



LEARN TO MAKE
A POLYMER CLAY MERMAID
WITH

Nemifar Blanco



Thank you for purchasing this book!

I'm Rosa Grueso, the creator of Nenúfar Blanco.

In this, my third book, I will teach you how to create a polymer clay mermaid following my own techniques, you will see every step I take during the creation process with many pictures and very easy to follow detailed instructions. You will learn tricks and I will give you useful tips based on my own experiences.

It's not necessary to have a wide knowledge of anatomy and experience in sculpting. I didn't have it when I started years ago, I am completely self-taught and I've learned by dint of observing, experimenting, a lot of practice and intuition. I have never taken any classes, I had no access to books or tutorials and it was very difficult to find information on techniques and materials, let alone in my own language. For this reason, I have endeavored to make the most comprehensive tutorial possible with all the information that I would've wished to have when I started.

You have my permission to reproduce this mermaid. In fact, by copying, is the only way we have of learning. In order to develop your own style, I recommend you to look works from various artists, draw inspiration from diverse sources, observe much and then recreate everything you have observed, always from memory.

Do things that particularly appeal to you and things with which you identify most, do not do things because you think that are popular and will please others. If you're a beginner, it is normal that everything seems to be very complicated at first, practice a lot and do not give up if you do not obtain the results you want. If you are really eager to learn and you love this art form, I'm sure you will be able to create amazing things.

I hope all the information in this book will be helpful to you.
My native language is not English, so I apologize in advance for any grammar mistake.
Thank you!

~Rosa

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Chapter 1

Polymer clay

What is Polymer Clay?

Polymer clay is a malleable and flexible modelling paste. It's mostly made of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) as well as colour pigments and plasticizer oil. It's not air-drying like other clays. To harden it, you have to bake it in a domestic oven at a temperature of 100°C 130°C.

It is a very versatile medium that can be used for many projects and even exists in liquid form. It is available in many colors: opaque, translucent, fluorescent, metallic, with glitter and granite texture. All colors can be mixed together.

Polymer clay can be stored for a long time as long as we keep it well stored in a glass or metal container and preserve it from dust and sunlight.

There are many polymer clay brands in the market, the most used among professional artists are: [®]Fimo, Super Sculpey[®], Living Doll[™], Premo![®], Cernit[®], Kato[™], ProSculpt[®], etc. Each brand has its own qualities, and choosing a brand depends on each one preference, so I recommend you to try and experiment with several brands to find the one that best suits your needs.

The brand I use for years is [®]Fimo Classic, specifically the colour #43, after having tried all the brands I mentioned above and more, and after a long process of trial-and-error, certainly is my favourite. I like its texture when handling, neither too soft nor too hard, and once baked, its colour is nice, never appears moonies* and, most important, is very strong if it suffers an accidental blow.

Recently [®]Fimo Classic color #43 is being discontinued and now the same clay has been renamed [®]Fimo Professional Color Cameo Doll Art.



* Small white spots shaped as half moon or circle caused by an air bubble trapped inside the sculpture.

Chapter 2

Clay conditioning and blending

When you open a polymer clay block for the first time, the clay is stiff and not pliable, if you try to work with it, you'll notice that it's hard, it splits and crumbles. Therefore, it's important conditioning the clay before use. With the warmth of your own hands and a process of stretching, rolling and kneading, the clay will change to a softer and pliable texture.

In winter days when the clay is very cold, you'll need more time to condition it, but remember, do it only with the heat of your hands, do not put in the oven or microwave, because it will bake.

If you have old clay and it's too stiff for you to work with it, you can blend it with new fresh clay, this will soften the clay. You can also add a few drops of mineral oil or clay softener like Mix-quick of [®]Fimo or Liquid Softener of Sculpey[®].

However, if you notice the clay is too soft, you can harden it with a leaching process, which is nothing more than removing some of the plasticizer oils it contains. To do this, make a ball with the clay you are going to use, place it between two sheets of paper and stack some books or other heavy objects on top. Leave it for several hours or overnight, this will absorb the excess plasticizers in the clay firming it up.

Many artists make their own clay mixture to achieve the desired tone, but it can also be used directly without blending, and once baked give the skin tone you want with paints. Mixing different brands is not a problem as long as the baking times and temperatures recommended by the manufacturer are the same.

As I said above, I am satisfied with the colours of the clay that I use, and I don't need to blend, except when I want to get a darker or paler skin tone.

Below I will show briefly how to do it by mixing the clay that I will use to create the mermaid.

PROCESS:

1. Start by choosing the clay you want to blend.
2. Cut the clay into small pieces.



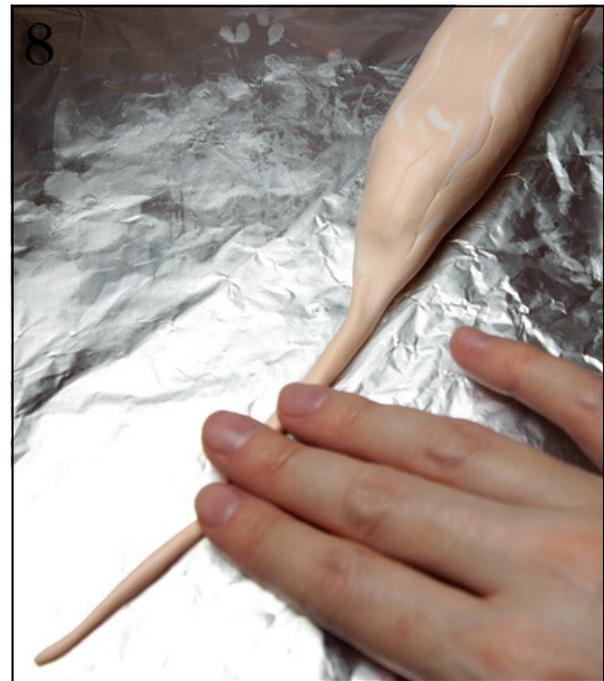
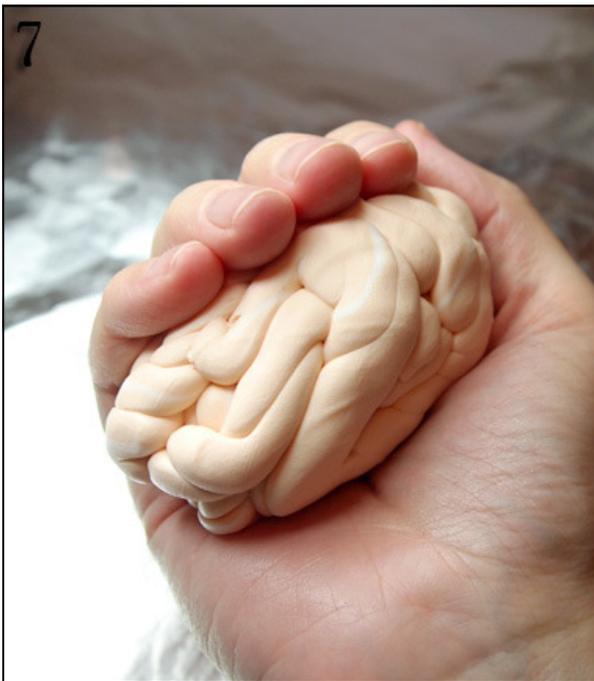
3. Make a big ball with all the clay pieces.
4. Cut the ball in half.



5. *Knead well each of the halves and stretch the clay forming a long thin cylinder.*
6. *Once you have made both cylinders, roll them up together.*



7. *Knead with your hands all the clay you have rolled, making a ball.*
8. *Stretch again all the clay making an even thinner cylinder.*



9. When you're done, you should have a pile of clay like this one.
10. Again, knead all clay forming a large cylinder and roll it up, as shown in the picture.



11. Continue stretching and rolling up the clay until it's an uniform colour, without leaving lighter or darker streaks.
12. When you're done, you can make a big ball, a cylinder or split it into portions, wrap in transparent film and store in a plastic container, metal or glass, and have ready for use whenever you need it.



Chapter 3

Tools and supplies

Here is a representation of the materials and tools you'll need to create this mermaid and any polymer clay sculpture in general.

In addition, at the beginning of each chapter, I will show you the specific tools you'll need and some more detailed descriptions.

In the last chapter, you will find links to trusted store sites where I usually buy supplies.

♦ ♦ ♦

Polymer clay:

The basic colours that should never lack are: flesh (the tone you prefer), white and translucent.



Oven and thermometer:

Though you can bake polymer clay in your kitchen oven, I recommend purchasing one specific to it. A tabletop convection oven is ideal. Do not forget a thermometer to calibrate the temperature.



Hair:

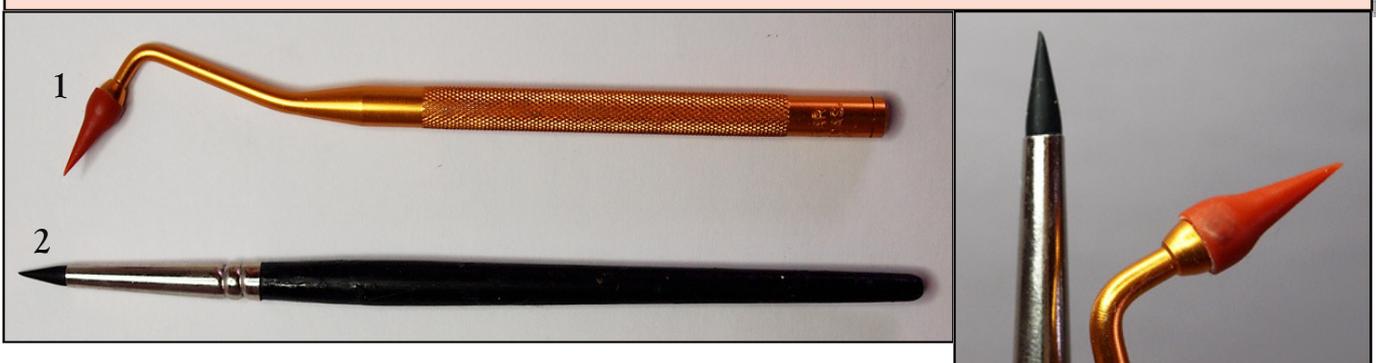
The hair that I usually use for my sculptures is: Tibetan lamb hair¹, Alpaca hair², Tussah silk³ and Coopworth sheep wool⁴. Alpaca hair and Coopworth wool are sold in locks cutted from the live animal. Tibetan lamb hair is sold in plates with the skin, is a byproduct, this means that the animal was slaughtered for meat, **not** for skin; I always buy it white colour to dye it myself to my own taste; you can also find it under the name of 'Mongolian fur'. Tussah silk is also called 'viscose'.

**Tools (modelling sticks and spatulas):**

Although most of time you will use your own fingers to sculpt, you will also need some modelling sticks or spatulas. They can be metallic or wooden. These are what I use: a rounded thin tip steel spatula, and two sticks of acacia hardwood in different shapes and size.

**Tools (Fine and flexible silicone point):**

Fine silicone point tools are essential for sculpting and marking the most delicate parts. Tool (1) is an instrument used in dental hygiene. Tool (2) is a silicone brush (Color Shaper) size #0, both are flexible and firm.



Tools (ball stylus):

Ball stylus tools (or embossing tools) are very useful for sculpting, you will need them in various sizes, and are easy to find at crafts, fine arts and nail-art stores.

**Tools (cutting):**

Round or flat nose pliers, cutting pliers, scissors and a X-acto knife, this one is also necessary to sculpt.

**Linoleum cutter:**

Linoleum cutters are a sort of mini chisel tool, it's perfect for making mermaid scales. It can be purchased in art and DIY stores, etc.

**Tools (brushes):**

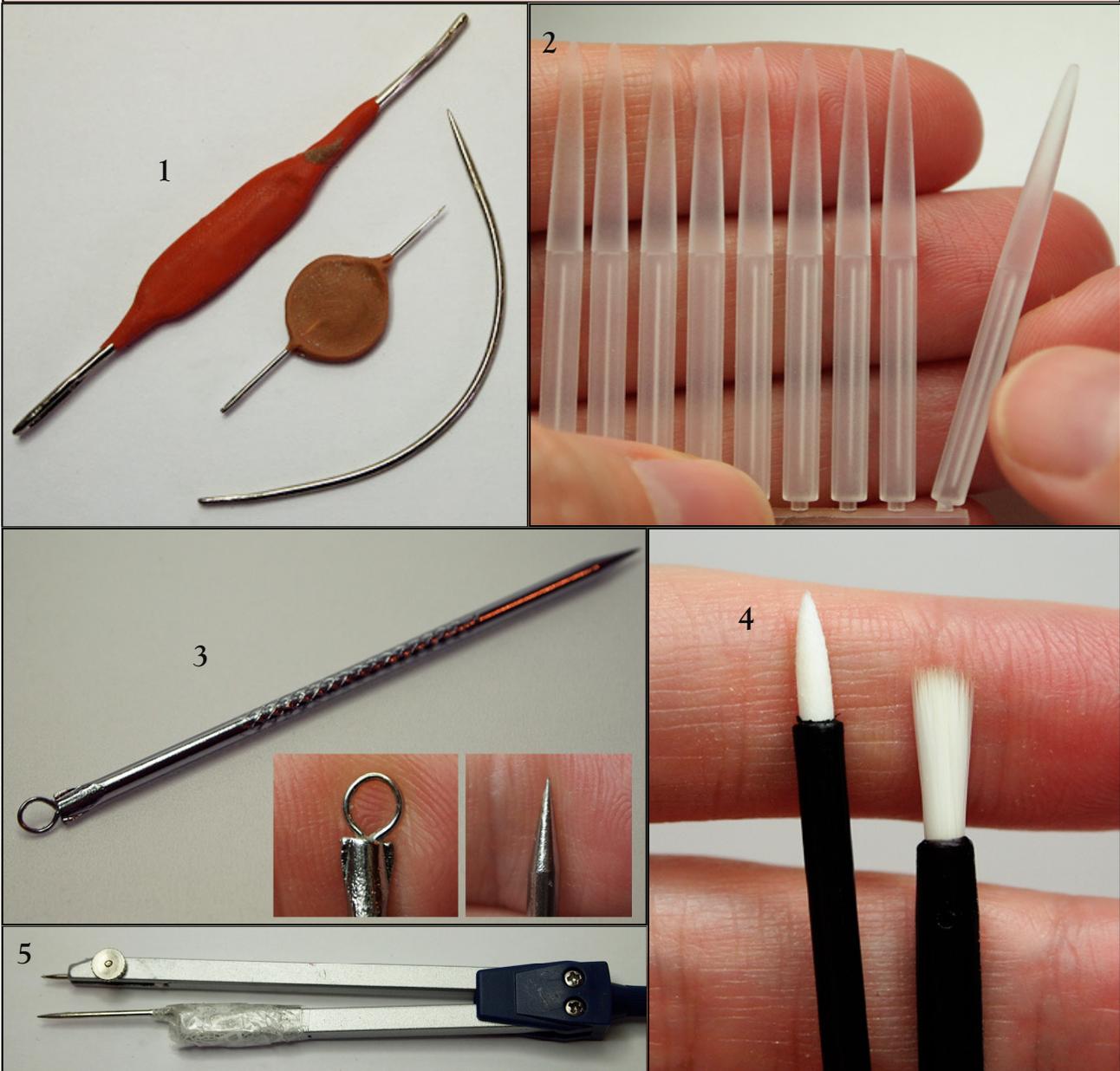
You will need brushes in different sizes and shapes for painting the sculpture, applying varnish and even for modeling and smoothing the clay.



Other tools:

There are other tools that, although they are for other particular use, can be very useful for sculpting and such. Here are some examples:

- Needles₁**: Needles in different sizes. You can make a polymer clay handle to make them easy to grip.
- Toothpicks₂**: For years now, these flat plastic toothpicks have become a must tool for me, ideal for sculpting small areas, features, hands, etc. Wooden toothpicks are useful for applying glue, paint, etc., but do not use them for sculpting because they are usually porous and rough.
- Blackhead remover**: Blackhead removers are very common cosmetology instruments. They come in several different shapes, but specifically the one in the picture, can be used as a modelling loop tool and its fine point and size are perfect.
- Disposable makeup brushes**: Mini-brushes applicators for cosmetic use, although they are disposable you can clean them and reuse several times, ideal for its quality and small size for painting, smoothing clay, cleaning, etc.
- Drafting Compass₅**: To take measures, mainly facial features, I've modified a common compass, adding a needle instead of the mine.



Paint:

Genesis[®]₁ is the most used paint for adding blush to sculptures. It is an oil painting that only dries when applying heat between 121°C and 138°C, can be dried in the oven or with a heat gun. You can also apply color with Chalk pastels₂, I recommend the brand I use: Crafter-T. And of course, acrylic₃ paint should never be missing, though I do not like to use it for painting sculptures, it is very useful for small decorations, bases, etc.

What you should NEVER use to paint is nail polish, because its components make the clay to soften and dissolve over time.

**Varnish:**

Another essential medium is varnish, matte and glossy, in addition to use it as a sealer and a brightness coating, it is also useful for applying glitter, pigments, microbeads, etc.

**Resins:**

3D Crystal Lacquer is similar to an acrylic varnish with three-dimensional effect, it has many uses, among them, for creating nails.

Gel du Soleil™ is the medium I use to make eyes, it cures at sunlight or UV lamp.



Pigments:

Powder color pigments are ideal for mixing with varnish or apply directly on the piece for adding luster or a metallic shade. I always use Pearl-Ex™ brand, but there are others.

**Glitter:**

A hint of glitter adds a magical touch to each creation. They come in different shapes and colours: opaques, translucents, micro-fine, hexagonal shaped, etc.

**Microbeads:**

Microbeads are an embellishment element widely used in crafts. There come in many colours and sizes, opaque, transparent, metallic, etc. Microbeads can be applied to the piece with glue or varnish.

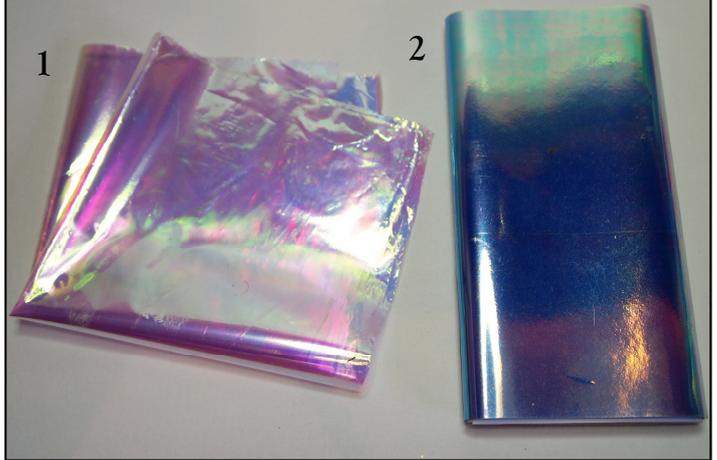


Wires:

Wires are necessary to create the armature, for fins and wings and other decorations such as tiaras, etc.

**Iridescent cellophane or Angelina Film:**

Iridescent cellophane₁ or Angelina Film₂ are used for creating wings, fins, etc. Both materials are very similar, the main difference is that Angelina Film is slightly thicker and stiffer besides to being thermofusible.

