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The Unmasked Artisan:
Techniques to Economically Build Theatrical Masks
For the Stage

By
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Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of Danielle Feige find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family.

To my mother, Juliet Mansel Feige, for unwavering support, guidance, friendship and pushing me to be more, and do more. Thank you.

To Abner Sims, my rock, thank you for your patience, and putting up with my antics on a daily basis, you are appreciated more than you will ever know.

To my sister Denise and my son Dylan, I appreciate you both immensely.

Last but not least...my father Gary Feige, the world's biggest nag, it finally worked!

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The Unmasked Artisan: Techniques to Economically Build Theatrical Masks For the Stage

Thesis Abstract – Idaho State University – 2018

This thesis describes the research and artistic processes undertaken to ascertain how the leather masks of Commedia Dell'Arte were originally constructed, and how they can be re-created in a much more cost and time effective means for modern costumers. Italian artisans continue to craft leather masks using traditional and highly guarded proprietary techniques, but cost constraints make these masks available only to serious collectors.

Eight distinct masks were completed and photographed for this project, all built from readily available materials. With each build, the reader is given a brief introduction to the character, a summary of historical construction techniques, a supply list, and a step-by-step documentation of the construction processes.

Key Words: Leather masks, papier maché masks, Commedia Dell'Arte masks, costume masks, mask construction.

Introduction:

I had been looking for a connection between the Theater Department and Fine Arts. Other than the obvious fact that both deal with communicating ideas, emotions, and beliefs to others, I also see a connection within the realm of masks, mask making, and the way that societies relate to them. They have been used for ceremony, celebration, mourning, performance, and display. In a way we all wear masks, as we are all guarded to varying degrees with how we project ourselves to others. Masks cross the line between performance art and visual art. They speak without words, and convey ideas that cross cultural and generational boundaries, and I do have to say...they are pretty awesome!

People have worn masks since ancient times, and done so for many reasons. Even though I have chosen to concentrate on masks, I have narrowed this subject down tremendously and focused on one small section of masks and mask making as explained below.

My original plan of study was in costume design, yet I always found myself concentrating on the smaller details of a much larger picture. Jewelry, hats, embellishments, and then makeup and prosthetics...all led me away from the original objective. Costume design is an incredibly broad field of study. There have been volumes of books written on every era of costume design since Ugg and Dug were wearing woolly mammoth. After great thought I have found an area that has afforded me the ability to stay under the umbrella of costume design while still allowing me to focus on the smaller details that hold my attention. The art of mask making is as intriguing today as it was when we first began to use masks. There is no doubt that masks and costumes have a psychological effect on both the wearer as well as the audience. I am intrigued

how something as simple as deliberately challenging the preconceived ideals of a play through altering traditional costumes can change the audience experience. In fact there have been many studies on crowd manipulation through the use of aids (such as masks), a phenomenon that can happen without the audience even realizing. This subject would of course have more of a basis in psychology than art, but might make for an interesting interactive gallery display!

It was my desire to know more about the history of masks in performance. I wanted to know where it started, and why it's not as popular today as has been in the past. In conjunction with this brief history in theatrical masks I will present, as part of this thesis, documentation and photographs instructing the reader on how to recreate a collection of masks with readily found materials. These instructions will of course result in a physical body of work to correspond with my thesis.

Overall I find the masks of the 16th century Commedia dell 'Arte to be the most intriguing. They are beautiful as well as functional. They are/were used in theater as well as art, and they are supported by a host of literature as well as fine art imagery in the paintings of the time. The subject matter is not widely studied at a higher level, and I believe that it could be defended in an oral exam, as well as support a body of work to accompany it. pushed me toward learning more about masks was a painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme entitled 'Dual After a Masked Ball' (fig.1) that pulled me in...hook, line, and sinker (and it doesn't even contain a mask)!

Despite being drawn to the idea of cloaking oneself into a new identity in the simple step of covering ones face, it was not the idea of the mask that originally interested me as I have similar interests in Theatrical Sound Design (and had considered writing about that). The one thing that



Figure 1

'Dual After a Masked Ball' swims in icy finality. The painting, as its aptly titles, depicts the aftermath of a dual between different groups of especially passionate Commedia actors. We see what was once a man, an actor, an artist, suddenly transformed almost dove like into the cold atmosphere of the painting. One can feel the weight of the air, and the dismay of the participants as life slips silently from parted lips. The painting is truly powerful, and really pushed me to understand whom it was depicting. The answer was a Commedia actor.

When I see something I want to know more about the first inclination I have is to find out how it is constructed so even if I can't afford to buy whatever it is that I seek, I can learn to make my own! Because of this, it was my goal to try and combine the writing about masks with the creation of actual masks that could be displayed as well as worn. This desire to covet an actual Commedia mask or two is when I actually discovered that the original leather Commedia dell'Arte masks were no longer being made, unless they were individually ordered and handcrafted to the wearer's specific measurements. These particular masks are prohibitively expensive for all but the most well healed individual, a list that does not include myself. I had to know more. I started with the history.

History/Review of Literature:

Why the masks of Commedia dell Arte? After all hasn't it been "given up for dead by a book bound vision of theater"? (Fava) The answer is yes and no. Yes, for the most part Commedia is dead, but only when taking into consideration its past popularity and then comparing it to how it is used today.

While Commedia has its origins in 16th century Italy, it saw rejuvenation in 17th and 18th century France. Most of the art we see glorifying these traveling troupes of actors (such as the one depicted in Fig. 1) are from this latter time period. Further study into

these fascinating traveling troupes revealed their intriguing masks...what an amazing, yet simple way to quickly fall into character. (L. Lawner)



Figure 2

The very first evidence of masks being worn can be seen in the drawings of cave walls. It is believed that hybrid man-animal images such as the 'bird-man' of Lascaux were either wearing the masks as part of a ritual associated with the hunt, or that these individuals were considered to be tribal shaman. (McCarty)

The oldest masks physically existing today date back 9,000 years to the Neolithic period, which was before the invention of writing (fig. 2). Eleven masks were discovered in the Judean desert, they provide a rare glimpse at some of the earliest communal rites. "The stone masks were fashioned at a critical turning point in the history of civilization, when humans in the Fertile Crescent abandoned the hunter-gatherer lifestyle and became farmers." (McCarthy)

So why did these early people wear masks? It is believed that masks were not only a means of passing down oral history, but also as a way to show hierarchal separation in religious or social groups. With roles of individuals being set, oftentimes-ritualistic rites of passage would be shown through the wearing, or changing of masks. Masks were also believed to possess power to protect the wearer from evil spirits, which is where the wearing of Halloween masks actually started. Masks could also physically protect the wearer from the elements, or aided to project the actors voice in early performance venues. (Sivin, Maskmaking)



Figure 3

Masks are worn by most cultures of the world. Masks from Africa (fig. 3) tend to be made of carved and painted wood oftentimes overlaid with metal, while Chinese mask (Fig. 4) are still made of stones, metal, leather, cloth, paper, grass, and wood, which are painted in different colors and represented both human as well as animal forms.



(McCarty)

Figure 4

The Japanese took mask making to a whole new level with their very finely carved and beautifully decorated masks of Cypress wood. Master craftsmen who took great pride in their work created these masks, much the same way the craftsmen of Italy did with their Commedia masks. (Sivin)



Figure 5

Figure 5 shows a fine example of a Japanese Noh Mask, used in theater starting with the Muromachi Period (1392-1573). These masks are so highly sought after; artisans now create miniatures in the style of the originals, which can command a great deal of money. (Ko)

The new world has its share of exotic masks as well. These range from the Day of the Dead Festival masks of south and Central America, to the wood carved animal totem masks of the Native Americans. Indigenous masks of the Americas tend to be very similar in style and construction to the creators ancestral ties with Asia and the Pacific Islands. Proof that people brought storytelling and their creations with them even while migrating to a new world.

The first masks used for theatrical performance were those worn by the ancient Greeks during the 1st Century B.C.E, as represented in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6

These larger than life masks were worn not only to depict different characters clearly to a large audience, but also to allow the actor to be heard. Built out of clay, they were specifically designed to amplify the actors' voice, allowing all the attending patrons to clearly hear the play no matter where they were seated. (Edwin Wilson)

While theatrical performances continued throughout Italy, the Roman Empire began a rather radical transition towards a new way of thinking, as the marvel of theater moved away from the amphitheater and out into the communities as more of a spectacle.

Commedia dell'Arte

Commedia dell'Arte or 'comedy of craft' can be described as a traveling show of improvisational actors who worked with basic sketches or scenarios. These professional actors would 'become' the specific character they were portraying through the use of masks rather than by utilizing time-consuming makeup or costume changes. (Fig. 7)

Commedia dell'Arte not only had a number of routines to follow, they also developed 'stock' characters such as 'Capitano', 'Colombina', 'Comico', and 'Pantalone' to name a few. Commedia actors usually specialized in the portrayal of one or two of these characters, which allowed them to perfect their craft. The masks we now use for Masquerade Balls are named after these stock characters. (Lawner)

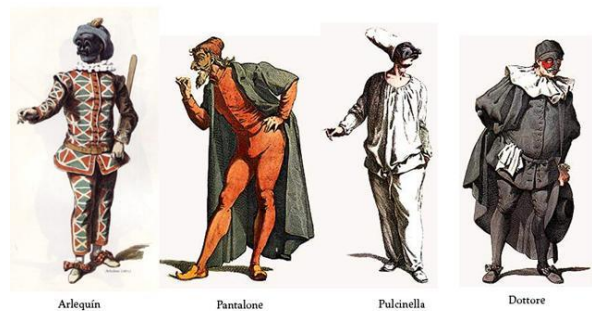


Figure 7

The original masks of Commedia dell'Arte were created out of leather, or papier-mâché and plaster. The leather masks were the desire of most performers, but because they were much more time consuming to make (and therefore cost a great deal more money to purchase), many Commedia dell'Arte masks were of the papier-mâché and plaster type. If the actor was lucky enough to purchase a leather mask it could be easily custom fit to the wearer by the simple act of wearing it. The upside of leather was of course is the fact that with care, a custom fit mask could

last the wearer a lifetime and still be viable enough to hand down to the next generation of actors. The downside was the fact that they tended to be only available in the natural colors of leather (with most being a medium brown), which darkened with age. The only original Commedia dell'Arte masks to survive today are ones made of leather. (Fava, The Comic Mask in the Commedia dell'Arte)

Papier-mâché masks were much more readily accessible. While they were not as customizable in fit as their leather counterparts, they could be beautifully painted and decorated. With most performers eventually seeking the more comfortable leather, the papier-mâché masks ended up adorning the faces of Venetian Carnival goers who chose to hide their sins behind their highly decorated plaster façade.

While the performances of Commedia troops fell out of favor the festivities of Carnival, a celebration of religious rebellion over the centuries, but has recently seen a rise in popularity, especially in North America.

Carnival

Although the activities of the Catholic Church seemed like a sidetrack on my research, in reality



Figure 8

it explained why the Commedia style masks had made the transition from theater to art via the celebrations of Carnival. The festivities of Carnival last from Santo Stefano (December 26th) through Shrove Tuesday. It is a moveable holiday marking the start of Lent, which is the Christian period of self-

examination and sacrifice prior to Easter. Lent marks the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness, and even though it has its roots in Paganism (and was celebrated prior to Christianity) it was still seen as a time of rebirth and renewal to both groups. (Lawner)

Prior to this time of fasting and other pious practices participants dispose of all rich food and drink preparing to fast. This disposal of excess has led to community wide celebrations that are considered to be the origin of Carnival. During the two-month celebration (which was the only time of the year when mask wearing was permitted), villagers would gather wearing elaborate masks and costumes (Fig. 8). They would then participate in pageants and processions as well as other, more wanton activities. Why was this the only time that mask wearing was allowed? Simply put, the act of wearing a mask hid ones identity, allowing the ‘faceless’ wearer to have a voice, where social status may have prevented them from voicing an opinion prior. That is not the main reason however...because people could spend a large portion of the year in disguise, some took advantage of that.

In disguise, people were concealed. Acts of violence, theft, and promiscuity became commonplace. Gambling went on all day and night in the streets, houses, and even in convents. This led to many laws being created attempting to restrict the celebrations, and often this meant banning the wearing of masks unless warranted.

Most Carnival and Mardi gras masks today are not the works of art they were previously (unless they have been custom ordered from artists who ply their trade in the making of custom masks). Masks today are generally made of latex, neoprene, and molded plastics. They are painted with layers of metallic paints, with ample glitter added to hide any imperfections. If discriminating consumers wish to have a semi-custom made masks, they can expect to pay a

handsome price for a papier-mâché and plaster mask from one of several recently re-opened Venetian mask-making shops. These shops have sprouted up due to the demand for Carnival and Mardi gras masks since resurgence in the late 1980s. These Venetian shops all tout themselves as being the only true to form builders of Carnival and Commedia masks. Leather is no longer on the menu unless you are willing to add your name to a waiting list and pay dearly for a custom built mask made by one of the few artists that have shifted their attention from the Fine Arts to the fine art of leather manipulation. (Shermans)

The research I have done thus far deals very little with the creation processes of Commedia masks, and more on the different stock characters. From the reading and research conducted, I found that the original masks of Commedia dell'Arte were created out of leather, and then later, from papier-mâché and plaster (which is the generally accepted process today).

Yes it is true; there are a handful of master mask artists that have made, what was once considered a trade, into an art. Unfortunately these few individuals are very tight lipped about the service they offer. There are no patterns, no books, not even any mention of where one might go for supplies. Attempting correspondence is met with obvious irritation unless said questions are accompanied with a valid credit card number. While it is frustrating, it is also understandable. The world of Fine Art is highly competitive, and fosters secretive behavior on all levels. (MaskedArt)

Mask Making

I have always been fascinated with the artistic aspects of theater, to the mastery of illusion and the imagination it takes to pull it off. Masks (and puppets) top my list of theatrical marvels, and sought to learn more about the mystery behind not just masks, but also the actual creation of those masks.

I took an Advanced Makeup class several years ago. The last project for the semester was the building of a mask. Immediately I knew what I wanted to create, but had no idea how to go about building it. Medico Della Peste, better known as the Plague Doctor, was an ominous character dressed to deal with the onslaught of the Black Plague that broke out in 14th century Europe. These empirics were covered from head to foot in a heavy waxed overcoat, leather boots, pants, shirt, and gloves, and...the most telling mask ever created. Made of leather it featured a long beak like protrusion, which was filled with straw and aromatic oils to ‘mask’ and protect, from the smell and infection of the Black Death. Prismatic lenses covered the eyes; a hood covered the neck and back of the mask, and all of that topped off with a large brimmed hat. I wanted to build that mask!

After much research and no luck in finding any answers to my questions, I used the plaster cast of my face (that had been made in a previous class), and set about building the mask out of papier-mâché. Although it shrank as it dried, it still allowed me to drape fabric over it, which I then used as a pattern. I built the mask out of heavier material, fixing the problems with it before proceeding with cutting up the black leather coat I had purchased from the Good Will store. It was a trying process of trial and error and took far longer to create than expected. The eyes were the hardest part, as I no longer have access to a glass band saw, or metalsmithing

tools. I ended up using a pair of welding goggles, which I extracted the lenses from. I am still not satisfied how I attached the lenses to the leather eye openings. This is something I would like to work through more thoroughly in the future. Although the finish is fairly decent on this preliminary mask, and it functions and fits the way it should, there is much more I believe I can do with it when I push myself into building another. My goal with creating the masks (which will accompany this thesis) is to figure out all the issues in creating them so as to better instruct others on their construction. There are a few people who have figured it out, but as previously mentioned, they are not readily sharing their knowledge, as this would disrupt their livelihood.

As mentioned in my introduction it is my goal to build several different styles of leather and leather-like masks. I intend to document the process of building each of them. My thesis therefore will cover modern day techniques of building theatrical style masks. I am hoping that the masks that I build while working through the processes will eventually be displayed in a gallery type setting, perhaps with a brief write up to accompany each one.

Processes/Materials:

In the following section you will find several subheadings. These subheadings will cover tools, materials, and the step-by-step building processes, and the different finishes for each of the listed style of masks. At the end of the building section you will find sources for the materials, a Weight/Thickness Conversion chart for leather, types of paint, and how to do faux finishes. It is my goal to provide groups or individuals with all the information and resources they may need to build their own masks, whether for performance or display.

The easiest way to start building is to first gather any tools and materials you may need to get started. You must first ask yourself how much time do you want to dedicate to your creation? What tools and materials do you already have? And what is the end goal you have in mind?

When I started this project I knew what my end goal was, and that was to build a variety of Commedia style masks using material I either already had, or could easily and affordably obtain. Other than the previously mentioned Plague Doctor mask made for a makeup class I had no experience in building masks. Because of this I started with the simplest Commedia style mask design I could, which is the Colombina or 'little dove' mask, and moved through to the more complex ones.

Gathering Supplies

There are certain items you will want to get before you start your mask-making journey. While there are particular items posted for each individual mask, there are also supplies that are either nice to have on hand, or items which several masks have in common. This is where we will start. At the end of my mask making tutorial you will find a section that is dedicated to materials, and the tests that were performed on those materials. Also listed are the most economic sources for those materials I was able to find. (For a more comprehensive look at the supplies used in these masks refer to the end of this document {Supplies section}).

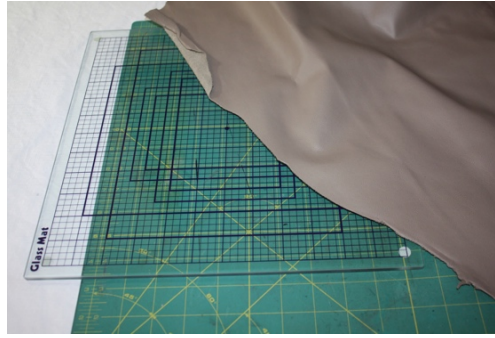


Figure 9

Figure 9. Shown here are two examples of cutting mats. The green one is a self-healing mat. These can be purchased in most big box stores, fabric stores, hobby stores, and online. They come in many colors and sizes. They are nice to work on and will save the surface of your table.

The second mat in this photo is a glass-cutting mat. These are generally smaller, more costly, and harder to find than the self-healing type of mat.



Figure 10

Figure 10. Shows an assortment of pens, pencils, markers, blades, and rulers. As you work on different materials you will notice that you may not be able to see your mark making clearly. As you can see in this photo I have gathered Sharpie pens (fine point, and extra fine point), ballpoint pen, charcoal pencil (nice to have black as well as white), two different types of blades (an X-Acto, as well as a disposable blade cutter). I also have a straight ruler (upper left hand corner) and a right angle ruler (across the bottom of the photo).



Figure 11

Figure 11. As you can see by this photo you may want to expand your markers to improve visibility when marking on darker colored leathers and fabrics....



Figure 12

12. And Figure 12 shows how well these pens work on the lighter colored materials!



Figure 13

13. If you still have any issues with finding your cut lines this pencil is manufactured by Stabilo and comes in an assortment of colors. It works well on most surfaces with the white being the easiest to see.



Figure 14

14. Figure 14 shows an assortment of scissors. The top pair is a standard set of sewing scissors, the middle set are heavy duty (good for leather), and the bottom one is a rolling blade.



Figure 15

15. Scrap newspapers are invaluable to mask making. Not only are they good for keeping surfaces protected and clean, but you can also use them to actually make masks with! (Step by step instructions to follow).

Tape is very good at helping to hold pieces down while they dry. Here are two different types of masking tape I have found to work very well. The plastic bag above the rolls of tape holds plaster craft strips. You can also buy plaster strips on rolls from medical supply stores. Either of these can be used to make masks. Next to the plaster strips you will see Action Wire Mesh. While not necessary for most mask making, it will become invaluable providing support in mask making for protrusions or long noses.



Figure 16

16. While not necessary, it is a very good idea to pick up an assortment of cheap plastic masks to use as templates and/or support for drying leather and papier maché masks. If you are not able to locate any plastic masks locally they are always available online. You can also create your own paper templates for certain masks, download templates online, or freestyle the more advanced masks you build from papier maché.



Figure 17

17. No plastic masks? A Styrofoam hat form can also be used for making masks. If you do, just remember that the spring clamps used on plastic masks will not work on Styrofoam forms. You will need to get a few metal T-pins instead.

