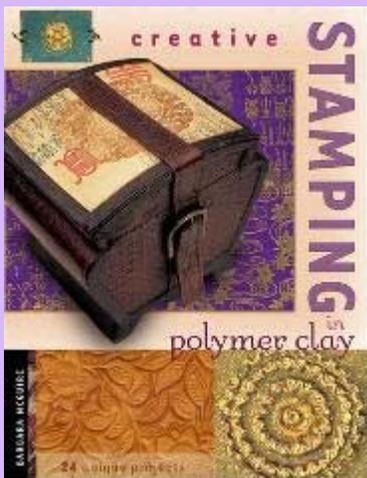


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More great books to share! I hope that you all went out and bought last month's books, but if you didn't, good news -- here are three more you will be sure to want! Maybe we should all band together and form a book club, so we can get good prices from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

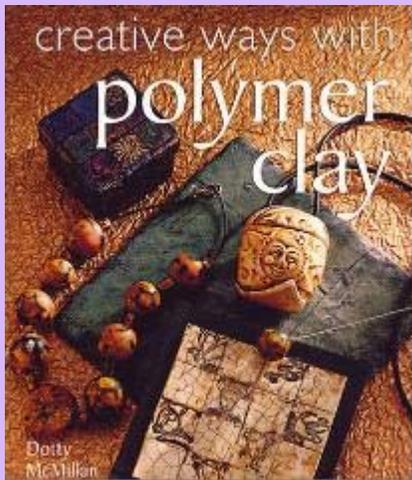


The first book is a recently published book -- Barbara McGuire's ***Creative Stamping in Polymer Clay***. Barbara is a master at what she does, and this book doesn't disappoint. It's jammed packed with all kinds of projects: stamping projects, stamping with mokume gane projects, and mixed-media-ish projects.

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.

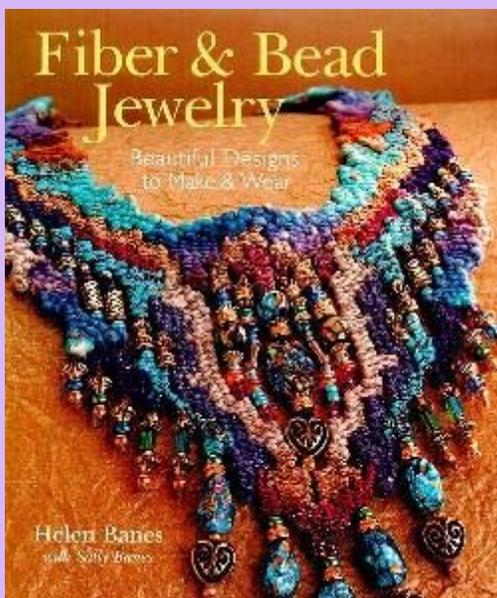
The book spends some time explaining and

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