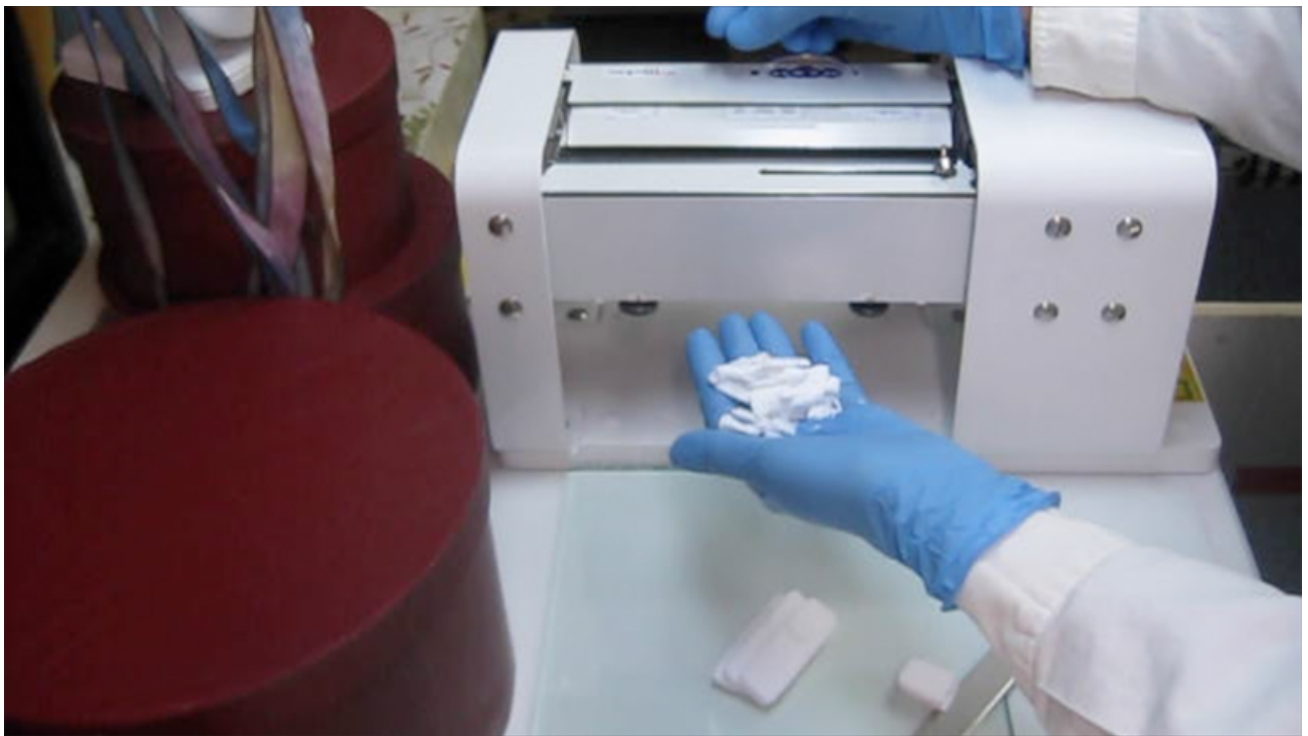


# Polymer Clay Journey

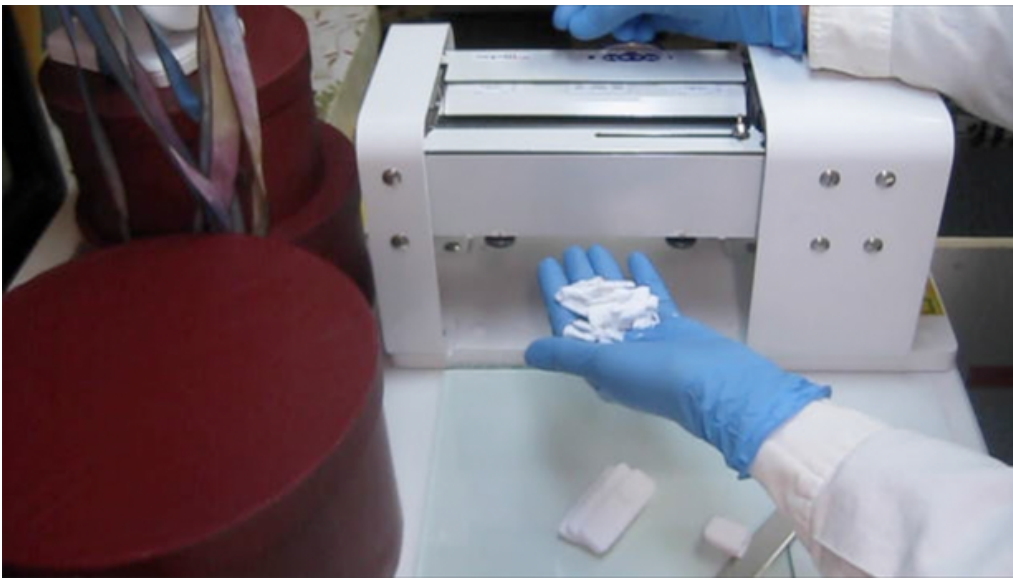
One artist's adventure

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

## Conditioning Crumbly Polymer Clay



Date: January 14, 2017 Author: Phyllis Cahill © 8 Comments



Sometimes you get an old, dry, crumbly package of polymer clay. Or sometimes the clay you're working with is really firm and sensitive to pressure, such as Pardo Art Clay. You want it to retain its inherent firmness, not become soft or sticky.

I was trying to hand-condition some yellow Pardo Art Clay and all it did was crumble. I'd successfully hand-conditioned translucent Pardo Art Clay, but this yellow looked like grated cheese. I was getting frustrated.

So, I reread Ginger Davis Allman's post on How to Condition Pardo Translucent Art Clay and her phrase, "Pardo doesn't fully condition until you make it super thin" stuck with me. She also said that polymer clay is thixotropic. "This means that when you apply a sudden stress to the material, it will often fracture rather than yield... If you stretch it really slowly, it will easily stretch and flow."

This gave me the idea to just use the clay machine and gradually make the clay really thin before conditioning it. The ten minute video below shows the process using translucent Pardo Art Clay.

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First, I cut new slices from the block of polymer clay. Without folding or doubling them, I gradually made them 0.5mm thin. Then, I was able to condition the clay. It became supple and I could fold it without breaking and eventually make it the thickness I wanted.

I tried it with other colors of Pardo and some hard Cernit and Kato and it also worked. So this is my new method of conditioning really firm clay. It's not mess-free, but the clay comes together.

If the clay is stubbornly dry, there are always the products in the photo below to mix into the crumbs. I prefer the soft mixes because they're less messy than the liquids. Soft translucent clay also works. I've also heard of using mineral oil or baby oil, but haven't tried them.



