



# Spring... yes it is finally here!

**IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR** where we think about doing some “spring cleaning” dusting, sorting and putting things back in order in our studios. I know when I do my studio cleaning I discover all kinds of treasures that I have totally forgotten that I bought. How about rediscovering the one thing you have been looking for for months!?! It is like instant happiness. We would love to see your studios or work area, please send in your images to share with our readers. Before and after pictures would be great!

In this issue of the *Creative Costuming* newsletter we bring you into the world of two renowned figurative doll artists Deb Wood and Mr George Stuart.

Deb has generously given us a wonderful article about her doll journey to where she is now. Her magical figures grace our pages to take you to her fantasy world of beautiful winged creatures. She has generously donated a costume tutorial for you to consider using on your next doll project. Thanks Deb!

Once again we bring you Mr George Stuart beautiful historical figure. As always his work is amazing. He works in one-quarter life-size historical figures to accompany dramatic historical monologues. His dedication to bringing these historical figures to life gives us a better perspective of the everyday life of these famous historical figures. In this issue you will meet, “Abraham Lincoln”.

Our book review corner has become very popular. So, stop by and browse that page to what new and exciting books are on the market or even books that have been forgotten but have always been on your list of books to buy.

We hope you had a Happy Easter and we look forward to sharing another newsletter in July. I invite you to email me if you have any particular costuming question you would like to discuss in a future *Creative Costuming* newsletter.

As always, we can't go without saying, “Thank You” to those that generously donated to the newsletter. Every donation helps to keep the newsletter going.

Until the next time...

Adele Sciortino, ODACA, Figurative Artist  
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Astra



Raine

## WHY DO WE DO IT?

by Deb Wood, Polymer Clay Artist



Jeisa

**WHY DO WE DO IT?** Is there a phrase, or a thought or verse or an explanation of ANY kind? I wonder. For me, being creative is like breathing. It exists within my soul as deeply and as tangibly as taking a breath into my lungs does, as it permeates every fiber of my being, every aspect of my life. From gardens to garments to gadgets, it is ever present.

It's something, that for many years, I took for granted, this creative energy; thinking certainly 'everyone can do this'. That is not the case; and while we are all blessed with gifts; and if we're wise we discover and nurture those gifts; no, 'everyone' cannot do this.

Some are blessed with this creative gene and it drives us. Some days it consumes us. And we allow it, because we must.

It's wonderful when we have family that understands this drive, this desire, this obsession to create; but not everyone does because it is so often misunderstood. It sometimes is miscon-

strued for selfish desire. I don't believe it is, quite the contrary. The very impetus that propels us forward can sometimes tempt fate and stumble us back...and life serves us a blow to the gut. But that too can be a good thing if we choose to receive the lesson.

Because then, at that time of our lives, we stand back, look around in complete astonishment and think, "What just happened here?" And along with those thoughts of shattered dreams and hopes dashed, the process of reevaluation begins.

### Our rebirth begins

As artists, it becomes imperative to rebuild ourselves, to reinvent the wheel over and over, lest we become stagnant. And to sit stale and be stagnant is soul killing. It is the kiss of death to an artist. This happened to me...

I have been expressing myself with polymer clay since 1988. Who knew what this wonderful, colorful medium would mean in my life? I even love the smell of it. And once I discovered it, quite by accident one crisp fall day at a regional art faire, I knew I had found what I had been missing. My work in soft sculpture

and cloth dolls lacked the realism I was seeking. This, this magical medium was the answer to my prayers. I knew that day I had found my niche. And that was 25 years ago. A quarter century I have been 'claying'. I smile at that thought....

And along this journey I have evolved in many ways, some quite ordinary, others quite extraordinary. From my humble beginnings at local craft shows where the most frequent question was, "What is this? What is it made of?" that led to the classes I taught through Community Ed, just to get polymer clay introduced in my area. To teaching beginner, intermediate and advanced classes at a ceramics studio for nearly 20 years; to eventually traveling all across the United States to teach week long seminars to eager students! My life has been so richly blessed. Who knew? What IS this? This, is nothing short of amazing. This is the life and the breadth that fills us. It fills us when so many other things in life endeavor to deplete us. It is the Apple Basket of Life. Our Art. That's what THIS IS.

Over those years I was encouraged by my collectors to "get out there and get your work in the gift stores!" I was flattered, naturally; but knew I was no where ready for THAT. So I graciously accepted their compliments and continued to practice, and produce and sell. It was good.



Marta



Until the day my daughter was almost killed in a car accident. It was 1994. Blow to the Gut #1. We got through it though and she is a vibrant, wonderful woman today, a wife and mother, a fire fighter married to another fire fighter! But those were some tough days, those 35 days we spent in the hospital where the doctors told us they weren't sure she would ever walk normally again. It gave me lots of time to STOP, and think and evaluate my life. I knew I couldn't keep up the pace I was working and still be there for her- so I did it, I took my dog and pony show and went on the road, I approached a gift line company. I think I was so numb, so tired and so anxious for a change of pace; I never stopped to consider the possibility of rejection. And it didn't come. It truly was one of those moments when God taps you on the shoulder and says, "Stop now. Stop the crazy pace and see what I have laid out before you."

