

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The ceramic, which appealed to me particularly, was the simple, monochrome 'Delftware' which was produced for general household use in the 19th Century, both as ceramic vessels and wall tiles. My idea was that if I could find ways to reproduce the colours and make similar patterns to Delft, then miniaturists who wanted an authentic look could make polyclay tiles and use them to make period fireplaces and for their kitchen 'splash-backs' tiled panels.

Click to enlarge image



Having decided to make a series of canes in blue and white, I then had to find a close representation of the famous blue in Polyclay. I'd always assumed it was cobalt blue and so I ordered some Premo in that colour (just to be on the safe side, I also bought some ultramarine, in Premo and Fimo). I was surprised that the Premo Cobalt blue seemed rather lighter than I'd expected but the Premo ultramarine is a very rich colour - just like the pictures of Delft I'd seen.

I found it helped the final appearance of the blue to mix it with translucent clay - I used Fimo. The palette was easy, simply mixing varying amounts of blue with the white ground clay gave me five or six shades - more than enough for simple canes. I don't know about you, but I'm always surprised how far some colours go - you don't need much of some in a blend for others to be overwhelmed!

[Click to enlarge image](#)



I decided to make a total of 10 different canes. Most were simple plant themes such as flower heads of several varieties and leaf motifs. In addition, I made some stylized botanical designs of bud or fern-like images. In an attempt to break up the botanical theme, I made a few very simple abstracts to intersperse with the others. All the canes were, of course, square sectioned and roughly the same size - about 0.5 to 0.6 inches wide.

My first job was to find a reasonable representation of white-ground ceramic in polyclay. At first I thought the obvious solution would be to go to pearl clay and use it 'straight'. I did some initial trials using Fimo and Premo. I found that Premo Pearl is fine in some lighting but in daylight it has a strange yellowish cast which would detract from the 'look' I was attempting. I also found that Fimo Pearl on its own looked too sparkly after varnishing.

After these tests, I decided to mix the pearl with white. The mix which gave the most realistic look after baking and varnishing was a one to one Fimo Classic White with Fimo Classic Pearl combination. I used Fimo Gloss spirit varnish - diluted with a little 'Nitro' thinners to reduce the likelihood of surface blemishes such as bubbles and brush marks.

Next came the designs. As I wanted to get a feel of the antique look, I decided to use a very simple colour palette. The classical Delft was rich blue and white. I checked several websites which displayed Delft ceramics and even found a tile museum's website which has some unbelievable designs and colours of all manner of tiles - not just Delft.

I shan't go into any detail about the construction of my canes - there is a plethora of information out there on all types and complexities. I will say that even the canes that were 'failures' in that they wouldn't pass as complete tiles, weren't a complete waste of time. They could subsequently be used reduced as borders or even as flower centres.

[Click to enlarge image](#)



In order to check the overall look of the 'tiles' I decided to cut several sections from each cane and bake and varnish them all. Anyone who knows my strange little ways will know that I couldn't resist covering some glass vessels with the canes.

I simply cut lots of slices of each and randomly covered a pair of fairly large, parallel sided jars. The process of covering the glass was far easier than I had ever known using cane slices. As all the canes had a white background, they fitted together very easily and the joins were simply rolled away.

[Click to enlarge image](#)



As my main interest lies in polymer clay jewellery making, I also couldn't resist making a number of 'Delft-ish' pieces - beads, pendants and brooches all made from the same 10 canes.

Again, I simply randomly associated different elements until I found a pleasing effect.

