

The Costumer's Manifesto—COSTUMES.ORG

<http://www.costumes.org/advice/costcraftsmanual/tmpjk15.htm>

by Tara Maginnis, Ph.D.

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Note: This workbook was made in 1984-85 as part of my MA Project at California State University Fresno. It was intended as a text workbook for the Advanced Costume Construction class to use in the costume properties portion of the class. Certain portions of the text now border on the antique because of the date at which it was written, for example under "Materials" in 1985 a hot glue gun was an unusual craft supply, only obtainable at hardware stores. I hope you will bear with these small oddities and look to the basics of this work, intended as an introduction to several basic costume crafts processes. --TM

PROJECT 15 DISTRESSING A STANDARD MAN'S SHIRT

"Distressing" is a term used to describe the process by which a garment is artificially aged or worn out.

Distressing simulates the natural aging of garments, but usually is more exaggerated than real aging since it has to be seen by the audience at a distance. The question is often asked "Why not distress with dirt and natural method of aging, or use old garments?" The answer is that natural aging does not show as well at a distance as artificial distressing, and is harder to do with any success.

Before starting this project, study the most worn items in your own wardrobe for signs of natural aging. Where is the fabric worn?. Where are seams coming apart? Where do sweat stains, grass stains and dirt accumulate? Noticing this will help you to better understand the distressing process.

The shirt made in this project is like the sample sheet in Project #1. It is meant to illustrate a large variety of distressing techniques on one sample garment.

DISTRESSING A STANDARD MAN'S SHIRT

Purpose:

To practice the processes used in distressing a sample shirt, where the possible outcome of a first time disaster is non-threatening. Also, to learn the use of distressing paints which are non-toxic and semi-permanent.

Materials:

- An old, long sleeved man's shirt from a Thrift store, a medium color preferred.
- At least one of these: Sandpaper, a spiky-toothed saw, a rasp and/or files
Seam ripper
- Several old jars or cans for mixing paint
- One or more good quality plastic laundry sprayers* or the cheapest "Badger" air brush. Cheap Laundry sprayers tend to spatter and are uncontrolled in their painting. If an airbrush is available to you, use it.
- "Versatex" airbrush paints, in at least 3 of the following colors: Brown, black, olive green, ochre, and rust. **2003 Note: You can substitute any non toxic fabric paint for this product.**
- "Protech" hand cream or rubber gloves
- Large muslin scraps for practice and press cloths
- Small paintbrush for dry brushing and spattering
- Large plastic garbage bag
- "Vaseline"
- Small round stones or other weights
- Bleach (liquid chlorine)
- Pressed paper paint mask
- A dress or suit form
- Darning egg

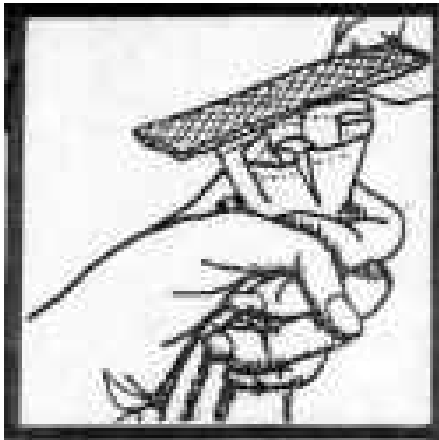
Procedure:

A. Cover the dress form with the large plastic bag and pin or tape down the bottom so no paint will get on the form or on the base of the form.

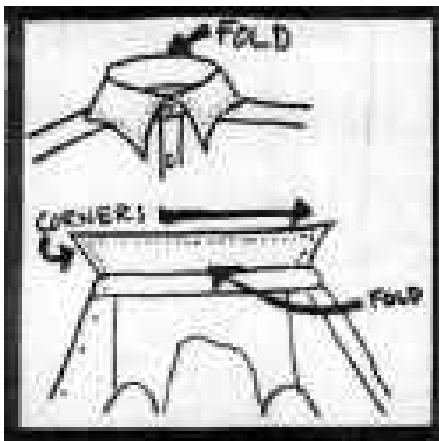




B. Before you put the shirt on the form, work with tile sandpaper, saw rasp, and files, wear away at those parts of the shirt that naturally would receive the most wear.



