

The Decaying Severed Arm

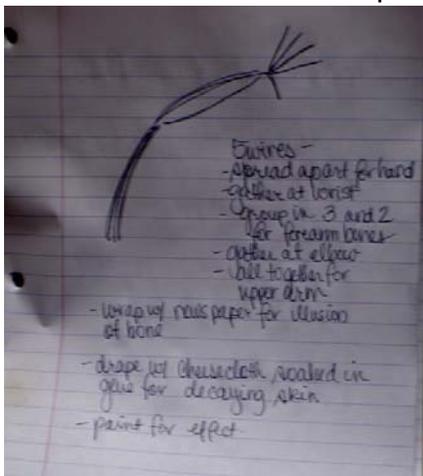
Hello Ghoulies!! This February's challenge was fabric and it was a challenge to come up with an idea for project, but I finally have a completed item for you to behold.

First and foremost, the ingredients. For this project, which cost me NOTHING, I used the following items which are all readily available in my Garage of Evil:

- heavy duty wire (could use straightened coat hangers)
- newspaper
- skinny pieces of scrap wood
- duct tape (no project is complete without it!)
- brown spray paint (not really necessary)
- paint in flesh tone, brown, red, green, and beige
- matte finish clear coat spray sealer
- Elmer's glue
- Cheesecloth

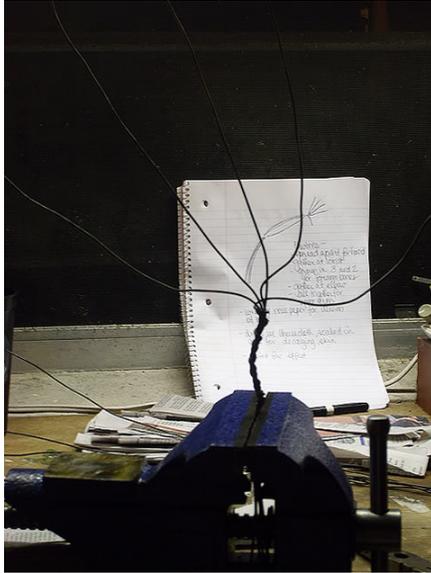
Tools needed:

- wire cutter
- two pliers
- table vice
- hand planer
- old plastic bowl for the glue
- various sizes of paintbrushes



As far as the amount of time spent on this project, it took me a week to complete and this was a few hours after work every night, or about 15 hours.

As with all of my kooky ideas, I sketch out what is in my head. Here's my sketchbook:



The first thing to do is to cut 10 pieces of heavy duty wire measuring about 50" long each. I don't know how to measure the gauge of the wire I'm using but it is very similar to coat hanger wire. Separate the wire into two piles, each will be an arm, and guesstimate where you'd like the wrist to be and using two sets of pliers, twist the wires together tightly for about 3" of twist to guarantee it's secure.

Next, take ordinary newspaper and rip it into manageable strips (about 1"-2" wide). Make a bunch of strips so you can go to town and this is a big project so you'll need a lot of newspaper.



A ghoulish friend of mine gave me a vice a while ago (what a great tool, by the way) and it was very handy for a project like this. Take one "arm" and place it in the vice just below the wrist and spread the fingers apart to about the size of the hand you want.



Weave the strips in and out of the palm area and push down often to really make the palm tight and solid. I didn't use any adhesives or papier mache here at all. Just a simple weave of groups of newspaper to achieve what, in my mind, would be the bones of the palm area. Once the palm is to your liking, twist the strips around each finger until you get them as gnarly as you'd like the bones to be.



Once the hand is completely "boned", rearrange the arm in the vice. Separate the wires now into one group of three and a group of two. These two groups will represent the two bones in the forearm. Wrap each "bone" with more strips of newspaper and be sure to add enough paper in the wrist area to give a continuous look of the bones.



Once the forearm is complete, take the wires out of the vice. Due to the weight and size of this gruesome, decaying arm, the upper arm should be supported with wood for strength. Using some scrap pieces of wood, round the corners and edges of the wood to resemble the general shape of a bone. After the wooden bone is shaped, duct tape it to all five wires in the upper arm area and wraps with more newspaper.



Once the "bones" are all finished, bend the arm and fingers into the shape and angles as desired. Fill in with more newspaper strips if necessary. Once you are happy with the overall shape of the bones and the arm in general, coat everything with the brown spray paint. This step may be skipped because the paint will not show through after later steps.

Now, cut the cheesecloths into about 4" wide strips for the fingers. Unfold the cheesecloth into a single layer and loosely gather it into both hands and saturate it in the work bowl with undiluted Elmer's glue.



Work the glue into the cheesecloth completely. Unfold the cheesecloth as much as possible and start loosely wrapping the fingers. Cover all of the newspaper with the sticky cheesecloth and shape the fingers as desired. Remember, the cheesecloth will dry hard, so manipulate it while it's still wet to resemble skin that has lost the muscle underneath and that is decaying and rotting away from the bone.



Continue wrapping the glue-drenched cheesecloth on all fingers, thumb, palm, wrist, forearm, elbow, and upper arm. The two bones in the forearm were wrapped with the newspaper separately, but cover both together with the cheesecloth. Also, you can end the skin before the end of the upper arm if you've done a nice job wrapping the wires and wood to look like bones.



Once the glue dries, it will be transparent and hard. The cheesecloth will be very sturdy and still see-through like this:



Now comes the fun part -- paint! Gruesify this arm to make it look like it's rotting and gross. Remember to let the 'bones' peak through in places and add some moldy areas for effect. This severed arm would have lots of dried blood and drooping flesh, too. Have fun! When you have it looking like the corpse of your nightmares, remember to coat generously with a matte finish spray sealer to protect your decaying severed arm.



Ooooh! What a creepy decaying severed arm! Now how am I planning to use these arms, you ask? Imagine them poking out of the ground in front of some of the gravestones. Keeping with the "Dead" theme for 2009, the dead in the cemetery will rise again and party with us!

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