**UV Lamp:**

It is necessary to cure the epoxy resin used for making eyes.

**Floral tape:**

Slightly sticky tape used to cover the armatures wires. It is preferable to use white or flesh colored.

**Heat gun:**

It is used for drying paint, baking liquid polymer clay, to shrink cellophane, etc.



Adhesives:

The ideal adhesive for everything is white glue₁, and for attaching hair, a specific fabric glue, my favorites are Fabri-Tac and No-Sew₂.

**Liquid polymer clay:**

For creating fins and wings, scales and decorations in general.

**Other:**

You will also need to have on hand aluminium foil₁ for the armature, cotton swabs₂ for cleaning, a sponge₃ for blurring paint and sandpaper or a nail buffing file₄ for sanding.

**Acetone, oil and water:**

Acetone or nail polish remover₁ is what I use to clean the clay. Oil₂ (can be mineral or vegetable) has several uses, I mainly use it to mix with water₃ and apply while sculpting to smooth clay.



Chapter 4

Safety tips

Polymer clay manufacturers certify that is NON toxic and, although I am a person very concerned about synthetic chemical substances in our environment, and I try to avoid them as far as possible in my home, food and cosmetics, I think polymer clay is not dangerous at all, provided that you take into account some basic rules and certain precautions must be taken:

- While working with polymer clay, clean your hands often with cleansing wipes, this way, besides cleaning your hands, you will also avoid the clay from becoming dirty. Avoid touching your mouth, eating or drinking. Wash your hands thoroughly when finished handling the clay, especially if you're going to cook or eat. Hands can be washed simply with soap and water, and it's recommended always cleaning your nails with a brush. If you notice that water and soap does not eliminate all residues, try to apply hand sanitizer, since alcohol containing dilute the clay. Another very effective method is to apply oil (mineral or vegetable), rub your hands and then wash them with dish soap.
- It is recommended baking the clay in a well-ventilated place and it's also very important not to exceed the baking temperature indicated by the manufacturer, because the clay could be toasted, literally, and if that happens toxic fumes of hydrochloric acid are released. I recommend you to read the instructions for each manufacturer, each brand needs a different temperature and baking times. To avoid any possibility of burning clay, buy an oven thermometer and calibrate the oven you are going to use. Although polymer clay can be baked in a domestic oven, it is preferable you buy one specific to do so if you are going to use it very often.
- In plastic arts, many potentially hazardous chemicals are used such as paints, varnishes, spray adhesives, embossing powders, etc. Try using latex gloves whenever you can or barrier creams such as Travabon[®] (ointment that forms a layer on the skin that prevents harmful substances to penetrate in the epidermis) and use a dust mask when working with mediums that could cause damage if inhaled. Wear also the mask whenever you are dry-sanding or polishing polymer clay (you can also do it underwater) and avoid inhaling the tiny particles that flow. Ventilate well your working place at least 10 minutes a day and you can also place some indoor plants, there are some that, apart from providing color and beauty, also purifies and cleans the air by absorbing volatile chemicals.



(1) *Spathiphyllum* (2) *Sansevieria* (3) *Pothos* (4) *Chlorophytum*
 (5) Cleansing wipes (6) Hand-sanitizer (7) Dust mask (8) Gloves

- Unbaked clay can damage wooden furniture, if you are going to work over a wooden table, place a ceramic tile, glass plate or aluminum foil on the table.
- Sometimes, when creating bases or accessories for our sculptures, we must put them in the oven if they are partly made of polymer clay or has been painted with Genesis[®] oil paints. It is important to bear in mind that some materials such as plastic, polystyrene and some synthetic fibers, should never be placed in the oven because they can melt and release toxic fumes. Materials that can be placed in the oven without problem are: metal, glass, wood, paper and cardboard, fibers or natural fabrics.

Chapter 5

Armature

The armature is an essential part of any sculpture, it's basically a wire skeleton that will provide shape, proportions and stability to the mermaid.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Aluminium foil
2. Wires
3. Floral tape
4. Flat nose and cutting pliers
5. Anatomy pattern

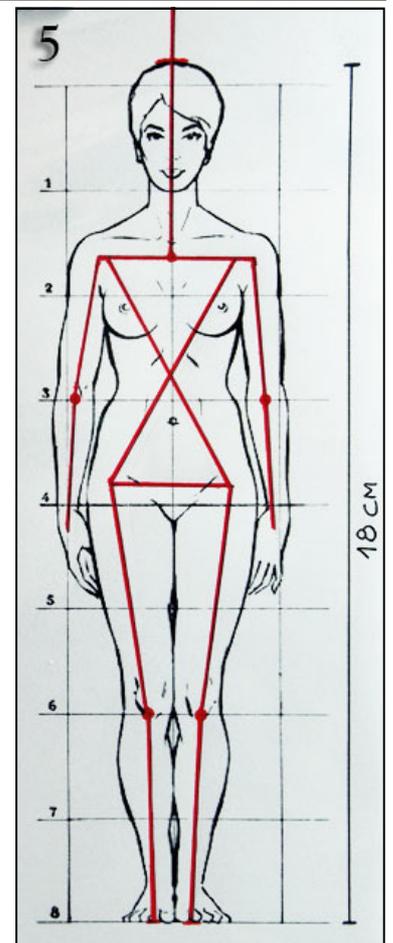


The wire you use, must be very sturdy but not too thick, otherwise it could show through the clay, especially in the thinner areas like arms. The wires that I usually use, are quite hard and difficult to bend, and I also roll them up for adding more strength. The wire I use is about 0.9mm thickness. For arms, I like to use one a little thinner, about 0.4mm thickness.

Floral tape is perfect for covering the armature, it stretches and adheres together, since it's slightly adhesive clay sticks firmly to the armature. It is preferable to use the tape in light colours, since if you use dark colors, it could show through the clay, the ideal is to use white or nude colours

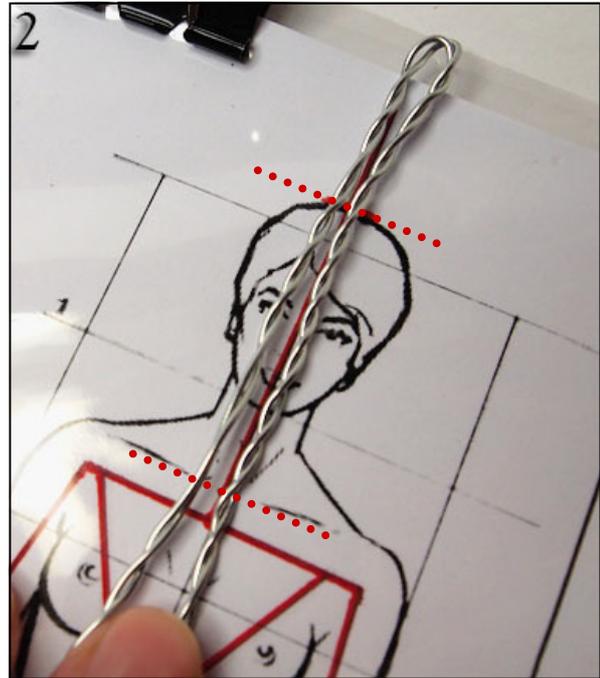
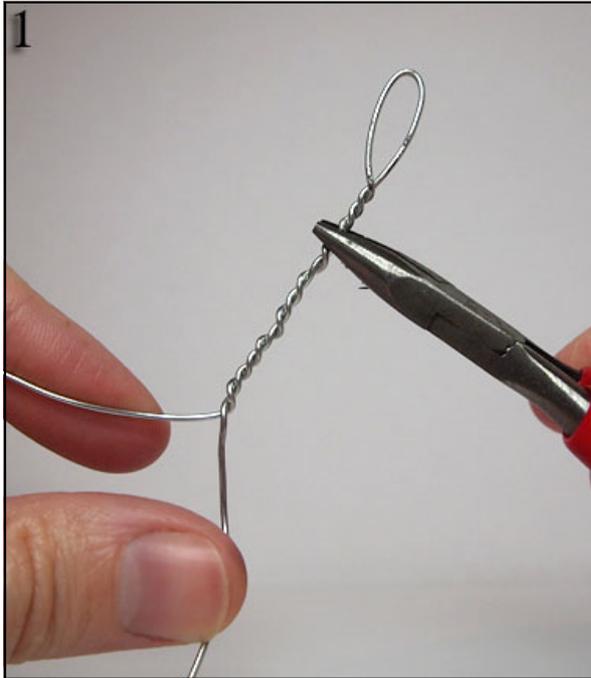
You are going to use aluminium foil for adding some volume and shape the torso and tail.

You'll also use an anatomy pattern, the one I use is printed to the standard measure of my dolls, about 18 cm high. Copy this image and adapt it to the size you want to have your mermaid.

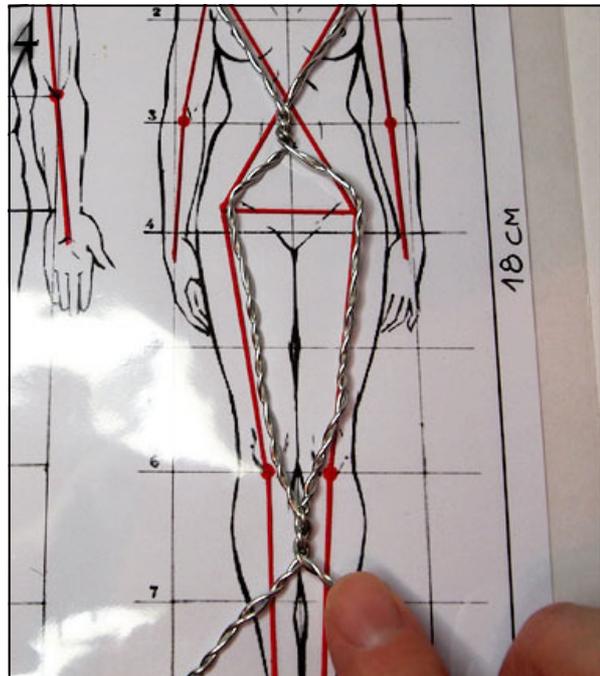
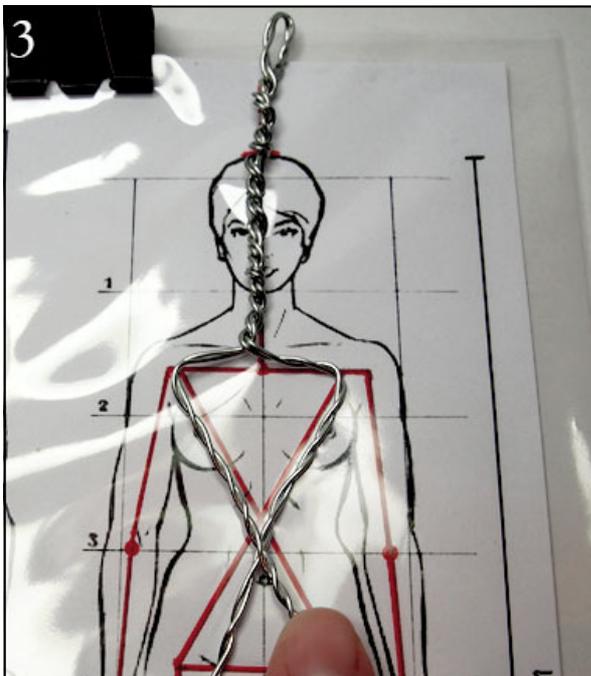


PROCESS:

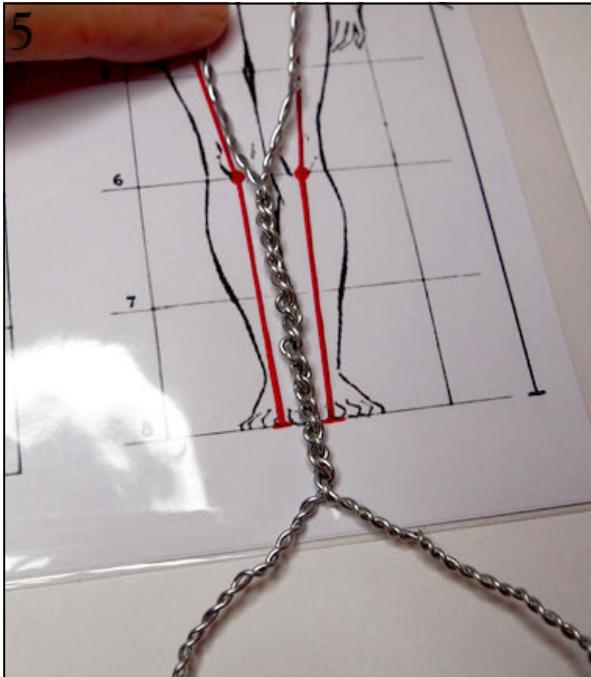
1. Start by cutting a piece of wire approximately of 120cm, roll it up with the help of flat pliers.
2. Fold it again in half and place it on the pattern as shown in the picture. Start leaving a loop and roll the wire along what would be the head and neck.



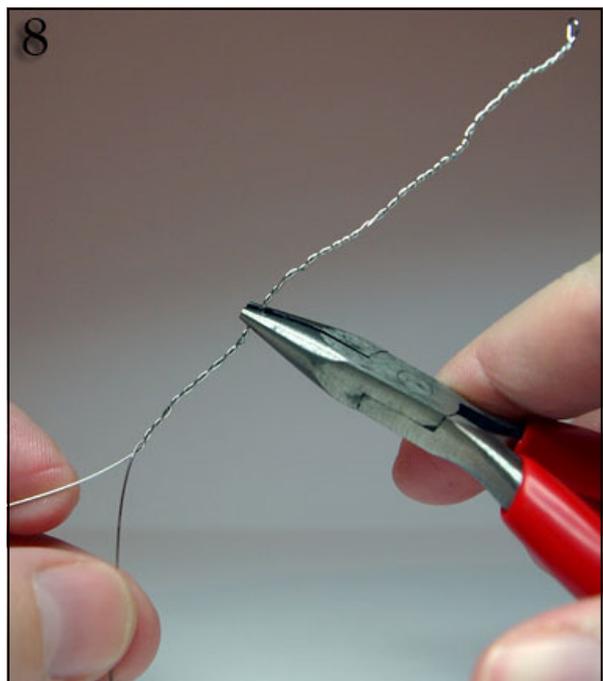
3. When reaching the waist, roll the wire up about three times, and continue giving shape to the armature.
4. Arriving at knees, roll the wire up again, the length you want.



5. At the end of the tail, leave two untrimmed wire ends, it may serve later to attach the fins or to get a little stability while sculpting.
6. Cover the torso and upper tail with aluminum foil to give volume and add more strength to the armature.

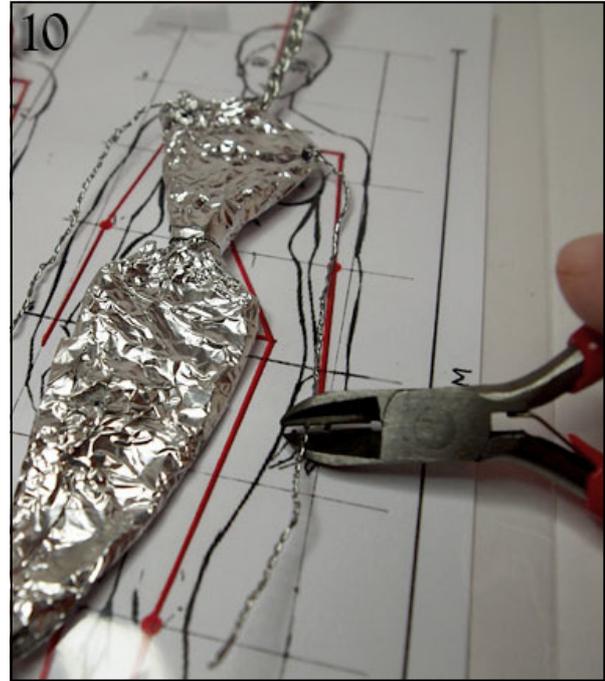
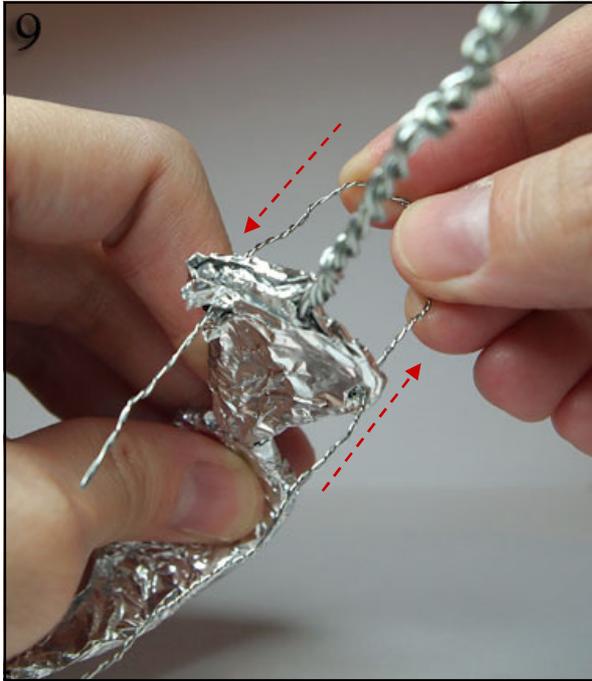


7. This is how the armature should look after adding the foil.
8. For the arms, cut a piece of thinner wire, about 35 cm, and roll it up.



9. Pierce with one end of the wire through the floral tape in what would be the left shoulder, and pierce again for the right shoulder, as shown in the picture, make equal both arm wires until are the same length.

10. Taking the pattern as a reference, cut excess wire of arms, leaving a few extra millimeters to avoid them to be too short.



11. Now cover completely the armature with floral tape, starting from the top, as shown in the picture.

12. The armature is completed, now you can define the pose. In this case, I'm going to create a mermaid in a simple sitting/kneeling pose, to make it easier for you to follow my instructions.



