

# Owl

## *polymer clay project*

by Christi Friesen

This project is real hoot!

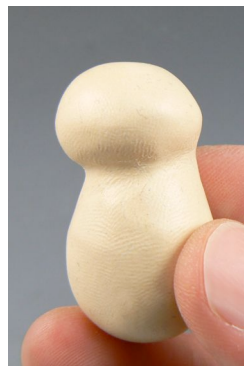
I took some artistic liberties with this owl, as you'll notice by the dots in the wings and head, just for funsies!



Premo brand polymer clay is my

recommendation for this project to make the owl color, mix white and ecru to make ivory. The wings were a bit of the ivory blend, mixed with a touch of gold clay to darken it just a little.

Roll out a ball of clay - about the size of walnut. Roll the ball into an oval. Squeeze to make an indentation between what will be the head and the body – about a one



third/two thirds kind of thing. You may need a tool to really make the indentation sharp enough. Now gently squish the head part down so the owl will look like he's shrugging a little (it's an owl thing).

Not all owls have those little feather horns on their heads, but all the really cool ones do (well, barn owls are cool, and they don't have

horns, but they're the exceptions). To make them, just pull the clay and pinch a little.

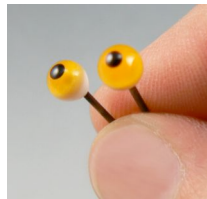


Next use your thumbs to make indentations for the eye area.



For owls, the best eyes are big ones – owl's eyes are one of the most noticeable things about them (all that seeing in the dark and stuff, I guess). I have this cool friend glass artist who makes some fab eyes!

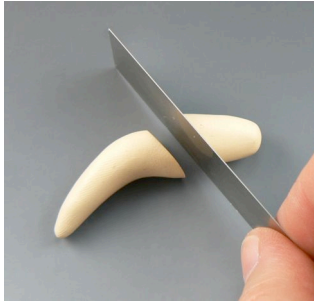
(you can find 'em on my website). Or you can use large dark, round beads, or even yellow glass beads (after baking, you can dot paint in the center to make them look very owly).



Press the eyes into the center of the indentations. Press them deeply into the clay.



Wings next – roll out two thick snakes of clay – one for each wing. Bend it a little, then slice off the tips and press the cut ends against the clay body – in the shoulder areas. Blend these into the body so it looks like they're growing there naturally. Oh, and while you're at it, pinch the tip of the body into a bit more pointed taper.



Feathers added to the wings are easy – just some flattened teardrops from that darker mix.



Press them onto the backside of the wing thingys. Start with longer feathers and get shorter and shorter as you press them on, headed towards the body.



He should have about four feathers on each side, to make spread out wings in full-swoop.



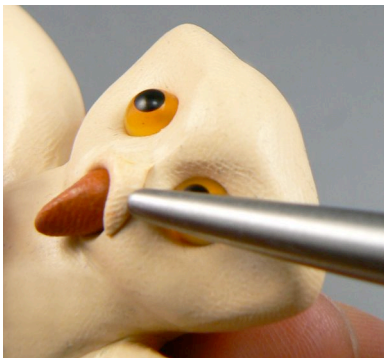
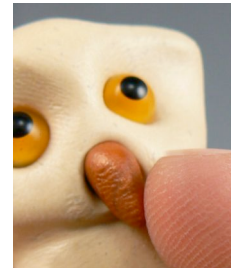
A few of the same flattened feather pressed behind the point of the body make the tail.

Use some orange color for the beak (try orange clay and gold clay blended together). Roll out a little rice-shaped bit.

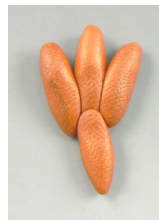


Make a hole in the middle of the head, right below the eyes for the bead to fit into.

Now fit the beak clay right in and press gently to attach it.



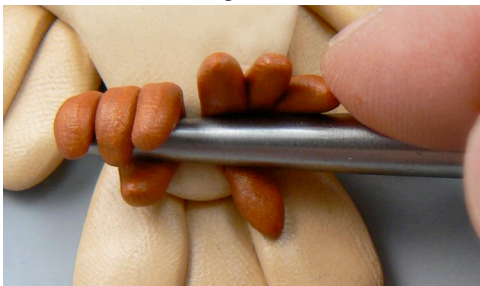
To help make the beak look like it really is growing out of the face, not just poked on, drape a little snake of clay (in the same color as the owl body) over the top of the beak and blend it into the face.