Other items used in multiple mask builds:

- School glue or Matte Medium (used by acrylic painters)
- Plastic containers for glue, water, and paint (recycled containers work great)
- Paint (acrylic works best)
- Paint brushes, sponges
- Cheap plastic clamps
- Hole punch w/hammer
- Paper towels for clean up
- Hole punch, or hammer and punch
- Table to work on
- Ample lighting
- Fabrics, embellishments, leather
- Hair dryer (heat gun is too hot for most materials)
- Scraps of cardboard or mat board

Colombina

The Colombina masks were said to have originated because of the vanity of the Commedia stock character Colombina. The character did not want her beauty covered with a mask hence the simplicity. Today they are the most common mask used for masquerades or other celebrations requiring masks, as they are easy to construct, easy to wear, and allow the wearer the freedom to eat and drink freely. These masks can be easily personalized, held on with clips or ribbon, or even held up to the face with a decorative handle. Simply made to cover only the eyes, the Colombina is worn by both sexes, although in theater we see these masks worn by more women than men.

Build 1: Colombina

- **Materials:**
 - 2oz goatskin approx. 5"x10"
 - Black felt approx. 5" x 10"
 - School or like glue...or Matte Medium (used for acrylic painting)

- Black ribbon approx. 30"
- Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Embellishments
- **Tools:**
 - Craft knife
 - Heavy duty scissors
 - While not necessary it is nice to have a cheap plastic mask to use as a form
 - Small spring or other type clamp
 - Paint brush(s)
 - Hole punch or hammer and punch
 - T-Pins
- **Need:**
 - Space to work (sturdy table)
 - Water for soaking leather/cleanup
 - Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
 - Towel and other cleaning supplies
- **Nice to Have:**
 - No plastic mask? Use a Styrofoam head (aka wig) form or shaped cardboard.
 - No spring clamps? Can use T-pins on Styrofoam.

1. The first step (if you do not have a cheap plastic mask) is to create a paper template. You can do this by taking a piece of paper approx. as large as the above listed dimensions and folding it in half. Place the crease over your nose and lightly press to crease the paper where your eye starts and ends on one side. Once you have eye placement on the paper you should draw how you want the eyehole to be shaped. You only need to do one as you can cut through both sides (therefore duplicating it for both sides of the paper mask). Now do the same with the outside lines of the mask (folded in half you can duplicate the shape by cutting both at once).

Note: There are templates for masquerade or carnival masks available online. You can simply pick one, print it out, and use for a pattern. Figure 18 shows an example of one Colombina template available.

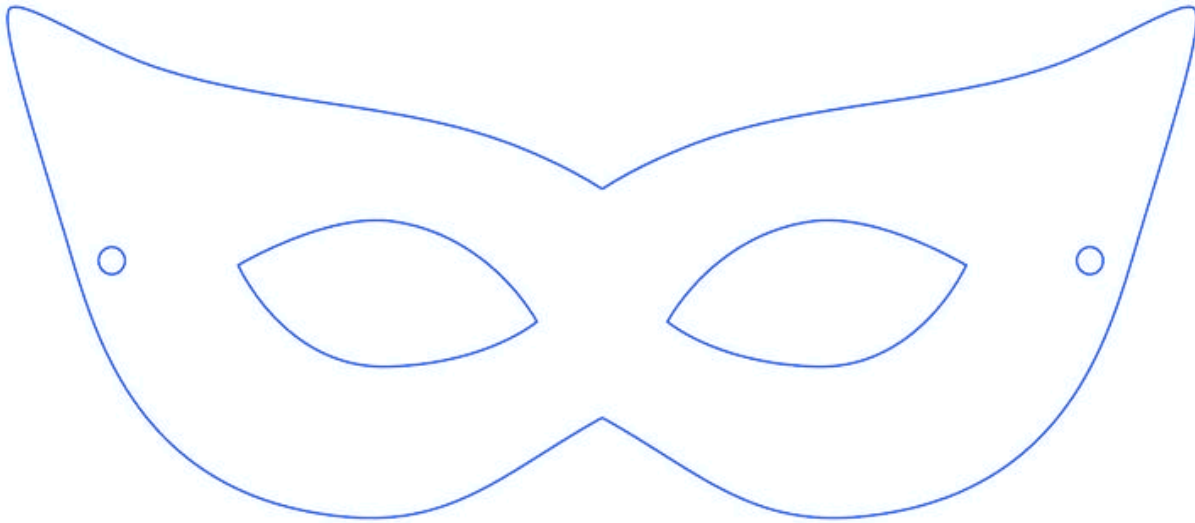


Figure 18

2. Trace your template to your material (I used leather for mine), and then onto your felt as shown in Figure 19 below:



Figure 19

3. Cut out the mask shape, adding approx. ¼” borders around the edges. These will come in handy later on.



Figure 20

4. Once your leather is cut to the shape of your mask or template place it into water and let it soak for 15-20 minutes.
5. When it is thoroughly saturated take it out and roll into a towel to damp dry it. The leather will be soft and pliable.
6. Gently push your thumb up and down between to eyes to stretch the nose area out before moving to the next step.
7. I used a cheap plastic mask from a hobby store to the cut around one of my two Colombina masks, and the template for the other one.
8. If you do are using the Styrofoam head (or a shaped piece of cardboard -larger cylindrical shapes work well). Place your still damp mask onto your form and pin it down by allowing the ‘T’ section of the pin to hold it in place. DO NOT pin through the leather or you will have

unsightly holes in your mask. ONLY pin on the areas that will be removed (eyes). Cut out eyes if you haven't already. See fig. 21 below.



Figure 21

9. If you are using the plastic mask to shape your mask you will need to use your plastic clamps to pin it to your mask. If you left the ¼" border remember to fold that over the edges of the plastic mask as shown in figures 22 and 23 below.



Figure 22

Note: If you are using clamps they may leave marks in your leather. You can soften marks by placing scraps of felt, cardboard, or mat board between the leather and the clamp.



Figure 23

10. Allow your mask to dry for several hours. If need be you can speed up the drying with a hairdryer or a heat gun. Note: Be very cautious with a heat gun you can over dry your leather and burn it.

11. Once your mask is dry remove your clamps or pins. Your mask should hold its shape. (The heavier weight your leather, the better it will hold.)

If it feels soft and floppy you may want to paint plain white school glue (or Matte Medium) on the back and let it dry before lining it with felt. This will stiffen the leather. You may also place a strip of leather or cardboard across the top or bottom of the mask and glue down for more rigidity. Just be aware that unless it's thin it will show under the felt lining.

Note: There are products readily available that will stiffen fabric that can be used. One such example is made by Plaid and it aptly named 'Stiffy'. Allow the leather to dry before proceeding to lining with felt. See Figures 24 & 25 below.



Figure 24



Figure 25

12. When your mask is dry you can continue with lining if so desired. Carefully lay a thin bead of glue down the center of the nose and spread out with your fingers. Place felt onto this area and smooth out. Spend more time on the nose area pushing into place back and forth. This will stretch the felt so it fits the inside of the mask better. Once satisfied

slowly glue the rest of the felt into the inside of the mask from the inside out...towards the edges. Smooth all the glue out so it does not leave ridges or bleed through the felt. Let dry then trim any excess material from edges.

Note: If your leather is still more flexible (softer than desired) now is the time to stiffen it further with interfacing, bias ply, or any other flat item used to stiffen fabric. If you look in fig. 25 you can see the strip of nylon which was glued along the top edge of the inside of the mask under the felt lining to provide that rigidity.



Figure 26

13. Figure 26 shows the back of the mask with its felt lining dried in place.

14. Now you are ready to punch holes to place ties into. Using your hole punch locate an area along the edge of the mask to punch those holes. If you have a plastic mask you can use the holes in it as guides. If you have a paper template use that as a guide. If you have neither hold it up to your face and determine a place that would be best for the ribbon. A rule of thumb is to follow

the bottom line of the eye up and to the side and allow at least 1-1.5” from the edge to better hold.

15. Painting and embellishing...if you look to the end of all the mask tutorials you will find a section entitled ‘Finishing/Color’. If unsure as to what to use or what color to paint if you choose to do so you may want to refer to the color swatches listed there.

This particular mask (figs. 26-28) has been painted with two coats of silver metallic acrylic craft paint, which can be found in any big box or craft store. I finished it with a clear acrylic gloss.



Figure 27

16. When the paint was dry I cut the ribbon in half and threaded through the holes on the sides. I knotted it on the inside, as that was standard practice with Commedia masks. This finished mask can be seen in figs. 27 and 28.



Figure 28

17. For the second, thicker leather Colombina mask I chose to stain the leather a darker brown with shoe polish. The first application can be seen in fig. 29 below.



Figure 29

18. This last image shows the leather mask with 3 layers of brown shoe polish, which was then sealed with a leather sealer. In this case it was a product called Snow Seal, which I applied by hand to warm leather (warmth allows for a better penetration).



Figure 30

Volto

The Volto mask is generally built as a full-face mask when worn during a masquerade, however when used in Commedia the chin area is generally left off. This absence allows for greater expression, freedom of movement, and allows the audience to better hear the actors' voice.

Volto is also called the 'larva' mask because of the fact that it is generally painted white and resembles a larva or a ghost. Many Volto masks are decorated with elaborate jester like headpieces that terminate with bells or other decorations. The masks that are adorned with these extra decorations are referred to as Volto Jolly.

Originally Volto masks were made of fine wax cloth that allows for great comfort of the wearer, which did little for the lifespan of the mask, which is why the few originals reside in museums. To counter the fragility of the originals I have used 4oz. rough out leather to create the one featured here. * The rough surface of my leather necessitated the use of flexible acrylic modeling medium to smooth it out, as you will see in the step-by-step instructions. If you desire to save this step you may want to make sure you use leather with at least one smooth side. I would not recommend using any heavier than 4oz leather for this mask, and would actually choose slightly lighter weight leather in the future. A lighter weight will wear more comfortably as well as conform to the users face more readily.

* To determine the thickness of your leather please refer to page 234, Fig. 274.

Build 2: Volto

- **Materials:**

- 4oz (or lighter) leather approx. 10"x10"
- Black felt approx. 10" x 10"
- School or like glue
- Ribbon approx. 30"
- Paint (I used acrylic craft paint), and 'puffy' paint
- Crackle medium for acrylic paint (optional)
- Embellishments (optional)
- If your leather is suede on both sides you can smooth with flexible acrylic modeling medium (optional)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- While not necessary it is nice to have a cheap plastic mask to use as a form
- Small spring or other type clamps
- Paint brush(s)
- Hole punch or hammer and punch

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for soaking leather/cleanup
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies

- **Nice to Have:**

- No plastic mask? Use a Styrofoam hat form or shaped cardboard.
- No spring clamps? Can use T-pins on Styrofoam.

1. It is advisable have a cheap plastic mask to use as both the template as well as a means to mold your damp mask. If you do not you will need a Styrofoam wig form with a face (more difficult). There are templates for masquerade or carnival masks available online. You can simply pick one, print it out, and use for a pattern. Figure 31 below shows an example of one Volto template available. If using a template add a cut allowance of at least 2” around outside edge or your mask will not cover your face.



Figure 31

2. You will need to transfer the template onto your leather, or use your plastic mask and very carefully trace around all the areas you wish to cut out. If you wish to build a mask for Commedia you will want to cut around the mouth area as I have done below. If you wish to build a mask for Carnival or a Masquerade party you will leave the mouth and chin in your mask. Figure 32 shows the mask I used as a pattern.

Note: the exaggerated cut line around the outside of the mask. You must allow for the extra material. One way to figure how much is to drape your leather over the mask, or push it into the inside of the plastic mask and then add at least 1" around the edges.

Note: It is advisable that a Carnival style mask be made from a lighter weight leather such as 2-3oz as it is very difficult to form compound curves without a set of positive/negative wood forms (which are what professional mask makers use to form leather masks). If you have to use the heavier weight leather you may have to cut a sliver out of each side of the mouth, form the leather, let it dry, and then glue the pieces back together as otherwise there will be a puckered area on each side which will be impossible to smooth out.



Figure 32

3. Place your roughly cut mask into water to soak. If you are using the 4oz leather for the Commedia style mask let it soak for 20-30 minutes (2-3oz leather 15-20 minutes is sufficient).



Figure 33

4. As mentioned in Step 1 you will need a form to shape this mask while it dries.

It is best to have a cheap plastic mask as this is easiest to clamp leather to, but a Styrofoam wig form (with a face), or even a plaster cast of a face you may have from a makeup class will suffice. (Figure 33 shows the mask, which has been cut out, eyeholes marked, and prior to determining the area to be removed for the chin.)

Remove your leather from the water and roll into a towel to absorb excess water. While still damp you will need to start pushing your thumbs up and down along the crease of the nose (and for the full face mask along the mouth as well).

Volto masks do not usually have prominent brow ridges, so you will not need to worry about stretching that area for this style of mask. Once you feel you have made the nose protrude in the leather, position it over the mask, and starting at the nose clamp or pin it down to the plastic/Styrofoam form.

Note: If you are using a plaster form you can very carefully pull against the nose from the outside, and if you are careful you can further stretch it by burnishing with the backside of the leather with a metal teaspoon. Since you cannot clamp to a plaster cast you will have to wrap the leather over the mask with elastic bandages or any other fairly wide, flat fabric. The tighter it is wrapped, the better.

Note: Do not use string or rubber bands unless you want a mask with distinct lines across the dried leather face.

Do not use tape, as it will either not hold at all, or it will hold well enough to pull out the surface of your smooth leather mask when pulled off.

5. Allow your mask to dry for several hours. The thicker the leather, the longer you should let it dry. Overnight is a good rule of thumb for a mask of 4oz leather.

6. Once your mask is dry remove your clamps or pins. Your mask should hold its shape.

The heavier weight your leather is the better it will hold. If it feels floppy you may want to paint white glue, Mat Medium, or product like Stiffy on the back and let it dry before lining it with felt. You may also place a strip of 2-4 ply mat board, or a couple layers of interfacing (used for lining clothes) across the top or bottom of the mask and glue down. Be aware that unless the reinforcing is

thin it will show under the felt lining, and if you choose to not line it, it will look tacky and unfinished.

I coated the back of this mask with Elmer's Gel glue to smooth it out a bit and add some rigidity. See Fig. 34 below.



Figure 34

7. As mentioned prior, I used a scrap piece of 4oz leather to create this mask. Both sides were rough, a texture which I did not desire to maintain. I tried to sand, and then shave the rough side to smooth it, both methods failed. I then experimented with a number of surface treatments and found Flexible Acrylic Molding Medium by Liquitex to be the most effective at smoothing the leather. I simply painted the Medium onto the mask once it was dry.

After the first coat dried I sanded it smooth with 100 grit sandpaper, and then coated it again with the same Acrylic Medium.

The second sanding was done with 250 grit sandpaper which was smooth yet had enough 'tooth' to hold the paint readily.

Note: This is where I 'discovered' 3M Sandblaster Flexible Sandpaper which is absolutely amazing. Not only does it conform to all surfaces, it does not plug up like standard sandpaper, and therefore lasts 15x longer.

This sandpaper is what I recommend for this process, as well as the rest of the masks built in this tutorial. Figure 35 shows the first coating of the Acrylic Modeling Paste I used. It is flexible unlike a coating of plaster (which is the preferred smoothing agent for a rigid mask).



Figure 35

8. After smoothing your dried mask form it is time for paint. If you are not sure what type of paint you would like to use, please refer to the materials used at the end of the mask build section where you will find multiple test swatches showing many different types of paint tested over smooth and suede leather.

For this particular mask I am using easy to find, inexpensive acrylic paint used for many types of hobbies and crafts. Mine was purchased in the craft section of a big box store for less than .99 a bottle.



Figure 36

9. Figure 36 shows how I divided this mask into two ‘color’ halves. I did this specifically for the design I chose. If you are unsure how you would like to proceed it is advisable that you plan ahead by doing some research on what type of design you want prior to starting to paint. This is especially true if you desire your mask to be symmetrical.

Note: I drew out a decorating ‘plan’ for the right ½ of my mask onto tracing paper. When that was done I flipped the tracing paper over to cover the other half of the mask, and by drawing the design onto the back of the tracing paper I successfully transferred it to the other side of the mask. This is not a perfect way to transfer imagery on a dimensional surface but does a good enough job if time is of concern. You can also use stencils, freehand, or even apply decorative items to your mask for decoration. They sell ready-made stencils and stencil blanks in most hobby shops.

As you can see in Figure 36, I painted a ‘skin tone’ across the bottom of my mask. This is to serve as a base coat as I intend on using the Acrylic Crackle medium over this area. (The base coat on a crackle finish will show through as the cracks.)

10. After painting the bottom with the base color I moved onto painting the top half of the mask its base color (blue) making sure to cover the edges of the leather (especially around the inside of the eye cut-outs).



Figure 37

11. Once the mask was dry I painted over the pinkish bottom half with the white topcoat, and then followed the directions for the Crackle Medium. As per the directions I coated the almost dry white topcoat with it. Within minutes the white topcoat started to crack and reveal the pinkish 'skin-tone' below. Fig. 37 shows the drying process.

12. As you can see in Fig. 38 (close-up) reveals the now dry surface of the mask. The cracked effect can be further emphasized by brushing a watered down coat of paint (consistency of milk...and any color), over the top and then quickly wiping it off. In this case I used gold Acrylic craft paint.

In this case the gold settled into the cracks and gave the mask an aged look. Experimenting or even just researching the colors you wish to use prior to painting is key to this step working the way you want it to.



Figure 38

13. Just as had transferred the basic design I drew out in step 9, I started adding more decorations and detail to one half of my mask with a soft (B) lead drawing lightly. When I was satisfied with what I had I then traced it onto the tracing paper.

Once again I flipped the tracing paper over onto the other side of the mask, drew over the back of the marks I had made, which transferred the design to the other half.

Note: If you are not clear how to use tracing paper to transfer designs I would like to point out that there are many step by step tutorials and videos available online.

With the detail drawn onto both sides of my mask, I used the same type of inexpensive acrylic craft paint as prior to paint in some of the detail. When those areas were dry I added detail by drawing over the edges with a bottle of readily found 'puffy' paint which is usually used on fabrics.

Note: 'Puffy' paints can be an amazing tool if used correctly, or can quickly turn into disaster if care is not taken. Start off by shaking the paint, and then with the cap in place, bump the bottle



Figure 39

against a hard surface (such as a table) to dislodge any air bubbles, which can ruin a design. Then practice! You can use this paint as though you are decorating a cake. You can draw, write, or pile up areas for texture. Once you are confident, you can get to work on your mask. It is best to start decorating at the farthest point (top left for right handed people, or top right for left handed people), so as to not drag your hand through your design.

14. It's always a good idea to have a paper towel or a few Q-tip's to pick up errors before they smudge or dry. Don't be afraid to work on sections, allowing time for tack drying of the paint before moving forward.

When you are completely finished painting it is a good idea to plan on a dry time of several hours to overnight for thick paint applications.

15. Once all your paint has dried you can further 'age' your mask by adding a layer of 'stain' that is nothing more than another layer of watered down acrylic paint over the top. In the case of this mask I used a thin layer of medium brown over the top to give it an even more aged look.

Note: The trick is to quickly brush this paint on and immediately wipe it off of all the high spots. The color will remain in the recesses and give your mask an aged appearance as shown in Figure 40.



Figure 40

16. Much as the first mask you will need to punch holes for your ties. In this case I used an elasticized gold ribbon to match the gold highlights of the mask. The interior was not lined as was the case with Build 1, but rather it was simply given a watery gold acrylic layer or paint. This mask is now ready for work or play!

Bauta

Although worn by men and women equally, the very popular and timeless Bauta mask, with its strong jaw line and masculine features provides with wearer with a powerful look. This is the mask that was made famous by Casanova. Traditionally the Bauta masks are considered to be the male counterpart to Colombinas character.

The beak like protrusion situated across the bottom of the mask allows the wearer not only to eat, but also to drink without taking it off. To add to that, the shape of the mask helps to enable the wearer to modify their voice, further enhancing the Masquerade theme. Some of the masks can even have an elaborately shaped bottom edge.

Original Bauta masks were made of plaster, papier-mâché or leather. Now it is much more common to see this mask made of decorated plastic. To complete the outfit, these masks are generally worn with a Tricorn hat and cape, which is the ultimate disguise!

Build 3: Leather Bauta*

- **Materials:**

- 4oz leather approx. 9"x9"
- Black felt approx. 10" x 10"
- School or like glue
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Optional: Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: leather dye
- Newspapers to protect table surface (if dyeing)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Optional: Cheap plastic mask to use as a form
- Small spring or other type clamps
- Optional: Paint brush(s)
- Hole punch or hammer and punch

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for soaking leather/cleanup
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Disposable gloves (if you are dyeing the leather)
- Dye applicator or brush/sponge brush (if dyeing)
- Dye (or paint) if desired

- **Nice to Have:**

- No plastic mask? Use a Styrofoam hat form or shaped cardboard.
- No spring clamps? Can use T-pins on Styrofoam.