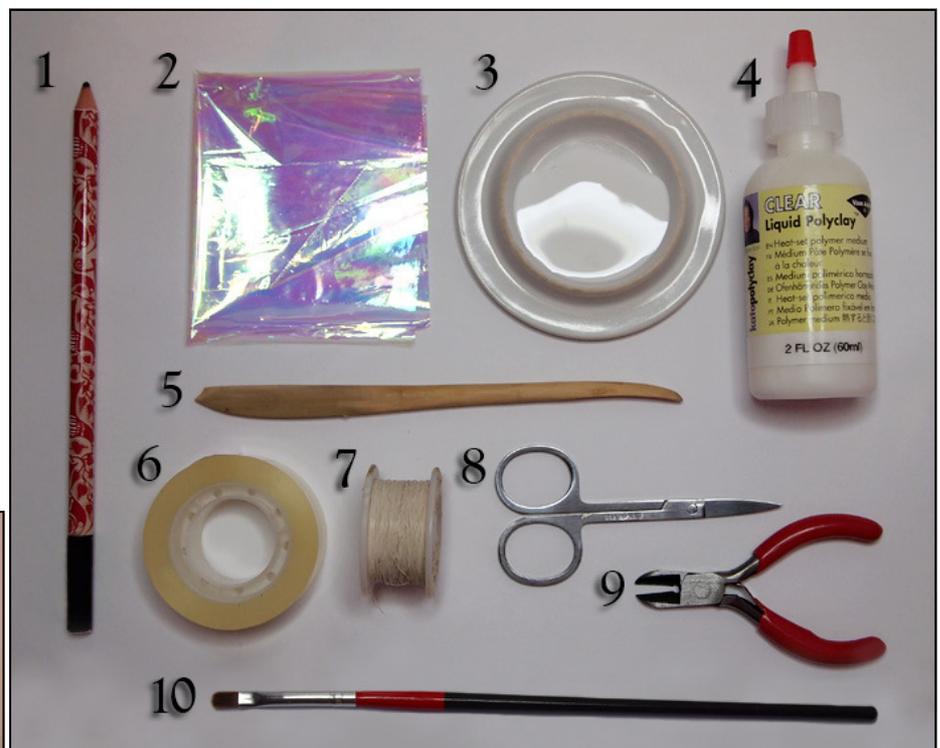
Chapter 6

Fins

The technique for making fins is practically the same as for making fairy wings, if you've read my previous tutorials, this chapter will look familiar to you. To make them, you can copy fish fin shapes for a more realistic appearance or invent your own design for a fantasy look. Besides making the caudal fin, you can also make small dorsal fins, in the pelvis, arms, etc. Fins can be done with cellophane, with translucent polymer clay, with liquid polymer clay, fabric, etc.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Pencil and paper
2. Iridescent cellophane
3. Glue
4. Liquid polymer clay
5. Wooden stick
6. Adhesive tape
7. White wire
8. Scissors
9. Cutting pliers
10. Brush
11. Oven or heat gun

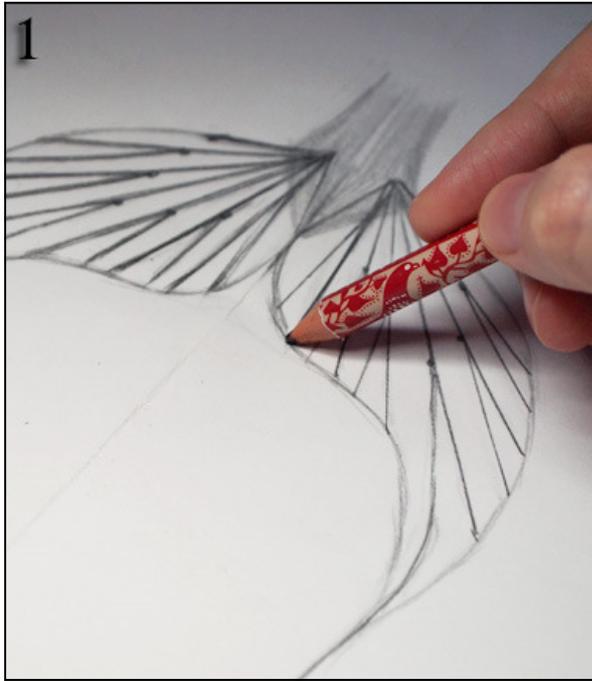


The iridescent cellophane that I use, is a stationery material which is used to wrap gifts and flower bouquets, it comes in rolls and I like so much more than Angelina Film. For my taste, Angelina Film is too rigid and its colors are too vivid. This is not bad at all, it's just my taste. Iridescent cellophane is a thinner film, if you apply heat, its colors are intensified towards reds and, if you apply liquid polymer clay, tones are softened, nearly disappearing, making it ideal for creating almost transparent wings or fins, as their iridescent tones and sparkles are more subtle and delicate.

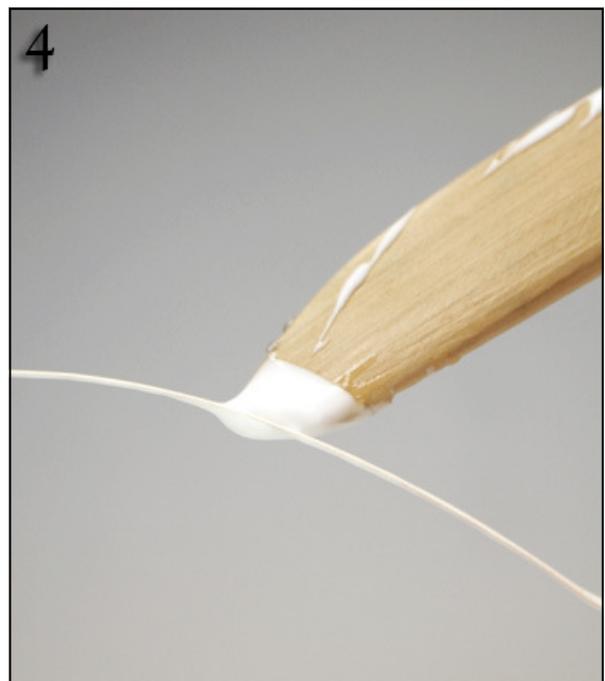
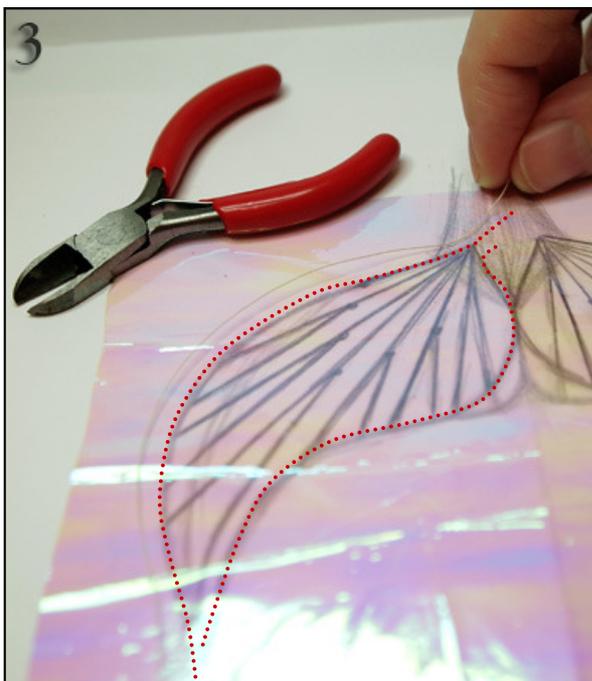
Perfect wire for creating fins is white-coloured because it mimics the fishbones colour, but you can use the wire colour you prefer or fits better with the tail colour, but if you're going to paint the fins, you can use a common galvanized wire.

PROCESS:

1. Draw on paper the outline and fishbone fins, if you look for pictures of fishes as reference, it will be easier.
2. Place a piece of cellophane over the drawing, hold it with tape at each corner, to keep it from moving while you work.

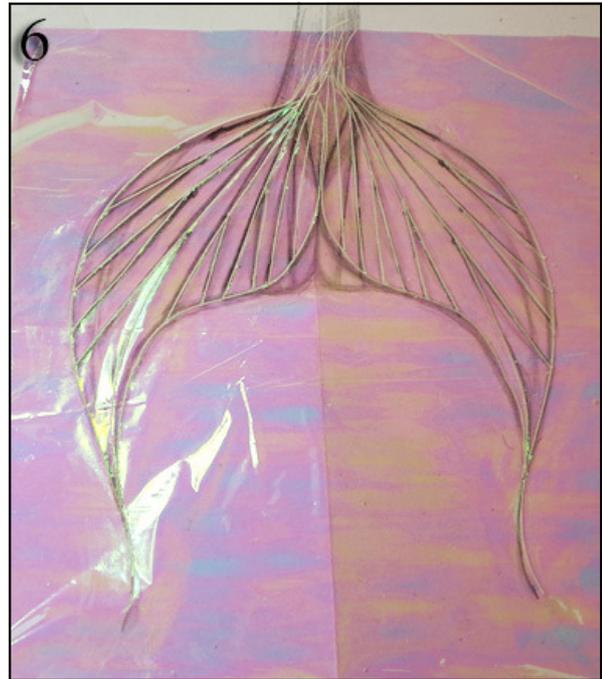
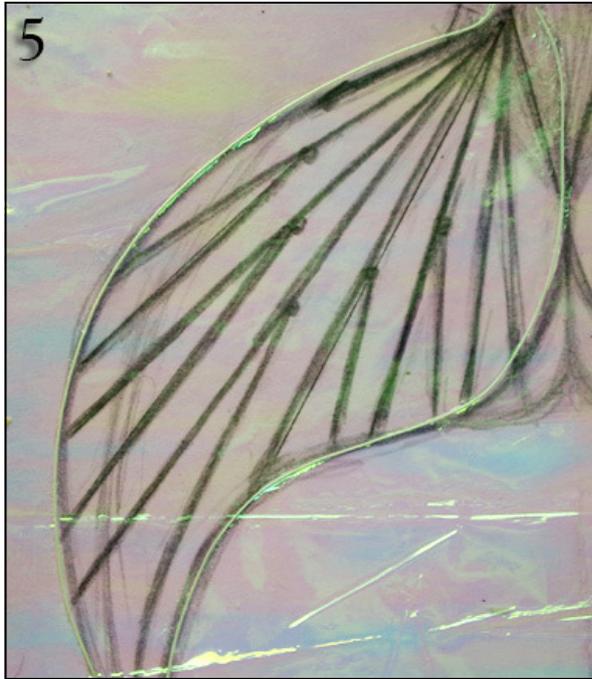


3. Start with the outer part of the fins, cut and give shape to the wires, taking the drawing as a reference.
4. Before proceeding with the inner fishbones, glue these two external wires by adding white glue on the side of the wire that will be attached to the cellophane, with the help of a wooden stick.



5. Place the wire with the glue over the cellophane making it coincide with the drawing. When working with such a thin wire, it is possible to stain the cellophane, if this happens, you can clean it with a brush dipped in water.

6. Now repeat this process with all wires, and let the glue dry completely. You can put weight over the fins to press them, making sure the wires are attached and do not move.



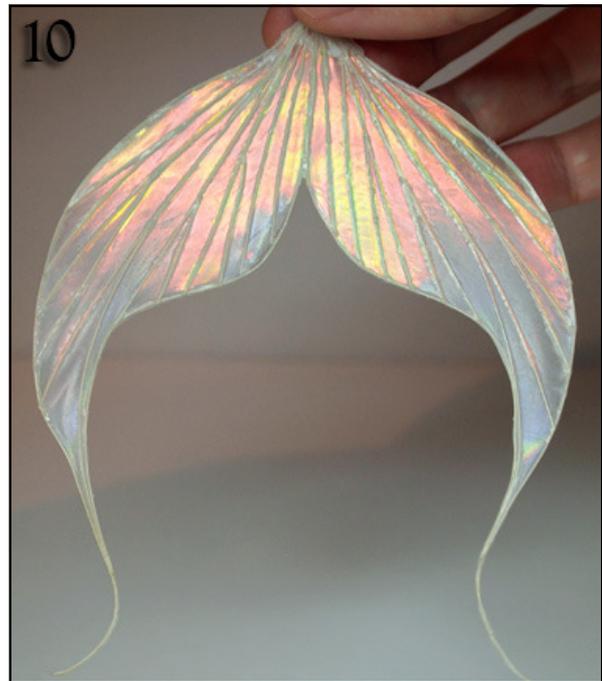
7. Once the glue is dry, trim with scissors the excess cellophane around the fins contour.

8. With a brush, apply a layer of liquid polymer clay fully covering the fins, over the side where the wires has been glued.



9. Bake the liquid polymer clay in the oven or with heat gun (the time depends on the brand you're using). If you do it with heat gun, do not put it too close to the fins because the cellophane may shrink. I personally prefer baking in the oven, placing the fins on a flat surface.

10. Once baked the liquid polymer clay, fins are already completed for now. If you want to paint the fins, add some luster with pigments or glitter, it is better to do it later when the mermaid is completed and you are ready to work on details. You could attach the fins to the armature now, but it's better to leave this process for later, and avoid overexposing fins to heat, since you're going to bake the mermaid several times.



Chapter 7

Eyes

In my first book-tutorial, I taught to create eyes with prefabricated clear crystal lenses, those used in taxidermy. In this new tutorial, I will teach a different technique with which you can also create realistic eyes, using UV Gel, a more affordable and easy to find material than the clear crystal lenses.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Polymer clay (three colours)
2. Black microbeads
3. Gel du Soleil™
4. PearlEx™ pigments
5. X-acto knife
6. Ball stylus
7. Brush
8. Oven
9. UV lamp



You will need polymer clay, white coloured for the eyeballs, and two different colours for the iris, in this case I chose dark brown and grey.

Microbeads are for creating the eye pupils, so in black much better, although you always can experiment with other colours.

Gel du Soleil™ is an epoxy resin that cures at sunlight or with UV lamp. You can also use other UV gels, those used in manicure. Though I've tried other UV gels with bad results, some were sticky after an hour of curing, others slightly yellowing when baking it later in the oven, etc. So I recommend you using Gel du Soleil™ if you want to avoid these problems, it can be purchased at craft stores.

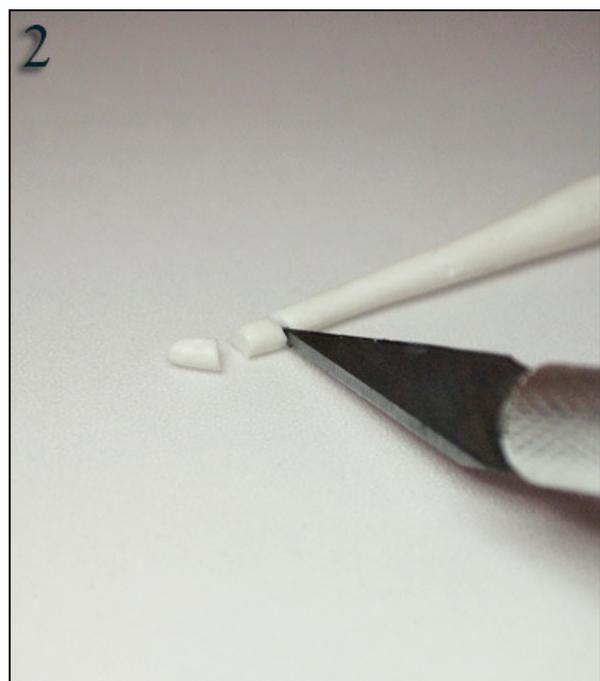
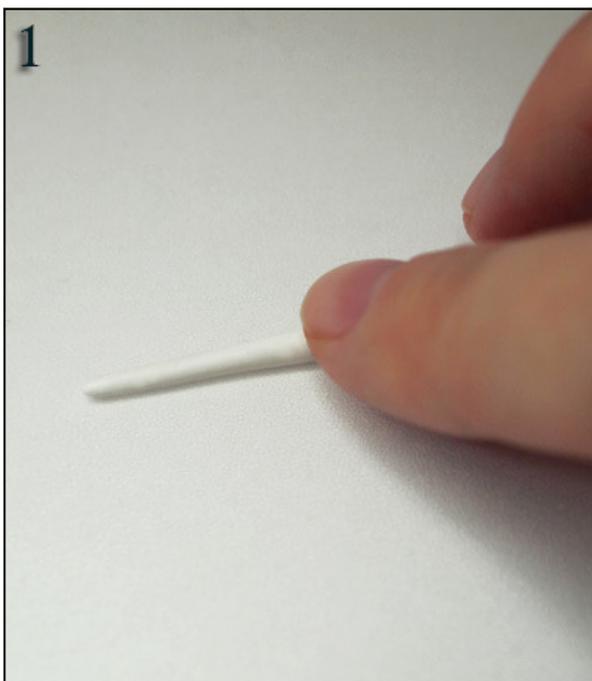
The UV lamp is used to cure the gel, lamps that are typically used for drying nails, so that you can purchase it at beauty stores.

You will use Pearl Ex™ for adding shine and luster to the iris, in this case I'm choosing colour #674 Interference Gold, you can choose the colour you like or better fits with the iris colour. As you see, with this technique, I do not use paint for the iris, I only add colour with clay and pigments, but if you want to add colour with paints you can also do, acrylics would be ideal, especially in metallic tones.

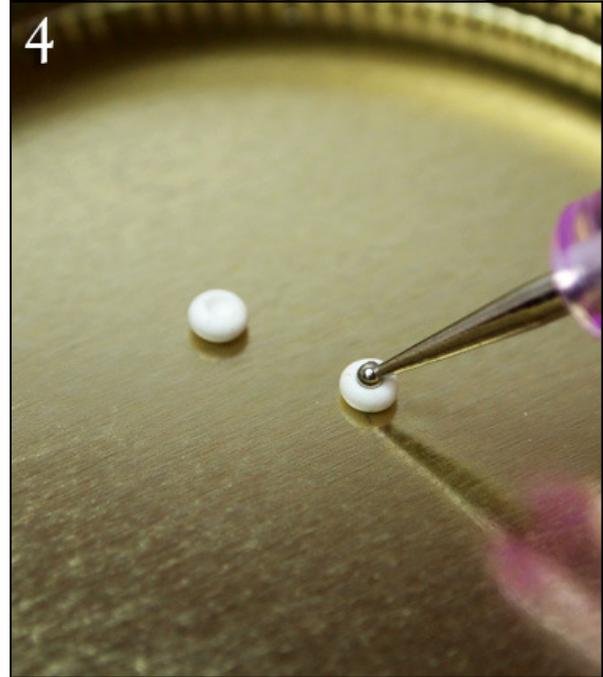
PROCESS:

1. Start by making a small cylinder with white clay. The eyes that I usually make are 3mm in diameter, the cylinder I'm making is about 4mm approx. Just adapt these measures to your preferences.

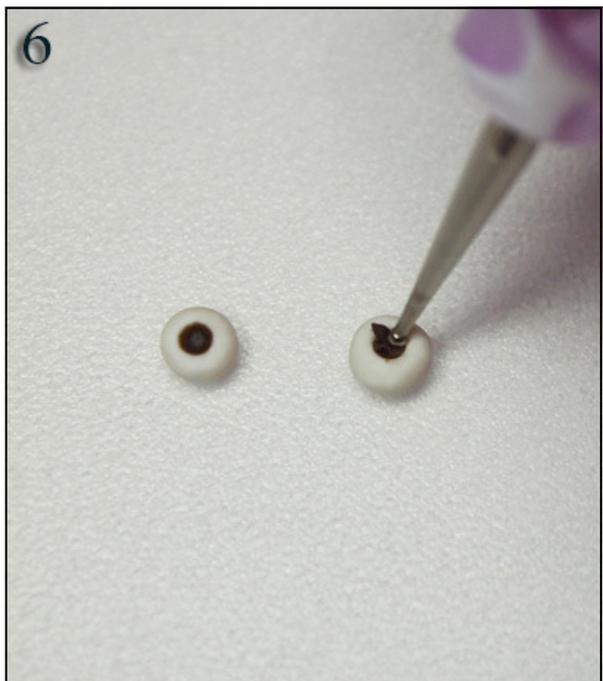
2. Cut two pieces of clay of the same size with the knife.



