

artistprofile

by *Deb Wood*
Polymer Clay Artist

when you know more...

Ice Queen
(face detail)

*When you know more,
you do better*

Deb Wood



Ice Queen



“When you know more, you do better.” I am probably paraphrasing here, but this is a well known quote from the late, fabulous Maya Angelou. And it’s true, don’t you think? It’s true in Life and it’s true in Art. The more we know (learn) the better we do, because our eyes are opened to the possibilities.

When we are raising our children, it’s common for us to do things and react to things based on how we were raised and how our parents reacted. Whether that is a ‘good’ thing- or a ‘bad’ thing-it is certainly a very personal thing; and we don’t know the difference....until we learn more. Only then can we do better; or else we are destined to repeat our history. Maybe the way Mom always did it isn’t the best way after all. But until we open



our minds to that possibility, we are likely to repeat what we already know and no more.

The same holds true with Art. Of course, there are those among us who will argue that art is subjective and open to each person’s interpretation and therefore, never incomplete or underdeveloped or ‘wrong’. Of course. But as artists, (and as we already know we are our own worst critics anyway) we too must look at what we create with an objective eye and ask ourselves, “Is this the best I can do?” And based on where you are in your training, that answer most likely will be ‘yes’, or ‘I think so’.

And then we learn more.



Joria

And we can do better. We will evolve and we will be able to see the imperfections in our work. That alone can be humbling and frustrating. There will come a time where, in your training as an artist, you can look at your work and know that something is off, but you can't quite put your finger on what it is. That's where experience comes in. You may gain experience and training in an art class, a college course or in your own trials and experiments. It really doesn't matter as long as you are striving to increase your base of knowledge and learn more about your medium. And once you do, you will be able to see where those flaws lie and do something to correct them or do better the next time because you now realize where you are stumbling. You can see it because you are aware; you are enlightened. You know more.

Personally I have always strived to learn more and do better in all aspects of my life. Naturally there are times when we get complacent and actually become lazy as artists- yes; we all do it at some point in our lives and I am guilty of this too. During those times I know I am being lazy and falling back on what I already know. It's ok as long as you don't stay stuck there for too long. I consider this a time to rest; to regroup. Then after we've been in our safe zone for a while, we can get brave and branch out again. This often coincides with learning a new technique or finding out about a new product that brings us quickly and eagerly back to the table. You know, we get enthused again. I love it when that happens! It's inspiring and very, very necessary. It feeds our soul.

Kaluana



I hope I can be a guide to others in this process and I humbly accept this challenge. Teaching classes in my medium, polymer clay, has been a blessing to me for more than 25 years now. When I think back on all those years, they are a blur, yet

it seems like just yesterday when I first discovered this medium and thought, "WHAT IS THIS?" Ah, little did I know that small package of polymer clay would forever change my life.

It has opened doors for me that I wouldn't have even been lucky enough to stand at before. It has allowed me to travel the country, meeting people from all walks of life. I have taught seminars in the fanciest studios and homes across the country and I have taught in a studio that had a goat pen attached to it! Literally! The goats were adorable, by the way....

I've met the most famous of doll artists and viewed the work of top names in the industry on this journey- most of them as humble and down to earth as they could possibly be. How lucky for me to spend a week with the late, great Robert McKinley, to sit with him in the evenings and enjoy dinner where we could discuss the mysteries of our art. He was an amazing man in so many ways. Bob also realized the importance of teaching and sharing what we know with others. I strive to do for others as he did for me, and that is to pass along any information that helps others gain momentum with their process. He challenged me and I am grateful for that.

So from the humble roots of a goat farm to the classiest studio, the message is the same.

***“Learn more.
Do better.”***

This has been my motto and is my goal for this time in my life.



Talullah



COVER IMAGE

To broaden my own horizons in sharing with others, I began teaching classes online in 2009, dabbling with it to learn the ropes. In 2010 I accepted the position as President of International Art Doll Registry, a group of like minded OOAK artists spanning the globe. After developing my flagship program, "Sculpting the Female Form" in 2012 with over 300 pages of instruction, I began teaching online in earnest in January 2013 at both I.A.D.R. and also at A for Artistic and have been going strong ever since. This fabulous vehicle, the Internet, allows me to reach so many more eager students than I ever could before. From the most remote villages in Alaska to the farthest southern tip of Africa, we gather together in cyberspace to learn and enjoy our craft. I am in awe of the power of this vehicle.

To understand a little more of how I arrived to where I am today- I look back and reflect. All I wanted to do was be creative, my entire life, it's all I remember. We read this often in interviews with artists, they remember always being fascinated with art- and this holds true for me as well. I guess we really are born with it. It is a gift and we ought not ignore it.

As a child, it occupied my days, as a teen it consumed me. English and History were so boring! But Art Class, now that was something to dig into and strive to learn more. That captivated my attention. And I guess we were bonded as blood brother and sister, my first art teacher and me, when I accidentally stabbed him with an Exacto knife my first day in class. Yes, it's true. Thank goodness he forgave me and allowed me to stay!



Flitter



Noelle

Then as a young married woman and mother, my artwork kept me sane in the daily routine of raising kids and keeping a household running.

I consider those my most formidable years, truly, for that was when I first learned about polymer clay.



Hunter



That was 1988. It was a medium that was new to me, and was certainly new to the area where I lived, so I took it upon myself to introduce it to anyone willing to give me a few moments. Art Shows, Craft Shows, Community Ed classes, the local craft store, anything, anywhere- I was talking about and promoting this exciting 'new thing'.

It turns out it wasn't new at all, the clay has been around since WWII. But I didn't know anything about it and really, not too many others did either, as this was during the 1980's after all, and many artists were just becoming familiar with the medium.

I do recall walking into a Doll Shop that specialized in One of a Kind Art Dolls, in Phoenix, Arizona. When I expressed an interest in the OoAK dolls, the shop owner proudly showed me



an Anna Abigail Brahm's doll made from polymer clay that was a special commission. Price tag? 5 figures. WOW. Who knew? If I wasn't already hooked, I certainly would be then!

Through the years, I sought to learn more, to do better. With each milestone I reached, I set new goals and strived to reach those. Eventually my customers encouraged me to get my work into reproduction. Can you even imagine how daunting that sounded? Let alone to go ahead and do it. But after a life-changing event in 1994 when my daughter was critically injured in a car accident, I had to rethink my process and decided to step out of the safety zone I had created for myself and take things to the next level.



Livia