

Tips from the Artist

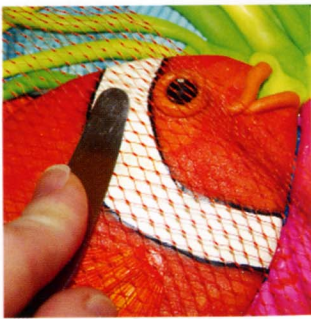


The art in this book was shaped entirely from polymer clay. As a picture book artist and former early childhood arts educator, I believe that polymer clay is a wonderful, friendly, pliable and colorful medium for both children and adults to work with. As a fine artist, I love to create art with an array of colors, patterns and textures, and to make things with my hands - just as children do!

My studio is actually a lot like a Kitchen. In a refrigerator I store the clay. I should say "polymer clay" because it is not like clay dug from the earth, but it is actually a clay-like material. I have a variety of shaping tools including a pasta machine, food processors, cake decorating tools and other utensils. And there is even an oven in which the clay is baked after the pictures are pieced together. The original

art for the pictures in this book are not flat, which is very satisfying to me because it speaks to my love of both sculpting and painting. The art is called a "relief:" sculpted pieces projecting from a flat surface. To create the two-dimensional illustrations for a book, the reliefs are photographed (with careful attention to lighting).

Polymer clay offers children a unique way to communicate their ideas, as well as to experiment with and learn about color mixing. You will find many colors available in art and hobby stores - even some translucent and glow-in-the-dark colors. I suggest that you "play" with a few shaping tools and color mixes yourself - and the children will be right there with their own creative approaches. I like to visit schools and would love to see some of your own creations. Contact me through the "Authors & Illustrators" section of Dawn Publications' website, www.dawnpub.com.



Find the clownfish towards the beginning of this book. Can you see the tiny fish scales on their bodies? I created this texture by pressing a plastic mesh bag that once held cherry tomatoes into the clay.



Look closely at the seahorse on the front cover. Can you see that it is made of little pieces with patterns that look like a kaleidoscope? They are made of "canes" mixed and rolled from different colors of clay, then sliced into thin pieces.



Sometimes I add things to the clay for special effects. Look closely at the background of the stingray picture near the beginning of this book. I created the "sand" by mixing ground black pepper with the clay. It made me sneeze!



Research is often an important part of the art that I create. I conduct my research in many ways. I go to libraries, zoos, museums and anyplace I can go to learn about the subject matter in my pictures. My favorite way to do research is going out in nature. Much of my research for this book was done by exploring an actual coral reef—what an adventure!