

How to Use Armatures for Sculpting OOAK Babies

Many sculptress do not use armatures. They have the ability to barely touch the clay and others, like myself, can't work without an armature. I always end up smashing a place that I had already finished and it takes me a long time to smooth it. I did some research and found out that there are several armatures nowadays; I will talk about the ones I have used or know they exist: Resin Polymer clay Plaster of Paris Gesso Wire Vinyl Plastic Wood Styrofoam Aluminum Foil Out of all these armatures my favorite is foil, but I'll talk a little bit about all of them. I like the resin armatures, because you get a resin head and limbs. The limbs have a wire that goes through them with gaps between the feet and knee, so that you can bend the wire to pose the limbs. Once they are posed, you fill the gaps with polymer clay and bake at 265 Fahrenheit degrees for 30 minutes. Once it cools, you can start covering the head and limbs armature with clay. The resin armatures are nice because you don't need to use a lot of clay, they cure even and you can work fast, but the inconvenience is that they are expensive. The smaller ones start at \$9.99 and the bigger ones go to \$19.99 If you are already selling your OOAK babies at high prices, that's fine, but if you're not, then wait and don't spend as much money. You can find the resin armatures at Jack Johnston's Art Dolls website. The polymer clay armature is pre baked before you start sculpting and you make the head and limbs, bake them and then you sculpt over these. I recommend these armatures for very small babies. You don't want to waste so much clay in an armature. No one sells these. You have to make them yourself. The plaster of Paris armatures are made out of a mold and they are hollow. I have only used the head armature. I haven't seen limb's armatures made out of plaster of Paris. They sell them covered with aluminum foil and you're not supposed to remove it. I did out of curiosity and found out they are two halves and they are held together by the foil. You have to be careful to work with the plaster of Paris, because you can't press hard or you will break it. It's fragile. Other than that, they are a great help to work with and you can buy them at Pat Moulton's website. The Gesso armatures are better to work with, because they make it out of the gesso casting strip. They are made out of a ball of paper, then you have to wet the gesso strip and put it around the ball of paper. You can make limbs out of this too, but I don't like it because it's messy and you have to wait for it to dry. No one sells them, so you have to make them yourself. The wire armatures are used mostly for small sculptures such as babies, fairies, elves, or miniatures. They form the wire as a body and then cover it with white floral tape. This works great for small or miniatures, because you can pose the wire armature any way you want. Some fairy sculptors sell these ready made wire armatures, but for whatever price you are going to pay, it is cheaper to buy the wire and make them yourself. After you have the armature covered with the floral tape and posed the way you want it, you can start adding the clay. For extra strength, you can dry the first layer of clay with a drying gun. Your sculpture will be so strong it will not break. The vinyl armatures are fairly new. They are sold by Secrist Dolls. It is the only place where they make them so far. You can work fast with them but they are hollow and the vinyl is not very hard, so you have to be careful not to press too much and when you bake them, you have to let them cool completely so you don't break the head sculpture. The risk of these armatures is that they crack very easily so until they find a way to make them better, I am keeping away from these. I had to fill mine with glass pellets and seal them before starting to sculpt, because I cracked a few and they are expensive too. They come in three sizes: Small, medium and large. Plastic armatures are good too, but once you put them in the oven they melt, so make sure you cover them with a fairly thick layer of clay and don't handle them until they are completely dry. Jack Johnston sells them too, but they are expensive and not very reliable. Wood armatures are great, but just for small babies' heads. No one sells them. I came up with the idea to buy wood balls in the crafts section and then I add the clay. They work beautiful, never crack and the weight of the wood makes them very realistic. They have a hole on one side, so I insert a small wood stick like a lollipop and the job is much easier. Styrofoam armatures are very good, but it's not just any styrofoam. If you put regular styrofoam in the oven, the fumes are toxic, so don't do it. They are special styrofoam armatures that you can buy from a lady in Doll Fan or in Europe. They don't make them here in the US yet. They have the head armature and they also have limbs armatures, but you have to break the styrofoam if you want to pose them in other positions rather than the 90 degree the foot and leg are positioned. They work great to sculpt, but the inconvenience is that they shrink once you get them in the oven. As a matter of fact, you can hear them rattle inside the head sometimes, but if you add a fairly thick layer of clay you should not have any problems. The advantage is that these armatures are very affordable. Aluminum foil armatures as I said before are my favorite. They don't shrink, you can pose them before you add the clay and will make your armature so strong it'll never break or crack. The only disadvantage is that you have to make them yourself and work hard at them. The harder you get them, the best, and if you work on the shape of the heads and limbs too they will make your job much easier. There are some people who sell them already made, but they are expensive considering it's just a ball of aluminum foil. The only difference is that these armatures are very well defined, formed and smooth, because they cover them with a last layer of foil when the head and limbs are done, but then again, you can do this yourself and save a lot of money.

About the Author

Arts 'n Dolls is an online community where you can buy, sell, or trade arts, crafts, OOAK and reborn babies. You can visit ArstnDolls and view more guides at http://www.artsndolls.com/reviews_guides.php

Source: <http://americanahost.com>