3. *With your fingers, make two balls with those pieces of clay, these will be the eyeballs.*
4. *Put the two balls on a flat surface, for example a metallic tray, to avoid deforming the balls when grabbing them with your fingers. With the ball stylus, make two cavities on each ball. Try to make them as uniform as possible.*

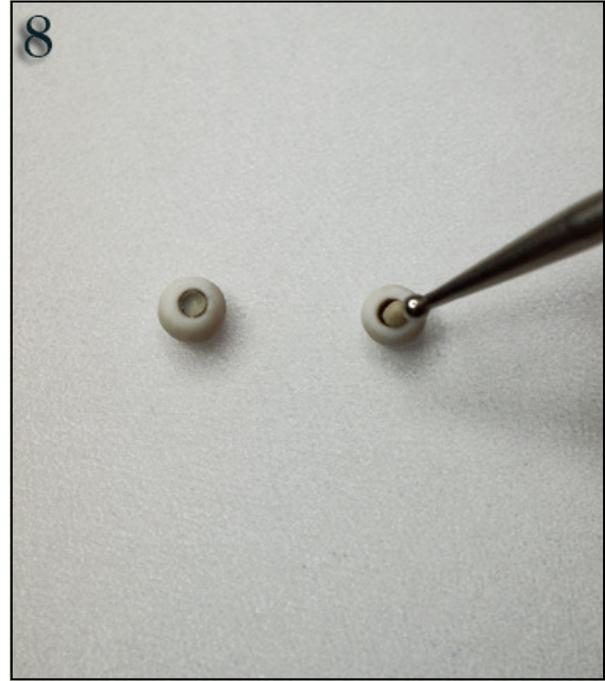
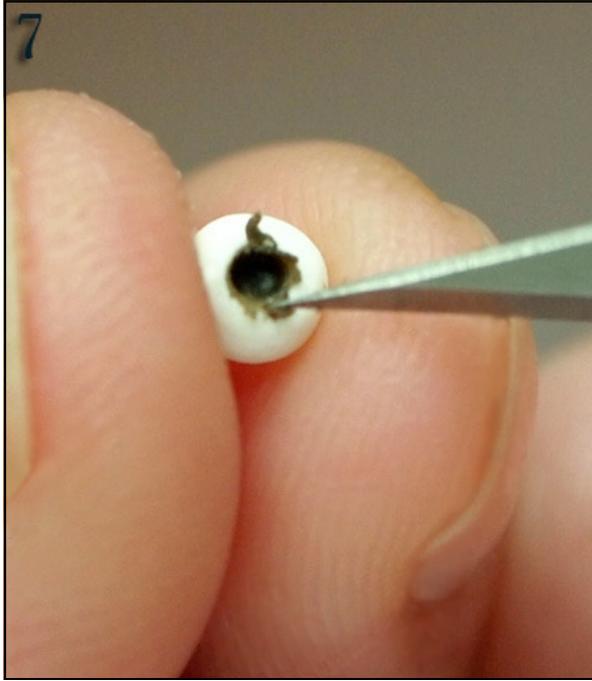


5. *Bake the balls in the oven for about 15 minutes at 130° C.*
6. *Once baked, add the darkest clay within the cavities and flatten it as much as you can with the ball stylus, just must to be left a very thin clay layer and you must keep the original hole dimensions.*



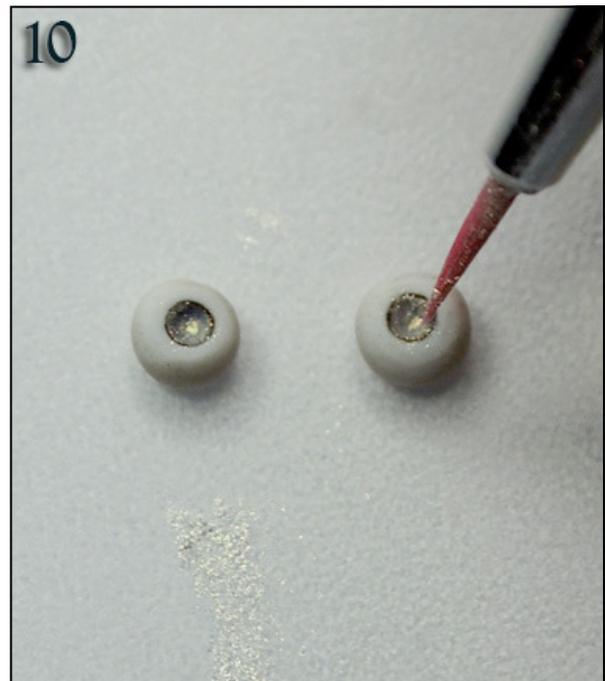
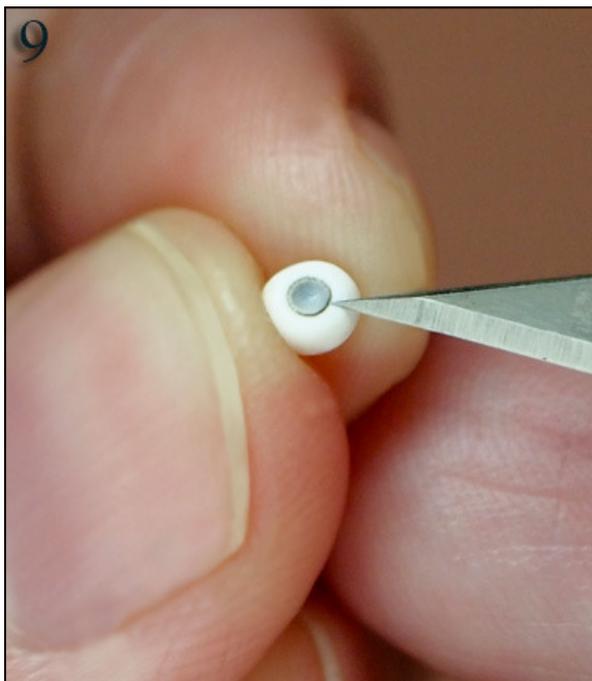
7. With the knife, remove excess of clay from the iris edges, must remain clay only within the hole. Bake again the clay in the oven, five minutes would be enough since it is a very thin layer.

8. Now add the lighter coloured clay, following the same procedure as before, flatten the clay with the ball stylus and keep the original hole.



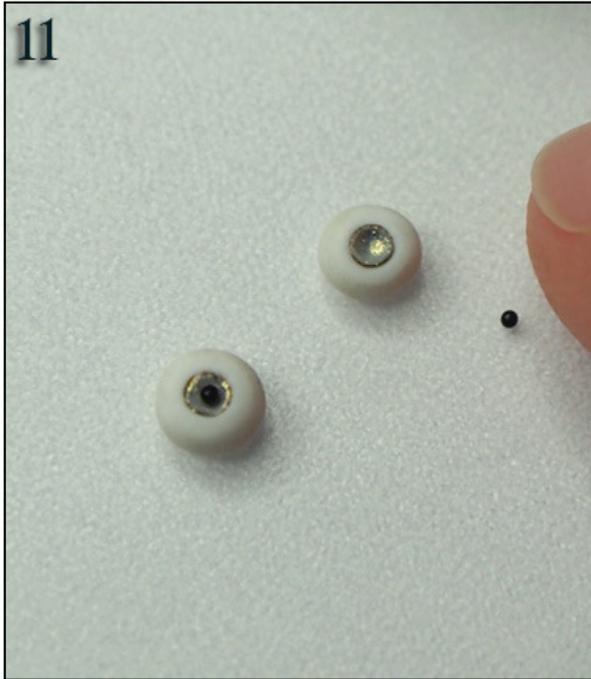
9. Again with the knife, remove excess clay from the edges, this time making slightly visible the brown clay underneath.

10. Apply some pigments on the iris with the brush.



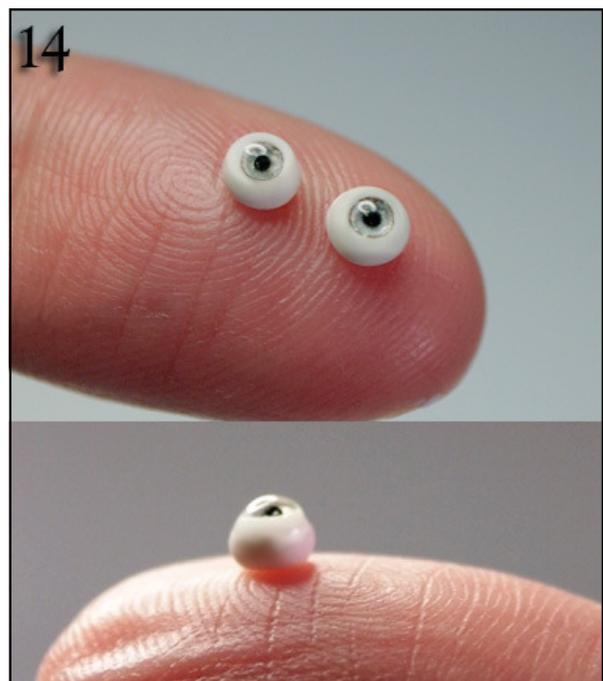
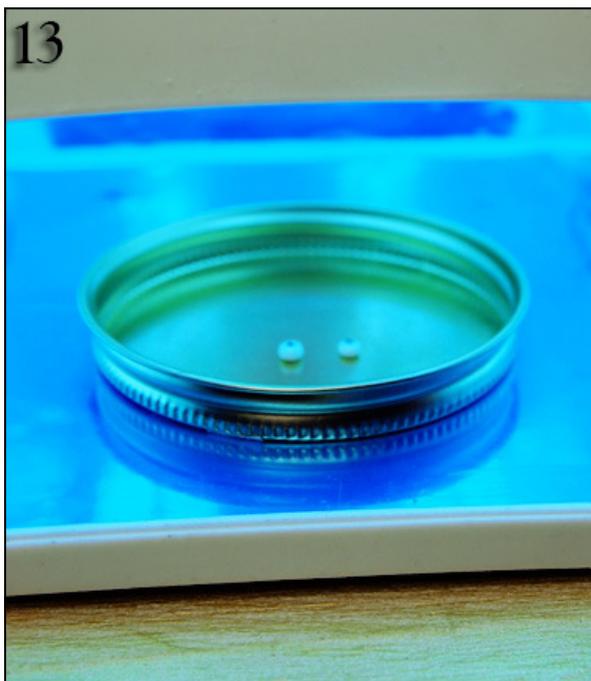
11. Now put the microbeads in the center of the iris, slightly pressing to insert them on the grey clay that is still unbaked, so you prevent it from moving when you apply the gel. When you have placed them, bake eyes again in the oven for 5 minutes.

12. Place the eyes on a tray to avoid touching the gel with your fingers, and apply a drop of gel over each eye. If any bubble appears, just remove it with the brush.



13. Cure the gel in the UV lamp for about 15-20 minutes.

14. This is the final result. If you think corneas are too flat, you can apply one or two more coats of gel and cure the eyes again in the UV lamp.



Chapter 8

Sculpting the head

*It's time to start sculpting the mermaid's head, then you will bake it to insert it into the ar-
mature and continue the rest of the body.*

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Polymer clay
2. Eyes
3. Water with a few drops of oil
4. Tools:
 - Stick to hold the head
 - Drafting compass
 - Brush
 - X-acto knife
 - Modelling tool (wooden or metallic)
 - Ball stylus in various sizes
 - Silicone fine point tools
 - Needle
5. Oven
6. Reference image





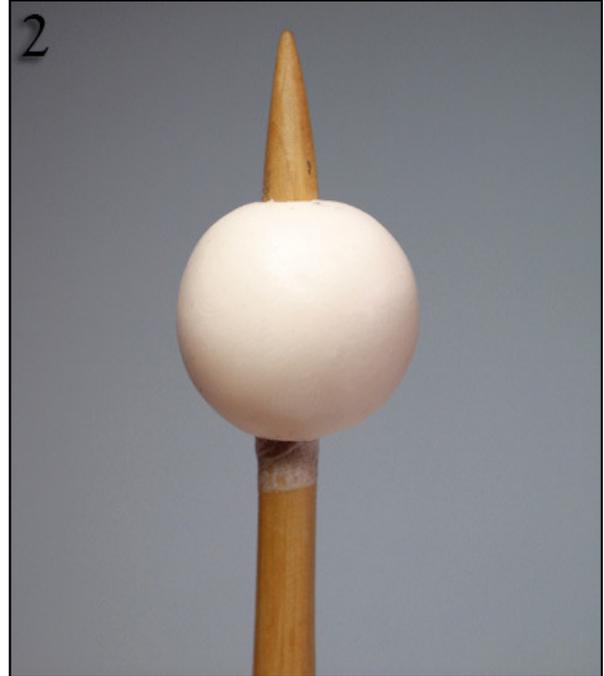
You can use a wooden stick to hold the head or any other tool that you feels comfortable to hold. If you put a bit of floral tape, it will prevent the head from moving.

You will use the fine tip tools for small details such as eyelids, nostrils, ears, etc., it is preferable you use silicone or rubber tools because they are gentler, but you can also use metal tools as a big needle, for example.

If you want to achieve a face as realistic as possible. Here you have this image that you can use as a reference for a guidance over facial proportions.

PROCESS:

1. First step is to make a perfectly round ball of clay. This will be the top of the skull, compare it to the armature and make the ball approximately the same size as the one in the picture.
2. Insert the clay ball in the wooden stick.

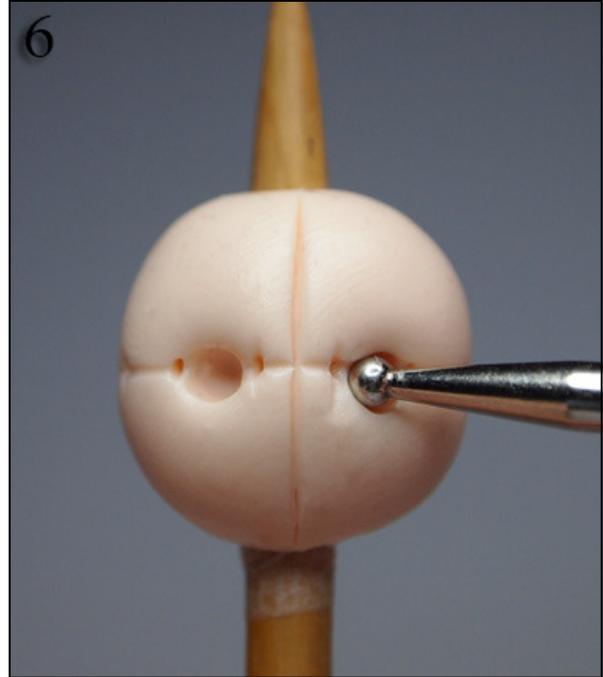
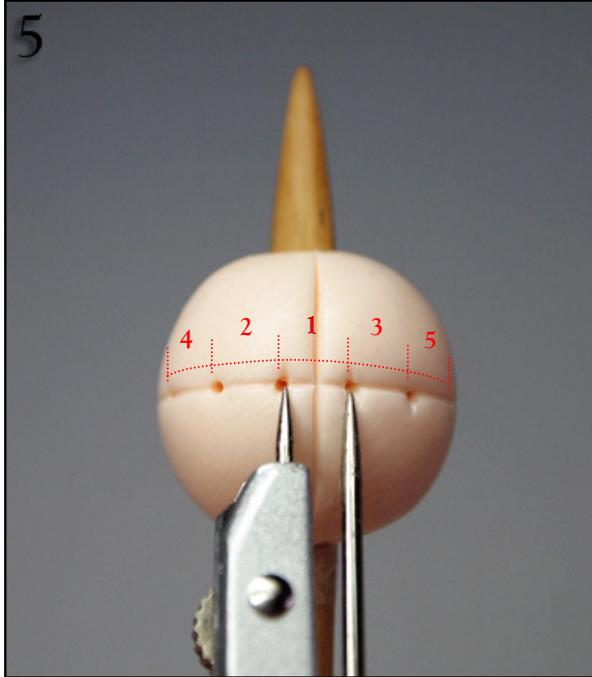


3. Draw two lines, vertical and horizontal, with a needle or knife.
4. Take the size of the eye with the compass.



5. With the compass needles, mark the points that will guide you to position eyes. Start first by the center and follows the order shown in the image.

6. With the large ball stylus, make the two eye sockets in the spaces 2 and 3, do not make the holes too deep.



7. Insert the eyes. Try that both eyes are at same height, depth and above all, make them looking in the same direction, take your time to make sure the eyes are in the correct position, later they will be anchored in the clay and you will not be able to rectify.

8. Slightly flatten the frontal area and sides.



9. If, as in this case, you realize that the eyeball is not completely round or is too slim, add some white or porcelain clay to correct it.

10. Smooth the eye area with a brush dipped in water/oil.



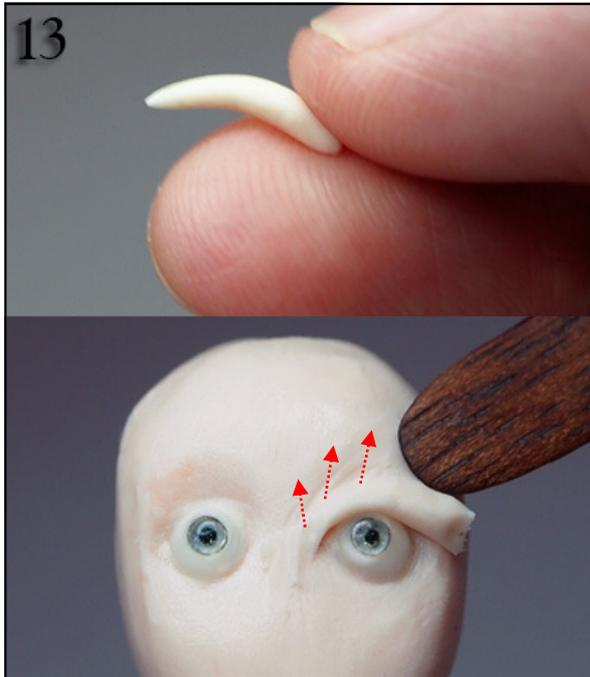
11. Bake the head in the oven. By doing this, you avoid the eyes to move from their place and deforming the head while sculpting the face, that's something that happens often especially if the clay is very soft, and always complicates work.

12. After baking and letting the clay to cool down, add a thin clay layer fully covering the head.



13. Now you are going to make the eyelids, start by making a tiny clay cylinder, gently flatten it with your fingers and place it on the eye as shown in the picture, extend upwards the clay from the top.

14. Do the same with the lower eyelid and also the other eye.



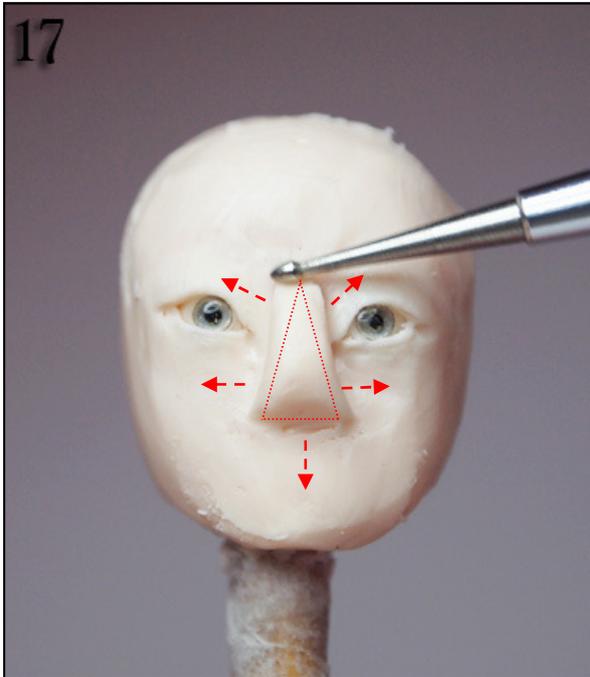
15. Mark again with the compass needles, still with the eye size, on the corner of the eye, this way you make sure that the distance between eyes is correct.

