



## Mark's Place

<http://www.markbsplace.net/SubPages/hall-portrait.htm>

# Glowing Eyes Portrait Halloween Prop How-To



In looking at my plans for our haunted garage, we have a long corridor down the side of the house before you turn in to the side garage door. Although the corridor will be tricked up a bit with a fog machine blowing fog out of the mouth of a giant sculpture and moving lasers shining through the fog, I wanted something along the walls for people to look at.

I spotted a bleeding portrait prop, but it was a bit too intense for our garage. We cater to the kids in the neighborhood and try to stay away from the "gory/bloody" sticking with the "creepy/scary" instead. I did like the idea of hanging paintings though and so I came up with an easier project. What if the picture just had glowing eyes instead of dripping blood! Thus was born this project.

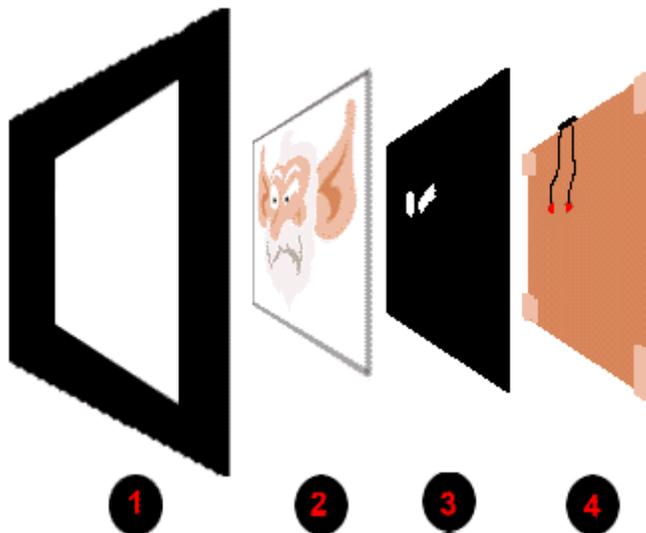
Construction is pretty cheap, a few dollars for parts should do it. The parts list is as follows:

## Parts List

- Foam-core poster board (about \$2)
- Contact paper (about \$3)
- Black construction paper (free if you've got small kids, \$2 if you have to buy a pack)
- Grain-Of-Wheat bulbs (about \$2)
- Battery holder (optional, about \$2)

## Construction Details

The following diagram shows the key layers:



Layer 1. The first layer is the picture frame. I originally was going to use a real picture frame, I wanted a big ornate frame, preferably with fancy scrollwork and things. However after discovering how expensive a nice looking frame was, and realizing this is a light duty project - that is, it only needs to be around for 1 night per year, and at night in dim lighting - I decided to make my own! I could have spent some time rummaging through garage-sales looking for old picture frames, and still might, but I wanted to get this done in a weekend.

I purchased some white foam-core poster board for about \$2, its easy to cut and has some thickness/strength without weighing too much. However its ugly plain white, certainly not suitable for pictures. However for another \$3, I found some contact-paper, the sticky-backed paper you normally use to line kitchen drawers. They have several different types, I selected the "Marble" paper and used it to cover the poster board. The

disadvantage of this process is that there is no pane of glass in front of the picture, unsuitable for rainy weather.

Layer 2. The picture itself. The key to the whole process. Its got to be an ugly picture, preferably with reasonably large and prominent eyes. Its also got to be transparent enough that light can get through. My first attempt was to take an animal picture and a human portrait and using some "Morph" software I pulled off the internet, try to get a mixture of the two, but it never came out decent. Finally I gave up on the "portrait" requirement and went with just a gruesome picture.

If you're talented you can draw a good one, I have no abilities in that area at all, so I went looking for pictures I could use. There aren't a lot of usable portrait-style pictures of monsters/mutants around, so after some fruitless time of searching I had a brainstorm and used a picture of a Halloween mask I found on the internet, it works perfectly.

It was too small of course, so I enlarged it with PhotoShop (hint: use the "blur" command after enlarging for a better looking pic) until it was a full page size, then printed it on my printer. This was so it was on thin paper and light would show through.

Layer 3. The mask. Since I am using real light bulbs behind the glowing eyes, I had to do something to make it so only the eyes would glow, rather than just a big glowing spot centered on the eyes. I made a copy of the portrait and using that as a guide, cut eye-sized holes in a piece of black construction paper. This acts as a mask, allowing light only through the hole in the construction paper, which matches the eyes in the portrait. When I say I used a copy, that's exactly what I did, made a copy of the original, laid it over the black construction paper and using a razor cut out the eyes, that way its exact, rather than trying to fudge it.

Layer 4. The bulb and backing. To do the actual lighting I purchased some grain-of-wheat bulbs at the hobby store. These are tiny lights that run off a single AA battery, they are used primarily for model trains and toys. The lights were taped to the cardboard right behind where the eyes go.

I used a piece of heavy box cardboard for a backing. If the bulbs are too close to the paper in front they will be a point of light not just glowing eyes, so I used some scraps of the foam-board and taped a few chunks around to give a little clearance between the bulbs and the paper, then taped the front half and the back half together with clear tape..

You can just tape the battery to the wires, which I ended up doing, I have seen AA battery holders from Radio Shack and it would have been great to use it and tape it to the top of the frame on the back, just below the top where it can't be seen. But they didn't have any 1-AA battery holders (only 2 and 4 batteries), so I'll just use tape.



Here it is! The whole thing went together in a couple of hours (once I had all the parts) and looks truly spooky (see actual picture at the top).

Obtained from  
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