***Note:** There are two examples of this mask within this chapter. This first one is leather and will be described in the following write up. The second Bauta mask will be listed in Build 4. This mask is built out of plaster strips and covered with 1oz. leather, which was then painted.

1. It is once again advisable have a cheap plastic mask to use as both the template, as well as a means to mold your mask. If you do not you will need a Styrofoam wig form with a face. There are templates for masquerade or carnival masks available online. You can simply pick one, print it out, and use for a pattern. Figure 41 below shows an example of a plain plastic Bauta mask.

If building this mask you should use a weight of leather no less than 4oz so it holds its shape. If you do not have that weight of leather please refer to the instructions for Build 4.



Figure 41

2. You will need to transfer the outline of your plastic mask onto your leather. If you do not have a plastic mask you will need to use either a heavy weight piece of paper, a template, or 10"x10" piece of felt over your face.

Use your thumbs to stretch the felt out in the shape of your nose, and mark where your eyeholes should be cut.

Bauta masks do not have an opening for your mouth so we are able to skip that step on this build!

3. If you cannot locate a template for this mask, but there is a way around that. If you look at Figs. 42, and 43 you will see a plastic mask with painters tape on it. You can make your own template by covering a mask with tape, trimming the edges, cutting out the eyeholes, and then carefully lifting it off as shown in Fig. 44.



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44

4. Once cut out of leather, place your mask into water to soak. The 4oz leather requires a soak of 20-30 minutes.

Remove your leather from the water and roll into a towel to absorb the excess water. While still damp you will need to start pushing your thumbs up and down along the crease of the nose, brow ridge, and along the center crease that runs from the bottom of the nose to the bottom of the mask. You can use a metal spoon or other like ‘tool’ to help you in this process.

5. As mentioned in previously you will need a form to shape this mask onto while it dries. A cheap plastic mask is by far the easiest to clamp leather to, but a Styrofoam wig form (with a face), or even a plaster cast of a face you may have from a makeup class will suffice (figs. 29-30).

Bauta masks usually have slight brow ridges, a fairly prominent nose, and a very prominent ridge from the base of the nose to the bottom of the mask. Once you feel you have made the nose somewhat visible in the leather by pushing with the back of a metal spoon make sure you push the chin out as well. While it is still damp clamp it down onto the mask, or pin it to your form.

If using the Styrofoam form you may want to place wadded up paper in the chin area to keep it in the 'shovel' shape while it dries. Dry for several hours to overnight.

Note: If you wish to dye your mask please read through to steps 7 through 9 as leather is best dyed when still damp.

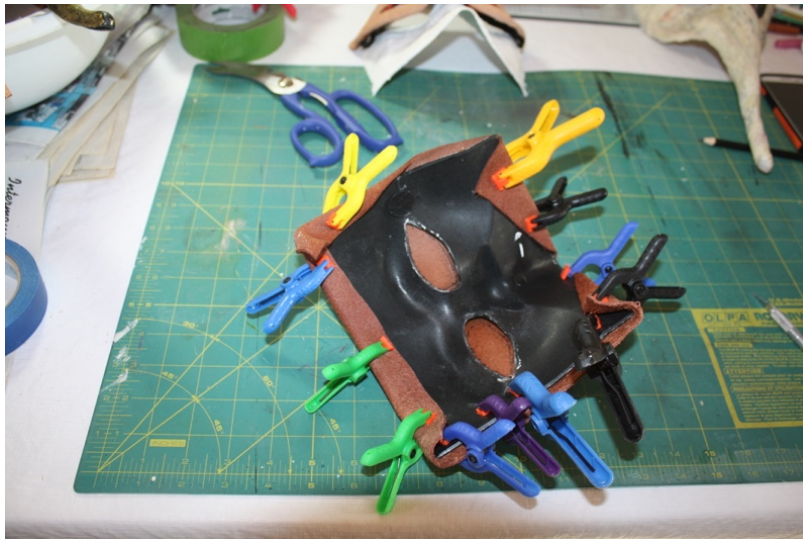


Figure 45

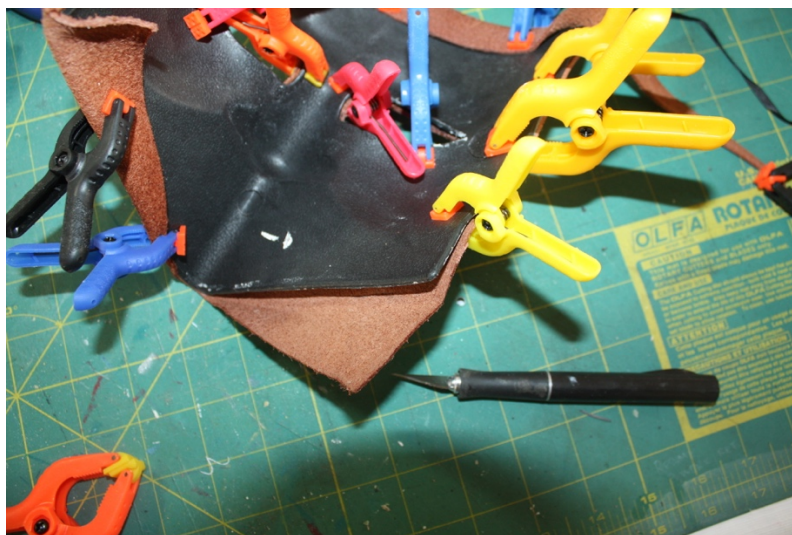


Figure 46

6. Once dry remove your clamps or pins. Your mask should hold its shape. The heavier weight your leather is the better it will hold its shape and any details you include. If it feels floppy you may want to paint white glue or Stiffy on the back and let it dry before lining it with felt, as shown in Fig. 47. For a smoother finish use Acrylic Gloss Medium as shown in Figure 48.



Figure 47



Figure 48

7. As with a previous mask, I used a scrap piece of 4oz leather for this mask. Both sides were rough, a texture I decided to keep with this mask as it was to retain a 'natural' looking appearance (as the original Commedia masks were).

I did decide the color of the leather would not work. It was a very light brown, which I did not desire (the original masks were usually darker shades of brown). Because I desired a slightly aged look, I purchasing a bottle of leather dye from a local saddle/tack store. (Leather dye can also be found at shoe repair shops or online.)

Note: There are several types of leather dye, which all fall under 2 categories...water based, or oil based.

Water based dyes are compatible with acrylics (such as paint we have used so far). They are easier to use, dry more quickly, and are less likely to come off on the wearers skin.

Oil based dyes are often used where the object being dyed will be subject to wear such as boots and saddles. My suggestion is to use water based dyes. Oil based dyes will be labeled as such.

8. If you do not desire to dye your mask you can proceed to the next step.

If you wish to color your mask but do not want to use dye you may want to follow the painting directions in the previous builds.

Dyeing instructions for your particular dye can be found on the box, bottle, or online.

A very helpful hint that I learned working on refurbishing saddles is to dye your leather while it is damp. You will use less dye and get a much more even coverage.

(As you can see in Fig. 48 below) the mask I am dyeing is still on the plastic form and therefore still damp from the initial soaking.) Not only is It is a good idea to keep your mask sitting on the plastic form while dyeing, it is also a good to have a plastic bag or even plastic wrap under that form before you start as dye will stain anything it comes into contact with...this is especially true for oil based dyes.

Your dye bottle should have come with a small fleece applicator. If it did not you can apply dye with either a wide, flat paintbrush, or a sponge brush. It is also advisable to wear disposable gloves as mentioned in the 'Need' list at the start of this chapter.

You will find the dye to be the consistency of 1% milk. If your mask is still evenly damp the dye will be easy to paint on. Most of it will absorb and spread out evenly. If your mask is drying out or not evenly damp you may have to apply more than one coat to even out the coverage. If in doubt practice on a piece of scrap leather prior to starting on your mask or seek out a leather repair shop or saddle maker for help. When all else fails don't forget there are video tutorials available online.



Figure 49

9. After dyeing your mask it is imperative that you allow it to dry. This will be best accomplished by allowing it to sit overnight. As you can see by Fig. 49 the dye has been applied and is drying a bit blotchy. Do not panic...it is normal for it to dry unevenly. Only when it is dry can you tell exactly if or where it might need any touch up. Once dry you can leave it as is, or even paint on top of the dyed surface. Dye will dry lighter than how it appears wet.

Note: There is a rule with art materials, which states ‘fat over lean’. In this case means it is possible to paint oil based paints or dyes over acrylic (water based), but you cannot paint acrylic over oil. If you use acrylic based paints and dyes for everything you will always have compatibility, so this is the easiest way around this issue.

10. I wanted this mask to have an aged look, so I decided to paint over the top of the dye. It is easiest to do this by working from light to dark. I applied a lighter greenish-brown acrylic coat over the dye within the interior area of the mask. I did not paint the areas around the edges, forehead, or around the eyes so the dye could be seen. This gave it a slightly weathered look. See Fig. 50.



Figure 50

11. This mask was finished with a topcoat (front and back) of Acrylic Gloss Medium, which makes it have a nice sheen. Holes were punched with a hammer and punch, and leather cord ties were knotted on the inside of the mask (Fig. 51). If you do not like gloss finishes you can also finish it with a coat of Acrylic Matte Medium, which would give it a loss gloss dull sheen.



Figure 51



Figure 52

Build 4: Bauta (covered plaster)

- **Materials:**

- E-Z Form plaster strips or plaster cast material
- Plaster of Paris
- Bowl
- Plastic mask or Styrofoam head with chin area built out with papier maché or modeling clay
- Black felt approx. 10" x 10"
- School or like glue
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Optional: Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: leather or fabric to cover plaster
- Optional: Spray Adhesive (nice to use for covering mask)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Optional: Paint brush(s)
- Drill and drill bit for creating tie holes

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for bandages
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Vaseline or cooking spray
- Old newspapers or other work surface protection

1. More so now than in any of the previous Builds it is advisable have a plastic mask to serve as a mold your mask. If you do not you will need a Styrofoam wig form with a face with the front built out to hold the chin. You can use foam blocks that will need to be shaped like the front of the Bauta mask (use a bread knife, extendible hobby knife, or hot knife to shape

Styrofoam), or use heavy weight cardboard with a taped joint in the middle over the top of your Styrofoam head, or modeling clay. Make sure the chin secure, as it will need to hold your wet plaster mask until it is dry.

2. First step is to cover your form with a release agent such as Vaseline (better) or cooking spray. If you do not do this you will not be able to get your dried mask off your form! If spraying with cooking spray protect your table with old newspaper. Fig. 54 below.



Figure 54

3. Follow the directions on your plaster strips, drape them over your form making sure you overlap and crisscross layers. You will want between 2 and 5-6 layers of plaster strips. Once this is done set it aside as it will take a day or so to thoroughly dry. If you do not have that much time set it in a sunny window or place into an oven at no more than 200 degrees (Fig 55). Keep an eye on it, checking every hour or so. Fig. 56 shows the mask prior to going into the oven. I allowed it to dry in there at 180 degrees for 4 hours. After 4 hours I took it out and allowed it to sit until the next morning before pulling it off the form.



Figure 55

Note: If you try to pry at the mask the plaster will break so have patience when working with it!



Figure 56

4. Figure 57 shows the mask after being separated from the plastic. I used an X-Acto knife with the blade inserted (upside-down) with pointed end inside the handle to slowly pry it off the form. A thin butter knife also makes a good wedge.

When it is removed you most likely will have to use either Acrylic medium or Plaster of Paris (Fig. 58) to give it a nice smooth surface. Mix the plaster slightly runnier than you would if you were using it to repair walls, and smooth it on with a flat paintbrush.

When it is dry, a quick sanding with 100-150 grit sandpaper will leave it smooth enough to cover in fabric or thin leather.



Figure 57



Figure 58

5. After you are happy with the surface of your mask it is either time to paint it, or cover it.

Note: If you chose to paint it instead it is still a good idea to keep reading prior to starting to paint it.

I chose to cover my mask with a thin (1oz) piece of deep green pigskin leather.

Using the mask as a template I cut the leather out leaving approx. 1.5” of excess around the edges.

Much like lining we did with the mask in Build 1, I covered the center (nose area) with a thin layer of glue laid and proceeded to work outward carefully gluing and smoothing the leather out.

Note: Use a thin coat of glue when working with thin materials or it will bleed through the leather/fabric. If you are worried about bleed through you may also use spray adhesive, just make sure it is a permanent and not temporary bond.

When you get to the edges carefully wrap the excess around to the back of the mask. There may be gathers in the material, which can be remedied by cutting small 'V' notches in the covering material. Do this step slowly or you may end up cutting too much material off! The nice thing about the Bauta mask is that it is made up of simple shapes and really has no compound curves to deal with. Most edges tuck very nicely as you can verify in Fig. 59 below.

Repeat with the eye holes...go slow...this is the hardest part!

Your goal is to make those tucked edges smooth...not necessarily that it is pretty. That area will be covered with the liner so messy edges will be hidden. When you are done gluing the edges of material coat the inside of the mask with Acrylic Medium (or glue). Let dry.



Figure 59

6. If you look again at the image in Figure 59 you will see a strip at the top of the mask as well as one at the bottom. Instead of using cardboard I reinforced this mask with a thin, lightweight metal mesh that is used for armatures in clay and sculptures. From experience, try to get the reinforcing to within 1/4-1/2" of the edge of the mask.

I added this to give the mask more structural integrity. This material is sold under the name Activ-Wire Mesh and is made by a company called Activa. You can find this mesh in any hobby supply store or online.

You will see it used again in later, more complex Builds. Simply glue it down into the mask and cover with the Acrylic Medium once it is dry. This will smooth out the texture of the wire mesh.

7. The next step is to line your mask with felt or other like material.

If you choose a liner other than felt think about the comfort of the wearer. If it is itchy, hairy, or holds heat/moisture your wearer may not want to wear it for long!

8. Start out by cutting a square of felt slightly larger than your mask. Once again find the area that will be placed in the nose area and slowly stretch it out with your thumb or the back of a spoon. (It might help to dampen the felt slightly.)

Once you are satisfied (and your liner is dry if you dampened it) start in the center with a thin coat of glue and push the stretched out area into the nose (Fig. 60). Work in small sections radiating out from this central starting point. Allow this to dry before trimming with sharp scissors or hobby knife (Fig. 61).



Figure 60



Figure 61

9. At this point you will want to drill holes on either side of your mask slightly above the edge of the eyes and approx. 1 ½-2” from the edge of the mask. * Seal the hole with Acrylic Medium or a thin coat of Elmer’s glue, and then touch up with paint if so desired. Having the corners of the mask reinforced will help with strength and durability.

*If you feel uncomfortable drilling holes in your mask no worries.... just use the method mentioned in Step 14 of this built for an alternate way to mount your ties!

10. If you are happy with your mask at this point you may want to thread your ribbon through the dry holes and put it into use.

If you feel as though you would like more decoration like I did, now is the time to make any additions.

11. I chose to paint blocks of contrasting diamonds across the front of my mask in a traditional harlequin style, and because my mask was rather large I took this time to add a bit of padding to the inside of the forehead area to take up space and make it more comfortable to wear.

12. Once I decided how I wanted to alternate the pattern across the face I used a piece of painters tape to set up my lines.

Note: Before sticking the painters tape onto your mask stick it to your pants first to take off most of the sticky off the tape. This will help when you go to remove it. If you skip this step you damage your mask when you pull the tape off!

13. Using painters tape instead of a ruler allows you to conform your lines to the mask which will be much more accurate than using a ruler (as the surface is not flat).

Once laid out, I used a white charcoal pencil to lightly draw the lines. A tracing pencil used for sewing will also work well. We use that type of pencil for marking fabric or leather, as it will easily brush off when you no longer need it. Using anything else may possibly mar your mask permanently.

If you look at Figs. 62 & 63 you will see the area of the mask that is green is the pigskin leather (suede side out). The gold is acrylic paint, which has been 'edged' with 'puffy' acrylic paint.



Figure 62



Figure 63

14. In Fig. 64 (below) you can see how the inside of this mask was finished.

Because I did not want to drill holes in the edge of a plaster based mask (you will find the plaster to be structurally strong until you start bending edges or drilling holes in it, then it has a tendency to become brittle and crumbly) so I changed the way the way the tie straps are mounted to the mask.

First of all the tie strap I chose was too wide... so I doubled it up, ironed it flat, and sewed along the edge.

I then created the abovementioned padded liner piece by adhering foam to the inside of the felt liner material with spray adhesive.

Once that was dry I sewed the tie straight into the bottom of the padded liner (the ties work best if just slightly above the eye-line). I then used craft glue and glued the whole padded forehead piece into position on the mask.



Figure 64



Figure 65

Il Dottore

Il Dottore is Italian for ‘Doctor’, which this character boasts to be. Il Dottore is a stock character of Commedia dell’Arte who falls under the category of ‘Vecchi’ or Old Men.

The mask that adorns the face of this character has undergone many metamorphosis over the centuries with one thing seeming to remain constant...the good doctor usually has a bulbous or elongated nose. I created this particular mask to have a bulbous nose in order to differentiate it from other characters with elongated noses. True to the original styling of Commedia masks, the mask I have created is sans mouth or chin for actor comfort and voice projection.

Original Dottore masks were made of plaster, papier-mâché or even leather. Today, along with the other Commedia characters (and masks in general) it is much more common to see this mask made of decorated plastic.

To complete the outfit, these masks are generally worn with a short black cloak, round velvet cap, and a white neck ruff. This character will oftentimes have additional ‘tools’ such as a giant syringe or scholarly books.

This mask build is deviating from the first 4 in build. You will see a new items on the list of materials to correspond with this.

Build 5:

- **Materials:**

- Fast Maché (a Paper Maché product by Aactiva)
- Bowl
- Plastic mask or Styrofoam head with chin area built out
- Plastic bag for mixing
- Black felt approx. 10" x 10"
- School or like glue
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Optional: Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: leather or fabric to cover plaster
- Optional: Spray Adhesive
- Sand paper (80 / 100 / 150-320 grit)
- Gesso (found with acrylic paints)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Paint brush(s)
- Drill and drill bit for creating tie holes (optional)
- Dust mask (optional but recommended)

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Warm water for papier maché
- Optional: hairdryer / heat gun / oven
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Vaseline or cooking spray

1. Unlike the masks that you have built so far, this mask is going to be completely different in its construction. You will need to use one of your cheap plastic masks as a base to build upon. You needn't worry about the shape of your mask as long as it has appropriate openings for the eyes, and is complete with forehead. The mask I used was a simple full face similar to the Volto mask of Build 2.

You may find a Styrofoam head will work...if that head is the same size as your own (many of these 'wig forms' are smaller than an actual human head).

2. The first thing you will want to do is liberally apply Vaseline (or cooking spray) to your plastic mask and set it on old newspapers (this is going to be a bit messy)!

Note: Vaseline works better than cooking spray, which should only be used when you don't have any petroleum jelly available.

3. As mentioned in the Materials list you will need a paper maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay (these are both products that can be found in any hobby store or online). These products are basically a finely ground paper product. The Fast Maché is finer than the Celluclay, and will be easier to work with as it has fewer tendencies to clump. If you are a die-hard fan of traditional Paper Maché you are more than welcome to use it, but your work/dry time will be much longer, and your mask will have a tendency to shrink and curl at the edges a great deal more than either of the two aforementioned products.

Note: If you chose to use traditional Paper Maché please leave your mask on the form for a minimum of 2 days to minimize shrinkage.



Figure 66

4. Once you have the ground Paper Maché the easiest way to mix it is by placing approximately 2 cups of the dry product into a gallon size Zip Lock style bag (fig 66). Add warm water a little at a time and blend with your hands until you have eliminated all the lumps and have a consistency slightly stiffer than very thick oatmeal (as shown in Fig. 67).



Figure 67

Starting at the center of your Vaseline coated plastic mask place the mixed paper maché product onto your mask respecting the boundaries of the eye openings and edge of the mask. Pay close attention to where you want your mask to end. If you are creating this mask in the style of Commedia masks you will not want any Paper Mache over any of the chin/mouth area. If your mask is for a Carnival or Masquerade applications you can include the chin/mouth area.

