

Painted Sunsets on Souffle Polymer Clay

I am known for posting photos of my local beach sunsets and someone challenged me to create a sunset image on polymer clay. Sculpey Souffle is perfect for this because of its suede-like surface that absorbs the inks instead pooling into a dark mess! Alcohol inks call for a little creative thinking in terms of application – a brush can't be used because it will stiffen in minutes with the ink, so I use a long metal needle tool and a small piece of flexible wire to apply the ink!

Supplies:

Souffle Igloo clay – 1 package

Polymer clay tools: Pasta machine, sharp Exacto blade

Alcohol inks – I've used Jacquard Pinata inks: Baja Blue, Tangerine, Santa Fe Red, Sunbright Yellow and White

Long needle tool -I've used a needle tool from the Sculpey Bead Baking Rack

Short piece of flexible coated wire – I've used .18 Beadalon beading wire

Cotton swabs

Small amount of rubbing alcohol

Cutters or plastic templates for cutting out your piece (mine are from Art Clay World)

Small smooth ceramic tile or sheet of glass as a work surface

Getting Started:

Polymer clay may stain. CLAY MAY DAMAGE UNPROTECTED FURNITURE OR FINISHED SURFACES. DO NOT USE polymer clay on unprotected surfaces. We recommend working on the Sculpey clay mat, wax paper, metal baking sheet, or disposable foil. Start with clean hands and work surface area. Knead clay until soft and smooth. For best results, clean your hands in between colors. Shape clay, pressing pieces together firmly. Bake on oven-proof glass or metal surface at 275°F (130 °C) for 30 minutes per ¼" (6 mm) thickness. For best baking results, use an oven thermometer. DO NOT USE MICROWAVE OVEN. DO NOT EXCEED THE ABOVE TEMPERATURE OR RECOMMENDED BAKING TIME. Wash hands after use. Baking should be completed by an adult.

Begin by preheating oven to 275 °F (130 °C). Test temperature with oven thermometer for perfectly cured clay. For best results, condition all clay by running it through the Clay Conditioning Machine for several passes on the widest setting. Fold the clay in half after each pass and insert the fold side into the rollers first.

Step 1:

Roll out about ½ package of the Igloo clay on the widest setting on the pasta machine, then set the machine to the middle setting and roll through again. I aim for a workable area of the clay sheet that is about 3 by 4.

Step 2:

I prefer to work from the bottom up, so I first squeeze a thin line of Tangerine clay for the sand portion at the bottom of the sheet of clay (leave about ¼ inch selvage from the edge of the clay).

Step 3:

Squeeze a thin line of the Baja Blue above the Tangerine, leaving about ¼ inch between the two lines of color.

Step 4:

Squeeze 2 thin lines of the Santa Fe Red ¼ inch above the Baja Blue.

Step 5:

The Tangerine and Baja Blue should be partially absorbed by now so using the long edge of the needle tool, start to blend them together at the edges of the colors. You will probably see a green color emerge at the blend.

Step 6:

Blend the Santa Fe Red and the Baja Blue in the same manner. Add another thin line of Baja Blue above the Santa Fe Red and allow it to absorb before blending it.

Step 7:

Once the Santa Fe Red is no longer pooled on the surface of the clay (absorbed but still damp), add a drop of the Sunshine Yellow toward the left edge of the inks in the red area. Dip a cotton swab into the rubbing alcohol and rub this yellow in a small circular pattern to create a sun effect. Repeat at the right side of the inks if you have room to cut out two pieces.

Step 8:

Adding the white caps – Squeeze a drop of the white ink out on a non-porous disposable surface (a clay wrapper works great!) Dip the front edge of the wire in the ink and use this edge to apply the white for the waves and the sun reflection by gently pulling the wire back and forth across the selected area in short strokes.

At this point these may not look like sunsets images at all!

Step 9:

Allow the ink to dry on the surface of the clay it just takes a few moments to set up on the surface.

Step 10:

Once the inks are dry to the touch, use your cutters or templates to define the area you want to use and trim them out.

Step 11:

Bake the finished pieces as described above and allow them to cool thoroughly. Add a bezel or perhaps just use a gold marker to finish the edges of the clay before adding a bail to the piece.