C. Grab the shirt cuffs into a fist with the cuff edges sticking out at the top, as shown. Rub the rasp or files against the edges until worn looking.

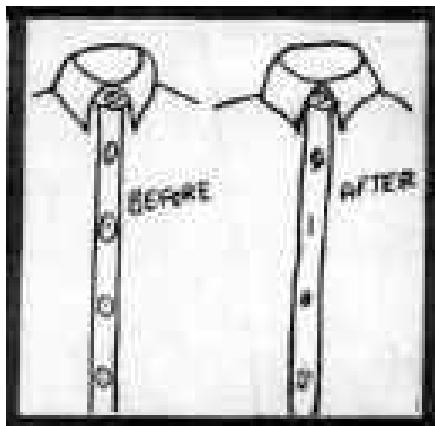


D. Sandpaper the fold on the back of the collar, as shown, where the neck rubs it. Lay the collar flat on a table and sandpaper or file the edges and corners until the interfacing shows in spots.

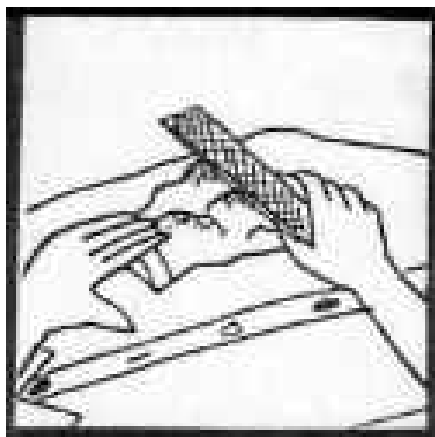
Obtained from www.technicaltraining.com



E. Put the shoulders over the darning egg and sandpaper the tops of the shoulder points. Use a seam ripper to pick apart a little of the armhole seams near the back, as if the wearer was beginning to rip out his sleeves.

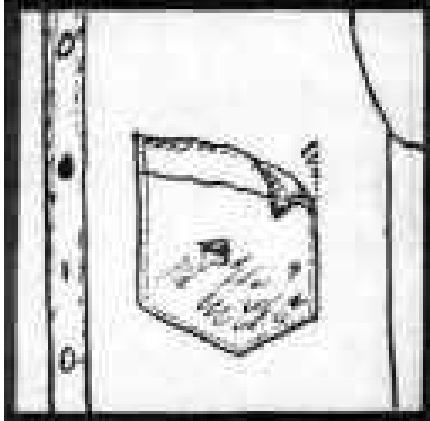


F. Sand down the finish of the buttons on the center front placket. Use the seam ripper to remove three or more buttons. Leave the threads from one to hang empty. Sew two, not quite matching color buttons on in the places where the others were removed.

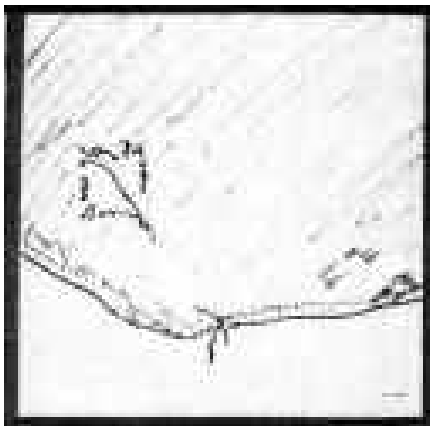


G. Place several small, round heavy stones in the pocket(s) and sand, rasp or file the bottom of the pocket where the stones are until tiny holes begin to appear.

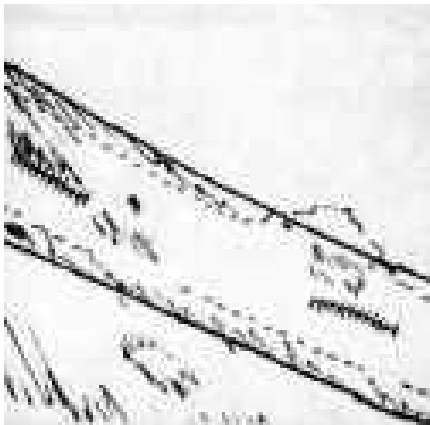
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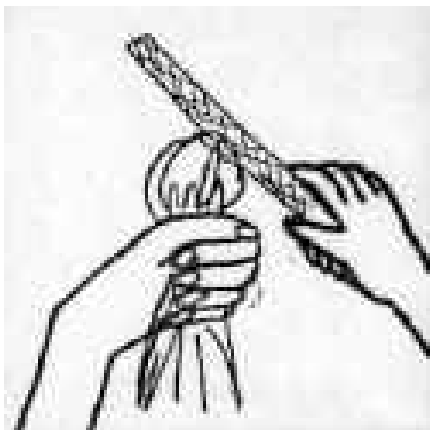
H. Use the seam ripper to unpick one of the top corners of the pocket and sand the top edge, as though someone had put things in the pocket roughly for a long time.