16. Now sculpt the eyelids with the tool you prefer, I like to use a fine point silicone tool. Give eyelids the shape you want and smooth the clay.



17. For creating the nose, add a piece of clay in triangular shape and smooth the clay edges.

18. Slightly sculpt the nose. I usually do it with my fingers, I think this way you can achieve a more natural and rounded shape than doing with a tool.



19. Now add volume to the face by adding thin clay layers, starting first with the cheeks.

20. Add another layer of clay at the bottom of the face, from nose to chin, as shown in the picture.



21. Add another bit of clay in the chin.

22. Add also layers of clay in the forehead.



23. Blend well all layers of clay that you've added.

24. With a needle, draw the guide lines over the clay, based on the image I have provided you. Start by making the circumference with the compass and continue with the other lines. This will help you create a proportioned face while you sculpt facial features.



25. Make a small slot on the line you've drawn for the mouth, and then push up the clay to lift the upper lip.

26. With a ball stylus, make two small holes in the corners of the lips.



27. For making the lower lip, it is necessary to add clay, make a small cylinder and place it as shown in the picture, stuck just below the upper lip and the ends down. Extend the lower edges toward the chin, blend the clay.

28. Create the philtrum with a small ball stylus. To make it look more realistic, make narrower the upper part than the lower part.



29. Mark the nostrils, you can do it with any tool, small ball stylus or just with a needle tip.

30. With a needle, define the nostrils. When working on the nose, look at it from different angles, this will help to make it symmetrical.



31. With the knife, sculpt the face and head, removing the excess clay to get the shape you want. I recommend you looking at some face pictures, for a reference.

32. Once you have given the shape you want to the face, blend a little the clay with your fingers, does not need to look perfect, until the moment you'll bake the head, you'll keep adding clay or removing as many times as you think necessary.



33. With a ball stylus sculpt the area between the eyes and nose as shown in the picture, so you'll define the eye socket and nasal septum too.

34. Now, work in more detail in all facial features. Once again I recommend you looking at a picture for reference. You can start, for example, with the mouth: define the lip edges with a needle or small tool, and then smooth the clay.



35. Sculpt and define the nose.

36. Now define well the eyelids until both eyes are equal and you like the result. Sculpt the eyebrow bone too.



37. Make the eyebrows with a needle by drawing fine lines as hair. This will help you keep a guide later when you paint the eyebrows.

38. When all facial features are shapely, make sure the head has a correct shape, usually lose its shape when handling while working on the face, if you think it necessary, add clay to the head and shape it.



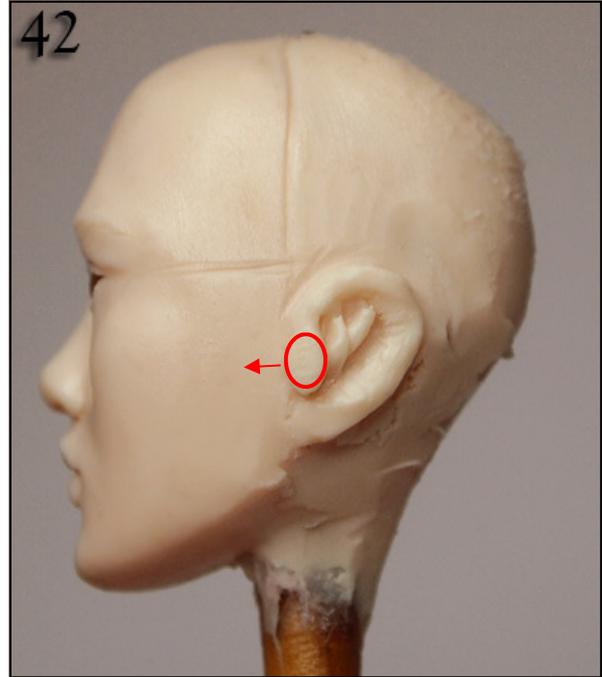
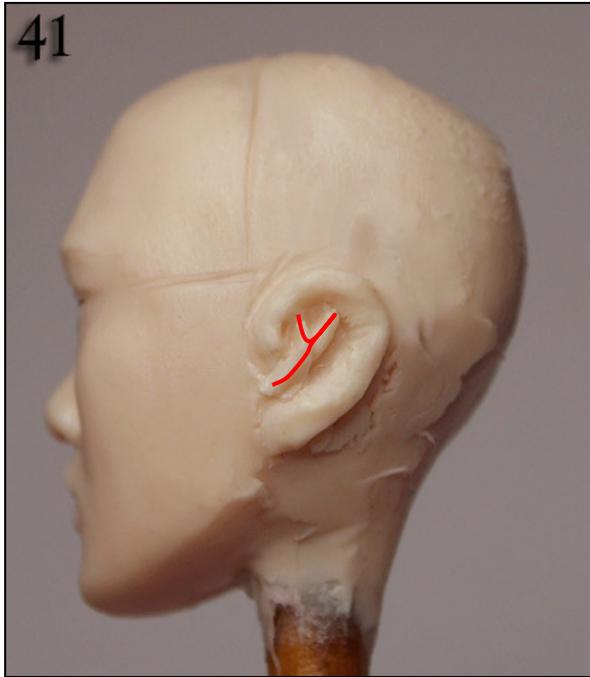
39. Lastly, you will create the ears. Start by drawing a line as shown on the image for a guide.

40. Make a small cylinder of clay and place it on the line you've drawn as a hook. Blend the clay from the back of the ear towards the head.



41. Now make two tiny cylinders and place them inside the ear forming something like a Y.

42. Add a small ball of clay in the area shown in the picture. Flatten and blend the clay towards the face.



43. Blend all edges of the clay that you've added and give shape to the ear. This is one of the hardest parts, so looking at some ear images, once again, will help.

44. When you're satisfied with the ear shape, smooth the clay with a brush dipped in water/oil.



45. Make the other ear and when you're done, check that everything is correct, looking the head at all angles to check its symmetry, you can even take pictures of the head, sometimes through photos you can see flaws not visible to the naked eye.

46. Smooth the clay until there are no bumps or imperfections, do it with a brush dipped in water/oil. If the clay is dirty, before this step, you can wipe the clay with a cotton swab dipped in acetone.



47. Gently remove the head from the stick and put in the oven. Set the oven to the clay manufacturer's recommended temperature. I always preheat the oven.

48. Completed!



Chapter 9

Sculpting torso and tail

Once completed the head, insert it into the armature and you'll can start sculpting the torso and tail. The reason why I'm baking the sculpture in stages, it's simply because this way is easier to manipulate the sculpture without damaging what you've already done, but you can sculpt the complete mermaid at once if you prefer. Here I'm showing my techniques but you can adapt them to your own working methods.

The tools you are going to use are the same as before though possibly you will also need:

- A cotton swab
- Acetone
- Aluminium foil

PROCESS:

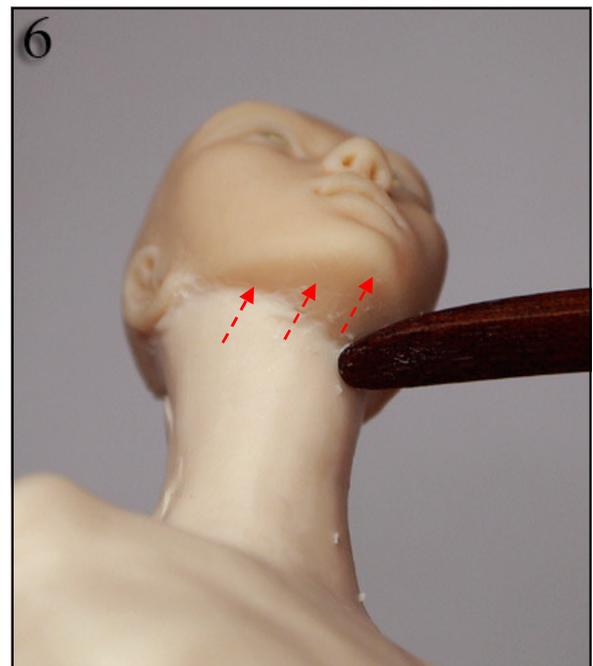
1. Start by placing the armature in the position you want for your mermaid, in this case it will be a sitting/kneeling pose. Having done this, you can set aside the arm wires to make it easier to work.
2. Add small portions of clay to the torso and tail. Make small balls of clay and flatten them, condition the clay to avoid air bubbles inside. Squeeze well the first pieces of clay to make sure they are well stucked to the floral tape.



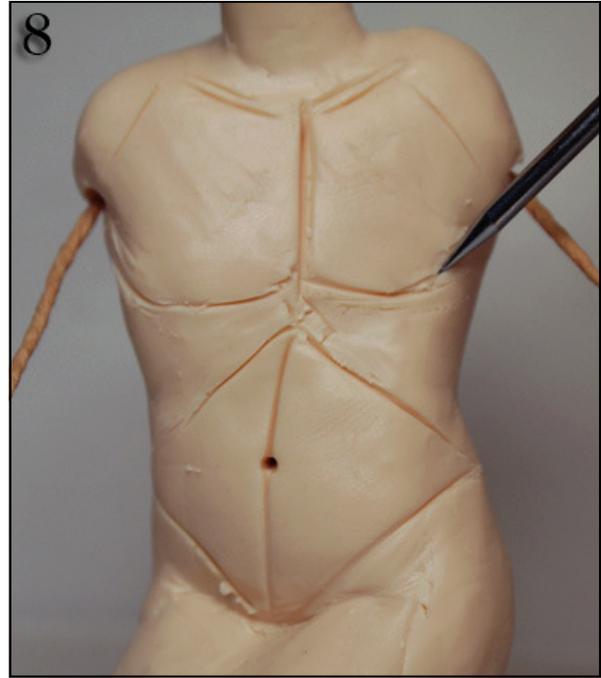
3. Keep adding clay, creating the basic shape and volume you want for the torso and tail.
4. Blend the clay, you can do it with a tool or your fingers.



5. Add also clay in the neck to get the thickness you want.
6. Blend the clay upward over the head's baked clay.

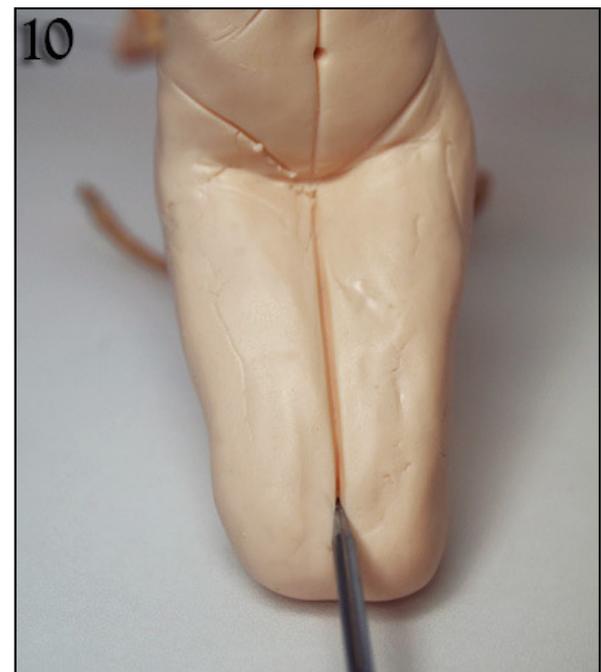


7. *This is the ideal time to re-position the mermaid if you think it necessary, since the body has already volume but the details and proportions are not defined yet.*
8. *Draw lines on the clay to locate each areas of the torso, as shown in the picture.*



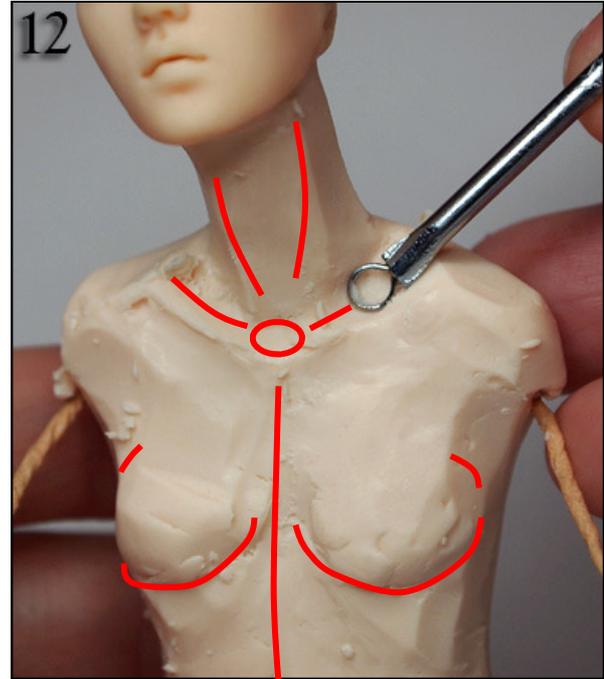
9. *Do the same on the back...*

10. *... and finally draw a line dividing the tail in half, like two legs.*



11. With the knife, carve the torso and tail, removing excess clay to achieve the desired shape, if you do not have much knowledge about anatomy, look for pictures for a guidance and take your time, attention to detail and patience in this step are very important.

12. With the large ball stylus, small loop tool or similar, define the bust areas (neck, clavicle, breasts, etc.) as shown in the picture.



13. Do the same on the back, taking as reference the lines you have drawn before.

14. Smooth all the clay with a modelling stick or your fingers.



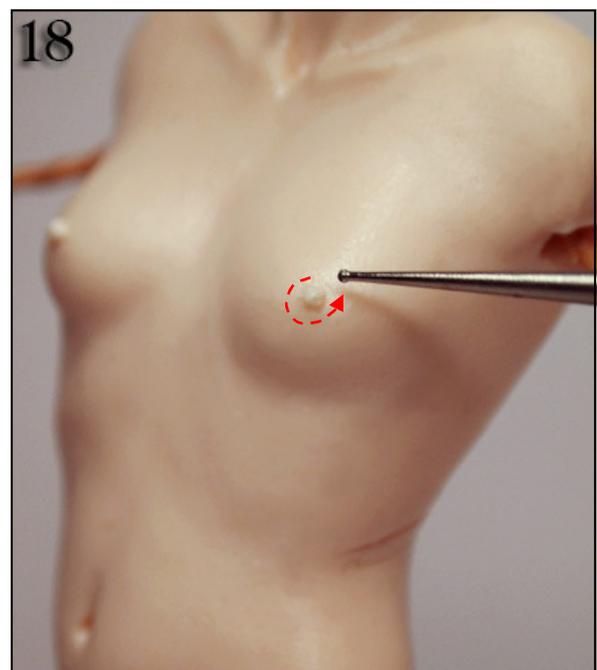
15. If, while smoothing clay, small cracks appear, apply on them water/oil, continue smoothing and it will disappear.

16. If clay is dirty (too often some small particles sticks to the clay), clean it with a cotton swab dipped in acetone.



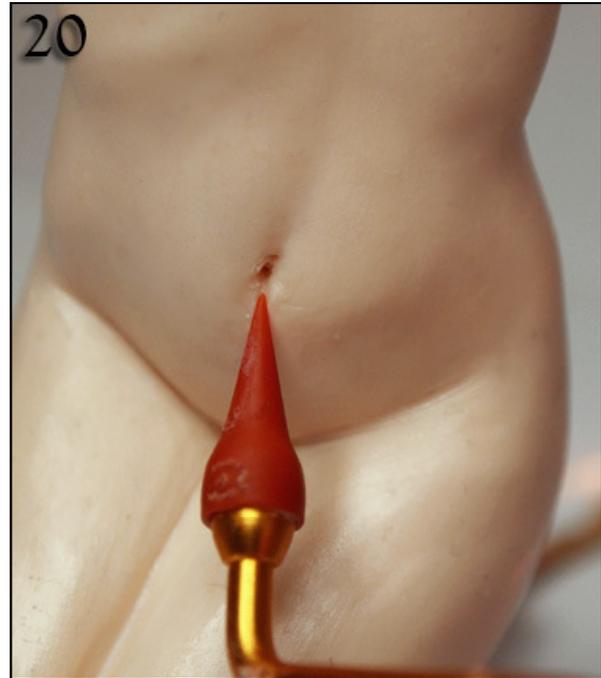
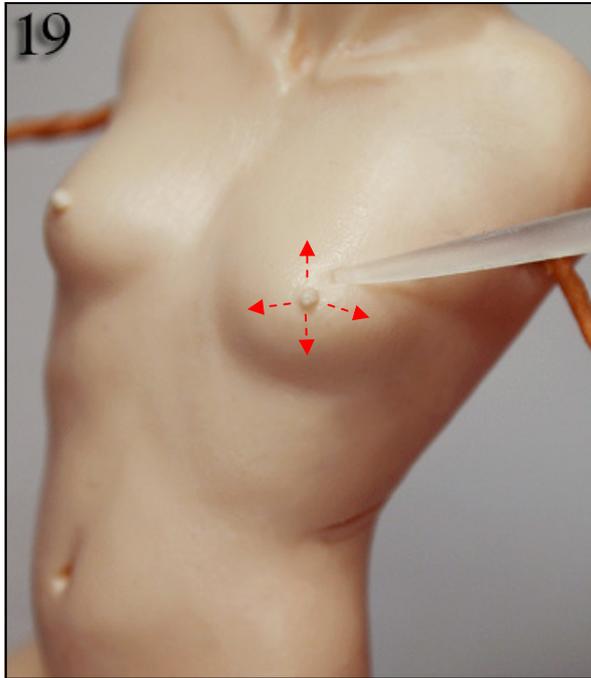
17. Once smoothed the clay and sculpted the torso and tail, you can add or remove clay in areas that require it. Make corrections as many times as you think necessary before baking the clay, and when you're happy with the shape of the torso and tail, you can start working on tiny details.

18. Make two tiny clay balls and place them on the breasts to create the nipples, gently flatten them. Make gentle circles with the small ball stylus, smoothing the clay outside the nipple and creating the areola.



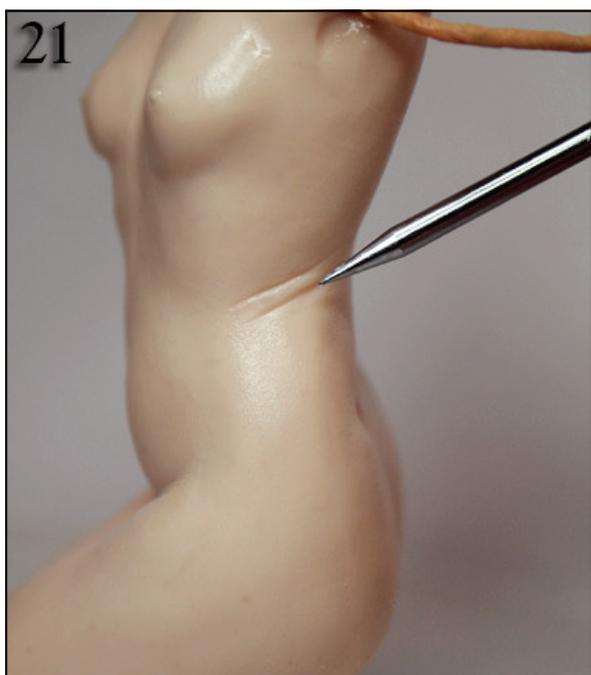
19. Extend outwards and smooth the clay of nipple edges.