My work was picked up and marketed nation wide in high end department and gift stores and this went on from 1995

continues on next page ►



Sayley



Taja



Arica



Andi



Leighton

to 2002. What an exciting run that was! I still am humbled by the whole experience; humbled and grateful.

With my daughter safely tucked away in a private college in Minneapolis, soon my son was ready to go off to college also to begin his education and training in Law Enforcement. I followed him, well, sort of, and moved to a city near his campus. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time, since I could do my work anywhere. I settled into a cozy log home and still live there to this day- among towering pines and pristine lakes and wonderful, friendly people. I call it God's Country, but have been corrected; apparently there are several 'God's Country' locations throughout the US. This is mine. This is home to me now. I've been known to say, "I will live here until they carry me out in a box." I did think this was my Happily Ever After.

That is, until Blow to the Gut #2. Divorce. Hard, painful, life altering divorce. I never saw it coming. NEVER. But there it was, and there I was, STOPPED, and once again, reevaluating my life. It was 2008. And God tapped me on the shoulder again and said, "You rest now. It's time for a break." So I took it. I rested. And I thought about 'what's next.'

What came next were even MORE amazing opportunities.

But first I had to be brave, and let go of what had been a very lucrative business. Selling my one of a kind figurative art dolls directly to collectors had sustained me since 2004. And while I still enjoyed it most of the time, I could tell that the emotional events I was dealing with in my personal life were being reflected and affecting my work and it wouldn't be long before my good graces with my collectors would expire. I felt my work would soon bring less or stop selling altogether and I wasn't sure my fragile ego could handle that, so one day, I just quit. I stopped. It was March, 2010.

And so I began another phase of reevaluation. Niggling thoughts of what once was drifted in and out of my head. I longed to get back to what I loved to do.

Teaching has always been my first love. I am moved to see the excitement and pleasure when someone learns a new technique or experiences a





Grace



Grace

discovery before unknown to them. It gives me such pleasure to see someone else succeed! I feel like a mother hen, watching her chicks grow pin feathers and strut! Over the years I have served on forums and art groups as a mentor for those just coming to this for the first time- or lending a helping hand to seasoned artists who are stuck; to give them ideas to get 'unstuck' because we've all been there at one time or another. For many years I worked free lance for a large company doing product testing, teaching, demonstrating, and research and development, and through that process learned a great deal about the technical aspects of polymer clay. I can share that experience with other artists and still field questions today when someone writes to ask, "Is it ok if I bake this clay at a lower temperature?" "No, it's not ok," I answer and then patiently explain to them exactly why that doesn't work.

Over the years I have been featured on television, I've written articles for magazines, How To tip sheets for manufacturers, tutorials for artists and have been interviewed and had my art featured on magazine covers. A lot can happen in 25 years, and it has.

And I taught myself how to build a website. Amazing all by itself if you ask me, I knew nothing about computers and my kids still tease me about my three fingered typing. I don't care. I am still in awe of this fabulous new vehicle that will take us right into the future. And I want to be in the driver's seat.

Online classes, a New Beginning. I began my polymer clay career teaching seminars in 1989 and I hope I can end my career, some day in the far off future, still

teaching people but this time; this time my audience is World Wide thanks to computers and the internet. Could it possibly get any more exciting than that? What an amazing opportunity!!!

In 2010 I was asked to assume the duties as President of International Art Doll Registry- an online group of like minded artists who come together to learn and nurture one another and help to promote our art. I started there with a few classes in 2011, just to get the experience. I continue to offer classes there today.

In 2011 I was asked by Adele Sciortino to teach classes at A for Artistic. I happily agreed. To say I have been blown away by the response to my classes would be a gross understatement. This is beyond my wildest dreams as an artist and as a teacher. But I had to be brave, to let go and to reinvent myself yet again. It is scary and wonderful and so, so exciting. And gratifying to see the success others experience. That is the best part of all, which makes this whole experience come full circle for me.

Recently another well known artist wrote to me and shared this with me. I was moved to tears so I want to share this with you here. Please indulge me. She writes, "Since the first, you alone have set the sculpting standard for me...and that standard is high."

"Your kind willingness to share your hard won techniques without a speck of jealousy is your legacy. A legacy the rest of us should endeavor to follow. And the way you have survived your personal storms was done is classic style.

I believe we are meant to reflect our Creator's light through our own creations. Deb, you are one of His bright lights that this world so desperately needs...And although trauma and drama takes a big, painful bite out of our hearts, it seems to be the only way for our character to be refined into gold. You are a shining example of that."

And it just doesn't get any better than that. Life is Good. ∞



Keira



Flitter



Kaela

# Starting Out

And so, it begins for you as well....

by Deb Wood, Polymer Clay Artist

**I RECALL BEING SO ENTHRALLED** with this exciting new medium I could hardly sleep, but for the ideas streaming through my head. They still do, some 25 years later actually, causing me many sleepless nights. If this is you also, know that you are not alone and your reaction is normal! At least in the view from another clay addict, that is! Write down your ideas even if they sound foolish at the time. Keep a journal. You never know when that idea might prove useful.