I. Rasp or sand the shirt hem and unpick some of the stitching of the hem. Ravel out the fabric where the stitching is undone. Sand all the way through too make some small holes above the hem on the back.



J. Lay the shirt out flat on a table and use the rasp or sandpaper over the main body of the shirt to rough up the texture of the shirt in uneven patches. Do both front and back. Sand the center front placket until the interfacing shows in spots.

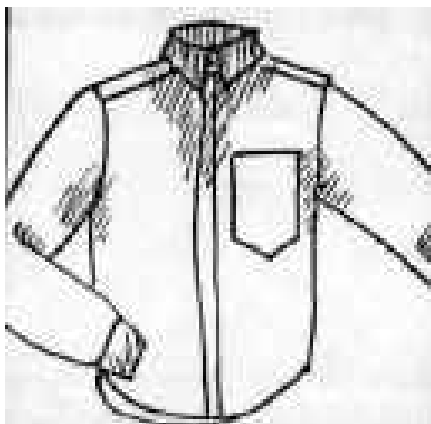


K. Put the shirt over the darning egg and use the rough-toothed saw to make tiny holes and rough spots on the shoulder points, elbow points, and wherever else seems appropriate.

L. Put on "Protech" hand cream, or rubber gloves. Put on paint clothes. In paper cups, dilute one part "Versatex" paint with ten parts water. Mix thoroughly so that there is no "gloppy" texture to the mixture, strain. Lumps in the mix will cause the sprayer or airbrush to clog.

M. Pouring into extra cups from the first set of original colors, mix the five following colors: very dark green with brownish overtones, (grass stain) yellowish brownish-tannish with extra water, (sweat stain), pale gray (mildew), dark, cold brown, (filth), and light, rusty brown, (defecation). If you cannot manage to mix these colors from the ones you have bought, make sure that you have at least a light and a dark brown, green, and a pale color with lots of brown in it. Remember that no matter how dull it looks in the cup, it will probably look too bright on the shirt. So, right now, throw a little more brown, gray, water and/or the opposite color in the mix to dull it down properly.

N. Get a large scrap piece of muslin, or scrap fabric similar in color and content to the shirt. Put sweat stain-yellow in the sprayer or airbrush and practice spraying it on the scrap until you get control of the sprayer's stream.

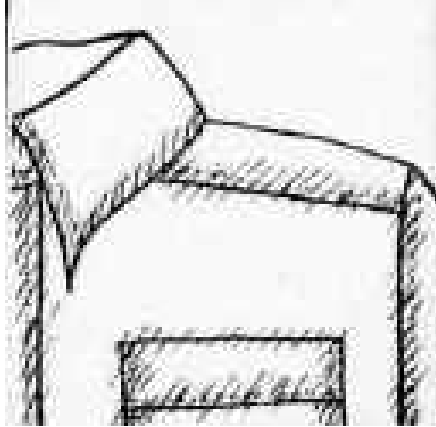


O. Put the shirt on the covered dress form. and start lightly to spray the natural sweat stain areas. Hit the armpits, the back just below the neck, the neck, the front just below the neck, the cuffs and the inside of the elbows. Spray a little darker than natural.

P. Pour the leftover sweat stain-yellow into a cup for later. Clean the sprayer with water. Make sure to pump water through the sprayer to clear out the nozzle. Pour defecation-brown in the sprayer and practice it on the muslin, as before.



Q. On the shirt, mist the hem, cuffs, the collar, the armpits, the outside of the elbows and the front placket. Make the very edges of the cuffs and hem dirtier, and fade the color out as you go higher.

