

January Report by Carol Blackburn

January 18th marked the 11th meeting of the London polymer clay group.

Throughout the previous year we have taken it in turns to host the day at our homes and now we have come full circle and it was my turn again. We were pleased to welcome Harriet and newbie Gloria to the group.

We soon set up our work places and within a few minutes polymer clay creations were unwrapped and displayed alongside our mugs of tea and coffee.

(Carol's necklace)



Clare who organises childrens polymer clay parties was the first to 'show and tell'. With recycling being topical she had made a pencil pot by decorating a baked bean can with a colourful face

(Clare's pencil pot)



Clare also had a dragon bracelet made of cane slices threaded together on a cord while raw and then baked. The bracelet could also be hung as a small wall hanging.

(Clare's dragon)



At this point the subject of Bake and Bend clay came up and I showed the pieces of 'braid' I had made in the flexible clay and used to make my faux cinnabar pendants.

(Carol's faux cinnabar pendants)



(Kerrie's image transfer pieces)

Kerrie brought her brooch, pendant and an unfinished segmented tile bracelet using image transfer techniques which had yet to be assembled. The use of liquid polymer clay versus using a thin sheet of translucent clay as a finish to encapsulate the image was discussed as well as dealing with trapped air bubbles and sanding the various liquid clays on the market. Also discussed was threading tile bracelets using Stretch Magic elastic and heishi beads in between each tile.



Harriet discussed selling work through the party plan scheme. She had recently been successful at selling her jewellery this way. She showed her faux cinnabar hollow lentil pendant made of a rich dark coloured clay, embossed with small flowers using small deep cut wooden Indian printing blocks as an impressing tool. She had patinated the baked clay with dark brown paint for an antique appearance. This raised the question of using oil paint versus acrylic paint for patinating baked pieces and we decided that oil paint had the advantage of a longer working time for antiqing polymer clay.

(Harriet's pendant)



June had also been working on a hollow lentil shaped pendant so we talked through several ways of baking hollow lentil beads so that they don't collapse when baked.

(Christine's necklace)

Christine brought several beautiful trumpet bead pieces in the theme of the pieces she submitted to the Progress and Possibilities competition where she was a finalist. Christine colours her clays using PearlEx powders and each of her focal beads is baked several times as parts are made and baked then assembled for the final bake.



Just before 2pm we broke for lunch and as usual we had a feast of a variety of shared dishes but today being a birthday we celebrated with a bottle of champagne supplied by Kerrie and June. I think that in future we should arrange our claydays to fall on someones birthday!

After lunch we began our demos. Kerrie kindly supplied us each with 2 sheets of art nouveau images from the www.lunagirl.com website. Using white clay we placed the image face down and burnished the back of the picture. After a few minutes we water-spritzed the paper and gently rubbed to remove the paper backing to reveal the image. These were then baked. Kerrie explained how she sealed the image by pouring on liquid clay, baking the piece and repeating for a 2nd layer.

Christine demoed her method of infusing scrap clay with PearlEx powder. A sheet of clay, rolled out through the thinnest setting, is covered with liquid polymer clay. The pigment is then smeared over the sticky surface. The liquid polymer clay not only contains the pigments but counteracts the drying effect of incorporating powder into the scrap clay. The scrap clay is then folded and rolled through a pasta machine till the powder is totally mixed into the clay. This is an excellent way of revitalising the muddy scrap clay that we all have and making it a useful and beautiful clay.

In a brief workshop, Christine discussed the importance of developing a quality of uniqueness and originality in our work. "As artists, we must strive to produce work that communicates our inner vision. What makes our work unique is that particular combination of choices we make in identifying a source of inspiration, interpreting it and selecting techniques to execute it. Techniques should be learned, mastered, refined and in some cases invented to express that vision. As artists we might want to provoke an emotional or intellectual reaction in the viewer - for example we might want to delight, seduce, surprise, shock or create particular associations. When I look at another artist's work, I try to find what makes it unique. Detecting a particular voice and responding to the maker's intent adds to the enjoyment and appreciation of their work." This was all food for thought.

Gloria is new to clay, but didn't take long to get into the swing of the meeting and we are looking forward to seeing her pieces at the next meeting. So watch this space!

We slowly began packing up at about 5-5.30pm and everyone had finally departed by 7pm! It's hard to see how a day can pass so quickly. Our next meeting will be on Sunday 22nd March so if you would like to join us please contact me at carol@carolblackburn.co.uk for details.

Till then, have fun claying.
Carol

All photos by Carol Blackburn except for Christine's necklace