

## Artist Interview:

### Just Emma: An Interview with Emma Ralph

By Trina Williams



Most of us would say that our early work was nothing to write home about. But most of us didn't start with polymer clay before we were teens. Emma Ralph, a polymer clay artist from Surrey, England, loved beads from the time she was a pre-teen. When she discovered that beads could be made from Fimo a career was launched.

Early on Emma worked mostly with Fimo, which is more readily available in the UK. She has also used Formello, a European clay. Emma has tried all of the clays and finds things she likes and dislikes about each. "I tend to use Fimo, as it is the clay I know best and seems to work best for me."

As far as teachers and mentors go, Emma is self-taught. "I have not personally had much opportunity to network in real life with other clayers. The British polymer clay guild has a bi-annual retreat, although I haven't attended." She has met a few other clayers including Candida Woolhouse, who is the author of *Polymer Clay Greetings Cards*.



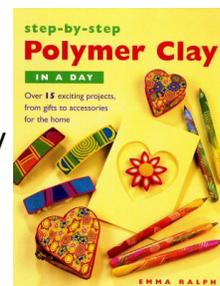
Like many of us Emma has belonged to an on-line discussion group for years. She and I started off together on the early Recreation-Polymer Clay and have stayed with it through OneList, Egroups and now PolymerClayPeople. She had a lot of fans when her first article was published in a U.S. magazine.



The idea that others were working in polymer clay was a revelation. "After some initial pouting, I found this to be quite cheering news actually." It was shortly after this that she found the Internet groups.

"I have written several articles for both British and American magazines and am on the Advisory Board for *PolymerCAFÉ* and my first book, *Polymer Clay in a Day* is out from Northlight." (Look for a review elsewhere in this issue: <http://www.pcpolyzine.com/2004sept/book.html>.)

When asked about how her book came into being Emma replied, "I felt there was a real lack of project books available on polymer clay in the UK. I wanted to write one on pc jewellery specifically and I approached New Holland Publishers in the UK because I had seen their other craft books in the stores." And as the case has been here in the states they were not interested because "they had always discounted it as a serious medium!"



They liked Emma's proposal but wanted a more general, beginner title. Guess what? Now that the book is out and has been picked up in the U.S. by Northlight, she has been asked to write another one!

We all have our favorite artists and are inspired by others and working in isolation has both its pluses and minuses. "I don't have much clay work by other artists" says Emma, "but I have a few inspiring pieces: An Elissa Powell heart pendant, a stunning rainbow pendant by Dorothy Greynolds and a gorgeous tassel doll by Pörrö Sahlberg." She continues, "bear in mind I have only ever seen photographs of most other artists' work. I think Kathleen Dustin's work is astounding and would love to own one of her pieces."

Wouldn't we all!

Emma's work is known through the Just Beads auction site. "Finding Just Beads has allowed me to expand sales of my polymer artist beads and provides the opportunity to reach customers who appreciate polymer clay as a medium and the time and effort I put into creating my beads."



She is best known for her "Illuminare" bead series. According to Emma, *illuminare* comes from the classical Latin, meaning to "adorn or embellish". Each bead features elements of metallic, shimmer or cane work built up to form the piece. You can see her beads at [www.JustBeads.com](http://www.JustBeads.com). Other bead styles she makes are "Moulded Collage" and Klimt inspired face beads.

When I asked Emma about the Just Beads experience, as one who is kind of intimidated by the whole process, she told me that the whole site was very user friendly and that Bob and Bettina, who run the site, would probably love to do an interview for *pcPolyzine*. So stay tuned.

What does the future hold for Emma Ralph? She loves what she is doing and hopes to do more writing, some teaching and to design lots more beads. Look for some Precious Metal Clay creeping into her repertoire.





**All jewelry photos by Emma Ralph.  
Photo of Emma Ralph by Mr. L. Head.**