

Fun with Buckys

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Fun with Buckys By Alex DeRito

What would Haunting be without Buckys! Before the Bucky skeleton, if you wanted a corpse in your attraction, you either made the skeleton out of wire or Romex, or you paid several hundred dollars for an educational quality skeleton. When Anatomical Chart Company discovered the Haunting industry and started selling their inexpensive plastic Bucky skeleton, families of corpses were attainable. When the skeleton manufacturing company realized that Haunters would buy rejects, those skeletons or parts and pieces that were too flawed to sell to schools or doctor offices. The ability for Haunters to have whole towns of corpses was within some budgets. The Bucky skeleton is a versatile base for corpse building. They can be gored-up with bloody melting skin; rotting out with latex or spray foam insulation flesh; or simply aged with deck stain for that clean picked to the bone look. While corpses can be effective fright elements, skeletons tend to be more comical. Posing and accessorizing the Buckys can create comic relief and add entertainment value to an event. They can tie together a storyline and aid in the continuity of your theming.

Using Bucky characters in fun and impacting ways will send guests from your event with a smile. Whimsical vignettes, like a skeleton hopping after a skeleton dog that has his leg in its mouth, are always popular with guests. At the amusement parks Oak Island Productions themes for Halloween, photo opportunities and humorous area theming vignettes are found to leave guests with lasting memories of the event. These lasting memories create word of mouth advertising and return customers. A couple of whimsical Buckys in a memorable vignette at your event can increase your profitability just like it does for the parks. The number of fun things that can be done with Buckys are curtailed only by your creativity.

The Look

Once you come up with some fun situations for your Buckys to get into, what you will need to decide is how you want your Bucky characters to look. If you want their bones fresh and white, they are ready right out of the box, but if you want the Buckys antiqued then that is a good place to start. The quickest way to antique a Bucky is to create a brown wash (2:1 or 3:1 water to brown latex paint) the darker the wash, the dirtier the bones will look.. The easiest way to coat a Bucky is to put your paint/water mixture into a large rubber trash can and submerge the Buckys in the mixture. If you are only aging a few Buckys you can just rub them down with a rag saturated with walnut colored wood stain. This method is much more time consuming, but has a very authentic look.

Beginning the Posing Process

The next decision will be how to pose your skeletons. This can be time consuming, so make sure you allow ample time. The key to a great Bucky scene is realism! When posing the skeletons, make sure that they look exactly like a live human would in every detail. Every finger, joint, elbow bend and waist twist needs to be as lifelike as possible. By achieving these details you will make the Buckys appear to be more believable. Realism is the thread on which all of the humor and entertainment impact is built.

In order to achieve whimsical personification, the Oak Island team uses an artist as a model to pose in the position a Bucky will eventually be positioned in. If the plan calls for a Bucky to be sitting cross legged, one of our artists will sit in this position. Great detail and notes are then taken, about how the arms and legs are positioned. Where is the natural place for arms and fingers to rest? How does this position affect the neck angle and even facial expression? With these questions answered you are very close to posing the Bucky. However, there is one crucial question that needs to be answered: What is going to hold the Bucky up.

Structural Support

When it comes to supporting the pose you have chosen for your Bucky, there are several options to choose from. Any one or a combination can be used to support the skeleton while not drawing attention to the support.

Using Props for Support

When you are creating the vignettes for your Buckys, think about ways to use props in the scene where you can fasten the skeleton to hold it in place. For instance, a Bucky sitting in a chair, or on one crate and leaning against another, gives you the opportunity to secure the ankles, lower legs, hips, thigh bone, spine, shoulders, and maybe even an arm or two to the crates. Secure the skeletons to props using various sizes of drywall screws, tie wire, zip ties, or whatever fastening method seems logical. What the prop is does not matter as long as it fits your overall theme and allows for fastening points. Whisky barrels, treasure chests, a hitching post, tombstones, coffins, are all great supports. In this scenario the prop is there to support the theme of the scene as well as holding the Bucky in place.

Vignette Base

A vignette is a stand-alone set complete with props, an overall theme, and in our case several Buckys. When Oak Island starts putting a vignette together we start with a base and work our way up. The first thing we do is determine where the vignette will be placed. If the scene will be on grass or on a soft surface, we use a single sheet of plywood as the base. If the vignette will be going somewhere that a forklift or pallet jack can easily

get to we add 2x4's on the bottom of the plywood base so that the forks can get under the piece. If the vignette is small we cut plywood to fit the props, if any, for that particular scene.

Support Stands

If your vignette calls for any free standing skeletons you will need to create a stand to hold them up. The spine of a Bucky was not designed to be used this way, and will have to be supported. From the factory, a Bucky's spine is built with threaded rod that runs through the skull, inside the vertebra the length of the backbone and comes out of the bottom of the pelvic bone where a nut holds it in place. At Oak Island we weld a piece of tube that will slide over the nut at the base of the pelvic bone to a 12"x12" metal base plate that can be fastened to your plywood base with screws. With the stand secured to the base, you can cover the entire base in erosion cloth to help hide the support and disguise the base of the entire vignette.

