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Picture, if you will, the largest craft store you have ever seen. Then multiply it by a factor of ten. Welcome to the 2002 HIA annual convention.

"Crafts: Discover Life's Little Pleasures" is the Hobby Industry Association's motto, and at this year's annual convention there were over 1000 exhibitors from around the world displaying some of the most amazing little pleasures one could hope to discover.



Almost one million square feet of exhibits and displays filled the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, CA from January 27 thru January 30.

Members of the Hobby Industry Association, consisting of wholesale, retail, design, production and service people, were divided on the huge convention floor into color-coded sections representing Art Materials, Fabric/Sewing /Needlecraft, Florals and Naturals, General Crafts and New Exhibitors.

During the five days of the convention, business experts and industry insiders offered seminars and workshops specific to the craft and hobby industry, including, interestingly enough, one seminar on the buying power of women.



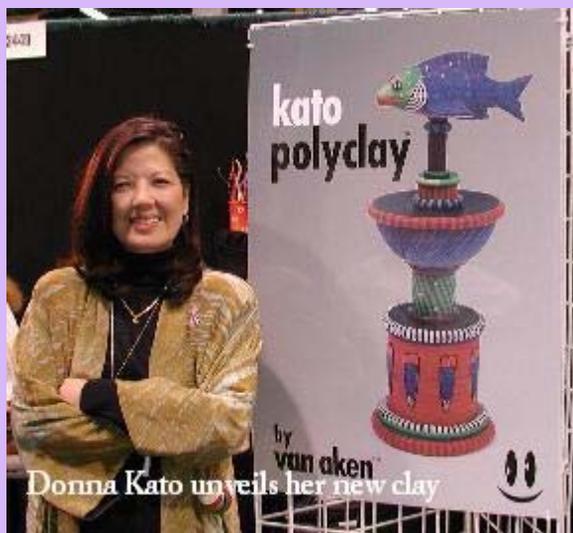
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Exhibitors offer convention attendees a look at their latest products, literature on their wares, hands-on demonstrations of their goods, and, in many cases, even free samples.

Meeting People

While the focus is clearly on new products, the HIA Annual Convention is also a chance to rub elbows with craftspeople, as I was able to do with several of my favorite people from the polymer clay community.

Donna Kato was in attendance, unveiling her new product line, [Kato Polyclay](#). Karen Lewis (Klew) demonstrated polymer clay techniques in Donna's booth and announced she would be the first retailer of Kato Polyclay in California.



[Howard and Marie Segal](#) were hanging out with [Polyform](#). [Emi Fukushima](#) was in one of the Japanese Art Paper booths. syndee holt divided her time between [Jacquard Products](#) and [Polyform](#). Kathy Davis was with [Art Clay, USA](#). Dotty McMillan was a guest of her publisher and Lisa Pavelka was demonstrating products for Oasis Stamps.



Maureen Carlson was also at the convention, demonstrating Fimo Stone techniques and talking about her new children's book, tentatively titled *Clay Characters for Kids* (due out Fall 2002, North Light Books), in which the color wheel is made up of little sculpted fish. Barbara McGuire, also in attendance, won the Leather Factory challenge for handbags.

(The Leather Factory, which bought Tandy Corporation, sells leathers and tools and kits for making leather items. For the last four years they have sponsored a challenge among artists invited from HIA. Leather must be incorporated in the design. Lisa Pavelka won third place last year.)

I chatted with polymer clay artist and instructor Deborah Anderson and mixed media artist [Sherril Kahn](#) (who told me she paints on Pellon). Other persons of note include Clotilde (of the sewing catalog), who visited our booth. Eleanor Peace Bailey, known for her fabric sculpted dolls and her colorful dress, was in the booth next to us and Vanna White made an appearance in one of the yarn booths!

Carol Duvall and her producers were there, filming. The Carol Duvall HIA show will be on Wednesday, March 3, and Sunday, March 17, and will feature a segment on Donna's new clay.



Maureen Carlson demonstrates some claying techniques

Getting into the convention as a visitor is no easy feat. Membership fees for the HIA start at \$60/year and a great deal of identification is needed to prove that you are a legitimate member of one of the listed groups.

This year, I was hired as a demonstrator for Pellon, which makes Wonder-Under and other sewing aids. Most companies like to hire someone locally rather than pay travel expenses (so all of you Texans, get ready for 2004!).

Working As A Demonstrator

I had heard about the free demonstrator certification class that HIA gives each year. So I decided to go and see what it was all about: "To practice effectively as a demonstrator requires in-depth knowledge and familiarity with a wide variety of techniques and practices." I could do that.

Then there was the matter of a \$90 fee. I could do that, too. The catch was being on a list where I could get called to do all kinds of things, which would take away from my clay time. Couldn't do that!

There was also a class on becoming an evaluator. I went to the evaluator class also. This is a voluntary position where you go around and watch the people who are trying to get certified.



The evaluators are incognito. They give you a three-page form (which you can't look at in the presence of the candidate) and after you watch them you go hide somewhere and fill it out. The list of tips for demonstrators was pretty routine common sense: "Know the product. Dress appropriately. Don't chew gum."

Kathy Davis and I attended the two sessions together and decided we were beyond that point (how's that for a good self-image?). But we did meet a very nice store owner from Belgium, Diana Behets. She told us they needed qualified demonstrators in her country and she went on to become an evaluator.

Diana came and visited me several times at my booth and said she was very unimpressed with some of the candidates, who never even mentioned the name of the product they were showing.

The need is there for good demonstrators. If you really want to get into the show, there are ways, and it is really fun to talk to all of the clay "names" who attend.



syndee holt displays her newest product, produced by Jacquard

Walking the Show

Once you are in, however, it takes a stout heart and a pair of good shoes to "walk the show." Most people map out the booths they want to see. The HIA web site www.hobby.org allows you to print out a customized map to save time and tootsies.

This was the second year in a row HIA was in Anaheim, and it will return there next year. Other cities that host the show are Dallas, TX;

Atlanta, GA; and Las Vegas, NV.

Anaheim, I was told, is the ideal place for this show because of the size of the facility, proximity to hotels, restaurants and entertainment (Disneyland is just across the street), and accessibility for foreign exhibitors.



Kathy Davis and Pat Walton with Art Clay Silver

While most people agreed that attendance was down this year, the HIA annual convention is certainly an experience you will want to try some January when the show comes to a convention center near you.