Your goal is to have a layer of Paper Maché over the mask in a consistent thickness of no more than 1/4-3/8". Your wet fingers can smooth any area of your Paper Maché mask that is lumpy. It's a good idea to keep a small container of water with you while you work just for this purpose. Keep the thickness and consistency of your Paper Maché over the whole mask...even at the edges.

Note: If you create a chin area and later decide you do not want it you will have to wait for the mask to dry thoroughly, and then enlist the aid of a saw to remove it!) Don't worry about building up the nose and brow area until the next step.

5. Once you have the 1/4-3/8" of papier maché material over your mask let it dry for a minimum of 2-3 hours before adding more material to the nose and/or brow area.

Set it aside and let it get dry to the touch (it will still be slightly damp on the inside).

Il Dottore is known for having either a bulbous or a hyper extended nose. I chose to make this particular build with a bulbous nose, as there are other masks included with this mask building tutorial that have elongated noses.

Refer to the photos provided here, or locate your own images and build the nose to your liking. If you desire to have an enlarged brow ridge now is the time to create that look with your papier maché product. Don't stress out if it is not entirely to your liking as it can be fixed in further steps by sanding it (once it is thoroughly dry)!

Note: When you look at the Commedia characters that fall under the category of 'Vecchi' (old men) you will see that all of them have large 'moles' on their faces. Now is the time to add those character flaws to your mask if you so desire. They will add dimension and personality to your finished mask!

6. Now that your nose, brow ridges, and/or moles have been added you will need to let your mask thoroughly dry. This is accomplished by allowing it to sit for at least 24 hours... unless you have an oven.

The mask pictured in this tutorial was dried in an oven for approx. 4 hours at a temperature between 150-180 degrees (similar to the last mask build).

DO NOT use a higher temperature than 180 degrees if you have a plastic mask as your base. The heat of the oven can still distort any area that is not covered with

Paper Maché, so if your mask is a Commedia style with an uncovered chin area you may have some distortion in that area.

Note: If the potential warping of your plastic mask is troubling to you, cover it with a thinner layer of Paper Maché or leave a very slight gap between the chin and body of the mask so it can be easily removed once it is dry.

DO NOT use the oven at all if you have used a Styrofoam form for your mask!

Plastic and Styrofoam do not do well in an oven! Let the masks on Styrofoam air dry for a minimum of one day (preferably in the sun which will help cure the inside layers).

7. When your mask is dry (it will be evenly colored throughout...dark spots indicate areas that are still damp) very carefully try and pull your dry mask off the form. If it doesn't budge (most won't right away) DO NOT force it! To help it out you will need to clean up the papier maché that is hanging over the edges of the plastic mask. Concentrate on the eyeholes and mask edges with a bit of sandpaper prior to proceeding...and have patience!

With the larger pieces removed, carefully go around the mask edges with either 80 or 100 grit sandpaper. Your goal is to get a clean edge on your mask that is not attached to the plastic mask anywhere.

If you just pry at this point (without thoroughly cleaning those edges) you risk breaking your new mask.

Once the edges are clean then very carefully try and pry your mask off again by wedging a butter knife (or like tool) between the two pieces. It may come off right away, and it may take 20 minutes. Work slowly around the edges, and do not use a screwdriver, as it is too thick!

Note: If at any time you find the inside of your mask is coming apart and sticking to your form STOP prying! That means it is not totally dry yet! Repeat the drying process if this is the case! If it still does not come put the mask in the sun or in a warm oven for 10-15 minutes and try again until it is loosened/dried sufficiently to come apart.

8. Figures 68 and 69 show the mask freshly pried off the plastic form. The mask does not look anything like the original plain mask at all.... this because of the nose and brow ridge that you added to it.

The next step is to get rid of any imperfections or pits in your mask, which is done by sanding it all over.



Figure 68



Figure 69

9. Figure 69 shows the underside of the nose prior to sanding. You can see that the nostrils are not the same size and that the nose is not smooth.

After sanding it will look like the image in Figure 70.

Note: Sanding should be done either outside, with a dust mask, in a spray booth with a fan, or at least have a fan blowing the fine dust away from people and animals.



Figure 70

10. Once sanded the mask will be further smoothed out by the application of thin coats of Plaster of Paris so don't worry if there are still some pits or even marks in it.

Plaster of Paris is readily available at any home improvements store or hobby shop. It is basically the same as Joint Compound (so in a pinch Joint Compound will also work).

The reason to use Plaster of Paris over Joint Compound is because Plaster is much more finely ground and produces much cleaner results.

Use an old yogurt or margarine container to mix small amounts of Plaster at a time. Start with 1/4 cup of plaster and add a little bit of water at a time until the consistency of thick cream or soft yogurt.

Plaster of Paris dries fairly quickly so it is best to work a section at a time.

11. Through experimentation I have found that Plaster of Paris is easiest to spread with a cheap plastic palette knife to fill small holes, an old flat edged paint brush to smooth large areas,

and one of those plastic store membership / discount cards (or a small Bondo scraper) to fill larger cracks.

Start with the inside of the mask so you get practice with working the plaster before proceeding to the exterior. Let it dry.

If it's not perfect don't worry...it will be smoothed out further in following steps.

12. Once the inside of the mask is done proceed to the outside. Its easiest to work from the nose out, that way you will be less likely to put your fingers in the wet plaster.

Once you are happy that the surface is without pits and holes let it dry until the plaster is white through and through...that means it's dry enough to proceed with the next step.

13. Dry mask in hand you may want to head outside again, and / or put your dust mask back on...you are going to get dusty! You will need 80 grit sandpaper if you have coated your entire mask in plaster...100 grit if you are just looking to smooth filled areas and 150-320 grit to smooth everything prior to painting. Sand the entire mask inside and out. Smooth out all the edges. When you are happy with the sanding continue to switch up to a higher number of sandpaper. When you are happy with your nice smooth mask you are done sanding! Figure 71 below shows the initial sanding on this mask. You can see the small lines left by the harsher grit paper, as well as the pits on the cheek area.



Figure 71



Figure 72

14. Figure 72 shows how much smoother the mask becomes as you apply a light coat of Plaster of Paris to the mask, and then sand using finer grit of paper, such as 220 grit to 360 grit.

15. When you have made it through all the Plaster and sanding stages of sandpaper your mask will have a nice smooth finish with no lumps, pits, or rough places. The next thing that you will need to do is protect your mask with a sealant. You can use Gesso or Matte Medium. Gesso is preferred.

Gesso and Matte Medium can be found anywhere that acrylic art paint is sold.

Gesso is a ‘ground’, which will allow for the permanent adhesion of paint.

It is the same concept as primer is for your car. Without primer the paint on your car has nothing to adhere to, and would not stay on the metal body of your car for very long. Gesso is used to prime canvases for painting. Without gesso paint would not stay on your canvas for very long...so think of it as a type of glue that holds your paint where it needs to be.

Along with its adhesion properties, it will also allow for an even paint tone on your first layer.

Note: If you choose to skip this step your first layer of paint will be blotchy, as some of your paint will simply absorb into the plaster. This is because Plaster of Paris and dried Paper Mache absorb paint differently. If you desire a blotchy mask you can proceed with the next step! For those of you desiring a smoothly painted mask you will need to paint your mask with gesso prior to proceeding. If you do not have any gesso you can use Matte Medium, white glue, or spray primer in a pinch (read information below).

Note: If you choose to use Matte Medium you should be aware that when you paint over it, it could get tacky and when that happens your fingerprints will be left as indents which can be seen once it dries.

Note: Primer is generally only available in an aerosol spray can. Primer can be bought at any store that has a selection of spray paint. You will want to pay special attention to compatibility issues with primer and the paint you choose for your mask.

16. Figure 73 (below) shows the mask after sanding throughout with 250 grit sandpaper, and then applying Gesso. As you can see, the mask now has a smooth and even finish. When that finish is dry your mask is ready to be painted.



Figure 73



Figure 74

17. Figure 74 shows the application of the base coat of paint. The inside of the mask has been coated, and now that it is dry (acrylic paints dries quickly) I am moving to the front of the mask. I want this mask to look like aged and stained leather so it will have to have several layers applied. Each layer will add depth to the overall appearance, and each layer will be a slightly different color. The mixing of colors also adds visual depth to paint and better mimics the warmth of leather than painting flat, evenly applied coats.

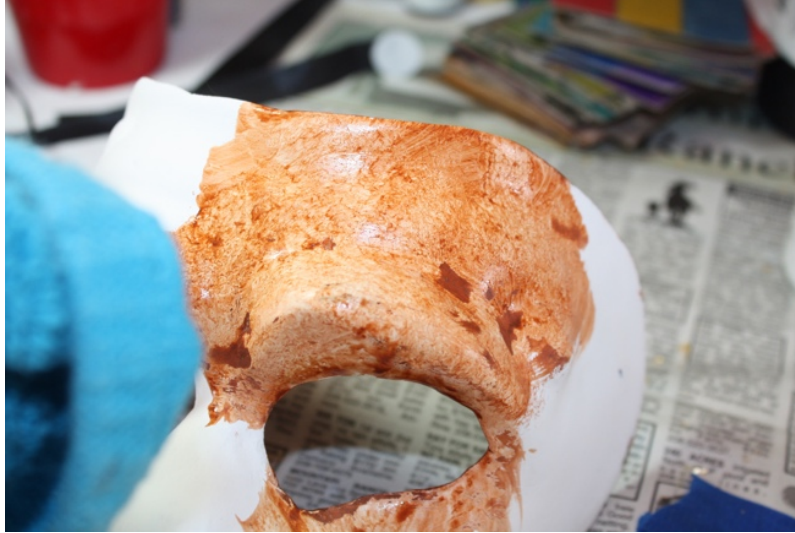


Figure 75

18. Because leather does not have hard lines in its appearance (unless created that way in the dying process), I used a wadded up rag and blotted the paint before it dried (Fig. 75). You can also use a sponge, which will give a slightly different texture. Continue over the entire mask and let dry. Figure 76.



Figure 76

19. Continue with the same method to cover the entire mask. Each layer of paint should be a slightly different color. I simply added more paint to the base paint color and kept adding to it. You can start to see the layers being developed in Fig. 77.



Figure 77



Figure 78

20. If it helps with paint coverage you can also use a brush to apply the paint (Fig. 78), and use a cloth to add texture (Fig. 79).



Figure 79



Figure 80

21. As you can see by the image above the rough texture of the cloth used on the wet paint lends itself well to mimicking the texture of leather. This color works well as is, or can be even more believable as leather with another coat or two. Don't forget to slightly alter the color on each coat of paint you apply.



Figure 81

22. Figure 81 shows the addition of a mahogany tinted paint. Once that was dry I added a small amount of dark brown paint to the mix. This was applied in the indentations of the mask to make the shadows appear more recessed. This gives the mask more dimension, something that is treasured with the original Commedia masks. You can see the shadows develop further in Fig. 82, which is further apparent in the close up in Figure 83.



Figure 82



Figure 83

23. The last step you will want to undertake is the seal coat of your mask. Without this step your mask is in danger of chipping. In the image above you should be able to see the sheen of Acrylic Gloss Medium. Apply this with a clean flat brush. Try not to brush areas that have been coated and are starting to dry as this may leave brush marks. Instead let the Gloss Medium level out on its own. One to two coats should be sufficient.



Figure 84

- 24.** The last two photos show the finished product for this particular build.



Figure 85

Zanni

Zanni is a broad term for a stock character of Commedia dell'Arte who is known as a peasant, a fool, a clown and a buffoon. There are several characters, which fall under the broad description of a Zanni.

The name Zanni comes from an abbreviation of the name Giovanni, which in Italian means John (John is an everyday working mans name). Most Zanni are named Arlechino (aka Harlequin), Brighella, or Pulcinella (aka Punchinello). Along with being a dimwit he is also an acrobat, he likes the ladies, and is always wanting (food, money, love).

The face of this character has undergone two main changes since its origin.

The original masks were full face with a very long nose. In fact, the longer the nose, the more stupid the character would act. Because of the inability for the audience to hear the comedic ways of this character the mask very soon lost its chin. True to the original styling of Commedia masks the mask I have created is sans mouth or chin.

Original Zanni masks were made of leather, which were not overly decorated. Today, along with the other Commedia characters it is much more common to see this mask made of decorated plastic or papier maché. Since this mask has been adopted for use during Carnival it has also become much more decorated.

To complete the outfit, these masks were traditionally worn with peasant (work) clothes. Clothing worn with the Carnival masks are generally very ornate.

Build 6:

- **Materials:**

- Fast Maché (a Paper Maché product by Activa)
- Bowl
- Plastic mask (preferably Zanni, Volto, or Colombina)
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Wire
- Optional: Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: Gold leaf
- Optional: Spray Paint
- Optional: Modeling clay

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Paint brush(s)
- Plastic straw

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for Fast Maché
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Vaseline or cooking spray

1. You will want to have a plastic mask for this build. It can be any from the list above, or if you look at Fig. 86 below you will see the collection of cheap plastic masks I have been using as bases for our builds. You can use any of those masks to create your Zanni mask, but the easiest one is the one with the long nose on the right.



Figure 86

2. Although the mask on the right is the easiest to work with, you needn't worry about the shape of your mask as long as it has appropriate openings for the eyes, and is complete with forehead.

3. The first thing you will want to do is liberally apply Vaseline (or cooking spray) to your plastic mask and set it on old newspapers (this is going to be a another messy one)!

Note: Once again...Vaseline works better than cooking spray, which should only be used when you don't have any petroleum jelly available.

4. As mentioned in the Materials list you will need a Paper Maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay (these are both products that can be found in any hobby store or online). These products are basically a finely ground paper product.

The Fast Maché is finer than the Celluclay, and will be easier to work with as it has fewer tendencies to clump.

The first Zanni mask I made out of traditional Paper Maché. Because I used the Volto mask as a base (I did not have a plastic Zanni mask) I had to build the base of the nose out with modeling clay (which stayed soft). This worked well at first.

I built the mask and set it aside to dry. When I went back to it the next day I was horrified to see the nose has dried in a deformed curl, which resembled a bent up mosquitos proboscis. Beyond repair or reuse it was sadly thrown out, which sent me to a discount website to find a left over Halloween mask to use as a base. It was well worth the \$3.00...it will save you from the same headache I dealt with. If you don't want to spend the \$3.00 you can always wait until Nov. 1st and buy your masks at a greatly reduced price!

Believe me...buying an assortment of cheap masks is well worth your time and save you in the end if you plan on building masks! OK, on to building.



Figure 87

5. Put Vaseline over your plastic mask.

Place your ground Paper Maché the easiest way to mix it is by placing approximately 2 cups of the dry product into a gallon size Zip Lock style bag or a mixing bowl (fig 87). Add warm water a little at a time and blend with your hands until you have eliminated all the lumps and have a consistency slightly stiffer than very thick oatmeal.

Take a piece of wire and form it into a 'V' shape that is the same length as the nose through the forehead. You will thank me for this...I learned the hard way. That nose is long and needs a bit of internal support.

Starting at the center of your plastic mask place the mixed Paper Maché product onto your mask respecting the boundaries of the eye openings and edge of the mask. Pay close attention to where you want your mask to end. Because this mask in the style of Commedia masks you will not want any Paper Mache over any of the chin/mouth area if your plastic mask came with those areas.

When you have a thin layer of Fast Maché on your mask let it dry for a few minutes.

Note: If you don't want to drill this mask use a 1' long section of drinking straw placed where the holes will be. The straws will come out of the dried mask and leave the holes intact.

When it starts to firm up, place the point of your 'V' shaped wire approx. 1/4-1/2" from the end of the nose and gently bend the arms of wire down the nose on either side just down from the top. The tops of the wire (open ends) will travel over the forehead on either side of the eyes. Use the rest of your Fast Maché and build the mask to an even consistency over the rest of the mask. Make sure the wire is covered.

Your goal is to have a layer of Paper Maché over the mask in a consistent thickness of no approx.. 3/8". Your wet fingers can smooth any area of your Paper Maché mask that is lumpy. It's a good idea to keep a small container of water with you while you work just for this purpose. Keep the thickness and consistency of your Paper Maché, even at the edges.

6. Let your mask dry for several hours before adding more material to the nose and/or brow area.

Set it aside and let it get dry to the touch (it's still going to be damp on the inside).

Zanni's can have smooth brows, or prominent ones. I chose to make this particular mask to have mid-sized brows, and have an elegant look (there is another build that is not so elegant further along this tutorial).

Once again you can refer to the photos provided here, or locate your own images and build the mask to your liking or needs.

7. Now you will need to let your mask thoroughly dry. This is accomplished by allowing it to sit for at least 24 hours... unless you have an oven.

You can dry this mask in an oven but I would not exceed 150 degrees. The trick is to keep an eye on the end of the nose. As thin as it is you run the risk of burning that tip off. I took mine out after 40 minutes and let it air dry overnight.

8. When your mask is dry (it will be evenly colored throughout...dark spots indicate areas that are still damp) very carefully try and pull your dry mask off the form. Be especially careful with that nose!

If it doesn't budge DO NOT force it! You will need to clean up edges that are hanging over the edges of the eyeholes, and plastic mask edges with a bit of sandpaper prior to proceeding.

Carefully go around the mask edges with either 80 or 100 grit sandpaper. Your goal is to get a clean edge that is not attached to the plastic. If you just pry at this point without cleaning the edges you risk breaking those edges off of your new mask.

Once the edges are clean then very carefully try and pry your mask off by wedging a thin blade (or like tool) between the two pieces. It may come off right away, and it may take 20 minutes.

Work slowly around the edges, and do not use anything thicker than an X-Acto blade...you have a long nose to protect!

Note: If at any time you find the inside of your mask is coming apart and sticking to your form STOP prying! That means it is not totally dry yet! Repeat Step 8 if this is the case! If it still does not come off after that put the mask in the sun or in a warm oven for 10-15 minutes and try again until it is loosened/dried sufficiently to come apart.

4. Figure 88 shows the mask (white) pried off the plastic form (black). Sanding has smoothed it, and then I applied a light coat of Plaster of Paris to it. When this was dry, I lightly sanded again. If unsure of the process see Build 4 and review the step by step.



Figure 88

9. Smooth your mask inside and out (as well as the edges). Be careful with the nose while you work. Wear a dust mask or go outside when you sand. Once you are happy that the surface is without pits and holes let it dry until the plaster is white through and through...that means it's dry enough to proceed with the next step.



Figure 89

10. Just to make sure it would work...I used school glue over this mask instead of using Gesso (Fig. 89). I did this to get a super smooth finish, which would accent the smooth finish I planned on finishing the mask with. As you can see it worked well but did take several hours to dry solid.

When dry I decided on a color scheme. I started painting (Fig. 90) and then realized a straight edge would be much easier if I taped off half of the mask with painters tape prior to starting. Fig. 91.



Figure 90



Figure 91

11. I decided to use spray paint rather than craft paint to emphasize the smooth texture of this mask so I made a small ‘paint booth’ to contain my overspray and protect the mask from the blowing dust and pollen outside. I simply taped two boxes together and left them open on one side. I taped the ‘booth’ down to a small table so the wind would not move it. You can see the image of my portable spray booth in Fig. 92 below.

Note: It is best not to use the ‘spray booth’ inside as the fumes from spray paint is not good for you to breath in. Wait for a calm or light breeze and use outside or in a garage or shop with the door(s) open.



Figure 92

12. I chose to paint half of my mask a dark grey metallic. The color I ended up using was Rustoleum Carbon Mist. The paint went on nice and even and dried with a beautiful metallic sheen. I sprayed 3 coats and top coated this color with a Rustoleum Clear Lacquer (in Gloss). You can see this in Fig. 93.



Figure 93



Figure 94

13. Fig. 94 gives you a slightly better view of the painted side of the mask.

14. I decided to cover the other half of this mask in gold leaf.

I used artificial gold leaf (sheets), which are readily available in any hobby store or online. You will need to apply the adhesive (also known as size) and follow the directions (or find a video tutorial online). I would post the directions here, but noted that they vary between brands. For the particular brand I have I had to let the size dry for 5 minutes before applying the leaf. If you do not have tools for pressing the leaf onto the size you can use the back of a teaspoon to apply light pressure to adhere the leaf to the adhesive.

15. Once again I used painters tape to establish the edge between the paint and the leaf. It is a good idea to put the tape onto your pants before putting it on your mask. This removes part of the adhesive and lessens the risk that you will pull your dry paint off.



Figure 95

16. Fig. 95 shows the fresh application of gold leaf to the Zanni mask.



Figure 96

17. Rather than using the sealant that comes with the gold leaf I used the same Rustoleum Clear Lacquer over the leaf. From past experience it holds up better.