Free Roaming Buckys

Placing single "Free Roaming" Buckys out by themselves around the event are the most fun, because their positioning is the most creative. These poses are unique because often they are incorporated into existing assets or everyday elements. These are the Buckys that will make your whole event seem populated with Buckys, rather than restricted to a couple of scenes. They may not be as detailed as the vignette Buckys, but they will compliment other pieces and pull the whole event together. Supporting these posed Buckys is a little different because the support needs to be done on site using existing objects at your event. For instance, when you lean a Bucky against a tree or a fence, you can support him either using tie wire or large zip ties.

THE JOINTS

Once the Buckys are posed and secured, you need to think about keeping them that way. Again, the Bucky was not made for the use we are describing here, and the small fasteners used by the factory to articulate natural joint movement on the skeleton may come apart if not strengthened head to toe. The Oak Island team strengthens each major joint by drilling pilot holes through one bone and into the other, and then driving appropriately sized drywall screws into the holes to keep the joints in the desired positions. The elbows, hips, knees, shoulders, ankles and wrists are all set with screws to keep them from shifting. The bones in the hands and feet or any bone too small or hard to pre-drill are set in place with construction adhesive.

Once the construction adhesive is dry, finish setting all of the bones and joints by fiberglassing them in place. Putting Fiberglass on the joints will drastically help the durability of the pose and hide the adhesives and screws you have used to initially pose the Bucky. Respirators are a must with fiberglass, also be sure to read the warning labels and directions on the products and follow both. These materials can be purchased at most

home supply stores, Cut a piece of fiberglass cloth and wrap it around each of the posed joints, Then dab fiberglass resin onto the batting until it is covered and saturated. Repeat this process on any joint you wish to set permanently. Any fiberglass cloth that is loose can be cleaned up with medium sandpaper. Repeat this step with each of the joints on your Bucky. When the resin is dry come back and paint the fiberglass areas to match the finish of your Bucky so that the joints do not stand out.

The Spine

Because of the way the BUCKYS are made, they tend to want to fold over at the hips. Once the joints are repainted, reinforce the spine by bending a 1/4" threaded rod to the same arch and length as the spine. Zip tie the spine to the rod at four or five places to keep your Bucky upright. If the pose you have chosen still makes your Bucky want to lean, you may need to secure the threaded rod to a prop or make a support stand similar to what is described above. The thinner leg and arm bones also may bend if they are under stress, especially in warm weather. You may want to reinforce these points with rods as well. The extra steps help ensure that your Bucky will remain a quality statement for the entire duration of your event!

Expressions

You can give BUCKYS expressions by using the jaw bone in different positions; crooked for a confused look, or wide open for the look of shock. Eyes or eyebrows can be used for a great variety of expressions. With glass or home made eyes viewers can see where the Bucky is looking. Making eyebrows out of patches of faux fur gives you the ability to have the BUCKYS express themselves in almost limitless emotions. Anger, shock and curiosity are just a few emotions that can be expressed when eyebrows are added.

Clothing Your Bucky

The final step in completing your Bucky's personality is clothing and accessories. It is much easier to put clothes on the skeleton before the posed Bucky is set. Putting new pants or a shirt on a stiff posed Bucky that may be screwed in places to a crate or other props can be a problem.

For this reason, one of our favorite ways to dress the skeletons is with stained and shredded cheese cloth. Dip cheesecloth in a wash similar to the one you made to stain the bones, but use several different clothes colors, Wad the cloth up and let it dry to get an uneven texture. Then shred the material and drape it on your Bucky in a way that resembles clothing remnants. Cuffs, tattered pants, the shoulders of a shirt in a light tan, with a dark gray layer on top of it like a suit coat, all add to the theme and personality of your Bucky. Accessorize your character with details like a belt, bandanna, eye patch, or top hat to complete the characterization of the Bucky. This technique creates the look of tattered clothes that have nearly rotted away and gives guests the ability to see most of the bones.

The affordability of the Bucky skeleton has drastically increased their use in Halloween events all over the country. Now, with a minimal investment, any Haunter can create lasting memories of their event. You will be amazed at how much your guests will enjoy your posed Buckys and look forward to seeing them year after year! They present a wonderful opportunity to create memorable experiences that will keep your guests returning time after time, and allow you to create area theming that will add value to your event. Coming up with whimsical and humorous vignettes is a lot of fun and the possibilities of what can be done with posed Buckys are curtailed only by your crews brainstorming creativity. Soon you will see the benefits of increased word of mouth and increased attendance in your bottom line.

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