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## **RECAP: Beyond Technique**

What is the role of Technique? Do we have a tendency to treat Technique as an end-point as some of you have asked in the forum? This discussion has animated the wider polymer clay community for some time. It was a lesson for the participants of the Synergy 2 conference in 2010 who were urged to be concerned less with Technique and use polymer as a medium of expression. Have we, as artists, taken the advice on board, or to the contrary, have we become even more Technique focused?

Mastery of Technique and Design does not an artist make. Vision does. Art is expressing your Vision. Communication and/or expression are the end-points. Technique, design, work habits, etc. we bend to our will as artists.

So why look at Technique?

Because this is where we began when we first encountered polymer clay and it is therefore our best developed and understood resource. It's that primal contact with the material that made us realise we could be creative. As we started working with the material, we started asking questions about what we liked. Do we like precise and replicable ways of working or do we prefer a technique that approaches clay loosely with a degree of chance? Do we like the hollow form, layers, textures, patterns, lines, etc.? To reflect on the techniques we like is to use them as instruments of self-exploration. And so, if we are grappling with Vision, if we find it difficult to decide what we want to express or communicate in our art, Technique (like Design) can be bent to our desire to explore our internal and external world.

The Technique Deepening exercise was the first opportunity in the course to get you to impose your will on your techniques. You would have unearthed, not only new variations on your techniques, but also brought out new artistic depths. You controlled the technique; the technique didn't control you. We will continue to push beyond Technique by broadening our creative repertoire with what I call Technique Fusion.

## **WEEK 4: Technique Fusion**

The purpose of Technique Fusion is to stop you from compartmentalising your techniques. The same way fusion cuisine combines different culinary traditions, Technique Fusion takes autonomous techniques and brings them together to create something new.

The Showcase provides examples of Technique Fusion: Kathleen Dustin's pieces combine the autonomous techniques of caning, texturing, sculpting, image transfer and wire wrapping. In Bomba, I combined my Hollow Beads and Butterfly techniques. Annie Pennington, and Linda Steinworth combine a variety of materials and their associated techniques.

It goes without saying that bringing any techniques together won't necessarily achieve success. For Fusion to work, the techniques must integrate - they must produce synergy. This is the creative challenge as you move beyond Technique.

Technique Fusion produces synergy in different ways:

1) The aesthetic level by creating or enhancing contrast or harmony. For example, in White Summer, Sonya uses a variety of techniques to produce a rhythm and a mood. Kathleen's untitled piece creates impact and dynamics through contrast.

2) The emotional level by heightening feelings. For example, in Grass and Pods Necklace, Kathleen's tapestry of techniques recreates the exuberant richness and joyful profusion of textures and shapes present in the botanical world.

3) The message level by reinforcing what you are trying to express. In Bomba, the "ears" are like wings that will carry the pregnant pods and their precious cargo far from the tree. The ears enhance the message of the pods.

Fusion can be used as an instrument of exploration when you are grappling with Vision. Ask yourself what is happening when you combine autonomous techniques together. Are the aesthetics enhanced? Are the emotions expressed more powerfully? Is the message clearer? As you make choices, think about why you are making these choices and how they are enhancing your Vision.

## **Week 4 – Assignment: Looking for Fusion in your own work**

Place pieces you created during the Technique Deepening exercise in front of you. Paw through your pieces, in particular through your stash of rejects, pieces that didn't work, abandoned projects, and find a piece using a different technique. Put the two pieces side by side. Do you see the possibility for combining them in any of the three possible levels; aesthetic, emotional and message level. If so, how can you combine them to produce something new. If this isn't working, try something new until a combination clicks. Make notes and sketches.

Go to the Forums and share how you're doing. Don't hesitate to ask for help. Create a New Topic using this forum: <http://voila.eu.com/forums/Forum/week-4-fusion/>