

# INTERVIEW WITH DARLENE KULCZYCKI

BY ELIZABETH KEDAAKDE



Canework is one of the techniques that is responsible for bringing many new converts to polymer clay. Non-clayers are fascinated by the intricate precision of geometric cane patterns. They are enticed and excited by the whimsical charm and colors of pictorial canes. It is not uncommon to get a surge of questions: "Did you paint this?" "How did you get all of those colors in there?" "How did you get the image so tiny?"

I can still remember being very excited and asking many of these very same questions when I saw my first cane. The rest is history. I became an instant convert, and there was no turning back for me.

As a 'newbie', I soon discovered that cane work was not as easy as I thought it would be. It required a lot practice, patience, and time, and a dose of good luck. Even though it has been several years since my 'conversion' to polymer clay, I still get excited when I see a beautiful, well-made cane, and I still work very hard on my caning skills.

Darlene Kulczycki's canework has been a source of inspiration for many clayers.

## Interview

**Elizabeth:** How did you get started in polymer clay?

**Darlene:** I began working with polymer clay about eight years ago. I made polymer clay jewelry sets and sold them at juried art/craft shows. These shows were held at local colleges, churches, schools, and halls.

In July 2000, I was going on a family reunion to Maine. Before the trip, I began looking on the web at artwork made using polymer clay and came across some gorgeous landscape canes made by Mike Buesseler.

I decided it would be a good idea to practice reducing ready-made canes, before I made my own, so I wouldn't possibly destroy a cane that could take hours to make. I bought several different canes (round and square) at a craft store and brought them with me on my vacation. I reduced these canes to various sizes, some as small as 1/4" in diameter.

When I returned home from Maine, I began making some simple canes. Finally, I was able to make my lighthouse landscape canes. Since I began my canework in July 2000, I have made approximately 100 different canes. My Toucan Sam is an example of a complex cane that takes several hours to make (nearly 6" in diameter and 2 1/2" thick before it was reduced).

**Elizabeth:** What were your sources of inspiration for the balloon flower cane project and your other pictorial canes? Toucan Sam is one of my favorite canes.

**Darlene:** My Safari Animal Prints were canes I made after a trip to the Detroit Zoo in August 2000 with my children. I took several pictures of the giraffe, cheetah, zebra, and tiger. These pictures were an excellent reference when I made my animal print canes.

My Teacher's Apple Cane was inspired after a trip with my family to the apple orchard. I picked an apple with the leaves still attached and used it as my visual aid for my cane.

Many of my flower canes are my original designs, and I have made these merely by looking at a photo.

Over the last several months I put together a PhotoPoint Album to share my canework with others.

My website offers helpful polymer clay links, and contain some of my pictorial lessons, tips and advice.

I hope my canework will continue to offer inspiration for others to try and that working with polymer clay gives as much joy to others as it has to me.

Thank you for all the interest in my canework.