20. Define and give shape to the belly button, you can do it with a needle or a fine point tool.



21. With a needle or fine point tool, draw the folds of the skin (waist, back, tail, etc.)

22. Cut the leftover wires of the tail. In this case, I have left them uncut until now because they have supported the figure while sculpting. Now that the tail has shape, the wires are no longer necessary.



23. Attach the fins. Put them at the end of the tail, add some clay and extend it. The thinner and stylish you do this junction area, prettier the tail will look.

24. You've nearly finished. As you did with the head, make sure the clay is homogeneous, with no bumps or marks. You can dip a brush in water/oil to smooth the clay or you can press down with your fingertip on the clay, slightly marking fingerprints, this "imperfection" gives a skin-texture surface.



25. Cover the fin with several layers of aluminum foil, this will protect cellophane from heat and prevent shrinkage.

26. You can now start baking the torso and tail. Remember to preheat the oven and do not exceed the baking times.



Chapter 10

Sculpting arms and hands

Arms and hands are the last part of the body you are going to sculpt. It's important to know that arms and hands pose can express much, or more, as does a face, so you have to strive in this step, trying to get a natural pose, not rigid, and also correct proportions.

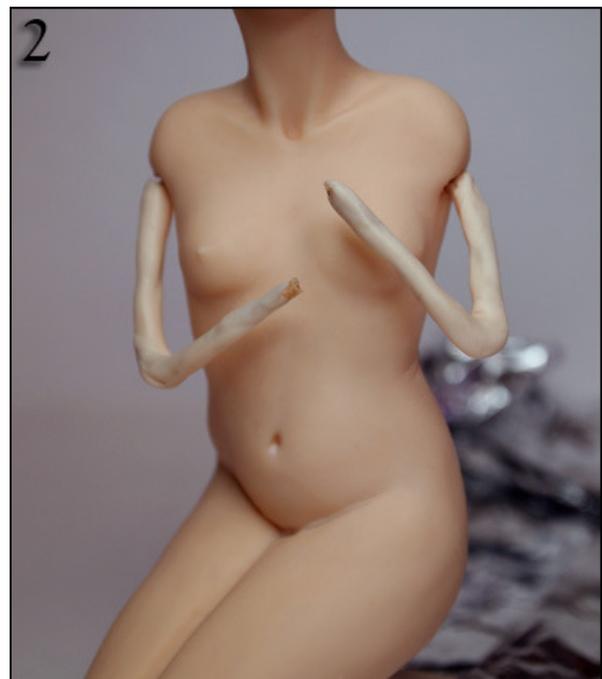
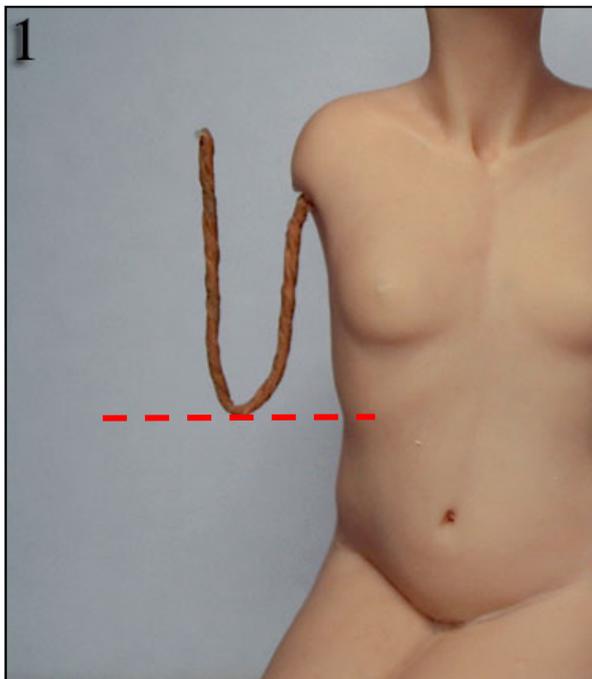
Personally, I think this is the hardest part, and takes practice.

Let's go practice!

The tools you'll need are the same as you used until now.

PROCESS:

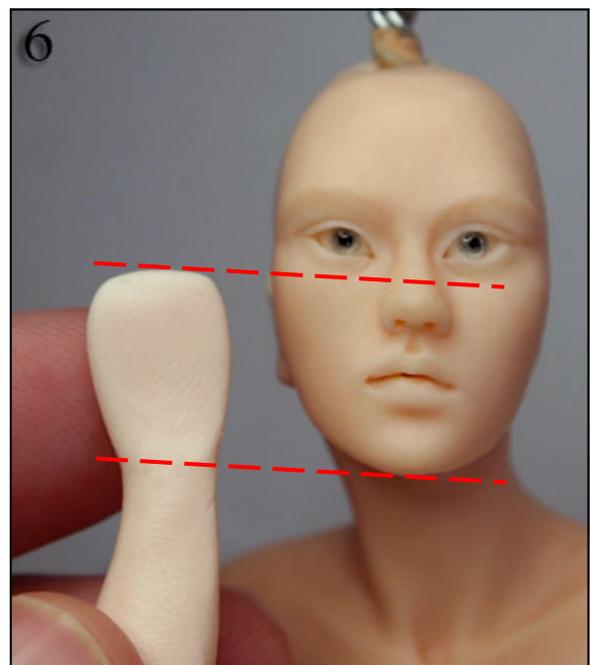
- 1. Start by cutting the wire to the exact size that the arm should have, to be sure it's well-proportioned, the elbow has to be at the same height as the waist, and if you bend the arm up, the wrist has to be at about shoulder height.*
- 2. Place wire arms in an approximate final position. Add a thin clay layer, making sure that it adheres well to the floral tape.*



3. Start by making a cylinder of clay and cut it in half with the knife, you are going to use each half to make a hand.
4. Flatten and smooth with your fingers one extreme of each cylinder.



5. Press the clay with your fingers to create the wrist area, as shown in the picture.
6. To know what size must the hand have, without fingers, place it together in the mermaid's face. Place the wrist at the chin height, the area where the fingers begin must be between the nose and eyes approximately.



7. Repeat the same steps with the other half of the cylinder to make sure they have similar measures.

8. Give curved shape to the top as shown in the picture. This is the right hand, so at the very top, is where you will place the index finger.



9. With a piece of clay, make a small cylinder, try to make it smooth and homogeneous, without curves or bulges. This small cylinder is the index finger.

10. Smooth the index finger with your fingers and give it some shape, make the tip of the finger slightly narrower and do not worry if you see that the finger is too long.



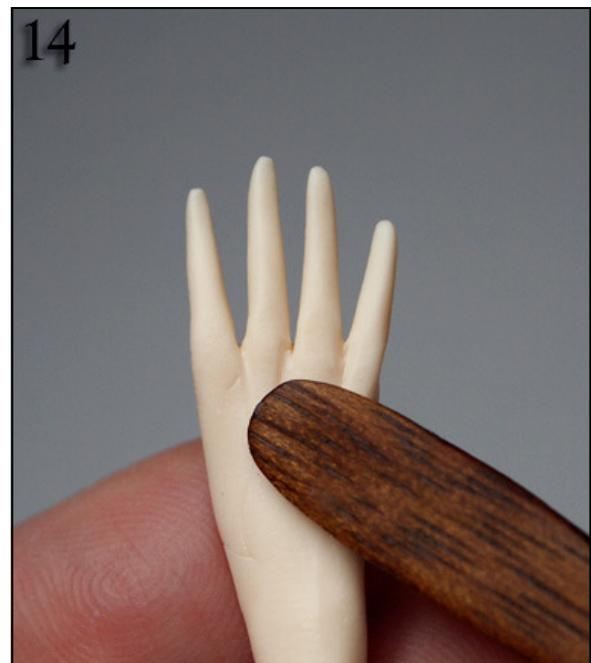
11. Place the finger on the hand reverse, as shown in the picture. Note that the hand, from the wrist to the beginning of the fingers, must measure the same as the middle finger, so the index finger will measure a bit less. If you find it easier, you can start by adding the middle finger first.

12. Extend the clay towards the rest of the hand...



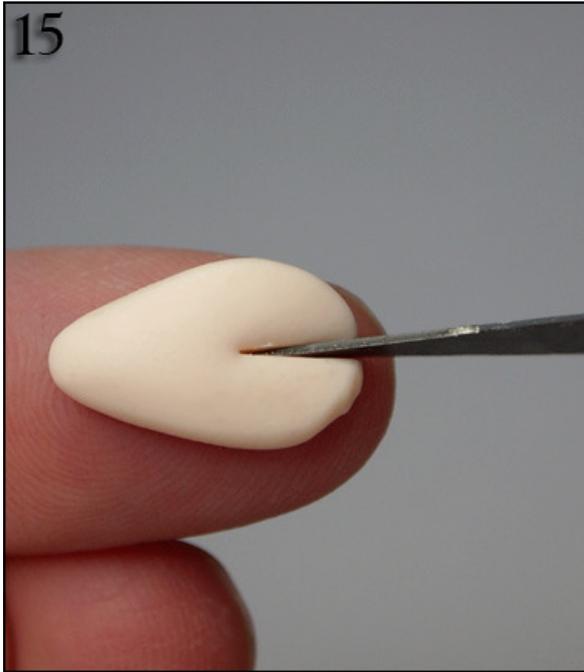
13. ... and also towards the palm and the interdigital area.

14. Repeat the same steps to make the other fingers, placing them as shown in the picture. Extends and blend the clay making sure that four fingers are secure.



15. Now you have to make the thumb. Give shape to a piece of clay, as shown in the picture, and make a small cut with the knife.

16. Slightly flatten with your fingers the two separated ends.



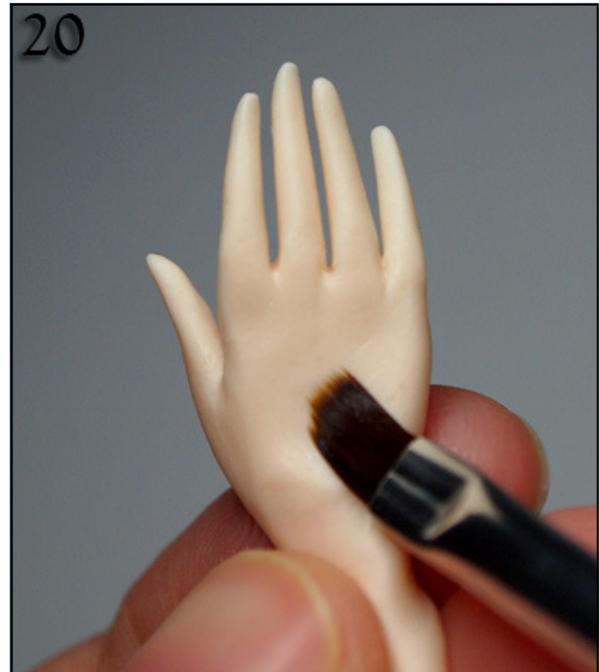
17. Put the thumb in the hand. If you are not sure exactly how high to place it, just watch your hand for a reference. Extend the to the rest of the hand.

18. With your fingers, stretch the clay, smoothing and giving shape, the finger is very long now, cut the tip and continue giving shape with your fingers until the thumb has the length and shape you want.



19. Sculpt the hand with the knife, and fingers if needed, removing excess clay to achieve the desired shape.

20. With a modelling stick or a brush, smoothen hand and fingers removing marks made with the knife.



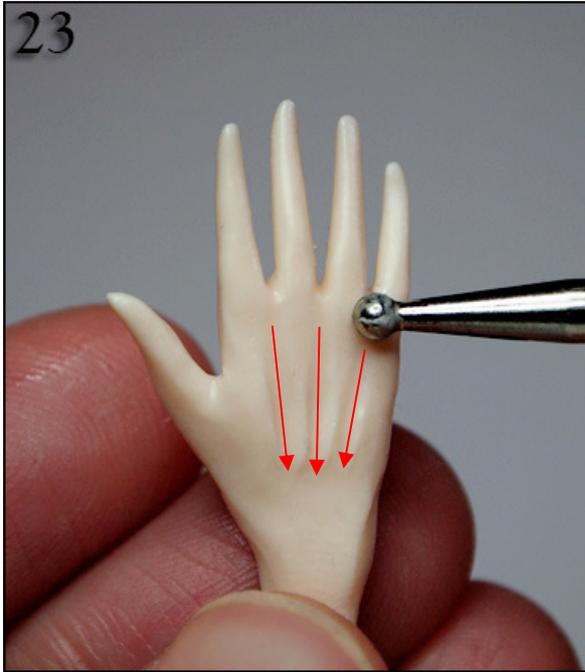
21. Fingers in the side view of the hand, it should be as in the picture: flat above (nail) and rounded down (fingertips).

22. With a small ball stylus, or any fine point tool, polish and smooth clay between fingers.



23. With a large ball stylus, do three marks on the hand reverse, as shown in the picture, to mark the hand bones.

24. Give shape to the palm, hollowing out the center with the ball stylus.



25. With a small needle, make marks on the inner side of the fingers, and gently press the needle letting the fingers to bend a little. Draw the palm lines too.

26. With the head of the needle, gently press the tip of the fingers to create the nails.



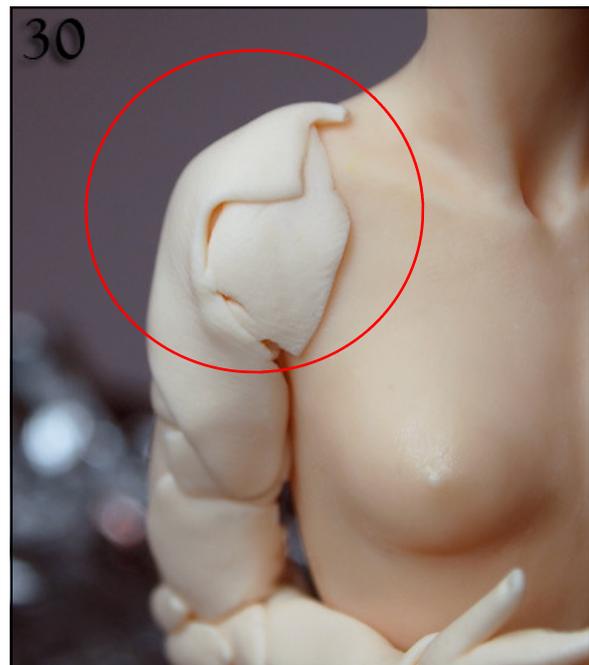
27. Remove the clay that helped to hold the hand leaving just a few millimeters, as shown in the picture, and make a cut with the knife up to the wrist.

28. Attach the hand to the arm, the wire of the arm must be slightly digged into the hand but not too deep. Extend the clay completely covering the wrist.



29. Add clay to the whole arm to create volume.

30. Add clay to the shoulder area too, placing it over the baked clay



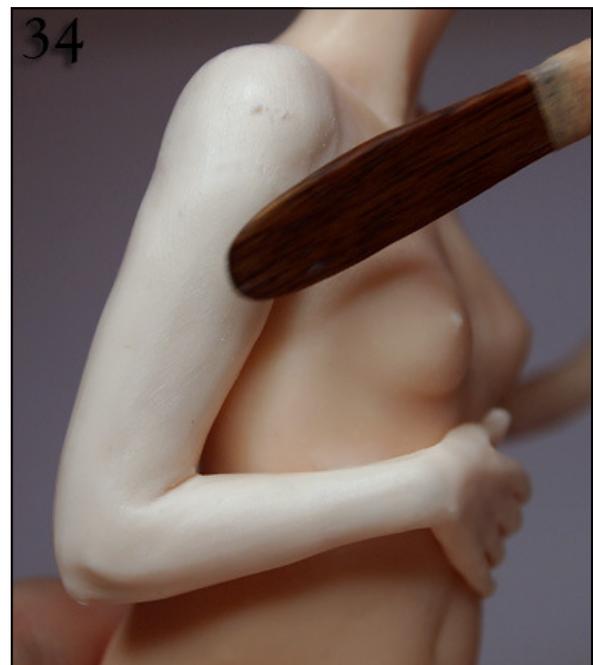
31. Extend and smooth a little the clay of the whole arm and shoulder, extend it to the already baked area, trying to make it as homogeneous as possible.

32. With a ball stylus, define the arm area as shown in the picture: muscles, folds, elbow bones, etc.



33. Sculpt the arms with the knife removing excess clay until you get the desired shape. You can also sculpt the hand again if you think it's necessary.

34. With the modelling stick, blend the clay to eliminate marks produced by the knife. Look at the arm and hand from all angles to make sure they have the shape you want. Take your time and be patient, it is difficult to make it right the first time.



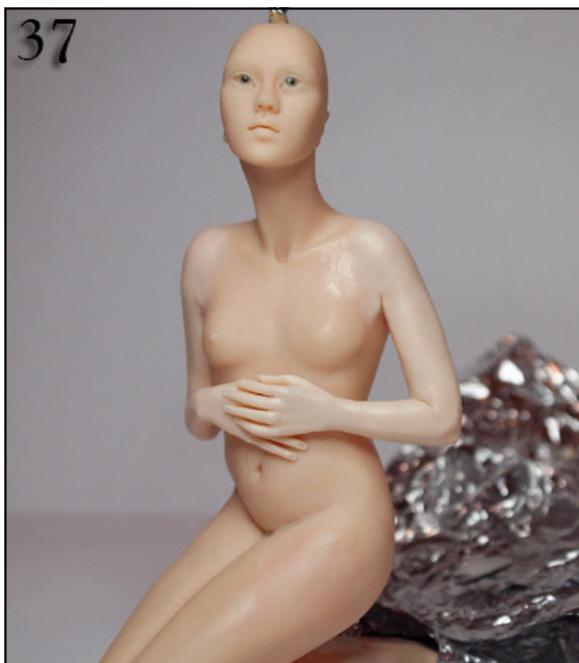
35. Once you are pleased with the result, smoothen for the last time the arm and hand clay. Do it with a brush dipped in water/oil.

36. Finally, press down with your fingertips over the clay, as you know, aside from getting a beautiful texture, when pressing the clay you also achieve an homogeneous clay, without bulges, etc.



37. Now you must make the other arm. Start by making the other hand if you haven't done yet and repeat the same steps you've done so far, trying to make them as similar as possible in size and shape.

38. When you're done and you are pleased with the result, you can already bake the arms.



Chapter 11

Painting tail and making scales

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Genesis® Thinning Medium
2. Genesis® paints
3. Glossy varnish
4. Glitter
5. Translucent polymer clay
6. Pearl-Ex™ pigments
7. Linoleum cutter
8. Modelling stick
9. Brushes
10. Oven
11. Heat gun



I usually do the scales of my mermaids with translucent, or white translucent, polymer clay but it also can be made with liquid polymer clay, though in this case you will have to make sure the cutter is quite sharpened. It is preferable you use Genesis® paint for the tail, since acrylic paints tend to yellowing and changes its color when baking.