Fig. 97 shows the freshly Lacquered gold leaf.



Figure 97



Figure 98



Figure 99

18. Figures 98 – 100 shows Build 5 finished with gold ties in place and ready to use.



Figure 100

Zanni: Covered Mask

Here is another iteration of the Zanni character mask. This particular mask started out as a painted model (as you will see in the first few images). This idea quickly changed when I remembered that the whole goal of these tutorials is to provide you with variable means to quickly, and affordably build masks. Because of this you will find this mask may have similarities that cross over from other building processes.

Build 6:

- **Materials:**

- Fast Maché (a Paper Maché product by Aactiva)
- Bowl
- Plastic mask (preferably Zanni, Volto, or Colombina)
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Wire mesh (found in the clay section of hobby stores)
- Scrap newspaper
- Optional: Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: Spray Paint
- Optional: Leather like fabric remnant
- Spray adhesive
- Craft glue (the best I have come across is '3 in 1' made by Beacon)

- **Tools:**

- Craft or X-Acto knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Paint brush(s)
- Drill & drill bit
- Clothes pins

- **Need:**
 - Space to work (sturdy table)
 - Water for Fast Maché
 - Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
 - Towel and other cleaning supplies
 - Vaseline or cooking spray

1. You will want to have a plastic mask for this build. If you look back at Fig. 86 from the previous build you will see the collection of cheap plastic masks I have compiled. You can use any of those masks to create your Zanni mask, but the easiest one is the one with the long nose on the right.

2. Follow directions 3. Through 10 on the previous Zanni mask (Build 5)

3. When you find yourself at the point of protecting your mask you can use Gesso, Acrylic Medium, Glue, or Spray Paint (as you will see in Fig. 101 below).



Figure 101

4. If you so desire you can simply paint your mask. The paint used on the mask in Figs. 101 and 102 is by Rustoleum. The color is Espresso, and the finish is Satin.

Note: If you choose to leave it painted you may want to give it a protective spray of Satin Clear. This will protect it from nicks, and it will come out similar to the one shown in those two images.



Figure 102

5. If you wish to cover this mask with a fabric or even give it a leather like finish, proceed through the following steps to learn how.

6. In staying with the traditional theme of Commedia mask making I decided to make this mask look as though it was made of leather.... without the cost associated with using actual leather.

7. To save money, a quick trip to any thrift store will reveal a treasure trove of fabrics and leathers residing there in the form of shirts, pants, and most of all...coats. This is where most of my leathers and materials come from.

Not finding anything I wanted to work with I went to a fabric store and immediately noted the high quality (and price) of leather like fabrics. Luckily I found the perfect remnant for the right price.

8. As you can see in Fig. 103 the fabric I used (Suede Cloth Pleather) looks so much like leather I had to do a double take. One thing about fabrics like this, is how nice they stretch and conform to most shapes. These higher end synthetics cut nicely, stretch well, and have excellent longevity. They are almost indiscernible from actual leather as I am sure you can see with the following build images.



Figure 103

9. The first thing I did was cut my remnant out in the general shape of my mask. I made sure there was plenty of material to tuck around the edges of the mask.

10. I placed my mask on some scrap newspaper and lightly sprayed the nose of the mask with spray adhesive. When I did this I used pieces of newspaper to cover the rest of the mask protecting it from overspray.

11. I then placed the center of the nose area of the remnant gently on the bridge of the nose, smoothing it down from the center and down each side as you can see in Fig. 103. If you don't take your time doing this you can get air bubbles under the fabric, which will detract from the look of your mask.

12. Once the nose on your mask has been glued down and smoothed out over the nose fold the forehead material over the front of the mask as you can see in Fig. 104.



Figure 104

13. Use the newspaper to now cover the nose area (including the material that is covering it) to protect it from overspray. Now lightly spray the area between the eyes and carefully smooth it upward toward the top of the mask and out away from the center.

14. Continue smoothing taking into account that the hardest area to work is going to be around the eyes. As you can see in Fig. 105 I have started the process of wrapping the eye area which necessitates relieving the stress on the fabric covering by cutting an 'X' into the centers with an X-Acto knife.

When you have cut the 'X's proceed to slowly stretch the fabric around the eye openings.



Figure 105

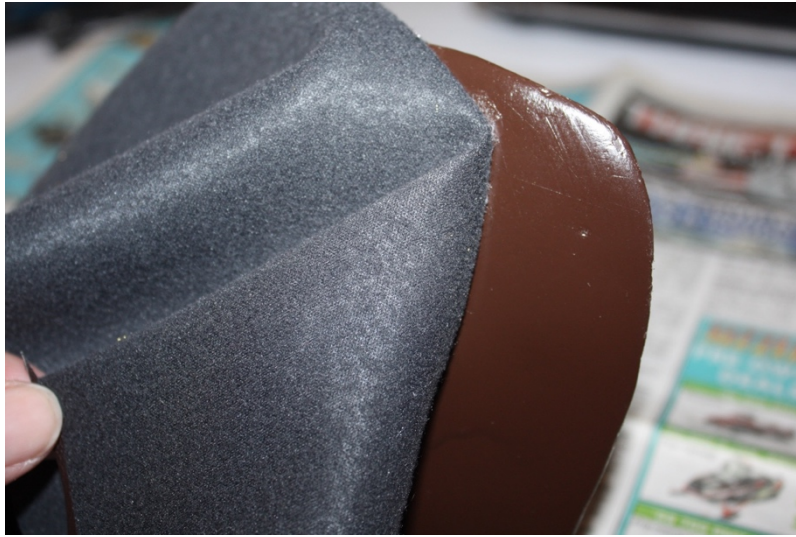


Figure 106

15. With the area around the eyes done I continue to adhere the fabric down to the mask. By this time using more spray adhesive will cause you to have overspray so it's a good idea to start using standard glue to finish gluing the rest of the mask.

I have tried many types of glues looking for the best possible one (for all the punishment I put it through). I have found that 3-In-1 Glue made by Beacon has surpassed my expectation when working with multiple materials. You can see the bottle in Fig. 107.

16. This is the point where I need to finalize the wrapping of the faux leather onto the mask. As you can see in the image below I am using the 3-In-1 glue to finish the wrap. When this is done I let the mask sit for 40 minutes or so to allow the glue to set up.



Figure 107

17. The next step is to finish wrapping the edges of the front your mask to the back edges of the mask so as you're gluing you are also trimming the excess. Try and aim for 1/3-1/2" overlap around the back of the mask. Fig. 108 shows the nose area being trimmed and glued.



Figure 108

18. The image in Fig. 109 gives you a better view of the trimming process. Take your time. If you cut too much off you will spend a lot of extra time either recovering your mask or looking for ways to cover your mistakes. In the next step you will understand that taking your time will save you in the end.



Figure 109

19. OOPS! Here is where I screwed up. I didn't take my time and that small accident ended up changing everything (I would have been done with the covering if not for that).

If you look at Fig. 110 you will see the red arrow pointing at the horrible nick I accidentally sliced into the eye of my mask. It was going so well too!

There are a couple of things I can do to remedy this...

- a) I can pull all the fabric off my mask and start over. (Aghhh!)
- b) I can spend an hour or more and attempt to patch it. This could be done with a tiny sliver of material, which would need to be cut to fit and glued down. This would remain as a scar on this mask (it would be visible).
- c) I could attempt to color match the fabric with acrylic craft paint...which I actually considered.... as shown in Figs. 110 and 111. I did manage to match the paint color, but not the sheen so the repair would have been visible.
- d) Find something else (decorative) to cover this spot.

I chose option d), and starting thinking of ways to cover this mistake so the wearer, and the viewer would not be aware of it.

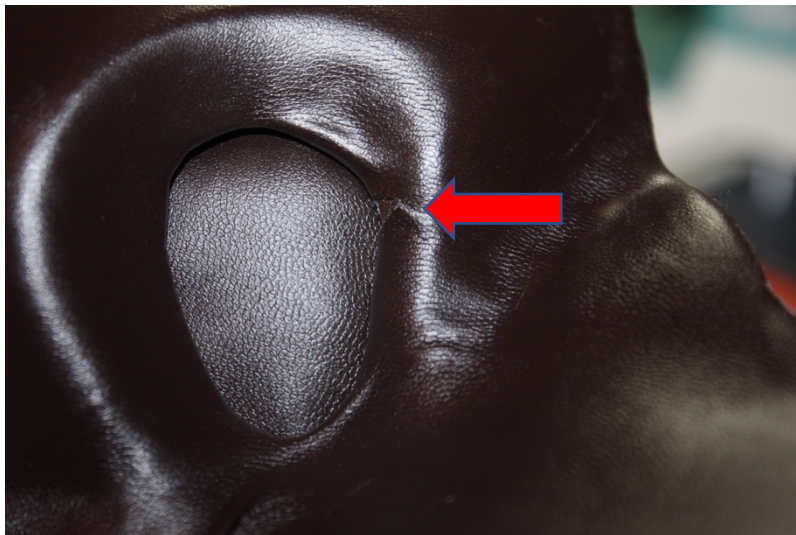


Figure 110



Figure 111

20. By mixing the colors Real Brown with Black, I was able to get really close to the color of the faux leather (Fig. 111).

Note: If you need to mix paint it is sometimes a good idea to actually mix that color on a scrap of the material you are using to ensure the color will work.

Figure 112 displays how close you can get mixing paint this way. Allow the color to dry and adjust if necessary.



Figure 112

21. As you can see in figure 112 the color appears slightly darker than the fabric it is on. Generally this will mean that it should match after you allow it to dry.... which it did.

22. It could have ended there...with my filling that clipped spot with the paint (2 to 3 coats allowing it to dry between coats). This would have built it up the paint to the level of the fabric overlay.

It was only when I tested the paint (on the color match) that it was determined that finish was not right. Rather than experiment with adding Matte or Gloss Medium I decided that I would simply cover that spot.

23. Figure 113 shows a piece of faux leather (same as what is wrapping the mask) cut in the same shape as the eye opening (which I got off of the plastic mask).

I could glue this down as is, and simply blend it in with the paint or even shave off the underside of the fabric so it blends better with the mask, but decided (since the object of this exercise it to learn) that I would take it a step farther.



Figure 113

24. The solution I came up with was to make those oval shapes into something that resembled Bias Ply tape (used in sewing). The way to do this is by folding it in half so that you have the two cut edges together and one fished 'rolled' edge. This can be seen in Fig. 114 below.



Figure 114

The angles you see in Fig. 114 were put there to add to the ‘character’ of the mask. Since this piece would be very difficult to sew (and I do not have sewing machine on the supply list) I simply used my favorite glue (3-IN-1) to adhere it to itself.

25. Once you have both eye pieces created and then fit to the mask you can glue them in place. Once again I used the 3-IN-1 Glue. This can be seen in Fig. 115.



Figure 115

26. Now finish gluing those mask edges down by either tucking them into the back of the mask, or by VERY carefully trimming along the edges. Keep in mind the comfort of the wearer. Do not allow for ridges, or puckers as that would rub on your wearers face!



Figure 116

27. Since the nature of this document is to serve as a tutorial I went ahead and very carefully cut the mask at the edges, as you can see in Figure 116. I did this so I could offer you another way to finish your edges.

28. Wanting to keep with the rolled edge look of the eye sockets I tried some Bias Ply tape to see if that would work...Figure 117 shows how that would look. (Not good enough in my opinion, but would suffice if the builder was in a hurry.



Figure 117

29. I tried a more decorative look with ornamental trim and decided against that look as well. You can see how that might work in Figure 118.



Figure 118

30. I decided in keeping with the way I had covered my error with the eye that I would also give this mask a rolled edge. That way the mask would look more cohesive. You can see the start of the rolled edge in Fig. 119 below.



Figure 119

31. So how does one go about creating a roll for a mask?

After a few failed attempts at alternate ways (which I won't post here) I found a way to accomplish this feat quite well. I simply made another (much larger) piece like the eye socket pieces. This time I did not have to work with an oval, but rather with a straight piece. I made this piece 2" wide and long enough to span the entire circumference of the edge of the mask + 2" longer (INCLUDE THE NOSE in this length). Fig. 120 – 123.



Figure 120

- 32.** As you can see in Figs. 121 – 123 you want to place your finished side of your material (faux leather in this case) against the finished side of your mask.



Figure 121

33. Start at the top center and pin the edges together as if you were sewing them. Instead of thread you will be using glue to sew so make sure it is good glue (3-IN-1 was what I used here). You will be working all the way around the mask so make sure you have enough clothespins!



Figure 122



Figure 123

34. When you get done with the body of the mask (head minus the elongated nose) let it dry for a few hours before proceeding.

35. When the mask is dry proceed with doing the same with the nose. You should have at least 1" of excess material at the tip of each side of the nose. Glue those edges as you did with the head and let that dry. Fig. 124



Figure 124



Figure 125

36. When your mask is completely dry it is time to start tucking those edges in. Remember make it as smooth as possible and keep the comfort of the wearer in mind at all times. Fig. 125 shows the edges starting to be folded in, tucked, glued, and then trimmed. Figure 126 gives you a view from the mask inside. The left edge has been glued down here.



Figure 126

37. Figure 127 shows the 'tail end of the gluing and tucking. Note the previously mentioned seam at nose end.



Figure 127

38. As you can see below I have started gluing and trimming the edges under the nose. Because clothespins will not work on this area I use painters tape (don't forget to stick them to your pants prior to using to reduce stickiness).



Figure 128



Figure 129

39. As you can see the excess materials were successfully glued down in Fig. 129. There are a few small spots where I accidentally spilled excess glue on the outside of the mask. Now is the time to clean that off. I have tried a number of cleaners to find out what would work well and not damage any of the materials used. I found 3. The first one is called ‘Goof Off’. The second one is DeSolv-It, and the 3rd is CitriSolv. All are available at any big box or hardware store.



Figure 130

40. Here is how the outside of this mask looks once everything has been tucked, trimmed, glued, and cleaned. (Fig. 131)



Figure 131

41. Fig. 132 shows how the inside of the mask looks at this point. Because I did not want to drill holes in this mask, I have decided to glue the straps in now so they will be hidden by the liner I am going to build (remember wearer comfort)!



Figure 132

Question is...how do I make the template for the liner, when the mask is concave inside?

Simple...with painters tape!

No, we are not lining this mask with tape, but we are using it to make a template for the liner!

Got to love tape!

Figure 133 shows that I have taken strips of tape and stuck them to the inside of my mask AFTER I stuck that tape to my pants (yes, I am drumming the into your head so you do not do something you may later regret). Fig. 134 shows the front of the mask.



Figure 133



Figure 134

42. If you look at Fig. 135 you will see the underside of that long nose heading out of the lower right side of the picture. As you can also see where I have drawn that line around my tape. This is the cut line for the felt liner on this mask. Draw it on your tape so you can save yourself a lot of time and hassle trying to figure this out when the taped form is separated. Also make note of Fig. 136.... and from the outside of the mask (Fig. 134) draw where the eyeholes are.

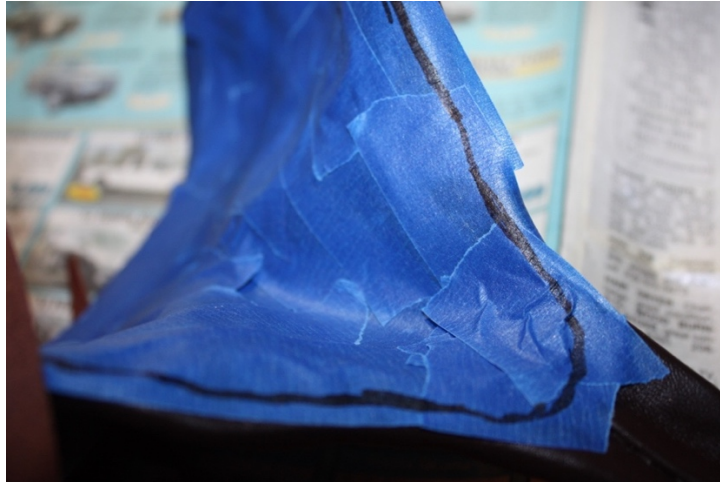


Figure 135



Figure 136

43. Now that you have made your marks you can carefully remove your masking tape template from the mask. It should resemble the image in Fig. 137.



Figure 137

44. Now it's time to very carefully flatten out your template. Don't tear it.... if you do, fix it in as close of a position to original as possible. (Fig. 138)



Figure 138

45. Using your fabric pencil, white chalk, or white pencil trace the masking tape template onto your liner. I used felt because it is comfortable, smooth, it stretches slightly, its cheap, and easy to find. Fig. 139 shows you how the liner should look. Fig. 140 shows the liner sitting on the back of the mask.

Note: It is a good idea to keep your templates for future use.



Figure 139



Figure 140

46. It's now time to place your liner into the mask. I chose to use spray adhesive, you can also use glue if you so desire. If you do use the spray be especially careful about overspray. Cover pieces not to receive adhesive with newspapers and/or masking tape.

Note: I did not cut the eyes out of the liner yet. I did this to protect the mask front from overspray. It's also easier to cut the eyes out more accurately when it is in the mask. (Fig 141)

Note: If you use glue, use it sparingly. Too much will seep through the porous felt liner.



Figure 141



Figure 142

47. If you have cut the eyes out of the liner do not despair.... just place tape on the outside of the mask to stop glue overspray. Fig. 143.



Figure 143

48. And cut them out when it's dry (carefully with an X-Acto or like knife). Fig. 144



Figure 144

49. Figure 145 shows the finished liner in this mask. The leather ties are secure, the liner is evenly applied, and has no glue residue on it to irritate the wearer.



Figure 145

50. The finished build for this Zanni mask can be seen in Figures 146 and 147. Although it cost approx.. 12.00 to build this mask it has the look of a fine leather mask and can work for anything you need it to.



Figure 146



Figure 147

Zanni (Brighella and Pulcinella aka Punch)

These are two more characters that fit under the stock character of a Zanni. These characters have changed over time, with only vague visual generalization remaining. They are still known as peasants, fools, or clowns. They are the funny working class men always desiring (elusive to them) money, good food, and love.

Because the original Zanni masks were made of leather (which were not overly decorated) I have created both of these masks to have a leather like appearance and feel, and because the builds are fairly similar I have put them together in this tutorial.

Like the Zanni character in Build 5, these masks were traditionally worn with either type peasant (work) clothes, or shopkeepers' pants paired with a white smock.

Build 6 &7:

- **Materials:**

- Fast Maché (a Papier Maché product by Aactiva)
- 1 Gallon plastic bag (or bowl)
- Plastic mask (preferably a plastic Zanni mask)
- Leather ties or ribbon approx. 30"
- Wire mesh (made by Aactiva)
- Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Rigid hair (can be from a wig, a brush, or horse hair like what I 'borrowed' off my horses tail)
- Optional: Spray Paint
- Optional: Modeling clay

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Paint brush(s)
- Plastic straw or Drill/drill bit
- Dremel Tool with bit (s)

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for Fast Maché
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Vaseline or cooking spray

1. You will definitely want to have a plastic mask or two for these builds.

The preferred mask would be Zanni of course, but a full-face mask like a Volto will also work. You can refer back to Fig. 86 if looking for masks to obtain.

2. As mentioned in the Materials list you will need a Papier Maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay.

The Fast Maché is finer than the Celluclay, and will be easier to work with as it has fewer tendencies to clump. I am using Fast Maché (Fig. 148).



Figure 148

3. As you can see in Fig. 149, that I was very lucky and found two of the traditional “Comedy & Tragedy” masks at the closing of one of those seasonal Halloween stores. These will work perfectly for any of the Zanni Character masks.

The first thing you will want to do is pull all the garish decorations off the plastic masks and then liberally apply Vaseline to them and set it/them onto old newspapers.



Figure 149

4. The next thing you will need to do is mix up your papier maché product according to directions. Rather than use a bowl I use plastic bags. That way the product does not dry out while I am working between the two masks in this build.



Figure 150



Figure 151



Figure 152

5. I put 2 cups of the dry product into a gallon size Zip Lock style bag and added warm water a little at a time. Blend until you have eliminated all the lumps and your maché has the consistency of stiff oatmeal.

6. When thoroughly mixed, begin applying the maché to your masks (Fig. 153).



Figure 153

7. Starting at the center of your plastic mask place the mixed Paper Maché product onto your mask respecting the boundaries of the eye openings and edge of the mask. Pay VERY close attention to where you want your mask to end. Because this mask in the style of Commedia masks you will not want any Paper Mache over any of the chin/mouth area if your plastic mask came with those areas.

