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## Positively Polymer Clay by Deirdre F Woodward

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Several weeks ago, I asked a variety of polymer clay people the following question:

How has polymer clay made a positive change in your personal or professional life?

The following are the answers I received:

Polymer clay gently reminds me daily of the opportunity for control and conscious creation that all of our lives embody. Our art is a metaphor for our existence. Artists who work in polymer are surrounded by ease, responsibility, and unlimited creative options. What happens if we take that metaphor to our larger art form: our existence?

*--Tory Hughes, ArtRanch*

Big question that requires a little answer! Working with polymer clay has allowed me an emotional outlet like nothing else before. It has helped me become focused in my work, learn 3 dimensionality while still providing me with the color ranges I desire to see, play with and create. In a nutshell, it has given my inner landscape a life.

*--Meredith Arnold, N.W. Polymer Clay Guild*

Thanks for the interesting thread that you've started for Polyzine (which I thoroughly enjoy reading, by the way...). Polymer clay has definitely changed my life. I'm a professional musician and a college voice teacher, and always lamented that my creativity seemed to be limited to things musical. Polymer clay has brought out levels of creativity and ingenuity in ways that I never thought possible, at times encouraging me to rethink the entire issue of human creativity.

Since discovering PC three years ago, I've gotten to a point where I could easily see myself abandoning my current career plan for a much more bohemian, integrated approach to the arts. I do remain committed to the idea that what I have learned needs to

be passed on to others, so starting in the spring I'll be teaching a noncredit course on PC at my college!

Thanks again for asking how PC has changed lives. I firmly believe that it has to some degree saved, or at least reinvigorated mine!!

*--Carl Johengen, Western New York State Polymer Clay Guild*

My professional and personal lives are very intertwined, and I can't really separate the two.

I'm now running a successful small business, as opposed to working for someone else. I've also authored a polymer clay book, and have just signed a contract to write another. I've met lots of interesting people, both fellow craftspeople and customers. I've become a lot more knowledgeable about many art forms and handcrafts, and have amassed quite a collection of work from people with whom I've traded at shows.

I can set my own hours, which usually means working more hours than I would if I worked for someone else, but somehow it's more appealing.

Hope this helps...

[--Irene Semanchuk Dean](#)

Before I found polymer clay, I was working in oils on canvas as an artistic outlet and making some jewelry as a sideline. Both of these were really just hobbies, as I was working full time as a manager of a window covering store. Also, I had no real passion for either pursuit and often went months without doing either activity.

Then, at a small crafts fair in San Diego, I saw some polymer clay beads that a woman had made. They were brightly colored & unique & I immediately saw a way to combine my joy in the intense colors of oils and my love of jewelry. I found a teacher, learned how to cane, and began working with an exciting new medium: polymer clay.

I developed my skills for 4 years, and with my husband's loving support, quit my "day job." For the last 7 years I have been making a living selling polymer jewelry. I'm not getting rich, but following my bliss has made me a happier person. I greet each day with joyful anticipation of what the creative muse will send me & end each day, sometimes exhausted, with gratitude for at last finding an artistic passion in my life.

Being able to earn a living doing something I love is a blessing that is inexpressible.

[--Christine Brashers](#)

Prior to finding polymer clay (in a children's store!) I'd been in what seemed to be a steady 3 year career cycle. Three years working as a video tech and sound "man", three years designing costume jewelry, three years owning a bead store! So, breaking the three year benchmark was of great significance to me.

It really seemed an unending cycle - not that I was all that unhappy with it, moving from one to the next was like walking, one step following the last. I was moving toward something, but I didn't know where it would eventually end (if it has). In the end, what I learned in the course of living each "career" has proven most beneficial to what I am doing today. Well, needless to say, polymer clay broke the three year cycle!

As many of you know, I've also managed to move from clay to clay - Cernit, then the Polyform clays, then to Fimo. These moves were professionally driven. Some people have had a real problem with that, but I looked at each move as a challenge and, as I like the marketing and educating aspect of clay almost as much as I do the actual creating with clay, this criticism has never bothered me. Each brand has its positive and negative characteristics, as we are all discovering.

Personally, my journey with polymer clay has really helped me toward a greater understanding of my inner workings. I used to knock myself silly - wondering why I couldn't focus like Kathy D and Pier and our top tier artists. Finally, I came to grips with the fact that, that type of focus has always escaped me and to try to force myself to be like someone else was a futile effort. I also realized that, if I were to do the best job I was capable of in promoting clay, I had to let go of feelings of competitiveness that only took me further from my ultimate goal - promoting clay through free sharing of information and techniques. This has been my best contribution to the community and the most satisfying to me.

We all have contributions to make; they're not the same contributions, but each is as valuable as the next. I believe to the extent you give, without reservation, you receive.

