



# DOWN THE ROAD

BY LESLEY MAGARIL DELIA

*While planning for this "Cane" focused issue, I happened upon the absolutely amazing piece titled "The Ladies," by artist Lesley Magaril Delia. Lesley had shared the story of its creation in an online group, and I was intrigued by her use of canes in its creation. Upon looking into her art further, and discovering her amazing work on serving plates in addition to her canvas work, I knew right away that I wanted to share Lesley's story, and her art, in this issue of Passion for Polymer!*

- Cindi McGee

Before devoting full time to creating with polymer, Lesley Magaril Delia, the artisan behind "Down the Road Designs," used the left side of her brain to practice law for over 35 years. She was initially a staff trial and appellate attorney. She ultimately became the Executive Director of a Statewide public interest legal services program with 23 offices throughout lower New York State that served individuals struggling with mental health challenges. Then, the right side of her brain called to her.

She has no formal training in art, but enjoyed drawing as a child and teen. For fun, she took an introductory painting class at the Art League of Long Island in the mid-1980s and subsequently continued developing her painting skills by learning acrylics privately with a local artist once a week for two years. During those years, she reminded herself often that "down the road" she could someday retire, become reacquainted with the right side of her brain, and paint full time, satisfied that on her journey she had tried to help make the world a better place. One day during those busy years juggling family and career, she became fascinated watching her friend, Joan Israel, an accomplished polymer clay artist, create a polymer clay leaf cane. She had long been a fan of Joan's work. Joan shared some simple words of wisdom... "It sticks to itself and sticks to other things" and "the way you cook will guide the way you use polymer." She left Joan's studio that day with a handful of Premo! Sculpey® clay and some of Joan's spare tools and started to experiment with polymer. She was immediately seduced by this remarkable, versatile medium and set to work to understand its behavior and all of its unique



properties... watching YouTube and reading everything written by Ginger Davis Allman.



Lesley retired from the practice of law in 2014, and is finally "down the road." She refers to her current work as "claynting"... painting with clay. She greatly appreciates the forgiving nature of polymer. She finds the most unique property of polymer to be its fitness for caning. This feature of the medium distinguishes it for her from painting. She appreciates that caning allows for repeating a complex design element throughout a piece without the need to repaint every detail, allowing her to focus on the gestalt of a piece instead of focusing on the small details. She primarily makes her own canes, but will occasionally, on a whim, buy a few, especially now during the clay shortage. She uses her canes to make decorative plates and bowls, as well as framed wall art. In some pieces, the cane is the main feature and in other just a minor embellishment.

After retiring, Lesley and her husband, Jeff, a retired engineer, took a 6 week trip to Tanzania. They spent the first five weeks volunteering at a school in a Massai village near Arusha where they lived and taught computer skills to the local teachers in connection with "A is for Africa," a charitable organization. Later they safaried. It was a life changing experience in so many ways.

While in Tanzania, everything seemed to Lesley like the subject of a photograph. One of the sights that she was drawn to photograph was all of the ladies wearing mismatched colorful fabrics and carrying goods on their heads to sell or to bring home from market. Recently, Lesley and Jeff were putting together a slide show of their experience for their travel club and she had occasion to revisit all her photos of the colorful ladies of Arusha.

The clay shortage during the pandemic has led many of us to pick through our scrap clay and cane ends. Lesley was sorting cane ends, wondering what she could do with those mismatched 1/4" and 1/2" ends that didn't seem to be enough to make anything... until the word "mismatched" struck her and she remembered the colorful ladies of Arusha looking beautiful in their mismatched fabrics... thus the idea for her piece, "The Ladies," was born. During baking, much of it became scorched in a random heat spike. It was a challenging save, but she was able to resurrect it with a combination of sanding, alcohol inks, and new layers of cane... a tribute to the wonderful forgivable qualities of polymer.

Lesley is a member of the International Polymer Clay Association, the Art League of Long Island, and the Long Island Craft Guild and is currently exhibiting her work in their virtual galleries. She has been giving private lessons and leading workshops and classes to introduce others to this remarkable modern artists' medium. She has been selling her work at, among other places, the Art League of Long Island shows and craft fairs.

Lesley lives with her husband in Huntington, New York where they are active members of the Huntington Jewish Center. They love spending time with their three adult children and their grandchildren. They love to explore and they travel extensively.



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