

Lisa Pavelka workshop hosted by the London Polymer Clay Group
18 February 2009

Report by Harriet Bligh



I was fortunate enough to be reminded of this great opportunity in time to get one of the remaining places on Lisa Pavelka's one day workshop on Wednesday 18th February. It was held at the Thames Tunnel Mill, a converted warehouse on the Thames at Rotherhithe, South London.

Getting there might have seemed a bit daunting had it not been for Carol Blackburn's exhaustive list of directions: by tube, by car, by bus and even a video link to view the warehouse during its refurbishment. I was really impressed, and relieved to find free parking spaces all around the area. I quite fell in love with the place.

The venue was a spacious room with tables and chairs on the mezzanine of this beautifully restored building, with windows opening onto the river. Passing river boats created gentle ripples in the water which lapped up against the building.

There were 16 of us and Lisa had brought along her assistant Haley who did most of the delicate work of baking and gloss curing for us. This was particularly useful since we had only one oven and one UV light for drying the magic gloss.

Before I begin to explain what we did, I want to just say how lucky we were to meet Lisa. I had previously come across her name when buying clay at the Polymer Clay Pit which stocks many of her products. I loved her taste, I began to collect her rubber stamps, but she herself was special. She established an instant rapport with the group and was so generous with her information, tips, encouragement, that you felt that she would reveal everything she knew, had she time enough to tell it all. It was hugely enjoyable.

And now for the projects: in the morning we made a 'faux dichroic' bracelet. Lisa provided us with the bracelet base, foils and resin, and actually the Fimo soft as well which was an unexpected extra. We used a sheet of black Fimo rolled out on a medium setting on the pasta machine, and were given a choice of Lisa's foils to apply onto the clay. The foil was placed face up on the clay and was released by friction either rubbing your finger onto it or using a piece of baking parchment between your finger and the foil. If you then took hold of the corner of the sheet of foil and ripped it quickly off at an acute angle to the clay, the metallic colour remained on the clay. We did this with small patches of different coloured foils to create a patchwork of colours. We then textured the sheet using either a very coarse piece of sandpaper or a piece of indented



plastic which came from an opaque plastic window. We used an oval cutter the same size as the bracelet segments and cut six ovals from the decorative clay sheet. These were then baked and when cool, Lisa's 'Magic-Glos' was applied to each segment dripping it into the middle to allow it to migrate towards the edges. Haley did this for us but we were given instructions not to use too much in case it dripped off the edges, although this could be cut away after drying. If air bubbles appeared, they could be removed by using a gas torch on them, or you could guide these bubbles towards the edge with a needle or pointed tool. The glossed ovals were then cured for us by Haley under a UV light (photo #3). These lights are also used by manicurists for curing acrylic nails and can be bought at Argos for instance. 'Magic-Glos' can also be cured in the sun. It takes about half an hour. You must put the object actually outside and not inside on the window sill as some UV light is filtered out by the glass. The effect of the gloss on the textured foil is surprising. It gives a sort of 3D effect. The decorated ovals were then secured to the bracelet segments with epoxy glue. My bracelet was much admired back at home. It was fun to make too.

While we were making the bracelet, Lisa showed us how to cover larger expanses of clay with one colour of foil. This required skill but was also a knack. If your foil was not perfectly transferred the first time you could replace it in the same spot and repeat the procedure until all the spots of remaining foil had been captured by the clay. She then showed us how to emboss the clay, using a rubber stamp of a leaf. She then used Sellotape to remove the foil on the peaks, leaving the foil in the troughs only and then repeated the foil application with a different colour foil to capture the top of the leaf. This leaf can be seen in the photograph with the watchcases.



At some stage we broke for lunch. We had all brought a packed lunch to eat while at the same time buying more supplies from Lisa's impromptu shop.

In the afternoon session we made our 'captured memories resin pendant'. Again we were provided with Fimo, as well as waterslide image transfers, findings, foils, resin and a vintage style watch casing. We started by making a Skinner blend of Indian Red Fimo Soft and metallic Gold Fimo Soft. We then made the sheet very long and thin and rolled from light to dark and compacted it into a plug. A slice of this was cut and rolled through the pasta machine on a medium setting and cut into a circle to fit the watchcase. We then chose from a number of different waterslide image transfers of languorous Pre-Raphaelite ladies as a focal



image for our watchcase. We placed the image face down on white clay and wet the back which released the backing paper, leaving the image on the clay. We then inserted our chosen lady into a recess in the watchcase. I think at this stage we stippled the surface of the clay as we had done with the bracelet. We then chose findings to adorn her with. I chose a tiny rose with quite a relief, some gold and silver coloured leaves, spacers and pressed the clay into the sides of the watchcase with a sharp tool and also over the outer sides of the image. These were then baked in the oven and when cool, 'Magic Glos' was dripped onto them and cured under the UV lamp. I did not get round to this last step and applied my gloss at home and put the finished object in the garden to cure. In the absence of any sunlight, it took a while to harden so I will try a south facing window sill next time. I was using my 'Magic Glos' sparingly but you can put a second coat on to enhance the 3 d effect if you want.

Lisa had a very clever way of identifying our pieces whilst they were being baked or cured. She gave each table of four people a piece of galvanised sheet metal and with a permanent marker divided the sheet in four and put our initials in each corner. We then placed our pieces in the appropriate corner for baking and curing. The sheets can be used again by removing the marks with nail varnish remover. They can also be stacked together for a multiple baking using magnets as spacers to separate the sheets.

'Magic-Glos' can also be used to cover Swarovski beads, and also fabric. However when using it to cover fabric, you have to form a barrier between the gloss and fabric with liquid clay which is rubbed onto the fabric and then cured, and then scraped off.

A myriad other things were discussed during the day and although I scribbled furiously into my notebook inbetween claying, there were many things I did not record: for instance the relative merits of using superglue versus epoxy resin and when to choose one rather than the other, and also different kinds of transfers and how they work.



The day ended too soon. I do hope Lisa comes back one day. If only I could remember everything Lisa told us. She did not draw breath all day and it was all so interesting and fun! A real pro!

Report by Harriet Bligh and photos by Carol Blackburn