When you have a thin layer of Fast Maché on your mask let it dry for a few minutes.

Note: If you don't want to drill this mask use a 1" long section of drinking straw placed where the holes will be. The straws will come out of the dried mask and leave the holes intact.

Your goal is to have a layer of Papier Maché over the mask in a consistent thickness of no approx.. 3/8". Your wet fingers can smooth any area of your Paper Maché mask that is lumpy. It's a good idea to keep a small container of water with you while you work just for this purpose. Keep the thickness and consistency of your Paper Maché, even at the edges. (Fig. 154)



Figure 154

8. Let your mask dry for several hours before adding more material to the nose and/or brow area.

Set it aside and let it get dry to the touch (it's still going to be damp on the inside).

I chose to make this particular mask to have prominent brows, a bulbous nose, and more of a traditional look.

Once again you can refer to the photos provided here, or locate your own images and build the mask to your liking or needs. This mask started as the "Comedy" mask and will become the character Brighella, a very versatile character that usually wears white (perhaps a shop or pub owner). His main concern is the acquisition of wealth.

9. When you are happy with the look of your mask let it thoroughly dry. This is accomplished by allowing it to sit for at least 24 hours... unless you have an oven. You can dry this mask in an oven but I would not exceed 150 degrees. The trick is to keep an eye on the thinner areas of papier maché to ensure they do not dry excessively with the heat or they will become brittle.

10. When your mask is dry (it will be evenly colored throughout...dark spots indicate areas that are still damp) very carefully try and pull your dry mask off the form. Be especially careful with the nose.

If it doesn't budge DO NOT force it! You will need to clean up edges that are hanging over the edges of the eyeholes, and plastic mask edges with a bit of sandpaper prior to proceeding.



Figure 155

11. It's at this point I started to proceed with my other mask (another Zanni). This one is to be built on the "Tragedy" mask, and will become the character Pulcinella. Pulcino means 'chick' in Italian. This character often has a prominent (beaklike) nose and a loud voice to go with it. Pulcino is the voice of the workingman. (Fig. 156)



Figure 156

12. When you are happy with the look of your mask follow the drying steps 7 through 10 above before proceeding. (Fig. 157)



Figure 157

13. When your mask(s) are dry carefully go around the edges with either 80 or 100 grit sandpaper. Your goal is to get a clean edge that is not attached to the plastic. If you just pry at this point without cleaning the edges you risk breaking those edges off of your new mask.

Once the edges are clean then very carefully try and pry your mask off by wedging a thin blade (or like tool) between the two pieces. It may come off right away, and it may take 20 minutes. Work slowly around the edges, and do not use anything thicker than an X-Acto blade.

Note: If at any time you find the inside of your mask is coming apart and sticking to your form STOP prying! That means it is not totally dry yet! Repeat Step 12 if this is the case! If it still does not come off after that put the mask in the sun or in a warm oven for 10-15 minutes and try again until it is loosened/dried sufficiently to come apart.

14. Fig. 158 shows the masks (white) pried off the plastic forms (gold). Don't be dismayed if they are lumpy and unsightly...that will be fixed in the next steps.



Figure 158

15. Here is where I had another accident (which I fixed in the following steps 6 through . If you look at the inside of Pulcino face (Fig. 159) you will see a crack extending through the mask from left of midpoint on the forehead through to the nasal crease on the right side (red arrows).



Figure 159

16. Once again I am returning to the tried and true Activ-Wire mesh (as used in Build Bauta #2) to make my repairs. From experience, try to get the reinforcing to within $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the edge of the mask and built out as far as you can within the face. Fig. 160 shows where I am marking the spots that I will glue to Activ-Wire.



Figure 160

17. Here (Fig. 161) you can see where I have placed the wire mesh prior to trimming and gluing it down. I used 3-IN-1 glue to set it in my mask. If you have bent your wire mesh to conform to your mask you will have no issues with it trying to lift while drying.

18. When the glue has dried cover it with Acrylic Medium and allow that to dry. This will smooth out the texture of the wire mesh. When you are finished with the Acrylic medium your mask will look similar to Fig. 162 below.



Figure 161



Figure 162



Figure 163

19. Now you will need to further smooth your mask by sanding it. (Wear a dust mask and/or go outside when you sand.)

When you have gone through the steps of sandpaper (same as previous builds), then you will need to add a light coat of Plaster of Paris (Fig. 164).

Once that is dry lightly sand again until your mask is smooth on the inside as well as the outside.



Figure 164

20. Be careful with the nose while you work.

Once the surface is without pits and holes let it dry until the plaster is white through and through...that means it's dry enough to proceed with the next step.



Figure 165

21. I put a finish coat of white school glue over this mask instead of using Gesso. I did this to get a super smooth finish, which would accent the paint I wanted to apply. As you can see it worked well but did take several hours to dry solid.

Fig. 165 shows the mask prior to the application of glue.

22. While the glue coat on the mask was drying I researched a bit more on what the traditional Commedia masks looked like. Since the Pulcinella masks were usually fairly plain leather masks I decided to mimic the look of slightly aged leather.

23. I started painting the mask a medium brown using medium brown acrylic craft paint. As you can see in Fig. 166 (below) I started with the inside of the mask.



Figure 166

24. While I was painting the base coat I was thinking about how I would need to make this a comfortable mask for the wearer. I was able to locate a scrap of faux suede the matched the base color of the mask almost perfectly. You can see this in Fig. 167.



Figure 167



Figure 168

25. When I went to line this mask I decided to see how hard it would be without the use of my trusty painters tape pattern.

I used a white pen to mark out the edges of the mask while I held it on place. This method seems to work fine on liners that are shaped simply such as the Colombina mask. That is why when you look at the liner in Figs. 169 – 170 you will see that it maintains that simpler shape. This is something to keep in mind if you are building quickly for a deadline.



Figure 169



Figure 170

26. Now that the liner has been glued to the mask it's time to cover those unsightly edges with some flat trim. I was lucky enough to find a roll of black felt trim on the clearance rack of a big box store. I simply went around the edges of the brown fabric and glued the felt into place. Fig. 170.

The felt I found was ½" wide and worked perfectly. Fig. 171.



Figure 171



Figure 172

27. The liner of this mask is finished. I have only to figure out how I want to mount it, and how I want to finish the front.

28. As previously mentioned I will seek to make this mask look more authentic with the color scheme. I already have a base coat of medium brown. Now to add some depth to it! Fig. 173.



Figure 173

29. Using a disposable foam plate (Fig. 173) I add some warmth to the mask by mixing some colors (warm colors are reds, oranges, and yellows). Here you can see a mix of approx. 4 parts dark maroon with 1part metallic gold.



Figure 174

30. Instead of using the traditional paintbrush to add the new mixed color I am using a scrap of old bath towel. It is that texture that I am looking for rather than even application of paint. I applied it by dabbing at the surface being careful not to cover everything. Fig. 174

Continue with dabbing the mixed paint until you have approx. 50% coverage. If there are recesses in the mask (deep wrinkles, creases, etc.) apply less of the dabbed on paint there to mimic natural shadows. This gives your mask the illusion of having more depth.



Figure 175

31. When you are done with this step your mask should be set aside to dry for a few minutes. This gives you time to come up with a highlight and a shadow color.
32. It is at this point I drilled the holes for the leather straps. That way I could seal it with paint.



Figure 176

33. The highlight should be a color in that ‘warm’ palette. For this mask I chose to use gold. Everywhere part that sticks out (brow ridges, bridge of nose, cheekbones, top folds of wrinkles) should get a light patting (still no paintbrush) of your highlight color.

34. The shadow spots on your mask will be the lowest parts (receded) that naturally fall away from the viewer. Places like inside creases on each side of the nose, areas under the eyes, and the low spots or ‘valleys’ inside of wrinkles. It is there you will place your shadow colors.

Note: It is actually a mistake to use black paint on anything that you would like to appear natural. Try and refrain from using black, and if you do just use it as an additive, not as the color you paint your shadows. If you look at shadows in nature you will see that they are actually full

of color. The trick is to use cool colors even if they are mixed with a bit of black. Cool colors are blues, purples, and greens.

The shadows on this mask are painted with a mix of Dark Mahogany, dark blue, and dark green. It's hard to tell in the photos, but it really does work. Painters can spend an entire career learning to mix colors for shadows so don't be dismayed the first time you mix colors!

Figures 177 and 178 show the character mask for Pulcinella in its finished state.



Figure 177



Figure 178

1. For this mask I used the “Comedy” half of the mask duo shown at the top of this section. If you don’t have a mask like this to work off of a Volto type mask will suffice. Fig. 179 below should refresh your memory!

2. As mentioned in the Materials list at the start of this section you will need a Papier Maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay.
Once again I am using Fast Maché for this build



Figure 179

3. This particular character is called Brighella. This opportunistic quick-witted character often wears a white smock and carries a big stick or bat. He is a jack-of-all-trades and is often represented with a bulbous nose and mustache.

When molding this mask you might want to add some moles as this character is one that is known for having them.

4. Following steps 3 – 14 from the previous build will have the mask to a point where it will be completely formed and off the plastic mask.

You can skip steps 15-18...unless your mask breaks!

Continue on with steps 19 – 22 which will take you to a point where your mask is being smoothed over with sanding, and filling with Plaster of Paris. Here I am using a plastic pallet knife to smooth Plaster of Paris over some pits. Fig. 180.



Figure 180



Figure 181

5. I have chosen to seal this mask with Gesso. Here you will see that I am using Daniel Smith White Gesso. Most Gesso's are the same and readily available in big box and hobby stores in the painting section. You can also readily find it online.

Figure 182 shows the inside of this mask after being coated with Gesso, and Figure 183 shows the outside of the mask with a couple coats of Gesso.



Figure 182



Figure 183

6. Image 184 shows the two masks that are part of this build with the difference between a mask sealed and ready to paint (left), and one that needs to be sealed (right).



Figure 184

7. That's right...Brighella is ready to paint now!

Sticking with the traditional models I find a warm brown with which I mix a tiny bit of orange. It produced a nice color but it has no pizzazz so I added a touch of gold. I painted this onto the entire mask inside with a wide flat painters brush and out and let it dry.

8. With the basecoat applied and dry I proceeded to follow a traditional painting pattern (from one of the vintage masks I found in an old book). I used a darker brown and added the decorative designs to the medium brown base coat. (Fig. 185).



Figure 185



Figure 186

9. Instead of using an old towel to add texture I am using a new tool I just bought specifically for this faux paint job. Normally I just wear a pair of disposable gloves and use a sponge for this technique, but now that I have a sponge-on-a-stick I can do this without gloves!

10. The goal of the sponging of paint is to soften the harsh lines I painted in order to make the mask look a bit aged. I mixed a color that was between the base coat and the accent paint. Using the sponge I dabbed this new topcoat over the entire front side of the mask. Fig. 187 shows the beginning of this process.



Figure 187

11. After I finished the outside of the mask it was my goal to add some hair to Brighellas face.



Figure 188

12. Using my Dremel Tool and a tiny drill bit I prepared to drill holes in my mask to insert hair into. Now you don't have to go to this extreme. There are many types of fake fur and fake

hair, which can be found. From old dolls, to new doll wigs. From the fabric store to the toy store, you will be amazed at the selection that is there once you look.

To stay on track with the traditional I chose to use horsehair, which is something, the artisans of Italy did when making their masks.

For this you can find horsehair online (they use it to make flies for fishing), or even from a local stable. I got mine from the tail of one of my best buddies, Goldie. She was more than happy to let me have some in exchange for a few iced oatmeal cookies. See Figure189.



Figure 189

13. As you can see in Fig. 188-189 I have taken a small piece of plywood and drilled holes in it. I push the horsehair (3 to 4 pieces at a time) into the holes then I put a small amount of glue (3-IN-1) along the shaft of the hair and let it dry.

When the hairs are dry you can pull them out and trim the glued end until they are not frayed looking. Those will be placed in the holes you drill on the face of you mask.



Figure 190

14. Figure 190 shows a close-up of where I started drilling tiny holes (drill bit for drilling holes in plywood is the same size as one used to drill on mask. Making the size the same ensures that the little bundles of hair will fit.

15. Make sure your holes are not even or it will look like your mask has implants.

16. When happy with how the holes you drill you can start taking the little bundles of hair, dip the end into the glue (3-In-1) and push them into the holes. You may need to use a needle or other pointed instrument to help push the hairs into the holes. (Fig. 191).



Figure 191



Figure 192

17. Figure 192 shows the eyebrow installed and trimmed. I regret that I trimmed them as short as I did so think it through before you cut them down...they aren't going to grow back! You might also notice that I gave him nose hair and a comb-over. I feel this just adds to his character.

18. Now it's time to add ties to the mask. For this I drilled a hold on each side of the mask. If you look at Fig. 193 you will see the approximate location of the holes drilled by using the edge of the eye as a landmark.

19. After placing a drop of glue in the hole (to seal the mask and stop the tie from moving) I inserted the leather tie and tied a square knot to the inside. (Fig. 193).



Figure 193

20. Taking into consideration the comfort of the wearer I decided to make it as comfortable to wear as I possibly could, and the inside of the mask in Fig. 194 did not look comfortable.

21. The first thing I did was locate a piece of high-density foam that I had saved from a package I had received.

This is the same foam you can get at a craft or fabric store. I cut it to fit that area and cut a hole for the knot to sit in.

22. When that was done I glued it in place on both sides of the mask. (Fig. 194). The pencil line shows the line to be trimmed.

I used the remainder of the foam to cut a piece to fit the forehead. (Fig. 195)



Figure 194



Figure 195

23. With the foam padding in place I decide to line the mask (foam can get sticky and cause sweating when next to the skin). If you look at Fig. 195 you will see the mask is sitting on a left over piece of fabric. This is what I will line this mask with.

24. In order to use spray adhesive without the danger of overspray you should use something to protect from overspray.

Figure 196 shows you that anything can be used! I used a piece of junk mail as a spray mask. I simply folded it half and cut a window on folded edge. Figure 197 shows that mask unfolded.



Figure 196



Figure 197



Figure 198

25. As you can see in Figure 198, I have taken that spray mask and folded, placed it over the edge of the mask. The fabric liner can be seen on the left of the picture (the dark brown). It is folded over, the spray is applied to the area of the window and then the fabric is slowly unfolded and adhered to the mask back. Continue around the mask until the liner is adhered.

26. The adhesive used is a permanent craft adhesive which can be found anywhere. Just make sure the label says 'permanent' and NOT 'repositionable'.



Figure 199



Figure 200

27. Figure 200 shows another view of the way the spray mask works.
28. Keep moving your template around the edge of the mask continually gluing as you go as shown in Figure 201.



Figure 201



Figure 202

29. By applying glue to the center of the trim piece you can follow behind and roll the edges in to give a more finished looking mask. These edges have all been tucked and glued with the 3-IN-1 glue I previously mentioned. The finished interior can be seen in Fig. 203 below.



Figure 203

Figures 204 and 205 show the character mask for Brighella in its finished state.



Figure 204



Figure 205

Zanni Arlechino

Arlechino is another Zanni stock character. He is known as a lighthearted comic servant who later (early 1700's) 'morphed' into the character Harlequin.

Arlechino usually wears a checkered costume, a feature that is more associated with the latter character Harlequin. He is nimble, astute, and witty. He is known to be a mischievous devil with his trickery. Arlechino desires Colombina although she does not return those feelings.

Just as the prior Zanni characters, the mask for Arlechino was also made of leather. To save on time and money, this mask has been fashioned from papier maché and painted to look like leather.

Build 8:

- **Materials:**
 - Fast Maché (a Papier Maché product by Activa)
 - 1 Gallon plastic bag (or bowl)
 - Plastic mask (preferably a plastic Zanni mask)
 - Leather ties (cord) or ribbon approx. 30"
 - Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
 - Optional: Wire mesh (made by Activa)
 - Optional: Hair (this particular mask does not have hair)

- Optional: Clear Spray Paint
- Optional: Modeling clay (for nose and brows)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- Paint brush(s)
- Plastic straw or Drill/drill bit
- Dremel Tool with bit

- **Need:**

- Space to work (sturdy table)
- Water for Fast Maché
- Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
- Towel and other cleaning supplies
- Vaseline or cooking spray

1. You will want to have a plastic mask or two for this build.

The preferred mask would be Zanni of course, but a full-face mask like a Volto will also work.

You can refer back to Fig. 86 if looking for masks to obtain.

2. As mentioned in the Materials list you will need a Papier Maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay. I prefer FastMaché because it's a finer ground paper pulp. Once again I have added an image of the box below. Fig. 206



Figure 206

3. If you refer back to Fig. 149 from the previous build you will see an example of the Comedy mask that I used for the face of Pantalone. This is that same mask.
4. The first thing you will want to do is pull all the garish decorations off, and then liberally apply Vaseline to your mask and set it onto old newspapers.
5. Mix up your papier maché product according to directions. Rather than use a bowl I use plastic bags. That way the product does not dry out while I am working between the two masks in this build. Figures 207 & 208



Figure 207



Figure 208

6. I put 2 cups of the dry product into a gallon size Zip Lock style bag and added warm water a little at a time. Blend until you have eliminated all the lumps and your maché has the consistency of stiff oatmeal.
7. When thoroughly mixed, begin applying the maché to your mask (Fig. 209).



Figure 209

8. Starting at the center of your plastic mask place the mixed Paper Maché product onto your mask respecting the boundaries of the eye openings and edge of the mask. Pay VERY close attention to where you want your mask to end. Because this mask in the style of Commedia masks you will not want any Paper Mache over any of the chin/mouth area if your plastic mask came with those areas.

When you have a thin layer of Fast Maché on your mask let it dry for a few minutes.

Note: If you don't want to drill this mask use a 1" long section of drinking straw placed where the holes will be. The straws will come out of the dried mask and leave the holes intact.

Your goal is to have a layer of Papier Maché over the mask in a consistent thickness of no approx. 3/8". Your wet fingers can smooth any area of your Paper Maché mask that is lumpy. It's a good idea to keep a small container of water with you while you work just for this purpose. Keep the thickness and consistency of your Paper Maché, even at the edges. (Fig. 210)



Figure 210

9. Let your mask dry for several hours before adding more material to the nose and/or brow area.

Set it aside and let it get dry to the touch (it's still going to be damp on the inside).

I chose to make this particular mask to have prominent brows, a bulbous nose, and more of a traditional Commedia look.

Once again you can refer to the photos provided here, or locate your own images and build the mask to your liking or needs. This mask started as the "Comedy" mask and will become the character Pantalone.

10. When you are happy with the look of your mask let it thoroughly dry. This is accomplished by allowing it to sit for at least 24 hours... unless you have an oven. You can dry this mask in an oven but I would not exceed 150 degrees. The trick is to keep an eye on the thinner areas of papier maché to ensure they do not dry excessively with the heat or they will become brittle.

11. When your mask is dry (it will be evenly colored throughout...dark spots indicate areas that are still damp) very carefully try and pull your dry mask off the form. Be especially careful with the nose.

If it doesn't budge DO NOT force it! You will need to clean up edges that are hanging over the edges of the mask prior to proceeding.



Figure 211

12. When your mask is dry carefully go around the edges with either 80 or 100 grit sandpaper. Your goal is to get a clean edge that is not attached to the plastic. If you just pry at this point without cleaning the edges you risk breaking those edges off of your new mask.

Once the edges are clean then very carefully try and pry your mask off by wedging a thin blade (or like tool) between the two pieces. It may come off right away, and it may take 20 minutes. Work slowly around the edges, and do not use anything thicker than an X-Acto blade.

Note: If at any time you find the inside of your mask is coming apart and sticking to your form STOP prying! That means it is not totally dry yet! Repeat Step 12 if this is the case! If it still does not come off after that put the mask in the sun or in a warm oven for 10-15 minutes and try again until it is loosened/dried sufficiently to come apart.

13. Fig. 212 shows the mask (white) pried off the plastic form (gold). Don't be dismayed if it is lumpy and unsightly...that will be fixed in the next steps.



Figure 212

14. Once your mask is off the form you will need to decide if you want to reinforce your mask prior to proceeding. For example, if you are creating the mask for a theater department you may want to reinforce the mask so it is more durable.

If this is your desire, please refer back to the instructions from the previous build (where I broke the mask) you will find these instructions on pages 134 through 137.

If you are happy with the strength of your mask continue with the following steps.

15. The next step is to cover the mask with Acrylic Medium or Elmer's glue and allow it to dry. This will smooth out the texture.

