

Hello, and Happy Holidays!

Wow! Chanukah is just around the corner, and then Christmas and the New Year! It sure seems that this year has gone quickly, and once again, we need gift ideas!

Here's one...instead of making something (although a hand made gift is always in good taste), why not give a gift of polymer clay? You could make a "kit" with clay and a couple of easy to find tools (soup can, toothpicks, vase to cover) and let the recipient get as hooked as we are!

This month, all our questions come from one clayer. Katie writes:

*"I have some **really** elementary questions that I just can't find the answer to on any of the sites. (Probably cause they are so elementary that you're expected to know!)"*

- 1. When you talk about "wet-sanding," do you mean you wet the piece or the sandpaper? Do you have to use a special paper for that? What grit paper do you use?*
- 2. When you talk about using "Future," how do you apply it? What kind of an applicator do you use? Can you re-bake your piece after?*
- 3. Is LS the same thing as TLS? I got some TLS, and am baffled by how to use it to transfer pictures. When I put it on something, I have experimented with applying with a paintbrush and just using the tip and squirting it on. Both ways left big air bubbles in the baked piece, even though I let several days go by before baking. And the thicker (squirted) piece was too opaque to see the picture through.*
- 4. Where can I get Flecto Varathane and will it make my pieces stronger?*
- 5. What is a swap, and what do I have to do?*

Katie—thanks so much for your questions!

1. Wet/dry sandpaper is the paper of choice, and it is easy to find if you know where to look. Since it is normally used in auto bodywork, it will be located in the automotive department. You won't find it in the paint department with the more familiar wood and wallboard sandpapers.

To wet-sand polymer clay, use the paper in a bowl of water, or in the sink under running water. For best results, soak the paper for a few minutes before sanding, and use a couple of drops of dishwashing liquid in the water. Most of us start with 400 grit, then 600 and finally, 800. Some folks even go finer, but generally, if you smooth well before you cure the piece, these three steps will be pretty much all you need.

Check the automotive department in your local Wal-Mart for the best prices I have found! The finer grits (1000, 1500, 2000) are available at automotive supply stores.

2. When using Future, you can dip your item into it, or paint it on. **If** you dip your piece, you need to watch for drips, and if you paint it on, drips and bubbles can be your problem. Wet Future bubbles when heated, so let it dry completely, then you can pop it back into the oven for a few minutes to hasten drying, and some say, to harden it more.

3. LS is Liquid Sculpey, and TLS is Translucent Liquid Sculpey. Although it never gets **TOTALLY** transparent, TLS is the closest thing we have to "clear" clay. The LS is simply TLS with titanium white pigment added.

The best way I've found to do a transfer is to paint the TLS onto a piece of glass, then GENTLY applying the picture to the top of the TLS. Be sure to place it slowly from one end to the other, and smooth as you go, to prevent bubbles. Check from the underside to see if you got them all.

The image will be backwards from the original, a good thing to remember if there is text!

After curing, soaking the TLS/paper in a bit of water helps hasten the removal process. Then you can rub the paper off, and the image is on the clay!

4. Flecto Varathane is a finish used by many clayers. It comes in a gloss or matte finish. You can usually find it in the paint or hardwood floor finishes section in your local hardware stores, or at the online vendors. Be sure to look for the water clean-up type.

5. A swap is simply an exchange of pieces. Usually, a theme is declared, and everyone makes their items according to parameters set by the swapmeistress/swapmeister, who receives all the packages and sends out the swaps.

Swaps are a great deal of fun, and it is way cool to receive pieces made by other clayers from all over the world!

And that, my friends, is it for 2001. It has been a year full of firsts for my family and me, both here and in the "real world." I hope it has been good to you.

I wish for us all a peaceful 2002, with each of us having a better understanding of our fellow humans and ourselves.

Cheers!

Deborah