**Emergency help for dry polymer clay.**

I try to mix Kato Liquid Polyclay with Kato clay, Fimo Mix Quick with Fimo clay, etc. Not that I'm a purist, it's that I'm a novice. Each brand of clay is different and don't want to cause myself problems.



Published by Phyllis Cahill

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## 8 thoughts on “Conditioning Crumbly Polymer Clay”

**Add Comment**

1. Gillian wiseman says:

January 16, 2017 at 3:43 pm

So, do you like your Elephant? Is it fiddly to adjust?

Reply

1. Phyllis Cahill says:

January 16, 2017 at 3:59 pm

I love it. The adjusting takes a little getting used to, but I don't think much about it anymore.

Reply

2. **nancy lotzer says:**

**February 20, 2017 at 1:00 am**

I've had wonderful results when adding tiny amounts of Sculpy Mold Maker to soften Premo. I'll stress the "tiny amount". I usually only need about a pea size amount to a 2 ounce package. I add the Mold Maker to a small portion of the clay by hand then gradually add the rest of the stiff clay by machine. Works well for me.

Reply

1. **Phyllis Cahill says:**

**February 20, 2017 at 1:02 am**

I'm not familiar with Sculpey Mold Maker. I'll have to check it out. Thanks!

Reply

3. **Tanya Burton says:**

**February 24, 2017 at 5:57 pm**

This post will save countless hours spent conditioning clay and give me more time to actually make stuff. I really like how you share your lessons learned. Great blog!

Reply

1. **Phyllis Cahill says:**

**February 24, 2017 at 7:51 pm**

Thanks, Tanya! This method has helped me to not pull my hair out. I know that even though it may be crumbly, it usually comes together if I don't force it.

Reply

4. **Susan Bowerman says:**

**February 8, 2018 at 9:28 pm**

Another great read. Thank you for the tips!

Reply

1. **Phyllis Cahill says:**

**February 8, 2018 at 10:13 pm**

Thanks again!

Reply