PROCESS:

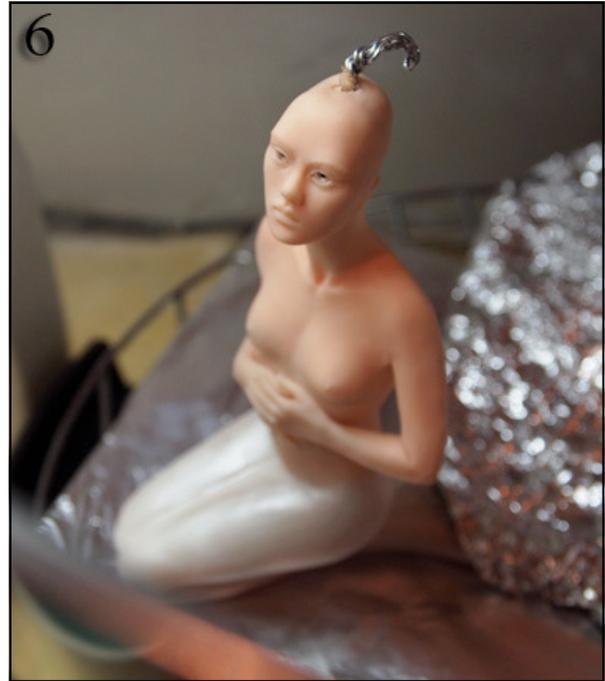
1. Prepare the base color to paint the tail. In this case I'm just using Flake White colour mixed with a little Thinning Medium to thin the paint.
2. Paint the tail, you can paint it with a brush, although I often do it with my fingers especially when I paint tails in different colors.



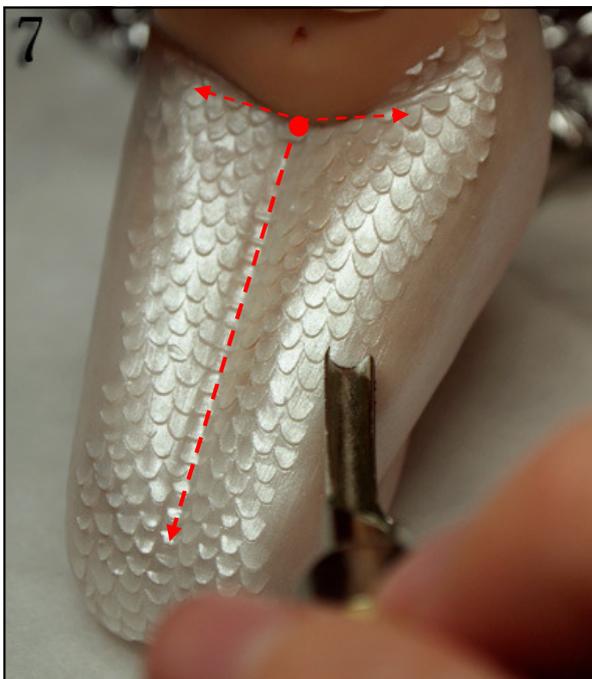
3. Dry the paint with the heat gun for 1-2 minutes. If you do not have a heat gun, you can use the oven but not exceeding 138 °C. (Cover the fins with aluminum foil).
4. Once the paint is dry, cover the whole tail with a thin layer of translucent clay.



5. Over the unbaked clay, add some shine with Pearl-ex™ pigments. In this case, I'm adding just a bit of colour #651 Pearl White.
6. Bake the clay in the oven.



7. When the clay is still warm, make the scales with the linoleum cutter, starting from the dot shown in the image. From top to bottom and from the center to the sides.
8. Insert the cutter only a few millimeters and remove it carefully backwards, if you do it sharply pushing up, the scales would break. Depending on the depth you insert the cutter you'll get a much larger scale, depending on the angle at which you insert it you'll get scales in different shapes.



9. Apply a coat of varnish to seal the scales and brighten the tail. Instead of varnish you can also apply 3D Crystal Lacquer, as it will give a three-dimensional and beautiful wet appearance to the tail.

10. Embellish the tail with a hint of glitter. You can also apply microbeads or other tones of Pearl-ex™, it all depends on your taste and the look you want to achieve.



11. The scales are completed!



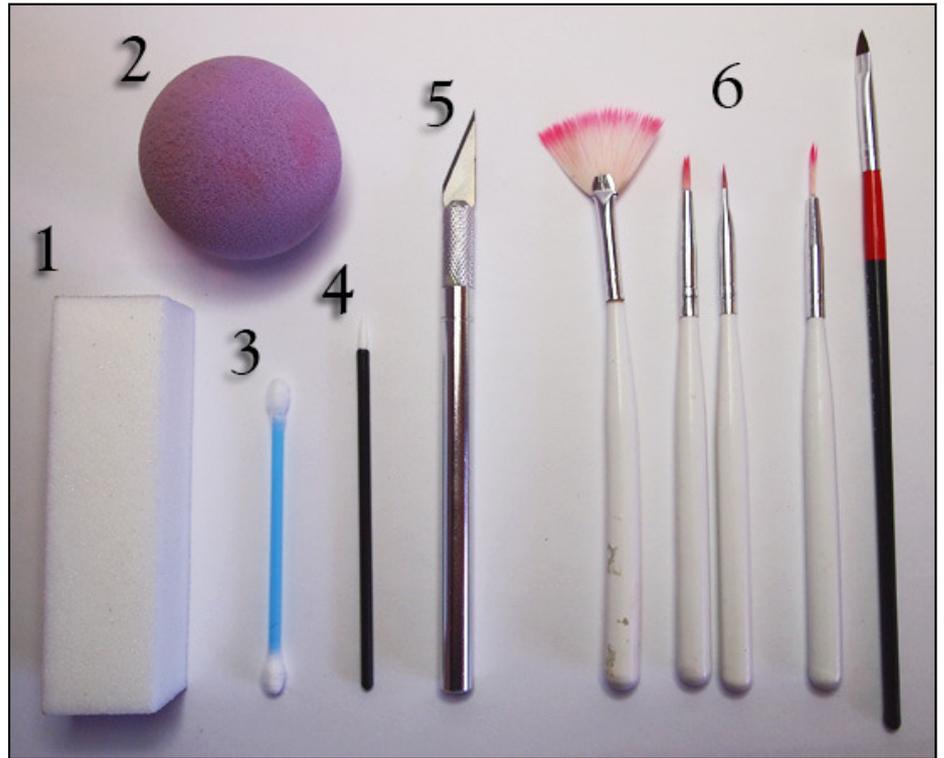
Chapter 12

Cleaning and painting

Once the mermaid has been completely sculpted, you have to clean and condition the clay and then paint.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

1. Sandpaper or file
2. Sponge
3. Cotton swab
4. Disposable applicator
5. X-acto knife
6. Brushes
7. Chalk paints
8. Acetone
9. Mineral oil
10. Genesis® Thinning Medium
11. Genesis® paints
12. Heat gun



For sanding the clay you must use the finest sandpaper you find, of 1000 or 1200. Though I like a lot do it with a nail buffing file, it is easier to find and is very delicate with clay.

The sponge I use is a common makeup sponge, you'll use it for blurring paint.

The applicator is simply to clean the eyes at the end of the process, but you can use any clean brush.

You will need several brushes: one to apply the paint, one for blend, one thin for details, one to apply chalk pastels (optional) and a fan brush or similar to clean the dust from sanding.



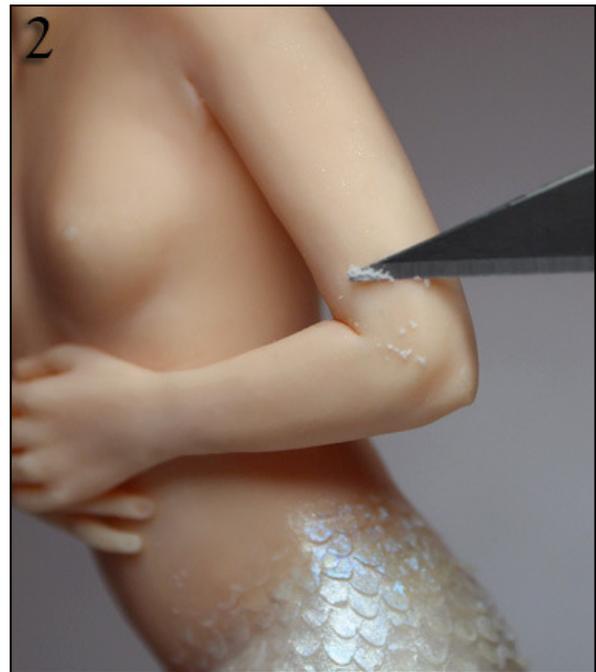
You will use acetone to remove dirt on the clay surface, if you cannot find pure acetone, nail polish remover can be used too.

The oil may be mineral (baby oil) or a light vegetable oil like coconut oil, almond, etc.

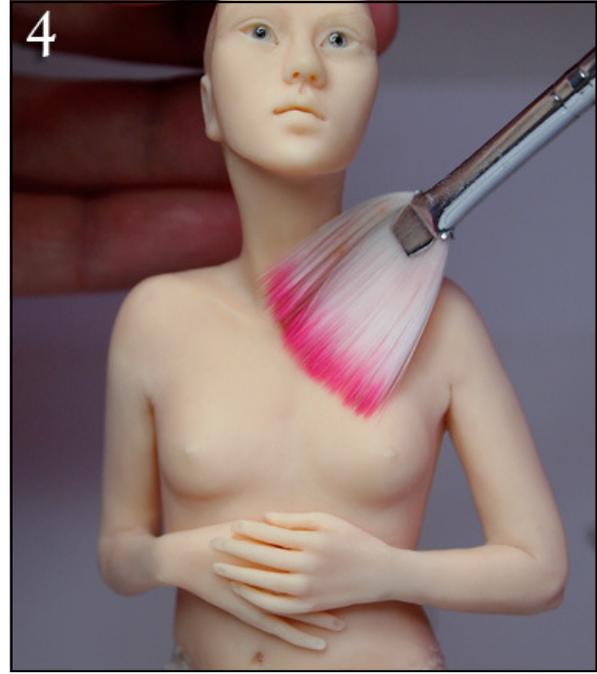
Genesis® oil paints only dries by applying heat, so you'll need a heat gun or oven.

PROCESS:

- 1. With a cotton swab dipped in acetone, remove dirt that may be on the surface of the clay like lints, powder pigments and other debris that may have stuck.*
- 2. If any of these particles is tightly stuck and you can not remove it with acetone, scrape the clay with the X-acto knife, but carefully, avoiding leaving any scratches or grooves.*

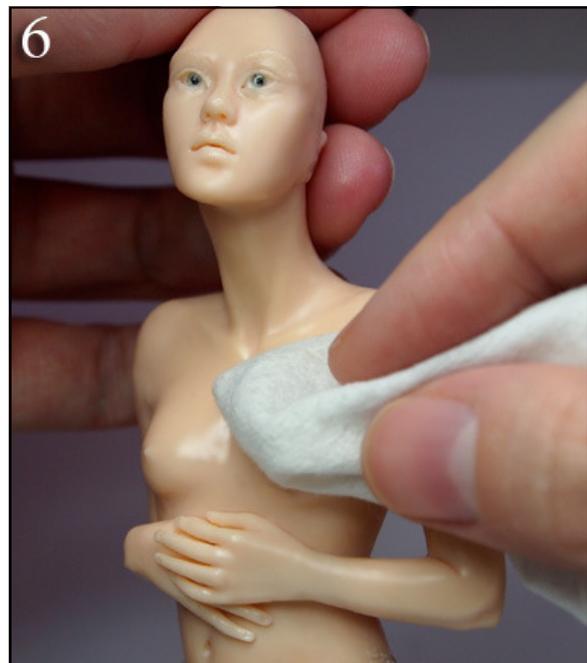


3. Sand carefully all areas you think need it.
4. Remove dust produced by sanding with a brush or a small damp cloth.



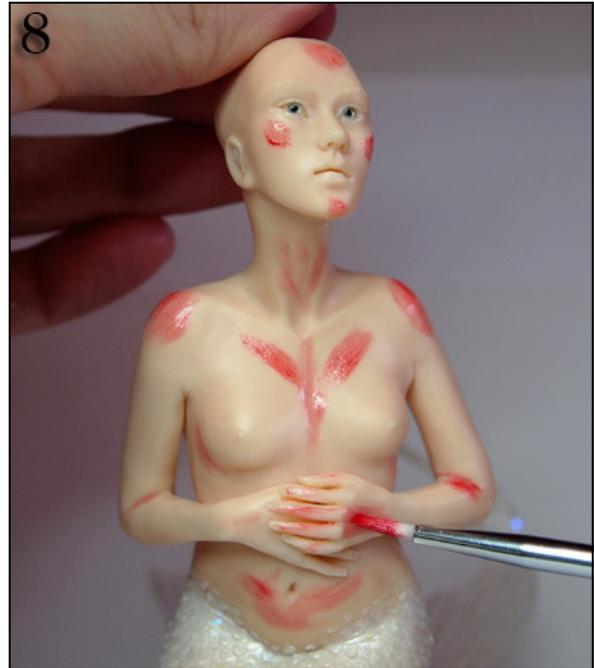
5. Apply oil with a cotton swab. This will help remove any whitish marks left by the acetone or sanding. It is also a way of 'moisturizing' clay and prepare it for painting, so you'll can blend paint easily. (If you're going to paint the mermaid with acrylics, it's not necessary this step).

6. Removes excess oil with a lint-free dry cloth. Let the clay absorb the oil for a while before painting. You will notice the clay is a bit shinny, this gives a very beautiful look to the 'skin' although part of that shine will disappear when drying paint.



7. Now you're going to give a more realistic look to the piece. Prepare the paint you're going to use, you'll need red or pink for blushing the skin. Genesis® has many different tones, I always use color Pyrrole Red 02 with a hint of Thinning Medium.

8. With a brush, add paint to the areas shown in the picture: forehead, cheeks, chin, neck, shoulders, sternum area, folds in arms, hands and belly.



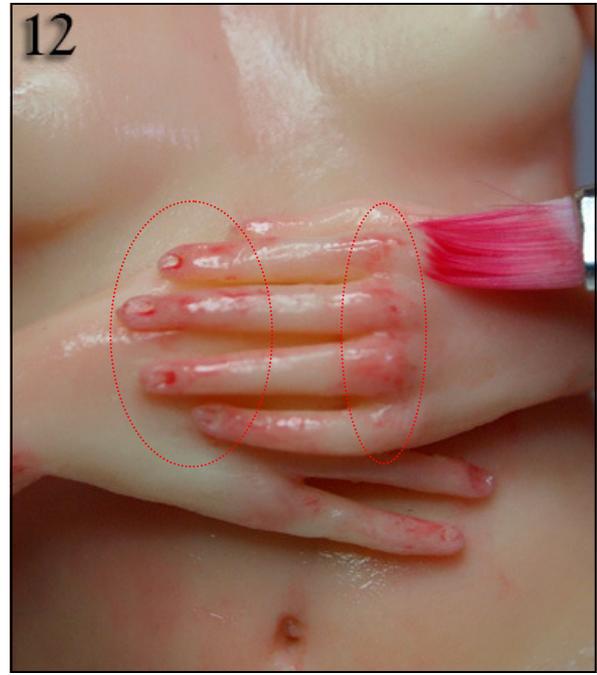
9. Do the same in the back: elbows, spine, shoulder blades, etc., and anywhere you think necessary.

10. Extend the paint with another clean brush.



11. Blur the paint with the sponge, trying to make it homogeneous and as natural as possible, without excessively red areas, it should be just a faint blush.

12. Paint hands in more detail. Apply paint in the finger tips and knuckles and extend again the paint with a clean brush and blur with a sponge if you think necessary.



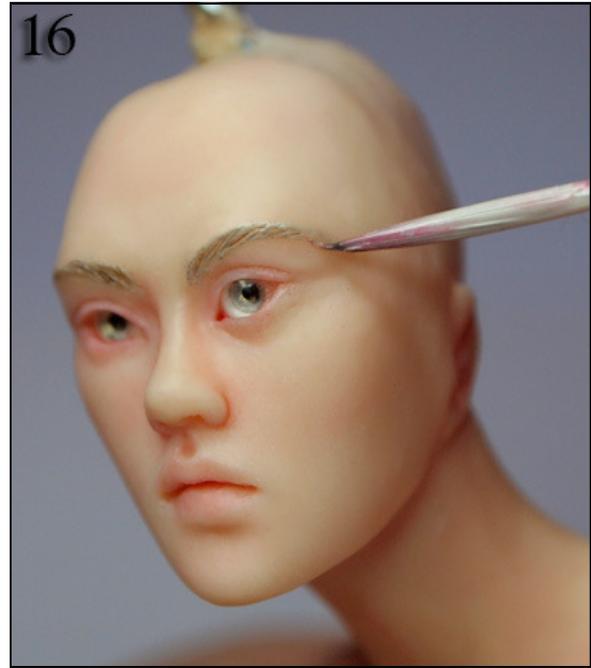
13. Add color to some face areas, such as the eyebrows, eyelids, folds around nose, lips and ears, achieving thus a light flesh colour. Extend paint and blend well.

14. Now, dry the paint with heat gun for about 2 minutes. If you don't have a heat gun, you can use the oven but not exceeding 138°C. (Cover the tail and fins with aluminum foil).



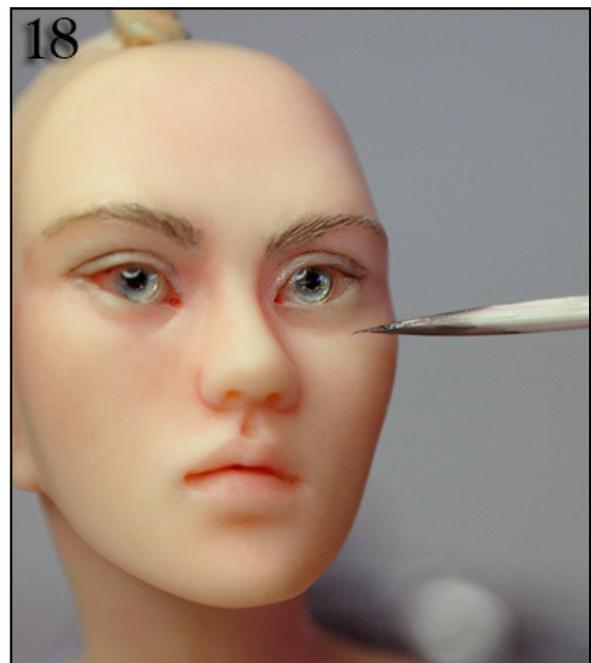
15. Prepare the paint for details. In this case I'm mixing Burnt Umber + Flake White + TM_1 for eyebrows and eyelids, Pyrrole Red 02 + Flake White + TM_2 for lips, and the two mixtures and a little more TM to get the colour for the nipples.

16. Paint eyebrows using a fine brush. You only must apply paint over the already sculpted eyebrows, starting from the inside towards outside following the drawing.