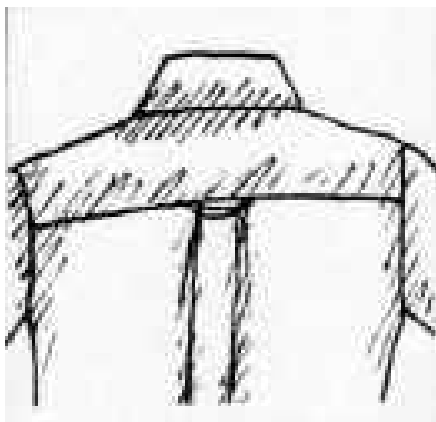


R. With a very fine spray hit the shirt all along any seams or topstitching so that they are almost imperceptibly darker than the surrounding fabric. There should be no hard edges or lines in the spraying.

S. Pour the leftover defecation-brown into a cup for later. Clean the sprayer. Put mildew-gray in the sprayer and practice with the muslin scrap until you can control it as a fine mist. Also practice getting a spatter look like large mildew spots.



T. Spray a fine mist under the arms and down the sides of the arms. Spray around the underside of the pocket(s) as though something inside had leaked through.



U. Spray around the back yoke, the cuffs and collar, wherever there are two or more thicknesses of fabric. With a spattery spray hit the body of the shirt in several spots as if mold were growing on it. Use restraint with this technique.

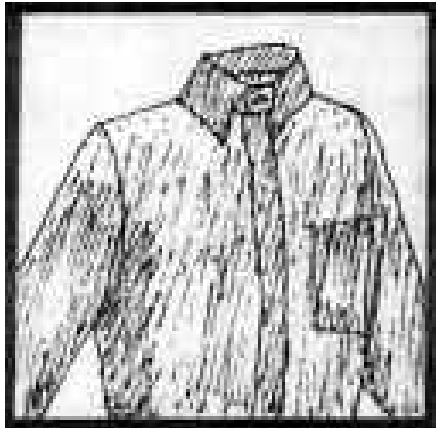


V. Pour mildew-gray into a cup for later. Clean sprayer. Practice spraying with grass stain-green on muslin scrap until you have control of the spray. Spray the outside lower arms and the back of the shirt tail hem area. Also, use grass-stain-green as a general darkener in spots where dark shadows seem to be needed.



W . Pour grass-stain-green into a cup for later. Clean sprayer. Practice with filth-brown as a general darkener and as a strong shadow in pits, around collar, cuffs, etc. Where dirt would naturally accumulate. Put some spray on shoulders tops and points.

x. Pour filth-brown into a cup. Clean sprayer. Fill sprayer with a 50/50 water/bleach mixture. Practice spraying over previous paint samples on muslin. Wait for bleaching action to take place (in sunlight).



Y. When you know how to control the fading power of the bleach, spray the tops of the shoulders where the sun would naturally bleach the shirt and overall, especially any place that the paint looks too dark.

Z. Check the overall look of the shirt from about 10 feet away. If any area seems too light or too dark, correct this with the leftover paint and bleach. Usually the sleeves and body will need more paint and the collar and cuffs more bleach.

AA. If the paint is far too strong, wash the shirt in cold water and much of the paint will come out. If the paint is only a little strong, putting water in the sprayer, and hitting the strong spots is enough to blend them.



BB. For fine detail work around the stitching lines or holes, use the small paintbrush to dry brush shadows. If the spraying looks too even, use the brush to spatter paint on sparingly for texture.

CC. When the shirt is dry, and the desired look, press the "dirt" to heat set the paint between two thick dry press cloths. Do not allow paint to come in contact with the iron or the ironing board. Iron on high or cotton setting for 30 seconds per foot.

DD. When the paint has been completely set, wet the shirt down with the sprayer and put it on the form to dry. Put the stones back in the pocket while the shirt is wet. When the shirt is dry, it will look naturally, not artificially wrinkled.



EE. When shirt is dry, apply small amounts of "Vaseline" to sweat areas with the fingers. Grease the collar, cuffs, pits, top of the front placket, and the back immediately below the neck. Slather on more until you can see the slight shine 10 feet away.

FF. This shirt can be gently hand washed in warm water without losing much of the paint, but the "Vaseline" sweat-shine will need to be reapplied after each washing. If an actor is allergic to "Vaseline," glycerin is a good substitute. Wash distressed items alone as paint and "Vaseline" can stain other garments washed with them.

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtail.com