16. Once 'Arlechino' is dry it's time to sand your mask smooth. Remember...it is advisable to sand outside, wear a dust mask, or sand in a vented spray booth.

When you have gone through the steps of sandpaper (same as previous builds), then you will need to add a light coat of Plaster of Paris (Fig. 213).

Once that is dry lightly sand again until your mask is smooth on the inside as well as the outside.



Figure 213

17. Be careful with the nose while you work.

Once the surface is without pits and holes let it dry until the plaster is white through and through...that means it's dry enough to proceed with the next step.

18. I put a finish coat of white school glue over this mask instead of using Gesso. I did this to get a super smooth finish, which would accent the paint I wanted to apply. As you can see it worked well but did take several hours to dry solid.

19. While the glue coat on the mask was drying I researched a bit more on what the traditional Arlechino mask looks like. It seems it has changed considerably over the course of time (along with his migration from Italy to France). (Talbot)
Because of this I chose to create a character face that I felt fit the morphed description of this character.

20. I painted the interior of the mask using acrylic craft paint. The colors used were metallic gold mixed with warm yellow ochre. I chose these two colors to compliment the warm personality of Arlechino.

Note: Metallic base paints tend to ‘glow’ through other paints allowing light to catch it in certain lights (like those in a theatrical setting). The secret to this is to add a bit of water to the paint, and then work in thin coats. This technique is called ‘glazing’ in the art world. It gives the illusion of depth in 2D objects, and helps 3D objects to look ‘lively’. Fig. 214



Fig. 214

21. While I was painting the base coat I was thinking about how I would need to make this a comfortable mask for the wearer.

I decided on high-density foam padded onto the sides and forehead (after trying it on myself). I cut these in oval shaped to fit the mask and sanded the edges smooth as you can see in Figure 215 below.



Fig. 215

22. As you can see in Fig. 216 below I followed the sanding of the temple pads with cutting a hole in each piece to correspond with the hole made for the tie. The next step was to fasten the foam down with my trusty 3-IN-1 glue. When that was done, I strung the leather cord through the hole (previously drilled). The cord was then tied in a square knot and glued into place.



Figure 216



Figure 217

23. I was able to locate a scrap of faux suede that complimented the base color of the mask almost perfectly.

You can see where I was roughly ‘fitting’ it to the mask prior to trimming it in Fig 217, and then placing it into the mask in Fig. 218 below.



Figure 218

24. At this point I trimmed the edges of the liner with a small pair of scissors, although you can use an X-Acto if you are careful not to cut the mask itself.

25. When that was done I made the command decision to paint the inside of the mask to match the liner. There really was no reason to do so other than wanting the cut out areas (eyes, nostrils, and edges) to be brown rather than yellow for a more finished look. You can see the difference it makes in Figs. 219 & 220 below.



Figure 219



Figure 220

26. Next task...finishing the outside of the mask.

The easiest way to do this is to first decide where the shadows will be. Think of the area under the brows, maybe the folds of eyelids, area under the nose, in the nose creases.... and under the cheekbones.) If you look closely on the remaining photos for this build you will see I have also added faux wrinkles and laugh lines to this mask.)

27. I painted the shadow areas in the same brown used on the inside of the mask. Add a bit of water to your paint and work in thin glazes with a flat brush. Let each paint layer dry (thinned acrylic paint only takes 5 minutes to dry), before adding another layer. The more layers the more luminous your mask will look.

28. When the shadow areas are done you will need to start on the highlights. I chose to use silver mixed with a bit of iridescent pearl to give it a bit of shimmer. I thinned down my color mix and painted it in layers allowing each to dry. The first few layers are shown in Fig. 221 below.



Figure 221

Note: (To add black to a color=shade; to add white to a color=tint).

29. Because I wanted this mask to maintain its smooth finish I opted out of using any sponges or towels to add texture and stuck entirely with a 1-1 ½” soft (nylon) flat brush. Continue with painting until you have the mask where you want it color wise.



Figure 222

Note: If you plan on using it on stage you might want to take the lights being used into consideration. If your actors or actresses are wearing heavy makeup to be seen, chances are you will need to put a greater deal on the contrast of your paint colors to get them to show.

Fig. 223 shows approx....three more thin layers of watered down acrylic paint has been applied since the image in Fig. 222. That, along with top coating the mask in Satin or Gloss clear spray will add a great deal more depth to your paint job.



Figure 223

Note: (Once again...) It is actually a mistake to use black paint on anything that you would like to appear natural. Try and refrain from using black, and if you do just use it as an additive, not as the color you paint your shadows. If you look at shadows in nature you will see that they are actually full of color. The trick is to use contrast to your advantage. Mix a bit of black into colors...but don't use black alone. Pair that knowledge with your understanding that cool colors

optically recede, and your shadows will always look farther away from your highlights. Cool colors again are blues, purples, and greens.

The shadows on this mask are painted with a mix of burnt umber, and yellow ochre. This was emphasized even more by a tiny bit of Payne's gray.

The highlights are silver mixed, iridescent pearl, with a touch of white and gold (again painted in thin layers).

Painters can spend an entire career learning to mix colors for shadows so don't be dismayed the first time you mix colors!



Figure 224

Figures 224 and 225 show the finished mask. This mask is perfectly smooth, but looks like it is full of wrinkles to an audience!



Figure 225

Raven

There is no Raven mask in Commedia, it's just a mask I wanted to build!

The reason it is here, is to simply help you to think 'outside of the box' when it comes to mask making. You will most likely not even come across a Carnival mask that features a raven...or any other bird for that matter. What you might come across however is a need to have a bird for a costume or play. You can use the plastic Colombina mask, or simply the template provided below to create a plethora of masks...the raven here is just one of them.

Build 1: Colombina

- **Materials:**

- Papier Maché or FastMaché
- Black felt or other liner material 5" x 10"
- School or like glue...or Matte Medium (used for acrylic painting)
- Black ribbon approx. 30"
- Paint (I used acrylic craft paint)
- Optional: Embellishments (I used sequin trim)

- **Tools:**

- Craft knife
- Heavy duty scissors
- While not necessary it is nice to have a cheap plastic mask to use as a form
- Small spring or other type clamp

- Paint brush(s)
- Hole punch or hammer and punch

- **Need:**
 - Space to work (sturdy table)
 - Water for soaking leather/cleanup
 - Optional: hairdryer or heat gun
 - Towel and other cleaning supplies

- **Nice to Have:**
 - No plastic mask? Use a Styrofoam head (wig) form or shaped cardboard.

1. The first step (if you do not have a cheap plastic mask) is to create a paper template. You can do this by taking a piece of paper approx. as large as the above listed dimensions and folding it in half. Place the crease over your nose and lightly press to crease the paper where your eye starts and ends on one side. Once you have eye placement on the paper you should draw how you want the eyehole to be shaped. You only need to do one as you can cut through both sides (therefore duplicating it for both sides of the paper mask). Now do the same with the outside lines of the mask (folded in half you can duplicate the shape by cutting both at once).

Note: There are templates for masquerade or carnival masks available online. You can simply pick one, print it out, and use for a pattern. Figure 226 below shows an example of one Colombina template available online (and you might notice...it's the same template we used for the first mask built in this tutorial).

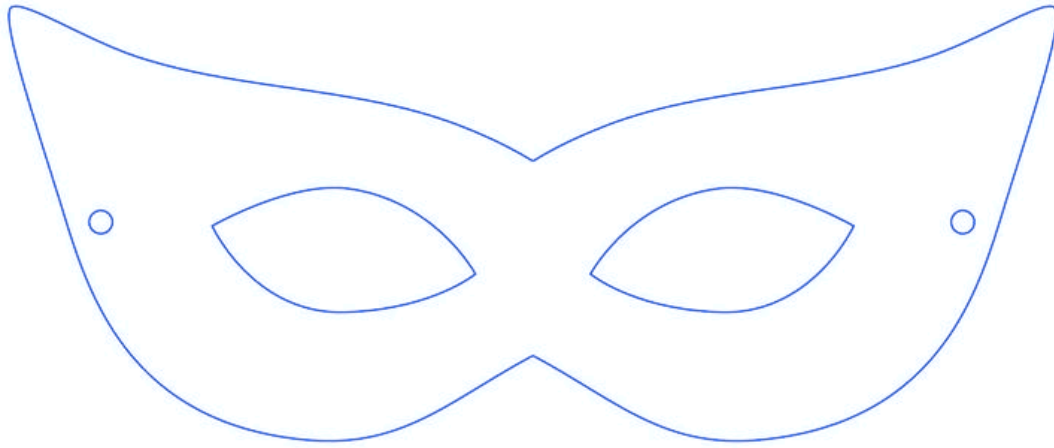


Figure 226

2. You are going to build a Colombina mask (same as Build 1), but this time you are using papier maché to build the mask in order to add the beak onto the front when you have the primary section (around the eyes) finished.

3. The first thing you will want to do is liberally apply Vaseline (or cooking spray in an emergency) to your plastic mask and set it on old newspapers (this is going to be a bit messy)!

Note: Vaseline works better than cooking spray, which should only be used when you don't have any petroleum jelly available.

4. As mentioned in the Materials list you will need a Paper Maché product like Fast Mache or Celluclay (these are both products that can be found in any hobby store or online). These products are basically a finely ground paper product. The Fast Maché is finer than the Celluclay, and will be easier to work with as it has fewer tendencies to clump. If you are a die-hard fan of traditional Paper Maché you are more than welcome to use it, but your work/dry time

will be much longer, and your mask will have a tendency to shrink and curl at the edges a great deal more than either of the two aforementioned products.

5. Once you have the ground Paper Maché the easiest way to mix it is by placing approximately 2 cups of the dry product into a gallon size Zip Lock style bag. Add warm water a little at a time and blend with your hands until you have eliminated all the lumps and have a consistency slightly stiffer than very thick oatmeal (as shown in Fig. 227).



Figure 227

6. Starting at the center of your Vaseline coated plastic mask place the mixed Paper Maché product onto your mask respecting the boundaries of the eye openings and edge of the mask. Pay close attention to where you want your mask to end. Since this utilizes the Colombina mask you will be concentrating on the areas around the eyes and the nose (which will become important).

Your goal is to have a layer of Paper Maché over the mask in a consistent thickness of no more than 1/4-3/8". Your wet fingers can smooth any area of your Paper Maché mask that is lumpy. It's a good idea to keep a small container of water with you while you work just for this purpose.

Keep the thickness and consistency of your Paper Maché over the whole mask...even at the edges.

7. Once you have the $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ " of papier maché material over your mask let it dry for a minimum of 1 hour before adding more material to the nose area, and when you do, carefully follow the directions below.

Note: Keep your extra papier maché in the sealed bag. You will need it again shortly!

8. Once your mask has set up for an hour or so it's time to move onto the next step, which is to fashion a support for your beak.

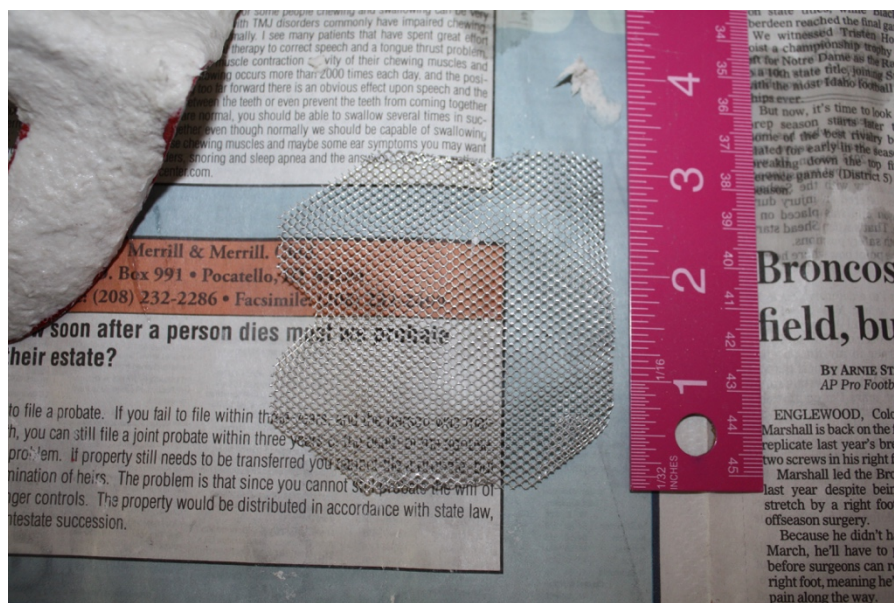


Figure 228

9. As you can see in Fig. 228 (above) I have chosen to use the product Activ-Wire Mesh. This is what I have used in past builds to repair breaks. You can find an image of this product in The Materials section at the end of this document.

10. If you look closely at Fig. 228 you will see the wire mesh next to a ruler. It was cut as an approximate $3\frac{1}{4}$ " x $3\frac{1}{4}$ " square.

Note: if you plan on building a bird with a longer beak you will want to have one of those dimensions longer. The best way to figure what your particular measurements will be is to cut out sample 'beaks' from heavy weight paper or cardstock. Once you have figured out the beak you want simply use this paper as your cutting template for the wire mesh.

The wire mesh can be cut with a decent pair of scissors with very little effort.

11. Once again refer to Fig. 228. You will see the left side of it has had the corners rounded, and a divot cut into the center. Now you will want to roll this mesh into a beak like shape. That cut out area of the wire mesh will be the center top of your beak. Roll the wire into a cone like the one shown in Fig. 229 below.



Figure 229

12. When you are happy with how your beak looks use a small piece of tape and tape the cone across the seam on the bottom (I used duct tape). Fig. 230



Figure 230



Figure 231

13. You will now want to bend the little tabs (that are on each side of the cut away spot on the top of the beak) as shown in Fig. 231. This will form the top of your beak, and also serve as an anchor spot for your beak onto your mask face. In Fig. 232 you will see how these tabs will be fit to the nose on the mask. You may need to bend your tables to adjust for your mask.

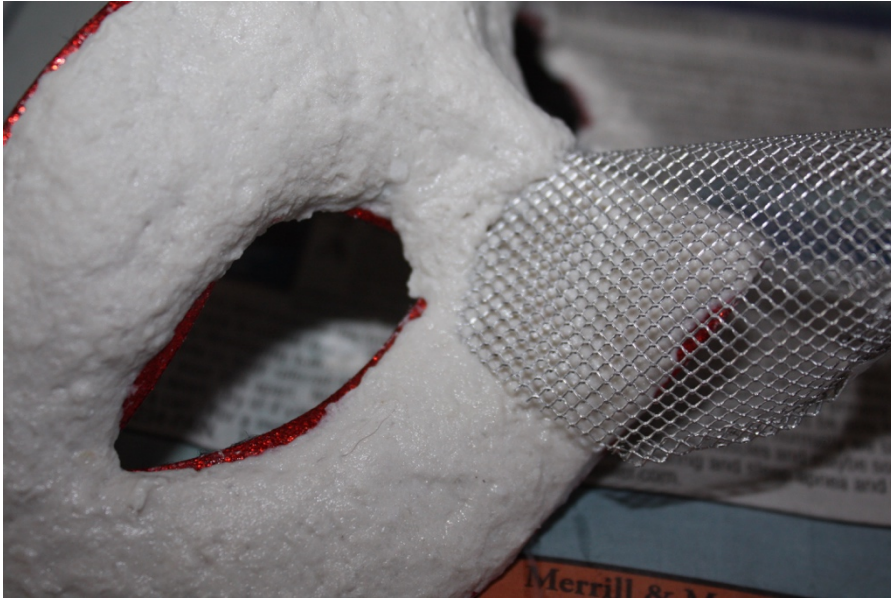


Figure 232



Figure 233

14. Now it's time to use the papier maché you have left over from Step 7 to smooth the beak into the nose of your mask. The wire will hold the paper pulp very well as long as you haven't added too much water! Continue covering the wire mesh until it is the shape you want. Do not forget to do the underside of the beak as well. Fig. 234



Figure 234

15. If you have not figured out that I am clumsy by now this might remind you....



Figure 235

That's right.... I broke another mask. Not a big deal, anything broken with this construction technique can be fixed. Fig. 235

16. Once again I reach for the Active-Wire Mesh and start cutting pieces to line the inside of the entire mask (just to make sure)! I started with a 'T' shaped piece to put between the eyes and glued it down (yes, I used 3-IN-1 glue for that)! Fig. 236



Figure 236



Figure 237

17. Much like previous repairs I simply cut pieces of the wire mesh to fit within the boundaries of the mask. They were glued down and allowed to dry before I proceeded with the build.

18. Better to be safe than sorry...I covered the interior of the entire mask with the mesh. You can see the overkill in Fig. 238.



Figure 238

19. To smooth the exterior of the mask prior to painting it I covered it with Gesso (Fig. 239). I was planning to simply paint this mask that is with acrylic paint and call it finished...that is, until I found sequined trim on clearance! You will still see the painted version below in Fig. 240.



Figure 239



Figure 240

20. I wasn't enamored with the way my bird mask turned out. I used a metallic black paint over the whole mask and then added the yellow over the top. If you do this you will need to put several coats on the beak so the darker color underneath doesn't bleed through.



Figure 241

21. Once again (Fig. 240) don't forget to cover every surface of your mask or it will always look unfinished.

22. Like the other Colombina masks I chose to line this mask. I am using faux suede material that I bought as a remnant. I used the same process that has been documented earlier in this tutorial (using a white pencil to mark out the basic shape and where the eyeholes go. Fig. 242



Figure 242

23. This marks the departure from a painted finish for the bird mask. I found a ‘remnant’ of 1 ½” sequined trim on a clearance rack. The sequins were attached in a layered almost feather like sequence so I decided to give it a try.

Starting with the center of the mask above the beak I started layering and gluing the sequin trim.

Fig. 243



Figure 243

24. After getting all the sequins glued down the beak looked funny and out of place. I went ahead and painted the beak in a gloss black. The mask is quite stunning but next to impossible to photograph accurately! Figs. 244 & 245



Figure 244



Figure 245

Materials, Tools, and Where to Get Them

Through each build I have posted which materials I was using for that particular mask, as well as the supplies and tools used. Just to make sure you understand exactly what is being used, and where I purchased them I have created this chapter.

Tools

If you refer back to each build you will see a list of items needed for that build. To reiterate their importance (and to give you an image or images of what I used) I have listed most of them here (others will be pictured within the tutorial). Tools are items that can be used on all builds.

- **Cutting mats.** This can be any smooth surface you can cut on so you don't have to have a mat, and if you have a table you are not worried about it will serve as a fine work surface. Because I do most of my work on my dining room table, having a cutting mat is paramount. The mat I generally use is a self-healing mat (green) which can be purchased in any hobby or big box store. I was lucky enough to purchase mine at a local thrift store. Another option is the glass cutting mat you see perched on top of the green one. These are generally smaller and are perfect for detail work like decorating. I found this glass mat at a local store that sells goods from insurance claims, so it was discounted to ¼ of retail.



Figure 246

- **Pens, Pencils, Markers***...all items you most likely have around your house. The only thing you may want to do is test them on a variety of surfaces. Sharpies work great on most, but it is also a good idea to have at least one pen or pencil that is capable of rendering easy to see marks on dark leather or fabric. Found everywhere...cheapest seem to be at the \$1 store or online.



Figure 247

- **Scissors**...another item found in most homes or schools. I have a variety of scissors (including the rolling blade at the bottom of the picture. If you have only one pair make it a good pair, or they will let you down when you need them. All of these were purchased at either a fabric or a big box store.



Figure 248

- **Craft Knives, Blades, X-Acto** are worth their weight in gold when it comes to creating anything related to art. They precise, they can be used with metal rulers for a perfect straight edge, and they can be maneuvered into the smallest spaces of your masks (eye and nose holes). To add to that you can insert the pointy end of your blade into the handle upside-down to help pry papier maché off of mask forms. There are many different types as you can see by the photo. I would advise to have at least two on hand with replacement blades. Sold everywhere...even the grocery store!



Figure 249

- **Paint brushes / Applicators** can be anything from a pallet knife to an artist brush. Foam brushes are quite nice to cover large areas quickly but rarely hold up for very long (they swell with paint which causes the glue holding the sponge to the handle to fail). The brushes I prefer for this type of work are the packages of assorted cheap paint brushes you can find in the craft section near the bottles of acrylic paint. This assortment usually has 15 to 20 brushes of various sizes much like the ones pictured the yellow or white nylon are the best. Avoid the hard bristled (usually an off white) brushes that look reed like. They are incapable of producing a smooth finish and you will spend more time picking lost 'hairs' out of your mask than painting. The top 'brush' in the photo is actually a sheepskin dauber which is used to apply dye to leather. They can be found anywhere that sells leather tools or dye.



