



<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Lot/9373/SCREAM/ltxmask.html>

Making a Latex Face Mask by Rebecca Burt

A simple how-to on creating a partial mask with slush/slip/mask latex.



This simple half mask of a skull, by Rebecca Burt, brought *lots* of good comments this Halloween. The photo isn't clear, but it looked great.

Basic Slush Latex 101

Slush latex, also known as mask and slip latex, is a thick cream colored liquid with a strong ammonia smell. Unlike foam latex, it doesn't need to be oven baked and will dry by air into an opaque rubber-like material similar to a rubber band. This kind of latex can be purchased at most costume stores and from any make-up supplier including Burman, Ben Nye and Graftobian (at various prices). Slip latex can be molded in many materials including plaster, hydrocal, and plastic molds, but for our how-to we'll be using the easy to find plaster of paris. Slip latex is easy to use, and this how-to will give you the simplest and cheapest way to make a partial mask or appliance. Once you have tried it this way you may decide to upgrade your materials or try more complex work.

Materials

For this how-to you will need:

- A Life cast
- Slush Latex
- Plaster of Paris
- Oil Based Clay (You can use water based, but the directions are for oil based, like plasticine)
- Liquid Dish Soap (Ivory works well)
- Talc or Baby Powder
- Sculpting Tools (read ahead for some suggestions)
- Mixing Bowl & Spoon
- Q-Tips or a cheap Paint Brush
- Rubber Cement or Contact Cement
- Acrylic Paints (the cheap craft kind will work too)
- Tin Foil or if you have one a Plaster Form
- Stuff to clean up your mess

Sculpting

You first job is to sculpt what it is that you want to make. Take your life cast and stick the clay to the area you're going to work on. Sometimes it won't want to stick to the plaster, but if you feather the edges well it will usually stay put. Start by 'roughing' your creation, that is making the basic form with lumps of clay. Then when you have the basic shape work on making it into the form you want and adding the detail you want.

You can use your hands, store bought sculpting tools, or anything you have around the house that will help you add shape or detail. Some things you might find helpful as tools are: screwdrivers, Exacto knives, pencils of different sharpness, cutlery, needles, wire brushes, sticks, etc. You can add texture by using texture stamps, sponges, leaves, rocks, crumpled paper, feathers, etc. If you want a smooth surface, get you fingers wet and smear (try not to leave finger prints) or use the quick touch of a lighter or candle (the black they leave won't hurt anything).

The sculpting of your creation is very important, so make sure you have it exactly how you want it before continuing.

Making the Negative

When you are done your sculpture it is time to make the negative mold. Use the tin foil to make a tub the size & depth (nose to back) of your life cast (or at least large enough for the area sculpted). Try to make the walls of the tub thick and the corners fairly sealed so you don't make too big of a mess. Carefully use a Q-tip of a paintbrush to coat your sculpture and life cast with the liquid dish soap. This will make it easier to remove later, make sure that any plaster areas of your life cast are coated extra well.

Mix up your plaster of Paris to a yogurt-like consistency, no thicker or it will damage your sculpture. Pour the plaster into the foil tub carefully, leaving a little room from the top. The tub might leak a little but that's ok, the tub will very likely overflow when you put in your sculpture so make sure you have your cleanup stuff nearby. Carefully pick up your life cast and press it face down into the tub, far enough to cover the sculpture but keeping the back half above the plaster. The plaster should be thick enough to hold the life cast/sculpture in place, but if it isn't keep it in place with your hands until the plaster solidifies enough.

Make sure that the nose doesn't hit the bottom of your tub or your mold could come out deformed. Let the mold sit until it is dry, a few hours at least. After it has solidified enough you can peel away the tin foil to help the underside dry faster. When the mold has dried, carefully remove the life cast (you might have to pry a little). If any clay is still in the mold work it out carefully with your hands or a sculpting tool. If your mold has very fine work, you may have to melt out some of the plasticine using a lighter, oven or microwave, just be careful! Peel off the rest of the clay from your life cast as well, and clean it as best you can with a little soap and water or alcohol. Now you have a finished mold (negative) and your life cast (positive). It's a good idea to let the mold sit for a while after cleaning so that you can be sure the inside is dry.

Pouring the latex

First you have to prepare the mold. Use the dish soap again, just light coats though, and coat the life cast and mold. Make sure that it is just a coat and there are no pools of soap in the negative. After the soap, carefully dust both sides with talc or baby powder. Now the mold is ready for use.

Start out by using a Q-tip to fill the smallest areas of your negative mold with latex. Try to get rid of any air bubbles by rocking the mold and blowing on the surface of the latex. Now use the Q-tip, or pour a little from your latex container into the negative to coat the rest of the surfaces. Fill any deeper areas of the negative that aren't part of the positive

(wherever things stuck out of your sculpture). When the mold is well coated pour in a little more latex and rock the mold to get rid of air bubbles. Now carefully set your life cast into the mold and press it down into place.

Some latex should squirt out around the edges of the mold. Sit the mold somewhere to dry and leave it to dry. The face mask in the picture took about a day and a half to dry, smaller objects will dry quicker and larger will dry more slowly. The mold should be kept at room temperature to dry the best (cooler temperatures slow the drying process). Do not bake the mold!!

Removal

When you believe the mold has sit long enough (the longer it sits the better guarantee that it will be dry) then carefully pry the life cast loose and set it to the side. The latex piece will be finished in the mold. If the piece is still wet, just press the life cast back down and leave it longer, the finish on the back of your piece will be lumpy from opening, but the front should be just fine. If it is done the latex will be rubbery and can be pulled from the mold carefully.

Work it out from tight spots if you can, but you may have to break the mold to get it out. Molds with many fine parts are usually only one use, so be extra careful not to damage the latex piece. As you pull out the latex us a little talc or powder, this will stop the latex from sticking to itself which it will tend to do.

Once you have the piece out, dust off any excess powder and set it in place in your life cast. Latex pieces can deform if not kept in the proper shape on a life cast. You can repair any visible air bubbles with a little latex and a toothpick, letting it dry while sitting on the life cast.

Note - If your mold is still good, you may notice after a few days that it has grown mold of it's own. Don't worry, it happens sometime when using these super-cheap materials. Simply clean off the mold with a soft cloth or Q-tip and some alcohol and it should be fine.

Painting

If you decide to paint your life cast and don't have specialty latex paints, then this technique will work (but may create a gravelly look, usually not noticeable though). Take whatever color of acrylic paint that you chose for your piece and put some out on a tray or piece of paper. Mix in some rubber cement or contact cement and paint this mixture

onto your piece. You have to work fairly quickly, only mixing small amounts at a time, because the rubber cement dries quickly.

This paint mixture works fairly well, but don't use expensive brushes with it because it will destroy the brush you use. After the surface is painted you can use normal make-up and paint to finish it off exact. For a good gory look, paint your bloody areas with rubber cement paint in red and then when it's dry paint on some corn syrup blood. It will dry shiny red (but stay a little sticky) and looks really good.

Finished



Now your appliance is done! You can use any adhesive, including spirit gum, to attach it to your subject. Latex pieces can be reused over and over if cared for properly. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- If it isn't on a subject, it's on the life cast.
- Keep dry at room temperature.
- If you bag it, chuck in a few of those little envelopes that come with pills and leather goods.
- Keep it away from pets and insects (especially ants if you used fake blood on it).

Good luck with your projects!

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