Once you begin, you will be so eager for information! Gather as much as you can from all different sources – and as far as tutorials and lessons are concerned, take classes from artists whose work you admire, first of all. Then look into their history and reputation in the business to make sure they are giving you trustworthy information. Do your research; it will save you a great deal of time later if you don't have to “unlearn” unsound techniques and practices.

Do your own experimenting and testing of products. You will learn far more valuable information if you try things for yourself and also, it will stay with you. Don't just take someone's word for it, test! Then keep a journal of that information as well. If you try blending clays, stick to blending clays from the same manufacturer and keep track of the portions; write all that down so you will remember later if you strike on a new favorite recipe! You will appreciate being able to remember what you put into that blend. And remember, it is not advisable to blend clays from different manufacturers that have different baking requirements because the results can be unsatisfactory.

If your goal is to create realistic figures, do your research on this as well. Study as much as you can about the human body, how it works; how the muscles overlay the bones, etc. Study anatomy books. Look online for anatomy references. Keep files. Watch people! Watch how the body moves. I would spend hours watching TV programs as I worked in my studio. David Letterman was a favorite because the famous actresses would come on the set, usually dressed in revealing gowns and have animated conversations with Dave. I would watch how their shoulders moved, their collarbones, how their arms looked in different positions, how their hands moved and what the wrist looked like when their hand was in a certain position. Lock these images into your memory...

As you learn more, you will do better. As your perspective and vision becomes keener, you will be amazed at the subtle nuances you will pick up. Study the faces of elders, to see how the skin ages, wrinkles and sags. I vividly recall sitting in church and studying with fascination the back of the man's neck in front of me. I remember thinking his aged, tanned skin looked exactly like a ginger snap cookie. You just don't forget things like that...

Cut pictures from magazines and save them in files, sort by 'Adult Beautiful Woman', 'Children', 'Babies' 'Toddlers', 'Adult



Men', 'Young Boys', 'Mature Woman', 'Fantasy', etc. Then save pictures of poses and beautiful fashion for costuming ideas also. Vogue and other high style magazines are known for their advertisements, use that to your advantage and save those professionally photographed images.

And then, after you have done ALL that homework, do what makes you happy. J

Some start out by watching what other artists are doing, what they are selling and what large sums of money well done, interesting work will bring. They want that same success. Of course, we all do. But that artist did his or her homework too, and came up through the ranks to achieve their success, and you can too.

You may hope to emulate someone's style or something like it, but the truth is, buyers are drawn to honesty. Discerning collectors can see the true spirit in artwork and they are drawn to that, to that pure energy, and what stirs emotion in THEM moves them to want to have that piece of art for themselves. Imitation doesn't do that....it feels counterfeit – and they can sense it.

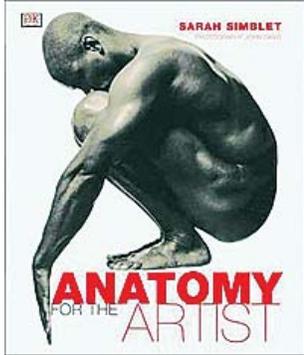
So do what you love, do it well and even if you never sell one piece of artwork in your life, at least your efforts will be honest and true. I believe that is paramount to selling anyway. Just enjoy the process and be happy doing what you're doing! If you do, the rest follows naturally.

...And you will be so much better for it.

Good Luck, and Enjoy! ∞

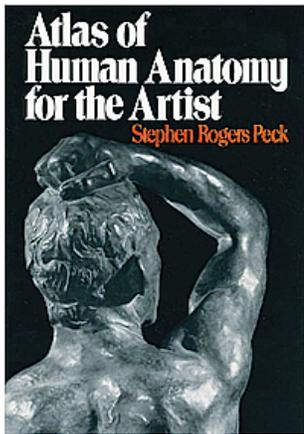
Books to Add to Your Home Library...

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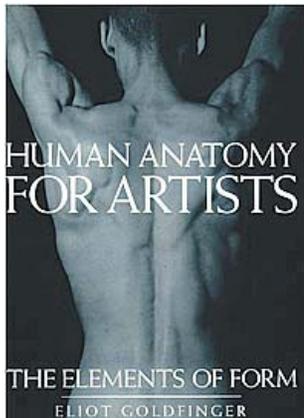
Sarah Simblet  
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Eliot Goldfinger  
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ISBN-13: 978-0195052060  
The power of the image of the nude--the expressivity of the flesh--has inspired artists from the beginning. An understanding of human form is essential for artists to be able to express themselves with the figure. Anatomy makes the figure.

*Thank You!*

*We would like to sincerely thank all those who so generously donated to our newsletter this past quarter, and helped to make this issue possible:*

*Cynthia Hannum – US*

*Barbara Leftwich – Canada*

*Sheila Lynn – US*

*If you would like to donate something towards the cost of putting out our quarterly newsletter, please contact*

**Adele Sciortino;**

**adele@adelesciortino.com**



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