[Click to enlarge image](#)



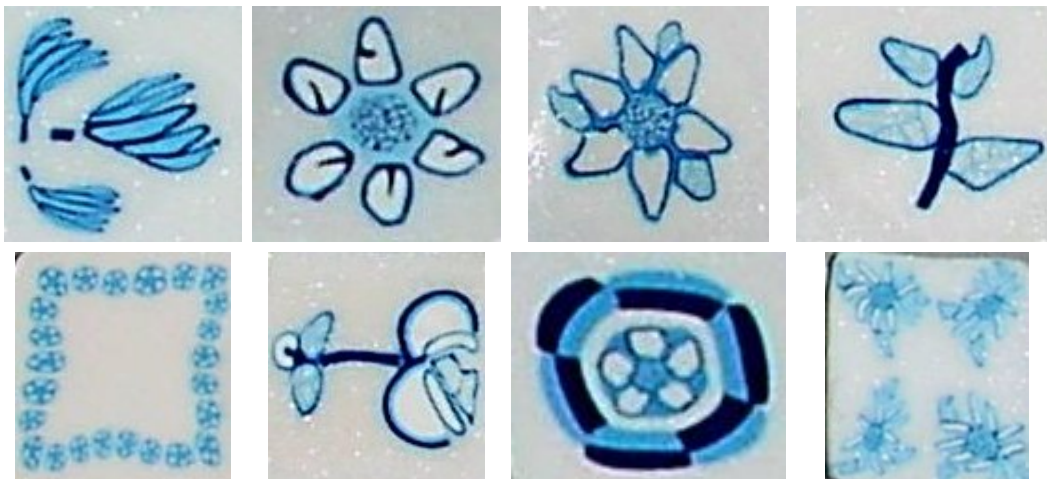
A little trick I did enjoy was that I cut some of the background from the top of a 'stem' cane slice and combined it with a flower cane slice and used the complete stemmed flower as a pendant design.

The beauty of a project such as this is that one can make as many or as few canes as one wishes. The canes may be as simple or complex as one is able to produce, but because the colours are from the same palette, the canes always match and can be used in so many different ways.

Try it - it's fun!

Colour references:

- Fimo Classic White - - ref. No 00
- Fimo Classic Pearl - - ref. No 05
- Premo Ultramarine Blue - - ref. No 5562
- Premo Alizarin Crimson - - ref. No 5383



Do take a look at the tile museum site - it's really amazing: <http://www.tile-heaven.co.uk>

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Face Cane Components: Cheeks and Nose by [Irish Red](#)

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Making noses and cheeks take less time than anything else, so they're here together.

Supplies:

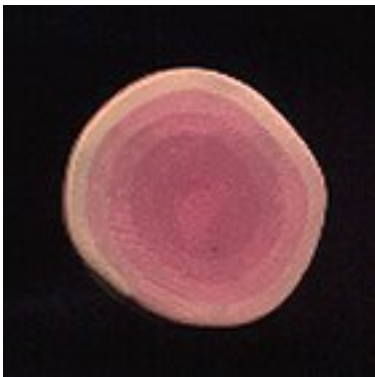
- Clay : Cheek color, flesh, brown
- Blade
- Pasta machine or roller



Cheeks

Step One:

Make a Skinner Blend with your choice of cheek color and flesh. Do you want rosy cheeks or just a hint? Add a bit of red for a healthy glow or a bit of brown to emphasize cheek bones.



Step Two:

Decide how large you want to make the "blush" on the cheeks. Remember, there are two cheeks, so you need to make the cane twice the size you need for each cheek. Make a jelly roll with the flesh color outside.



Step Three:

Reduce, and cut in half. Let rest.



Nose

Step One:

Refer back to your drawing. Are all the components of the face in proportion? Put them together loosely and make a quick check. Peel them apart carefully. (Kinda scary, huh?)

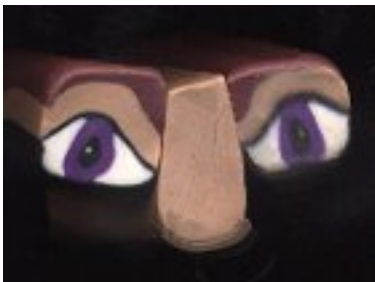


Step Two:

Pinch a log of clay into a narrow, longish tapered triangle and place between the eye canes. Do you like it? If not, adjust until you do.

