



<http://www.halloween-i.com/forum/showthread.php?tid=4557>

Tombstone 2007

Tombstone 2007-001

Well I thought I'd share the process of my latest creation. My first tombstone of the season. I hope you enjoy watching as much as I enjoy creating.

Materials Used:

- 36"x24"x3" Styroplast - ~\$8
- ~0.75 gallon of drywall compound - ~\$5
- ~0.2 gallon of black exterior latex paint - ~\$3
- Great Stuff Foam Skull - ~\$2
- Drywall Tape - \$1
- Adhesive 77 - \$??
- Black Bird - \$8
- Red Craft Paint - \$5



1 - Cut Styroplast

The dimensions are 24"x33"x3". I also cut a 24"x5"x3" for the base (not shown).



2 - Trace Shape

I used the holes in the square to create a pivot and it created exactly the curve I wanted.



3 - Big A Blade**

I happen to have a jigsaw blade that is over 3" long. Very handy for cutting styroplast. What's not shown is the shopvac running below to catch all the foam. A LIFE SAVER! Last year I looked like a snowman after.



4 - Rough Edges

Now for this tombstone I needed to trim down the edges by 1" to allow for the beveled base. More on that later. I wanted a rough edge so I cut an inch deep from both sides down the line and then broke the styroplast off by hand.



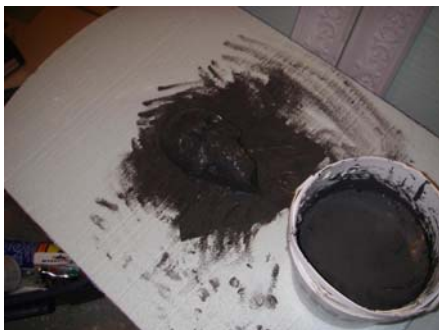
5 - The Result

This is what the technique does. It's very random but has a clean edge. Makes it look like the 'stone' was carved from a large hard stone.



6 - Brining it Together

I beveled the base with the jigsaw at a 45 degree angle and cut one of my foam skulls and placed it dead centre. (Center for you Americans) Then I glued it all together using Adhesive 77 and placed drywall tape along the seams to add some strength.



7 - MONSTER MUD!

We all love MONster Mud. It's fun to play with and it makes a great stone finish at a fraction of the cost of those crappy aerosol cans of fake stone.

Basically MM for those who don't know (are there any of us who don't?), It's 5 parts drywall compound mixed with 1 part black exterior latex paint. The exact portions are important if you want to add less or more black for different greys. The importance of the paint, besides the obvious, is it helps the drywall compound dry faster with more strength.



8 - Attention to the details

I applied a very thin layer to the skull first, then took a rag later and wiped off some of the mud. I wanted to make sure the details would still show up. You don't have to worry too much about coverage...you'll be doing more than one coat.



9 - First Coat Complete

I decided to try a textured look on this coat since I would be covering it up later anyway. I like how it looks. I'll probably recreate it on the last coat.



10 - Closeup of the skull

Just to show you it's not perfect yet, and that's OK.



11 - Epitaph

I printed the words out on the printer, cut them out, put them in a slight arc and taped them down with duct tape. Finally, and all you advanced pumpkin carvers will know the pain, I traced the letters by poking the paper with a nail in a dotted fashion. Man my wrists hurt at the end.



12 - Epitaph Trace

I traced the small holes with a marker just to make it easier to see.



13 - Epitaph Carving

I used my new dremel tool that my father-in-law got me for christmas one year. What a life saver. The depth wasn't always consistent but the look turned out to benefit the piece. If I had a router attachment I could have kept the depth the same. But I love the results. Incidentally, the website went through the drywall tape on the bottom and caused a lot of fibers to get in the way which I had to manually cut off later with my wire cutters. What a pain. Lesson learned.



14 - Epitaph Finished

Here's a shot of the finished piece after carving. Not bad!



15 - The painful bit...

Here's the hard part. At this point your tombstone is perfect and beautiful. Now take a hammer and saw and beat the crap out of it! You heard me. Destroy it! Make it look abused, like the neglected tombstone it should be. It'll be ok. I'll hold your hand and we'll swing the hammer together.



16 - And more Damage

Obtained from Omarshauntrail.com



17 - And Breathe!

This is the end result of the abuse. With the smooth outer surface and the rough inner surface it looks like limestone. This is the effect I was going for.



18 - More Monster Mud!

Time for a second coat. I took a small brush and brushed the skull again. As cool as it looked before it didn't look like stone. So it got another coat minding the details. I layed the piece down and poored on thick MM and spread it out as evenly as I could. I had to paint some into the epitaph as well.



19 - CRACKS!

I was impatient and dried the MM in front of my space heater. The process of quick drying the mud made many beautiful cracks on the piece. I couldn't be happier with the added effect.



20 - White Dry Brushing

The technique used here is simply white dry brushing. For those who don't know you take a little white paint on the brush and wipe most of it off, then drag it across the surface.



21 - More Painting Techniques

In this shot you can see I painted the epitaphs. I also did a black wash, which is a watered down black paint used to create a mildew effect. Then I used a thicker version to drip from the top epitaph. I think it needs work but others tell me it looks awesome...artists are never happy with their work.



22 - Adding the Final Touches

I added the moss and black bird. Lucky for me the spanish moss stuck well to the adhesive 77 and the black bird has wires on it's feet that made inserting into the foam easy. I even bent one toe on the bird over the edge for added realism. Next time I have a batch of MM I'll do some touchups on the skull. Otherwise I finally finished my signature tombstone for this year. I hope you enjoyed watching as much as I did making it.