

Joint Meeting of the London and Mid Southern Polymer Clay Groups

30th November 2008

Report by Susan Rimmer

It was a cold, wet and windy day out in the wilds of Berkshire when the London and Mid Southern Polymer Clay Groups had their first joint meeting. People travelled from various places including the Isle of Man(!), the far side of London, Surrey and 100 yards down the road. Cookham Dean Primary School was the venue for the meeting and once we had sorted out the heating proved to be a useful venue with space to spread out.



After introducing ourselves to each other we got on with our usual show and tell. Caroline started with a selection of great work from a recent show she had taken part in. This included the development of her work using Vitrail glass paint (she had started experimenting with this at the last London group meeting). She has been experimenting with different ways of putting her jewellery together using a variety of wires and findings. She has also branched in to using glitters and mica powders together with different textures producing some vibrantly coloured work.

Michelle was next up showing some earrings made with foil mokume gane. She also had undertaken one of Christie Friesen's online tutorials - "Ice Queen" and showed the resulting work. Michelle reported that she had enjoyed the project but found it quite slow as it was delivered in pieces. She has taken several other tutorials and found the instructions to be excellent. She explained how the components are all hand rolled and through the tutorials she has learned how to wire beads into her work as shown in this Friesen inspired leaf bead. Michelle has also used different cord and ribbons to great effect in her work and shared the details of various websites she has used to source them.



Carol showed her simple but effective black and white necklaces and bracelets using techniques she had put together for the magazine "Create it with Clay" (unfortunately on hold for the time being). She also shared some other pieces from the same publication including folded bead bracelets using stretch magic elastic. She has also started experimenting with some new ideas on a spiral theme. These ideas have great promise and we all agreed we looked forward to seeing where this would lead.

Clare, as usual, amazed us with the Christmas themed pieces she has recently been teaching children in her various workshops and parties. This included using kaleidoscope canes to make miniature baubles for Christmas Tree shaped Christmas Tree decorations! Her three dimensional pieces such as this Christmas Tree and a Gingerbread House that really looked good enough to



eat were also impressive. Although her work with children takes up a lot of her time Clare had also found a spare moment to make some hand rolled and hand blended gradient beads using some wonderful primary colours. They really brightened up the grey wintry day!



Debbie had had a successful November with several shows of her wonderful mixed media work in Precious Metal Clay and polymer clay. We had a short discussion around shows (the importance of lighting, having lower priced items available as well as the “signature” pieces etc – definitely worth more exploration at a future meeting). Recently she has been looking at using simple shaped logs to make swirls. These simple shapes looked very effective in plain black and also decorated with a heavy coat of glitter. Debbie felt there “was a lot of mileage” in these simple shapes and would be taking her ideas further.

Next up was Jenny who had indeed made it all the way from the snow covered Isle of Man. She is the only serious Polymer Clay artist on the island and after meeting several of us at the European Polymer Clay Carnival earlier in the year, felt it important to spend some time with like-minded people. She is planning to promote Polymer Clay more widely in the island and hopes to set up her own group there in the new year, She has been preparing pieces for the British Trade Craft Fair in Harrogate next April and showed some amazing asymmetrical pieces using large beads covered with kaleidoscope canes. She explained how her work had transformed after the carnival where she learned how to cover baked forms. She had also been experimenting with making large scale chains from PC and we discussed how to make and bake these successfully.



Sally showed us her Mica Shift bangle she had made following Donna Kato’s instructions in her book Creative Surface Techniques. Sally had found keeping the size small to be her main challenge and we had an in-depth discussion around how it could be made smaller. The mica shift she had achieved was truly striking. For those of us in the Mid Southern Group Sally was able to show how her ongoing experimentation with faux ivory had finally been successful.

Finally Susan showed us a few experimental pieces including the use of liquid clays over crayoned toner prints (following a technique described by Julia Converse Sober from the book Polymer Clay Jewellery). She had also been playing around with textures on both sides of a piece of clay made by pressing the clay on to a textured form (sprayed with Armor All) and then using a similar textured sheet to texture the top. The clay is then baked on the form. Susan has used this to create some Kim Cavender inspired earrings.





After all this sharing of ideas we were all very hungry and as usual had a wonderful lunch of soup, pasties, quiche, dips, garlic bread – mmmmm! And the piece de resistance - a wonderful meringue pie made by Clare. During lunch we continued sharing ideas for the future including how to manage the Lisa Pavelka day in February.

Following lunch Carol showed us how to successfully roll the twisted strings she had used on her black and white beads, Susan showed Caroline how to make nested concentric circles, and following Michelle's lead we all had a go at making a Christi Friesen style leaf bead. Lots of talk ensued – sharing different websites we had stumbled across, handy tools we had found, pricing work. Eventually we decided to call it a day and headed off to our various homes with lots of new ideas in our heads.



From left to right – Michelle Shrimpton, Sally Buchan, Clare McKnight, Jenny Murray, Caroline Schuck, Debbie Carlton, Carol Blackburn, Susan Rimmer

All photographs in this article by Carol Blackburn