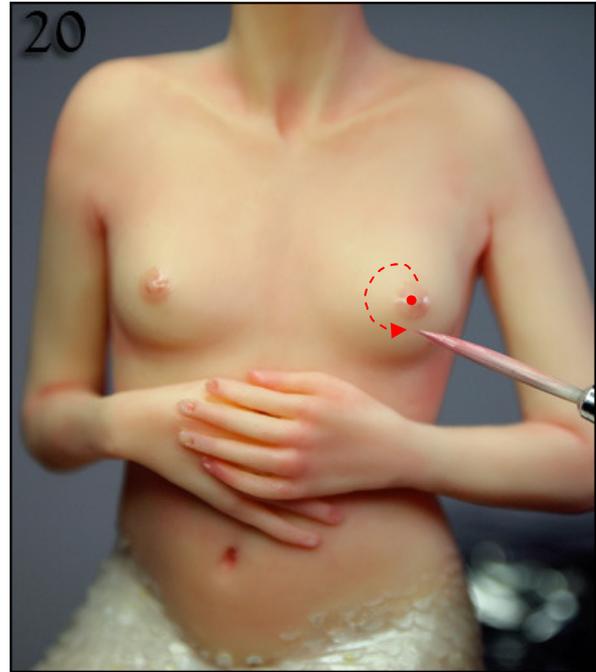
17. With a silicone brush (color shaper) or a disposable applicator, remove excess paint from the top and bottom part of the eyebrows.

18. With the same colour you have used for eyebrows, paint the upper and lower eyelid. Blend well the paint and if you want, you can draw a thin line as kind of 'eyeliner'.



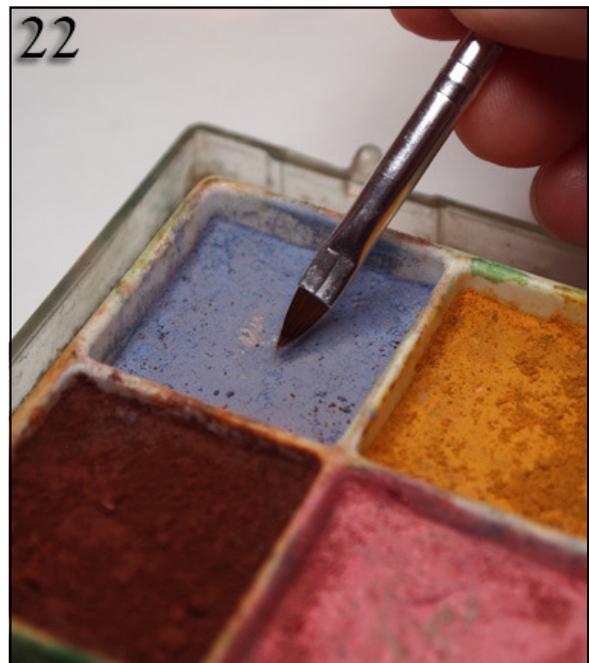
19. Paint lips with a fine brush and remove excess paint of the lip contour, outlining lips correctly.

20. Now, paint the nipples. Start by applying paint from the center and making circles outward. If you cannot paint a symmetrical areola, again with the help of a silicon brush or disposable applicator, remove excess paint from the edges. Take your time, apply paint and remove it as many times as necessary.



21. Dry the paint with the heat gun or oven.

22. In addition to Genesis[®] oil paints, you can also add some color with chalk pastels, for example, applying pink to cheeks, red to the lips or in this case, a hint of light blue in the eyes.



23. Apply a hint of chalk pastel in the area shown in the picture. The tone you get is very subtle and gives the eyes a natural look.

24. Remove remains of chalk dust with a cotton swab or brush. Finally, clean the eyes with a brush or a disposable applicator dipped in alcohol, to get rid of paint, dust or oil residues.



- Take all the time necessary to paint the mermaid until you are completely pleased with the result. If in some area, you think you have applied too much paint, you can remove the excess with a cotton swab dipped in acetone, and never will be late to repaint.
- When preparing the paint for the nipples, try to achieve a tone as natural as possible, avoid colours like bright red or fuchsia.
- As you can see, in this tutorial I won't teach to put lashes. The fact is I have not yet found a technique or material that I really like to achieve natural lashes, so I'd rather not put them. I always try to achieve a delicate and natural appearance for my dolls, that's why I don't make a very dramatic makeup, but it is just a matter of tastes, you are free to add brighter colors in eyeshadow, lips, etc.

Chapter 13

Wigging

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

1. Hair
2. Glue
3. Water
4. Toothpicks
5. Scissors
6. Comb
7. Hair styling gel or cream



In this case I'm using Tibetan lamb hair hand-dyed by me.

To attach hair, the ideal is to use fabric glue, but if you do not have it, you can use white glue although it will take longer to dry.

To fix the hair you can use a styling product: liquid gel, cream or oil. Hairspray and some foams leave residues and matted hair so better to avoid it.

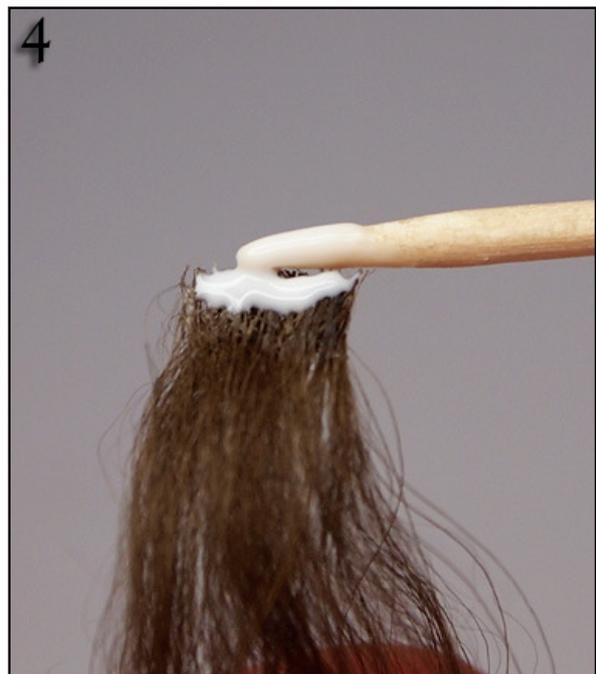


PROCESS:

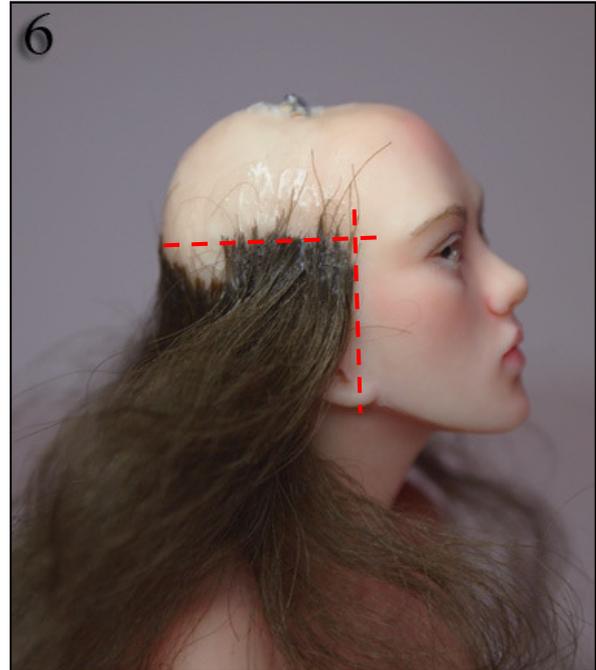
1. Cut, with pliers, the wire from the head.
2. Cut a lock of 1 cm wide approximately.



3. Trim the lock again, in such a way that the ends are straight and without protruding hairs.
4. Using a toothpick, apply glue on the ends, as shown in the picture.



5. Start by gluing the locks from the middle of nape. You'll need to add three or four locks, depending on the size of the head. Press with the toothpick making sure the hair is securely attached.
6. When placing the locks on the lower side, try to not exceed the earlobe, as shown in the picture.



7. Continue placing locks covering the head, only leaving an empty area on top.
8. Cut a lock slightly wider than the others, about 1.5 cm, and apply some glue on the ends.



9. Place it on the head, and hold the lock up for a few seconds, that's how you'll create volume in the crown area's hair.

10. Now, cut three very tiny locks, as the one shown in the picture, and apply a hint of glue.



11. Place the three locks in the forehead area.

12. Cut two more locks of 1.5 cm wide approx., apply glue as you have done until now. Start by placing one of the locks: place the glued area on the right side of the head, and the lock in the opposite direction to hairline.



13. Wait a few seconds and turn the lock towards the hairline.

14. Press down the lock for a few seconds to make sure it does not move from its place.



15. Repeat the same steps with the other lock.

16. Again, gently press down with your fingers for a few seconds to make sure the locks are held in place.



17. Once the glue is dry, comb all the hair to detangle and removing excess wool.

18. Moisten hair with water. Avoid areas with glue, or the locks could detach.



19. Separate hair into layers and apply styling cream or gel. Comb through each layer to avoid matted locks.

20. Now is the time to trim the hair if you want. In this case I'll just cut a few fringe hairs.



21. Wigging is completed. At this point, when the hair is still wet, you can make braids for waving or roll it with toothpicks to create curls, iron it, etc.. In this case I'm going to let the natural curl of tibetan lamb hair.



Chapter 14

Headpiece and last details

MATERIALS AND TOOLS:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Silver thread | 7. Varnish |
| 2. Dried tiny roots and lichen | 8. Scissors |
| 3. Sea shells and snails | 9. Needle |
| 4. Crushed mother-of-pearl | 10. Glitter |
| 5. Glue | 11. Microbeads |
| 6. Pearl Ex™ Pigments | 12. Brushes |



You will use the thread to tie the hair back, here I'm using silver thread, but you can use any thread or thin wire.

I collect the roots and lichens during my walks in the woods and I allow them to dry out for weeks before using them for my creations.

Sea shells and snails are also collected by me on the beach. If you live far from the sea or you can't find them, you'll have to buy them, the tiny shells are also used in 'nail art', as well as the crushed mother-of-pearl, so you'll can find these materials in specialized stores. You will use the varnish to embellish the headpiece and for her lips and nails, you can use it matte or glossy, at your choise.

You will need a fine detail brush for the lips and nails, and a brush to apply the pigments, microbeads and glitter on the headpiece.

PROCESS:

1. If you want to keep the hair under control, just tie the hair back. To do this, separate two small locks of the front of the head.
2. Tie them together with the thread and use scissors to trim surplus.



3. Apply glue in the head area where you want to place the headpiece.
4. Begin by placing the tallest elements of the headpiece on the glue, in this case, the dried roots. Hold them with your fingers for a few seconds to make sure they don't move from its place.



5. Now, place the large base elements, for example these small mussels.
6. Continue placing elements on the glue, like these tiny shells.



7. Now that the glue on the head is completely covered, when adding new elements, apply a hint of glue below each of them.
8. You can add more vertical elements, as here, a few pieces of dried lichen and glue them into the gaps between the shells.



9. When you've already placed the larger elements, you can embellish the headpiece, for example, gluing a few crushed mother-of-pearl bits.

10. Apply a few drops of glue wherever you want to put them, and place them with the help of a needle or tweezers.



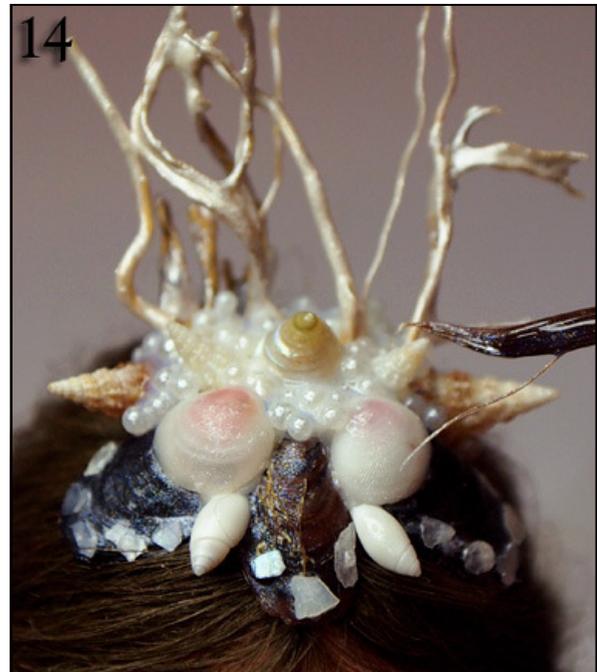
11. Mix a little varnish with a hint of pigments. In this case, I'm making a mixture with colors #674 Interference Gold and #671 Interference Blue.

12. With a brush, apply this mixture on the roots and lichens, this way you achieve an uniform and pearly colour.



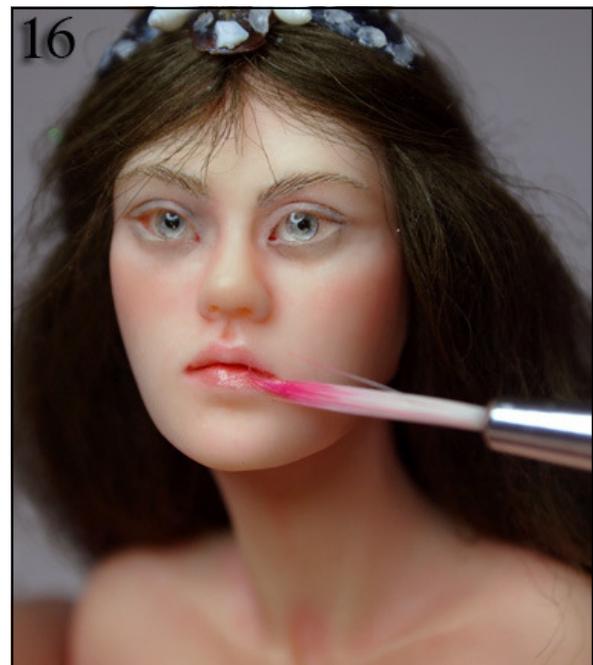
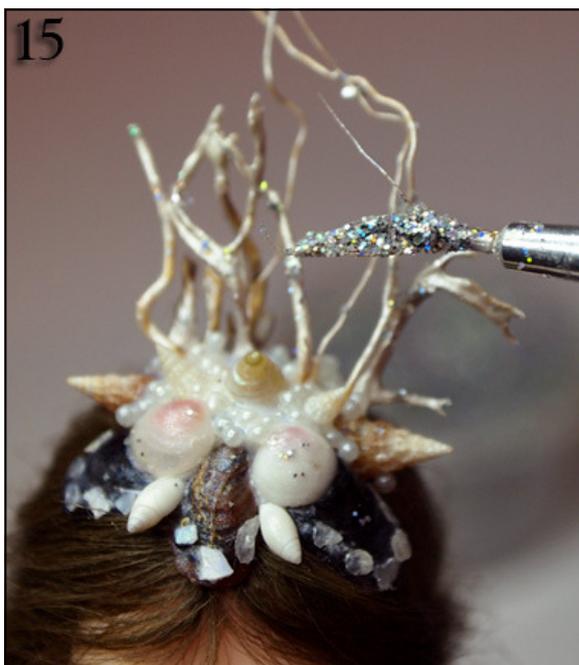
13. Now, mix together a few drops of varnish and microbeads. Here, I'm using only one kind of microbeads, but you can mix it in different sizes and colours.

14. With a brush, apply the microbeads in the gaps between the roots, shells, etc.



15. It's almost completed, but before the varnish to dry completely, apply a little glitter on the headpiece with a brush.

16. Before completing the mermaid, do not forget to apply some varnish on the lips, matte or glossy, depending on the appearance you want to get...



17. ...and finally, apply some varnish or 3D Crystal Lacquer on the nails.

18. The mermaid is now completed!



Chapter 15

Photographing your mermaid

If you want everyone to enjoy your creations, it is essential that you take quality pictures, especially if you want to sell your sculptures, because by photos is the only way you can attract the attention of potential customers anywhere in the world. First impressions are very important and tiny details must be seen.

I don't have a wide knowledge about photography and I don't own an up-market photo camera, but after years taking hundreds and hundreds of photographs to my dolls, I've learned some things I would like to share with you:

- **Never use Flash!**
- Use the macro setting for close-ups and details. If your camera does not have this feature, I recommend you to buy a camera with this function, today there are many economic compact digital cameras with this feature. If you can, use a tripod to get sharper pictures.
- Ideally, take pictures outside, preferably in nature. If the day is clear, you'll get better pictures at dawn and sunset when the light is softer, but at that time the light is very changing and you'll have to plan the session in advance. Always, the most important, is to avoid direct sunlight on the piece you're photographing. Clouds diffuses light, so in the grey, rainy or foggy days, the pictures will be perfect.
- Search for the right place to put the mermaid, damp mossy areas make her colors to highlight. If you can't find damp areas, carry a spray water bottle with you and spray the area, you will see how a few simple dry leaves or stones completely change their appearance with some moisture. If you're in the woods, avoid to take pictures under trees that could block the light, if possible, find a location with open sky.
- Of course, you can also take indoor pictures. It is preferred to make them in a light box, you can buy it or make it yourself with white fabric, although is not essential. Always use white light lamps. Ideally, use three light sources: two lamps projecting light over the sculpture at a semi-lateral way and one at zenith angle. The good part of taking indoor pictures is that you can take yourself all the time necessary and you can adjust the lighting exactly the way you want.
- If you use a plain background, it is preferably in white or gray colour. If you use a cloth, make sure there are no wrinkles or spots.

- You can also create a simple diorama like the ones I usually do.

In this case, I created a seabed with very few elements: for the background a black velvet fabric, in front of the fabric I've placed some rocks, behind the rocks, a large plant element like this dried seafan. I've scattered a layer of beach sand mixed with a few dried seaweed, I've placed a couple of sea urchins and a seashell on the rocks, a hint of glitter over the sand and, when photographing the mermaid, I will spray with water the sand and rocks.



- The more pictures you take the better, I usually take hundreds of them! You will choose them later, discarding the ones you don't like.

You will need a photo editor for minor light settings, etc., and cropping or resizing your photos before posting them on the internet.



Close-up and detail using the macro setting

Chapter 14

Links

Here is a list of trusted store sites where I usually buy supplies:

The Morezmore Estate

<http://stores.ebay.es/The-Morezmore-Estate>

Polymer Clay Express

www.polymerclayexpress.com

OOAK Artist Emporium

www.ooakartistemporium.com

Cloth Doll Supply

clothdollsupply.com

Clay Alley

www.clayalley.com

Do not forget to look for supplies on Ebay and Etsy where you'll find very interesting stores:

EBAY:

www.ebay.es

ETSY:

www.etsy.com



If you have any questions regarding this book or about my work, feel free to contact me via e-mail to rosa@nenufar-blanco.com, I will gladly answer your questions.

I hope you learned a lot and enjoyed as much as I did while writing this book for you!

For more information, visit my Website:

www.Nenufar-Blanco.com

... also you can follow my work through:

ETSY

<http://nenufarblanco.etsy.com>

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<http://www.facebook.com/nenufarblanco>

TWITTER

<http://www.twitter.com/nenufarblanco>