Through this community and medium, I've had the chance to develop tools and that has been a kick! Vernon and I work closely at this and it has enhanced our relationship. We all have ideas; making them realities is something else and that's where Vernon does shine.

So many challenges have been presented that I've had to overcome. The first was

demonstrating - I'd never done it, but I had to, so I did. I wrote a book and didn't want to finish out of fear that it wouldn't measure up - I had to let it go and face the consequences. I'd worked behind the camera, never in front, but I had to suck it up and just do it. I'd never considered teaching and had no formal training in that art, but I had to get over that, too.

Polymer clay presented challenges I'd never had to face before. In facing and meeting challenges head on, we find inner resources we didn't know existed. Each challenge met gives the power to face the next.

I've learned that life is too short for pettiness and jealousy. In claiming ownership of and holding on to techniques you close a creative door. This not only stunts your creative growth, it also affects your growth as a human being.

Our medium seems to be at the end of a renaissance of technical innovation. Don't get me wrong, great new techniques are being introduced all the time, but the grand explosion of innovation has slowed. I think this slowing down is a good thing.

Perhaps, now, we can concentrate on really expressing ourselves through the techniques - not making the technique the expression. Let's try not to pick pieces apart, spotting someone's so and so technique and someone else's whatchamahoozie technique. Let's look at piece in its entirety and respect the artist enough to seek the meaning in their work.

I've had a lot of tremendously talented students who were stuck in the "class taking" cycle - moving from one class to the next. If you're one of those, take some time off and spend some time processing what you've learned. Art will come to you.

I love polymer clay, but it's not the most important thing in my life and I hope it isn't in yours. Feel good about accomplishments achieved through clay, but self- satisfaction, contentment and inner peace should be derived through the sum total of living all aspects of your life, within and without the polymer clay community. And stop the hero worship - you do no favor to the "hero" and you put yourself down at the same time.

So, to sum it all up, yes, polymer clay has given me so very much. It satisfies the need I feel to create and has provided the means to support myself. It has helped me in the unending quest toward personal growth thorough a better understanding of who I am. It has helped me separate what is really important, tossing off what is not.

And finally, and most importantly, through the polymer clay community, I've met the most wonderful people and have made friends for life. We are part of a very special community, you know. We're pioneering this medium and each and every one of us are

critical to its future growth. I can't imagine what the kids of today will create in the years to come - the possibilities are endless and I find that very exciting!

[--Donna Kato](#)

To answer your question, polymer clay made a very significant positive change in my life. I've always been a creative person, but never tried sculpting until I met some people who sculpted in polymer clay about five years ago.

I thought that a clay you could bake without a kiln was really cool, so I bought some and gave it a shot. I discovered I had a talent for sculpting, which was extremely exciting for me. Since then, I have really enjoyed sculpting, won some awards for it, and even made some money off it (I am going to try giving professional sculpting a shot in the coming year).

Most of all, I have found a creative pursuit that has a primal appeal: sculpting in clay harkens back to some of the earliest activities of childhood, and it was also one of the earliest art forms in human history. I find sculpting to be very enjoyable and relaxing, and it may soon be my career. I'd call that significant!

[--Dan Perez](#)

Because I started working with polymer at the same time that I first did the Artist's Way, the two will be forever linked for me. They worked in harmony to open up my world with new friends, ideas and a creativity that I never dreamed was inside of me.

It was a huge turning point. I can't and maybe don't want to image what my life would be without polymer clay!

[--Jody Bishel](#)

Oh wow what a question!!! For me, there are a number of positive things that have come from bringing Polymer into my life.

Professionally, it has enabled me to have a business that can be managed from my home workspace, therefore giving me the ability to be a mother and "be there" for my children (ages 9 and 4) at the beginning of their day and when it's time for them to return from school. In this age of working moms, it can be difficult for a woman to remain financially independent if she chooses to stay at home. For me, this is the greatest thing

that polymer has given me in my professional life.

Personally, polymer clay changed my life so dramatically I don't know where to begin.

As a child, my "art" was not seen as being something useful or productive, but from the minute I picked up polymer clay, I was able to bring forth the artist in me. This newfound artistic confidence has enabled me to travel to the US, Britain, and Australia as well as all around New Zealand, teaching and speaking on a subject that I am passionate about.

I have traveled to wonderful places, seen amazing pieces made in polymer, shared times with fabulous people and made life long friends with folk I've met along the way.

[--Petra](#)

First, I figure the money I have spent on PC, tools, etc. was saved from the psychiatrist bills' I would otherwise have incurred if I had not discovered this wonderful medium.

Second, I am never bored since the variations in using this product are endless and my notebook of ideas, not yet tried, continues to grow.

Third, as of Friday, October 19th, 2001, I quit my full-time job. I am expanding my part-time business to full time, and most of what I produce is all or part polymer clay. This medium has truly changed my life and continues to do so.

[--Jan Scarborough](#)

*Blue Ridge Polymer Clay Guild*