On to the footsies. Four little ovals of clay, pressed three together and the other behind make the foot. (Ok, feet – make two). Blend the clays together.



Sticking the feet on is easy. Since we made the wings in full-swoop mode, the feet should look like they're going to grab something ... a tree branch, a mouseburger... something. So press both feet on the bottom of the body, then use a tool to press the feet to the body in the center of the feet. Keep the tool in position and curl the feet around the tool. Doesn't that look good?



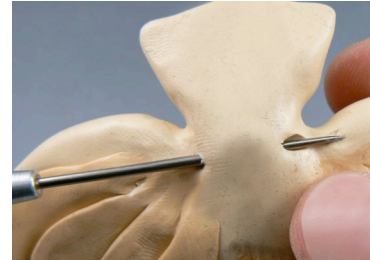
Next, let's add feathery details to the feathers - a line embedded down the middle of each feather, and more lines on each side of that centerline.



How about a bit more texture – little gentle lines on chest, face and shoulders to look like fluffy downy featheryness. Use a tool with a more blunt point than a needle tool for softer lines.



A little feathery pattern in the ear isn't accurate, but looks nice. Use a blade tool or needle tool to add it if you wanna'.



Since the bead will need a way to be strung, use a needle tool to pierce a hole in the back, horizontally through the upper back. Be careful not to smooch the front while you do this – just let the owl cradle in your hand and twist the needle tool back and forth to ease it through.



Ok, finally, if you want you can add some clay or beaded accents to make the piece a bit more stylized, I think it looks nifty. Some balls of clay pressed in place look especially nice.

Some powder dusted around the eyes draw attention to them and ditto for powder on the tips of the feathers.



Now pull the head forward (so he won't look like a zombie), and prop it with some paper or tissue. Pull the wings forward and prop them too (adds to the illusion of swooping flight).



He's done! Time to bake!

Bake in a preheated oven at 275°F (130°C) for 45 minutes (or according to clay manufacturer's instructions). Let it cool completely.

If you want, you can add a patina to bring out all the details of the texture lines. Just brush some acrylic paint (I suggest a nice medium brown color) onto a small area – get it into all the cracks!





Now wipe it off with a well-wrung-out sponge, leaving the paint only in the lines and grooves. Move on to the next small area. Repeat until the whole owl has been patina-ed! Let it dry and then you can coat it with a clear varnish if you like (you don't have to, it won't hurt to just be patina-ed, or to just be clay with no patina, actually!). Use a low gloss for this organic design (satin or matte is best) because a high gloss shiny varnish would be yucky.

Now be ready for everyone to ask "Whooooo made that wonderful owl?"

### For this project you will need:

. **polymer clay** – I recommend Premo brand – less than a 2oz. package each of: white, ecru, gold, orange

You should condition your clay before you use it – run it repeatedly through a pasta machine, or roll/fold/twist in your hands until the clay is soft and flexible!

. **a pair of eyes** – the best ones to use for this project are the groovy glass lampwork eyes made by my buddy Ralph McCaskey. You can find them on my site in the "products and tools" section! [www.CForiginals.com](http://www.CForiginals.com). Ralph of course carries them on his site too: [www.NightSideStudios.com](http://www.NightSideStudios.com)

If you don't want to, or can't use the glass eyes, you can substitute two large, round beads (about 4-6 mm size), or even two large round beads in a golden color that you can paint two dots of black onto after the piece is baked to duplicate the look (use enamel paints, or coat the dots with clear varnish to protect the dots from rubbing off).

All glass doll's eyes or taxidermy eyes can also be used.

. **tools** – you'll need a pasta machine (to condition and blend the clay), a needle tool, a sculpting tool or two (may I suggest my favorite tools! check 'em out on my site in the products page).

. optional: **paint** for patina and clear varnish – any acrylic paint will work (I use and recommend Liquitex BASICS) in a medium brown color. Also you'll want a **paintbrush** to apply and several small **sponges**. Any clear, **low-gloss varnish** compatible with polymer clay will work. My favorite is an outdoor varnish available at some hardware stores and online: Rustoleum brand's Varathane (a water-based polyurethane) style #200241& 200261.