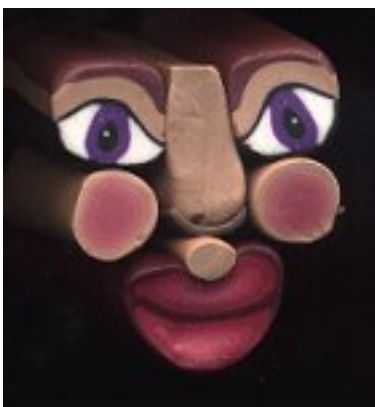
Remember when shaping the nose that it's in the center of the cane and won't move as much when it's reduced, so don't give the poor face a beak.

If you're satisfied, you're done adjusting the nose size.



Step Three:

Roll out a thin sheet of brown clay and lay across bottom of the nose. Trim excess.



Step Four: Put all of the components back together to recheck if the nose works. Adjust as necessary. Take cheeks and mouth off but leave eyes and nose together.

Note: There will be more space between the components on finished cane.

Next month: Wrapping and filling in negative space.

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Insight and Inspiration For Your Artistic Career

by Robert Genn

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Although Robert is a painter and not a polymer clay artist, his words apply to all creative endeavors. Substitute brushes for clay tools and it all works. Be sure to check out the letters section at his site.

Irish Red

An old Chinese proverb says:

"Do not grasp the brush before the spirit and the thoughts are concentrated."

This part of the creative process--the beginning part--needs to be handled with the same sort of attention as given to the later stroking. This is where you envision the potential; this is where you sort out the variables for the dish you are about to concoct.

Why go for the same automatic cold rice, when almond gai-ding or egg foo-yong could be in the wok? A list of creative ingredients is valuable. Every artist needs his or her own, and they ought to be reassessed regularly. I'm not saying this is anyway near definitive but right now I'm playing with extenders, texture gels, glazes, giant brushes, wire brushes, combs, plastic scrapers, sponges, little rollers, linen rags. The mere thought of these tools and media when projected onto a blank canvas widens the range of possibilities. With retooling, the compositions, motifs, and passages change as the mind morphs with them.

The possibility of possibilities turns jobs into adventures. Having said that, the thoughtful and intelligent elimination of variables works too. How to simplify; how to have form follow function. The architect's job holds its own joy--and while results and outcomes can't be too finely predicted in a creative process, the payoff is that desire and resolve are better honed in this zone.

Thinking things out in advance also leads to economy and freshness in the production

zone. You empower yourself to be casual and fluent. Unpleasant overworking and compositional boo-boos have a better chance of being avoided.

And hey, it's not always easy.

But the idea of all this early thinking and visualizing is to make later activities both more professional and a little easier. And best of all it helps your finished product to look like it was all so easy. And that makes everybody else crazy. And that's the idea.

Best regards,
Robert

PS: "Easy is right. Begin right and you will be easy. Continue easy and you are right. The right way to go easy is to forget the right way, and forget that the going is easy." --
Chuang Tzu

- Esoterica: Economy of process is improved by re-addressing your familiar order of doing things.
- Take satisfaction in the idea that every individual work may require or even demand a different order.
- Foreground--background, subject--surround, dark--light, strong--weak, soft--hard, big--small.
- Our minds are made for yin and yang.

If you would like to comment on this letter or give your own thoughts, systems or opinions, please do so by [e-mailing Robert](#).

Purchase a copy of Robert Genn's "The Painter's Keys" - the seminar in a book for artists and all creative people - online at: http://www.painterskeys.com/purchase_TPK.htm

To see some art work by Robert Genn, click on the thumbnails below:



"Self Portrait with Emily"



Robert and Emily in his studio



Robert painting on location

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Pumpkin Bead
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[Bill Girard](#)



Halloween
[Bill Girard](#)



Pumpkin Pins
Irene Niehorster
SDPCG



GITD Ghosts
Thomas Ojeda
SDPCG



**Dia De
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