

Glossary of Clay Terminology

© 2003-2013, Lisa Pavelka, All Rights Reserved
May not be copied without permission from the author
www.lisapavelka.com

Antiquing - The process of creating an aged look to clay. This can be done using pigment powders, paints, or inks. Application is made on the baked clay. Excess patina is wiped away while wet or lightly sanded after drying.

Armature - A foundation or framework that lies under clay as a foundation for sculpture or an exterior finish. Armature can reduce the finished weight of a piece or the amount of clay needed to complete a creation. FIMOAir® clay, wire, aluminum foil, or other materials can be used to create an armature.

Backfill - This is the process of filling depressions in the surface of clay with other clays (solid or liquid), paints, or other compatible mediums. The look of intarsia inlay, mosaic, cloisonné or enameling can be achieved through backfilling.

Bull's Eye (see Millefiori) - This is a millefiori term for clay that is wrapped in one or more layers.

Cane (see Millefiori) - A glass blowing term applied to polymer clay. This refers individual, wrapped, or bisected lengths of clay that are used in combination to create millefiori clay rods. The term can also refer to finished millefiori rods.

Conditioning - The preparation of clay towards a workable state. Conditioning is typically achieved by: kneading, rolling through pasta machine and or dedicated food processor granulation.

Cure - The baking of clay to reach molecular fusion of the molecules in order to reach optimal strength and permanence.

Faux - Is the French word for "false." It is used in many polymer clay techniques to indicate an imitative method. Many technique variations exist for imitative methods for creating the look of: wood, stained glass, fabric, opal, metal, stone and more. Polymer clay is the most versatile of mediums making faux methods easily achievable.

Image Transfer - This is a means of transferring photos or artwork onto polymer clay. Various methods for achieving this are available including Toner based copy transfer which can be done in black and white or tinted by hand with pastels, chalks or colored pencils. Image transfer can also be created with FIMO® Decorating Gel, as well as special transfer papers available on the market.

Inclusion - Any ingredient that is added to clay to create a special effect. Most often, Inclusions work best with translucent or lightly colored clays. Items that are ideal for adding to polymer clay before baking include but are not limited to: glitter, embossing powders, spices, fibers, and metal leafing.

Jelly Roll - One of the simplest and most basic of millefiori canes. Two or more flattened sheets of clay are stacked and rolled just like the cake of the same name, forming a swirl pattern when viewed from the side of the cane. More complex versions can be created with wedged sheets, color gradients and manipulated constructions made with striping, foiled layers, or textured sheets.

Leafing - Thin sheets of metal traditionally used to gild picture frames walls, ceilings, and illuminated manuscripts. Precious metal leaf isn't used often due to the extremely high cost. Metal composites are used to create "gold and silver leafing. Copper leafing is still typically made from real copper. When metal leafing is applied to uncured clay, it can be dramatically cracked when stretched. Leafed clay, especially anything that will be handled should be sealed with a thin layer of liquid clay or other compatible sealant to prevent fading, tarnishing or peeling.

Liquid Clay - This is polymer clay in liquid form. It can be applied to seal surface treatments, dyed for special effects such as feathering or marbling. It is also a transfer medium for images.

Marbling - The mixing of two or more clay colors together without blending into a solid color. This technique can be used to mimic stone or handcrafted paper. Dragging through a sheet of marbled clay with a skewer or knitting needle can create chevron patterns.

Mica/Pulver Powder - Finely granulated mica particles that have been dyed with pigment. When applied to unbaked clay they can give an iridescent finish that resembles the look of metal. Powders can also be added as an inclusion in clay.

Mica Shift - A holographic effect that is unique to the medium of polymer clay. The mica particles embedded in clay are manipulated so that they lie in the same direction. The mica particles are further manipulated with texture or crosscutting to create a pattern. In addition to creating a holographic look, the resulting clay patterns also look as if they are created from two different colors or shades of clay. Finished mica shifted clay looks as if it has dimensional texture but is actually flat. Polishing enhances this effect by further highlighting the illusion of depth. The technical term for the phenomenon that results is known as Chatoyance. This is an optical illusion in objects that exhibit a wavy band or luminous glow of light that appears to be lit from within. Chatoyancy is an effect that is often seen in opals, cat eyes, tiger-eye stone, and on the surface of record albums.

Millefiori (see Cane) - Derived from the ancient Roman glass blowing method. The term is Italian for "a thousand flowers." It is the formation of geometric or pictorial patterns through the combination of individual canes. After a cane is created, it is compressed and sometimes lengthened through reduction method. This allows the cane to be made smaller while retaining the identical pattern. Slices can be cut from finished canes and applied to clay and other surfaces as a decorative veneer. Individual slices can be layered or assembled to form dimensional or sculptural effects. Baked slices can also be used as beads or buttons.

Mokumé Gané - is pronounced "May-ku-may Gone-ay". This technique is adapted from the metalsmithing technique discovered by 17th century metal smith, Denbei Shoami, it literally means: Moku - wood, Mé - eye and Gan - metal) and is also known as wood grain metal. Loaves of clays made from thin sheets are manipulated with items including texture stamps, tools, or found objects. This creates holes, or texture on the surface. When the surface is sliced into thin layered, random patterns of amazing beauty are revealed. These can be applied to layers of clay. Rolling them into a seamless veneer for multiple uses.

Opaque (see Translucent) - Anything that is impenetrable by light.

Polymer Clay - A non-toxic, man-made modeling material that is a PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) composition. Polymer clay is thermoplastic resin, plasticizer, and pigment combined in specific formulations. Unlike earthenware clay, polymer clay contains no water. It cures at low temperatures and long shelf life when properly stored. Polymer clay can be baked on or with numerous materials including paper, wood, cardboard, paper maché, metal, glass, crystal, pearls, feathers, fabric and certain plastics. It can be baked repeatedly. Cured clay can be drilled, sanded, painted, and carved.

Relief - The sculptural method of creating three-dimensional imagery in a nearly flat composition. Coins are the best example of how dramatic relief technique can be when creating the illusion of depth and dimension in a nearly level plane.

Skinner Blend - A technique developed by polymer clay pioneer, Judith Skinner. A color gradient sheet is formed between two or more colors of clay when blended in a diagonal assembly. It is an innovative and time saving technique that has revolutionized polymer clay work by becoming a staple effect used in creating millefiori canes, backgrounds and other clay embellishments.

Translucent - This is a quality that permits light to shine through a material that isn't transparent. This is most commonly seen in polymer clay without pigment added. A very small amount of colored clay blended into translucent clay can shade it while still allowing light to pass through. Rolling out translucent clay in thinner layers can reduce it to the point of being nearly transparent.

Transparent - This is a quality that allows light to pass through a material so that clear images of what's on the other side are apparent. Transparency is the opposite of Opacity.

Learn more about the designer at:

www.lisapavelka.com

Wholesale Inquiries please visit:

www.thegreatcreate.com