

VARATHANE® DIPPING: PART TWO

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(Eds. Note: See Elissa's [Varathane® Dipping](#) article in the February 2001 Issue of pcPolyzine.)

We all have different ways of finishing our polymer clay work. Some lucky people have it easy - their work is finished when it comes out of the oven. Other people's work needs only a light sanding to smooth out any irregularities.

Other people's work is more labor-intensive, needing sanding with progressively finer grits of sandpaper before buffing to a high polish. Some people will omit the buffing step, and give their work a shine with a coating of Flecto Varathane® or Future Finish™. And then there are those masochists, like myself, who insist on doing everything possible to obtain the utmost shine and glassy depth. That includes all that sanding, buffing, **and** applying a coat of finish.

One problem, though. In order to achieve the illusion of glass or polished rock, there can be no streaking or puddling, which has been a problem with painted-on finishes. Any surface that our work makes contact with while drying will also leave a telltale irregular spot and create more work, which we certainly don't need!

I did a little experimentation, and came up with a fairly successful solution. I dip!

The process is really pretty simple. For dipping pendants, I use a plastic-coated wire "helper shelf" that I bought in the closet section of a hardware store. I place this helper shelf over a section of folded newspaper. I open several paper clips so that each one resembles an elongated "s."

On one end I hook the heart (or other shape) by its hanging-loop or leaf-back bail. I dip the piece into a wide-mouth jar of the Varathane® and hold it over the jar for about a minute to allow the excess to run off. When the dripping has slowed, I hang the heart on the wire shelf, using the top part of the opened paper clip as the hook.

Now this is important: for the first half-hour, set a minute timer for every ten minutes. Fold a piece of paper lengthwise, and dab the drippy bottom parts of your suspended work to remove any excess finish that accumulates there, so it won't dry into a permanent half-drip.

Dipping pieces that will be pins is trickier. For these, I use four-inch Phillips screws and some amazing stuff called "Blue Tack™." It's a gummy putty from a stationery or office supply store that is normally used for putting posters on a wall without using tacks or nails. Press a pea-size ball of the stuff onto the head and into the grooves of a four-inch long Phillips screw. To this, press the back of the buffed heart. It ends up looking like a long-stemmed drawer knob.

Dip this at a slight angle into the jar of Varathane® and slowly roll the screw between your fingertips, being very careful to cover the pin thoroughly, including some of the back, but not reaching the center spot where the blue tack is stuck.

It will be easier, not to mention neater, to remove the screw and blue tack if you are careful with this step. Also, you want to maintain a clean, unglazed area where you can glue the pin back.

Hold the heart point-down over the jar of Varathane® for a minute or so, until the dripping slows.

Now, where to put your little treasures to dry? I use a square of foam board covered with waxed paper. Screw the wet heart in at a 45-degree angle, and stop screwing at a point where the heart is situated point-down. The heart will still be dripping every half-minute or so.

With the hearts, as with the pendants, it is necessary to dab the points every ten minutes for the first half hour so that there will be no dried-on half-drips.

The final process is the drying. Leave your finished pins and pendants in a motion-free, dust-free, cat-free (and kid-free, for that matter) area. Varathane Diamond Wood Finish™ dries amazingly quickly and should be glass-hard in about two hours. Avoid the temptation to touch it before then! Future Floor Finish™ can also be used with this dipping process. The drying time should be the same, if not a little faster.

And that's how Varathane® - and Future®. - dipping is done!

