

## STUDY GUIDE

Polymer clay is a relatively new plastic clay that can be permanently hardened in a home oven at approximately 275 degrees for 20-30 minutes.

Helpful tips:

- Never use a microwave oven! It will burn and destroy polymer clay.
- Rest the clay on aluminum foil or ceramic or glass baking dish. Do not use grease or oil as a separator.
- Use wood or foil on the inside of your sculpture to bulk out the figure to conserve on clay.
- Use soft aluminum wire to make armatures.
- Avoid toaster ovens. The heating elements are too close to the clay and can scorch portions of the piece.
- Paint on blush or other powdered pigments onto the clay before baking to permanently colorize the piece.
- After baking you can sand and drill the clay as you would any soft plastic and can also add more clay and rebake the piece to control detail.
- After baking you can paint the piece using water base acrylic paint.
- Never use Enamel paint on the clay as it will react with the clay and make it permanently sticky.
- Never use gloss varnish that is not meant for polymer clay in that it will make the clay sticky as well.
- For figures, sculpt the piece over a wire armature and allow two wire prongs to stick out of the feet. Drill holes in a scrap piece of wood and bake the figure with the foot prong wires inserted in the holes in the wood for support.
- After baking and painting a finished wood base can be purchased and drilled and the figures wire prongs can be glued into place on the finished base.
- Put felt pads on the bottom of the wood base to protect furniture.

## STARTER EXERCISE SCULPTURE # 1: THE OCTOPUS

1. We have learned the basic skill of making tiny uniform cylinders with only our thumb and forefinger. Refine that skill by using only your hands to create 8 long tapered tentacles of identical length.
2. Now create a series of flattened disks that will be the suckers for the tentacles. Remember that the disks will have to get smaller and smaller as they approach the tip of the tentacle.
3. Find several tools similar to a chopstick that can be used to indent the disks to simulate the shape of the suckers.
4. Make a large rounded head and attach the tentacles to it.
5. Make an appropriately sized eyeball out of white clay and prebake it in an oven at 275 degrees for 15 minutes.
6. Insert the prebaked eyeball into the head and using the banana technique as shown in the video create eyelids and a brow.
7. Change the shape of the brow to create the emotion of happy, sad or angry.
8. Pose the tentacles and make a statement with your figure through the use of posture. Have the creature tell a story through its' appearance.
9. Paint the eye using the technique of iris, pupil, reflection and gloss as shown in the video.

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT REVIEW AND FURTHER STUDY.

1. What are the basic foundations of expression? What facial characteristics depict the emotions, happy, sad, anger, curiosity, love?
2. All human beings have good sides and bad sides. Ugly people can be beautiful and beautiful people can be ugly. The truth is what is on the inside. A sculptor's challenge is to portray truth through posture and expression. How can one find beauty in ugliness?
3. What are the characteristics of a hero? Does a hero have to look like Arnold Shwartzenegger? What about a villain? Does a villain have to have a curled up handle bar moustache? Can cliché characteristics be switched?
4. How do we perceive personality in faces with different sized features? What does a big nose say to us? What do big ears say to us?
5. How is emotion expressed in posture? Without words pose your body in a way that expresses an emotion and have others guess the emotion. Use that pose as a guide for the figure.

## FURTHER EXERCISES

1. Make a series of 5 faces. Make each identical except one as a big nose, one has a small nose, one has a medium size nose and big ears, one has a medium size nose and small ears and the last has any combination of ears and nose with a big lower lip.
2. Make a series of 5 faces. Make each identical except one is happy, one is sad, one is angry, one is curious, and one is fearful.
3. Make three full figures. Make one thin, one fat and one old.

## A NOTE ON ANIMATION

If the goal is to animate the figures it is best to use a wax based colored clay that never hardens. A wax clay will stand up to repeated repositioning without requiring as much smoothing to eliminate cracks etc. A wire armature should have cap nuts glued to the feet to allow the figures to be bolted down from below the table stage. A thumbscrew and wing nut are run through a hole drilled in the table into the cap nut and tightened down. In this way the figure does not need to be supported by wires. This tie down procedure can also be used with finished hardened polymer figures to affix them to a variety of bases.

To record animation it is essential that either a film camera or a digital camera be configured to photograph one image or file at one time. Without a single frame recording feature, animation production becomes a very cumbersome editorial procedure entailing the deletion of excess files to ensure that there is only one picture per pose of the figure.

## RESOURCES

### INTERNET

#### **Art-tek.com**

[polymerclayexpress.com](http://polymerclayexpress.com)  
[polymerclayinterest@yahoo.com](mailto:polymerclayinterest@yahoo.com)  
[Research4Life.com](http://Research4Life.com)

#### **Polyform Products Co.**

1901 Estes Avenue  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-5415  
Telephone (847)427-0020  
Manufacturers of Sculpey and Sculpey III

**Eberhard Faber GmbH**  
PO Box 1220  
D-92302 Neumarkt/Germany  
Telephone 09181/43 0-0

### TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

#### **Burman Industries Incorporated**

14141 Covello Street Suite 10C  
Van Nuys, CA 91405  
Telephone (818) 782-9833  
A great place for getting molding rubber, urethanes and plasters.

#### **Kit Kraft**

12109 Ventura Place  
Studio City, CA 91604  
Telephone (818) 509-9739  
A great source for model makers. They carry the almaloy wire.

# BEGINNING ANIMATION VOL 1: SCULPTING CHARACTERS WITH CLAY

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