

STOLLOWEEN

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DESCRIPTION

The Ancient Skulls resulted in an attempt to simplify the skull building process; they are created with plastic grocery bags, cardboard and plastic milk jugs. While experimenting with some different homemade clay formulas I stumbled upon a clay that cracked quite nicely when it dried. This tutorial documents the trials and errors of trying new techniques.





The skulls started by filling a small plastic grocery bag with crumpled newspaper until it was the desired size. The bag was wrapped with masking tape to define the shape and create a solid armature.



Obtained from Omarshauntedtrail.com
A cardboard face template was attached to the stuffed bag creating a basic skull shape.



Additional cardboard pieces were used to further define the eye sockets and nose. Layers of newspaper soaked in paste were applied over the entire form. Homemade papier mache was used to add additional details and depth.





The jaw was created in a similar fashion by cutting a jaw shape from poster board and hot gluing to a piece of corrugated cardboard.



Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com



Once the papier mache had dried a hole was cut into the bottom of the skull and the crumpled newspaper was removed leaving a hollow skull. Holes were cut into each side of the skull to create indentations. The hole was blocked with strips of cardboard and masking tape.





Additional papier mache strips and clay were used to cover the entire skull adding more structure and definition to the brow, nose and jaws



The eye holes were filled with paper towel soaked in papier mache paste creating very organic looking eye sockets.

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com

Teeth were created by cutting appropriate size and shapes from a plastic milk jug. The teeth were attached with hot glue.

At this point I tried an experiment with the surface texture. After the papier mache had completely dried I coated the entire skull with a thick layer of water and flour paste. No glue or other additives.



While the paste was still wet I used a heat gun to rapidly dry the paste resulting in bubbles and blisters. The texture was interesting and I proceeded to paint the skulls.



The finished skulls were adequate but not quite what I was visualizing. My goal was to make something that looked like it had just been dug up from the ground, sort of an archeological relic.



So I proceeded to with the next step which was to take a hammer and smash the hell out of them. Using a hammer and a chisel I broke away large sections of the cranium. Once I was satisfied with the look I added more clay essentially reinforcing the edges and smoothing out the exposed inside of the skulls.



The next step was a happy accident. While experimenting with some new homemade clay recipes I came across a clay that had the unique characteristic of cracking while it dried.



A very thin 1/8" layer of the "cracking clay" was applied to the surface of the skulls. The skulls were placed in front of a fan to quicken the drying process and the clay cracked in a very natural looking way. The clay also has the advantage of not flaking off unlike past experiments with plaster and other materials.



CRACKING CLAY RECIPE

- 1 Cup Bon Ami Polishing Cleanser
- 1 Cup Water
- ½ teaspoon Alum
- 1 Cup of Water
- 1 Cup Corn Starch

Bon Ami is a non-toxic cleanser containing no chlorine, phosphorous or fragrance. The cleanser is made from calcium carbonate, sodium carbonate and feldspar. Bon ami can be found in the cleaning section of your local grocery store.

Alum is a food additive used for canning and making pickles. Alum can be found in the spice section of your local grocery store.

The clay is made by mixing 1 Cup of Bon Ami Cleanser, 1 Cup of Water and ½ teaspoon of Alum in a small saucepan. Heat the mixture until it starts to boil. Reduce the heat and add 1 Cup of Cornstarch. Using a spoon mix the cornstarch into the liquid until completely blended. If the mixture is too dry add additional water until the clay is a uniform consistency and does not crumble. Remove the clay from the pan and allow to cool slightly. Once the clay is cool enough to touch, knead the clay until it thoroughly mixed. Store the clay in an airtight container or plastic bag.

To use the clay on your props roll a small amount between two sheets of waxed paper until it is about 1/8 inch thick. Cover the desired surface of your prop with the clay. Dip

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com

your fingers in water to smooth the clay into a porcelain like smoothness. The thin layer of clay will crack as it dries, the more it dries the larger the cracks.

Note that I applied this clay to a papier mache surface and used considerable pressure and moisture to make sure the clay adhered to the surface. I'm not sure if the clay will adhere to non-porous surfaces such as foam or plastic. Also be aware that thick amounts of the clay will chip and flake, only very thin amounts were used on the skulls.



Once the "cracking clay" had dried the skulls were painted. Flat black exterior latex was used as a base coat for the prop. White latex primer was used to dry brush each skull. Dry brushing highlighted the texture and really made the cracks visible. Diluted acrylic paint was used to achieve the final color scheme.



Obtained from
Omars



The skulls were sealed with Spar Urethane after the paint had completely dried. The urethane probably played an important role in protecting the clay and preventing it from chipping or flaking.