Figure 250

- **Spring Clamps / Bar Clamps** are invaluable to the molding of damp leather. They can be found anywhere that sells hardware. I purchased mine at Harbor Freight in a big tub for next to nothing.



Figure 251

- **Clothes Pins** can be used if you do not want to use clamps. Just remember the opening (clamping area) of a clothespin is much smaller than that of clamps. This size difference will limit how much you are able to clamp. They will work in a 'pinch' (insert smiley face here). Mine came from the \$1 store.



Figure 252

- **Hole Punches** are also available (as a multi-sized set) at Harbor Freight or any hardware



Figure 253

/farm/ or big box store. This type of hole punch is shown in the photo on the left. In order to use this hole punch you will also need a hammer.

The second hole punch is pictured on the right. It has a rotary head. If you decide on this type of hole punch I

would advise not to cut corners with your purchase. Buy a brand name like Sprenger or C. S. Osborne. Yes, they are expensive but cut through leather like butter and will last forever. If you cut corners on this tool you will regret it.



Figure 254

- **Rulers** are a necessity for obvious reasons.....they can be used as straight edges, or you can ever use them to determine size. Here is a picture of 3 rulers. The black ruler is called a carpenters square. While I usually use mine for squaring up etching plates or framing, I found it very useful for mask making when cutting materials. The pink ruler is a standard metal ruler with a cork back. I use metal rulers for cutting as they will allow for straight cuts, whereas wood rulers can be cut into along with the material (which could render both useless). The white and blue ruler has the ability to bend which works wonderfully for designing the interior decorations on masks. Sold everywhere. My black ruler came from the \$1 store, the pink one from a big box store, and the bendable ruler came from an office supply store.

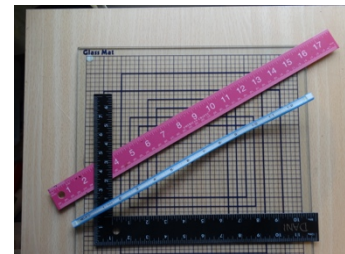


Figure 255

- **Dremel Tool.** Need I say more? You don't have to have a Dremel Tool but they sure come in handy for so many things. Depending on the bits you have, you can drill holes to mount leather cord or whiskers, clean up the edges of the mask, eye openings, smooth out lumps, cut the bottom of your mask off if you opted to create the full face mask. The Dremel brand bits are expensive in the store, but are often sold online at a greatly discounted price. Aftermarket bits can be bought at Harbor Freight just don't expect them to last as long. You can find a Dremel at hardware, big box, hobby, art, and online. The bits can be purchased anywhere the Dremel Tools are sold



Figure 256

- **Stencils** will come in handy when it comes to decorating. They can provide a subtle pattern with an undercoat or use them boldly with gold leaf. Again not a necessity with Commedia masks, but very useful with the more ornate Carnival mask. Stencils can be found anywhere...or make one yourself.



Figure 257

Along with the tools needed, you will see the list of materials at the start of each build. To clarify which materials (expendable supplies) used for the masks built, I am including images here. Along with the supply images you will see a section (at the end) which shows the 'tests' performed with different paints on leather (and suede leather). This should help you to pick specific paints for the look you are trying to achieve without putting in extra 'test' time.

- **Glue** is a must for any build. No need to get specialty glues, as you can see in the picture all of these glues are readily available at any big box or hobby store. If you have read through any of the mask tutorials you will probably notice that once I discovered the strength and versatility of 3-IN-1 glue made by Beacon I pretty much stick to it (no pun intended). I also use white Elmer's School Glue for covering papier maché. The other glues shown in the photo come in handy for other applications (adding jewels, trim, feathers) but are not necessary. Available anywhere.



Figure 258

- **Acrylic paint*** was used in all the masks presented in this tutorial. This craft paint is easily found in almost any store for very little money (meaning you can buy lots of colors)! Because they are all acrylic, they are compatible with one another. They are also compatible with acrylic gesso and all the glues used. An added bonus is that they are also nontoxic and water soluble (water cleanup). You can buy them as matte, satin, gloss, metallic, neon, opaque, and transparent.



Figure 259

These bottled paints can be found at \$1 stores, big box stores, hobby and art stores and online. The paints that come in tubes can be found in big box, hobby, and art stores. Tubes of paint are usually more expensive than those in bottles.

- **Specialty paint / glitter ‘glue’*** (including puffy paint) are a really nice way to add texture to your work. Most, if not all, are acrylic (water based) so are compatible with other paints and glues. These ‘paints’ are thicker than their bottled counterparts so will hold their shape (which can be dispersed from the tube much like decorative cake icing). With them you can draw lines with dimension (great for decorating masks) or apply them as dots. There are many metallic colors to choose from, or you have the added bonus of sparkles are glitter (especially nice if you are building Carnival type masks). These versatile decorative paints can be found at \$1 stores, big box, hobby, and art stores, as well as online.



Figure 260

- **Gesso** is made by many manufacturers. They all do the same thing...they provide a smooth surface (with a ‘tooth’) that provides support for paint. When you paint your house or car this base coat is called primer. You can buy gesso on a can, a bottle or a jar. The only difference between brands seems to be the viscosity of the gesso. Daniel Smith makes a nice thick gesso (this is the one shown in the picture). Art gesso can generally be found in white, black, or clear. For all the tutorial mask builds I have used white gesso. Available at big box stores, hobby stores, art supply stores, and online.



Figure 261

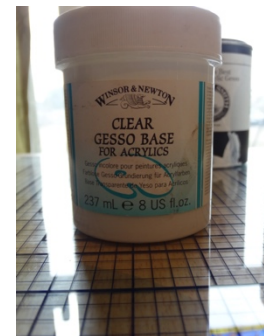


Figure 262

- **Modeling clay** (nondrying) can come in handy to build out a base for some of the more advanced masks. While it is not necessary, if you do not have a mask with exaggerated features (noses especially) clay can help provide support for your papier maché build up. I found my clay at a hobby store.



Figure 263

- **Tape (and straws)** are other items that comes in very handy. You can see it being used in some of the build photos. With tape, I prefer to use painters masking tape. I generally stick tape to my pants (or shirt) prior to using it on a mask. This prevents threads from being pulled, or adhesive marks being left on surfaces. Straws can be used to form holes in your mask if you do not feel comfortable drilling holes. Simply cut an inch or two and either build the mask around it, or use the straw to cut the perfect size hole in the still wet papier maché. Tape can be found in any store.

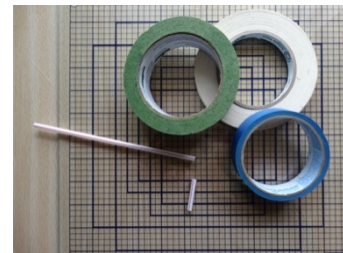


Figure 264

- **Papier Maché / Celluclay / FastMaché** will, for the most part, form the bulk of your builds. It is inexpensive, easy to find (hobby stores, online), easy to mold, nice to finish, and will take any finish you put on it. A bit about each one....

- **GOOD: Standard papier maché** is easy to make and easy to use. My preferred recipe is ½ white glue (like Elmer's) + ½ water (there are other recipes available online). If you use tap water and leave your mix sit for more than a day you might end up with mold forming. Distilled water will allow the mix to last longer.

Once mixed you will use it as the 'glue' to hold strips of paper together as you build upon a mold (a mask in this case). Most people use newspaper as the paper, although you can use any thin paper. This is the cheapest way to build masks (video tutorials available online).

The drawback of papier maché is the longer drying time, and the curling of edges not supported properly (with clay or wire mesh). My first Zanni was destroyed by excessive curling of the edges and nose rendering it useless.

- **BETTER: Celluclay** is a product made by Activ. It performs better than standard papier maché in that it is readily moldable, easy to work with, and has minimal shrinkage / curling when dried. Simply mix with water (instructions will tell you to use a bowl...it is easier to mix in a plastic Ziploc bag so you don't waste any, and it takes much longer to dry out when kept in the bag until you need it). The finish is slightly lumpy. Not a big deal if you like sanding, but I found the next product to be better yet. Find this product at a hobby store or online.



Figure 265

○ **BEST: FastMaché**...another Activ made product. It performs better than standard papier maché as well as its sister product Celluclay. The reason is simply the end product. I found FastMaché to have minimal shrinkage and a much smoother dried finish which needed minimal sanding. Find this product at a hobby store or online.



Figure 266

• **Plaster Strips / Rolls / Wrap** are all good ways to build masks that can be molded off of plastic masks as well as your own face. If you decide to use plaster strips be aware that the finished product is basically reinforced Plaster of Paris which is very brittle. If you are building a decorative mask this would work fine. If you are building a mask that is to be use, especially for performance (stage) you will be better off not using plaster strips. If this is all you have to build with you may want to reinforce the mask with wire mesh, build it up in layers and seal it with gesso and a coat or two of paint. These can be found at hobby stores, medical stores, or online.



Figure 267

- **Wire and Wire Mesh** will serve you well for reinforcing internal structures, and



Figure 268

repairing breaks in papier mache masks. The mesh also serves well as a support for armatures on larger masks (and can be used to support fabric structures). Hobby stores will carry wire mesh, and you can find the wire anywhere. The ones pictured to the left are from a \$1 store, and the package on the top



Figure 269

right was purchased at a hobby store, and the package on the bottom right is from the floral section of a big box store.

- **Plaster of Paris** is invaluable not for building masks, but for putting a nice, smooth finish on your mask prior to painting. It is a product you can find in any store. It can be in powdered form (like the box shown in the picture), or premixed. If it is premixed it will be in a tube or a can and is very inexpensive. You will find Plaster of Paris in any home improvement or big box store.



Figure 270

- **Foam** comes in very handy to add padding to the inside of a hard mask, or to even make a larger mask fit the wearer. This foam can be any type, just watch for the width you buy. These are two scrap pieces that was in a package I received (to protect the art work that was shipped). Foam is available at any fabric, hobby, and big box store. You will find it in the hobby/art dept., the fabric department, or even in sporting goods (camping).



Figure 271

- **Cleaners / Solvents** come in handy to clean up dried paint, glues, or other mask accidents. This is a group of solvents I feel safe using in my home. Other cleanup items not pictured are towels, dish soap, Amazing Cleaner (from \$1 store), paper towels, and sponges. The ‘Stiffy’ is not a solvent or cleaner (strange that I photographed it with cleaners), but rather is something I add to masks (leather or fabric) and hats to stiffen it.



Figure 272

- **Extras...**these are all acrylic finishes that you can change the look of your finished mask with.



Figure 273

They are from top left...Liquitex Light Modeling Paste, Liquitex Matte Medium, Grumbacher Gloss Medium, Liquitex Iridescent Medium, Liquitex Gloss Varnish, and Store brand Acrylic Gloss.

Leather

Leather is one of the primary materials you will want to build masks out of. Not only is it what was used to construct the traditional Commedia masks, but is absolutely wonderful to work with. Masks made of leather are highly sought after for use and display. There are many kinds of leather and many ways to tan that leather. The one thing that all leather has in common...it's all expensive. I personally can't afford to buy expensive materials for my mask builds, and I am sure that I am not alone there. Theater costume shops, artisans, and even custom mask makers all have to work within a budget. When I shop for fabrics and leathers the first place I go is to thrift stores. You will find large a huge array of dated leather coats and jackets just waiting to be turned into your next creation.

Along with leather you will never find a cheaper place to purchase silk and velvet in the form of old shirts, jackets, vests, and dresses. When you look through the bulk bins you will also find many dollars' worth of trim and embellishments for your masks. Most everything you need to actually make your mask can be had for very little (and sometime no money...if your friends and relatives know what you are looking for they may supply you with more than you could ever ask for.

Besides thrift stores, you can find things at auctions, yard sales, and even in the 'free' ads in the form of furniture and drapery. Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace are overflowing with items that are begging to be repurposed (just to name a couple).

There are people who move that don't want to be bothered with moving their leather couch (yards and yards of leather). Others update the look of their homes interiors on a regular basis. When they do they often sell or give away yards and yards of expensive cloth in the form of curtains and drapes. If you want to build on a budget it's very possible, you just need to think outside of the box for your materials.

So back to the subject of leather...the following information is information that I have learned over a half a lifetime of dealing with saddles, horse tack, and working with leather in artist books. It's all from personal experience which can be backed by other accounts of leather

workers from all works of life (in books and online). I understand a thing or two from this experience and would like to share this knowledge with you. It will save you time and money.

Just because all of the leather you see in my mask building tutorials started life as clothing or furniture doesn't mean it's substandard, I have just learned how to recognize good leather from bad, and after you work with leather a bit you will start understanding what will work for mask making, and what won't.

There are different ways of tanning leather, and of course different animal hides being used. If your leather is papery, has a color on the outside that is different from the inside chances are it originated in Asia and has been drum tanned and then sprayed with paint rather than stained. These hides do not hold their shape well, and because they are painted on one side, they do not take well to having any moisture (like water for soaking...or even dye for coloring). This leather simply dries out internally and turns into cardboard over time. There are many products made from this leather imported all over the world. Some of it holds up, most does not. You can spot an Asian made saddle from a mile away, and the same goes for clothing and furniture. Try to avoid any leather that fits the above description, you will have nothing but issues with it.

South and Central America produces a large volume of leather that is tanned in uric acid. While leather tanned this way is nicer to work with you will notice a distinct smell when it gets wet. It's the uric acid, and will be very unpleasant for your performer to wear a mask that smells that way, and which possibly 'bleeds' dye on them if they sweat. If you come across leather like that just think about sealing it well and possibly lining it for the comfort of your performer.

North America and European tanneries generally vegetable tan their leathers. These are the most desirable for saddles and tack...and most anything else including masks. They are usually soft and pliable. They are easier to work with and last longer. Now I am not saying that there aren't leathers originating anywhere in the world that aren't high quality, this is just a rule of thumb. When you look at thrift store leather you will quickly be able to tell the difference in those leathers. Look for medium bodied leathers with even thickness through and through. Avoid papery, dry feeling leather. Cow hide and pig skin works well. Lambskin, while super soft and supple does not work that well with holding shapes.

As far as thickness below you will see a chart which is put out by Tandy Leather. It's a good guide to follow. It will give you a thickness which will tell you which leathers work best for what you need. One to two ounce leather is generally only good for covering a base mask. Refer back to the Second Bauta mask (green and gold). The leather on that mask is green pigskin in 2 oz. It was stretched over a plaster mask as it's too thin to use alone.

My Plague Doctor mask is made out of nice 4 oz. leather from a thrift store coat. When working with leather I like to use 3 to 5 oz. This of course changes with the type of leather (pig skin is generally softer than cow hide of the same weight) and what kind of mask I am making.





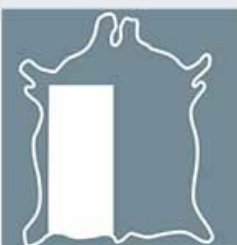
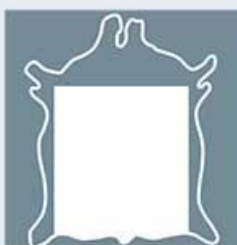

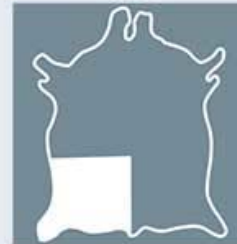
Leather Hide Parts:		Weight/Thickness Conversion			
		Ounces	Irons	Inches	Millimeters
		1 oz.	0.75	1/64	0.4 mm
WHOLE HIDE	SIDE	2 oz.	1.50	1/32	0.8 mm
		3 oz.	2.25	3/64	1.2 mm
DOUBLE SHOULDER	SINGLE SHOULDER	4 oz.	3.00	1/16	1.6 mm
		5 oz.	3.75	5/64	2.0 mm
BEND	DOUBLE BEND	6 oz.	4.50	3/32	2.4 mm
		7 oz.	5.25	7/64	2.8 mm
BELLY	SINGLE BUTT	8 oz.	6.00	1/8	3.2 mm
		9 oz.	6.75	9/64	3.6 mm
		10 oz.	7.50	5/32	4.0 mm
		11 oz.	8.25	11/64	4.4 mm
		12 oz.	9.00	3/16	4.8 mm
		13 oz.	9.75	13/64	5.2 mm
		14 oz.	10.50	7/32	5.6 mm
		15 oz.	11.25	15/64	6.0 mm
		16 oz.	12.00	1/4	6.4 mm

Figure 274

Below you will see some swatches of leather. These are simply samples of what I have acquired over the past few years. They have all been repurposed from the above sources. I have made cut these swatches out and written on the backs of them. Any findings I have (how well they work, what they have been used to build, where they came from, and how well they take dye and/or paint). This information can be written directly onto the swatches or placed in a notebook for later reference. As I acquire leather I simply add a swatch along with its information.

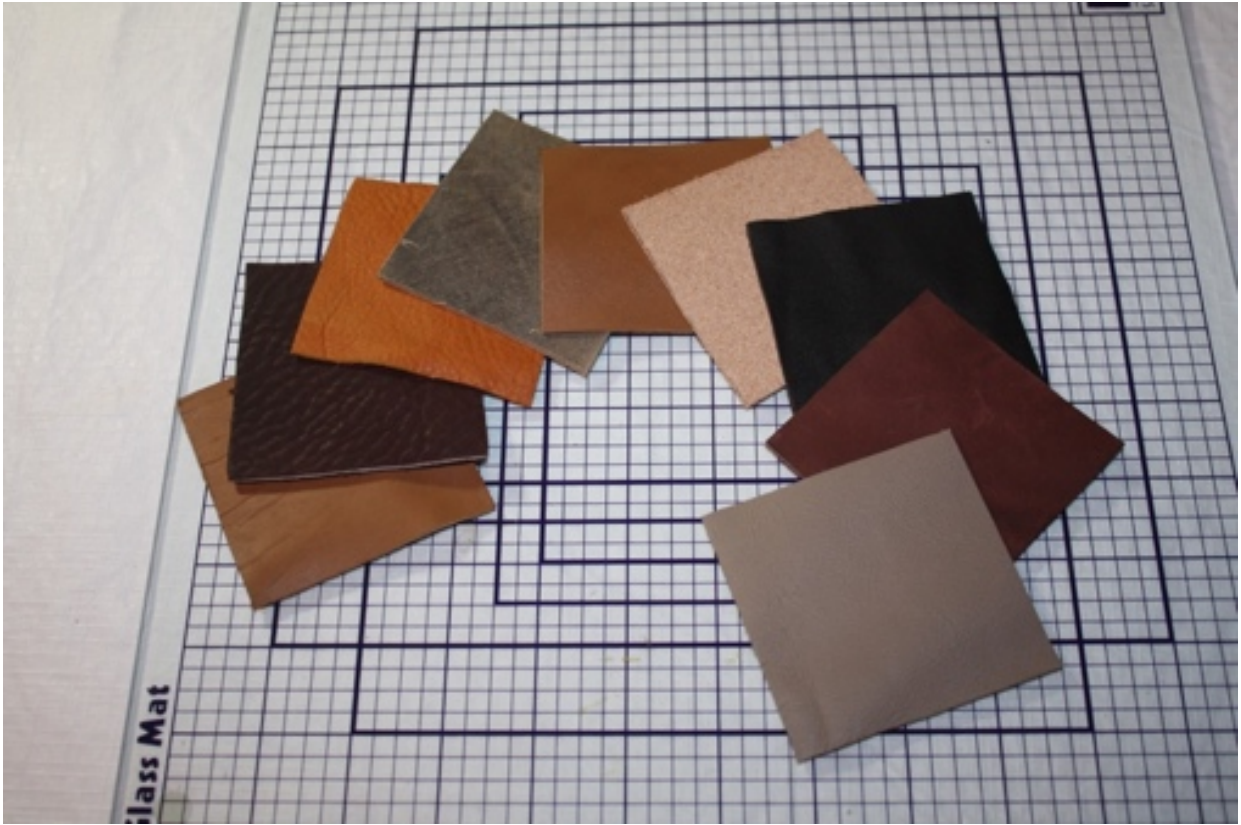


Figure 275

The next set of swatches I have deal with the same type of leather and how well that leather takes on color. I have tested numerous types of paint on these swatches. This is how I know the simple, bottled acrylic craft paint works well for mask making....through trial and error. In these images you will see what kind of paint I used and how it works on the smooth side of the leather as well as the suede side.

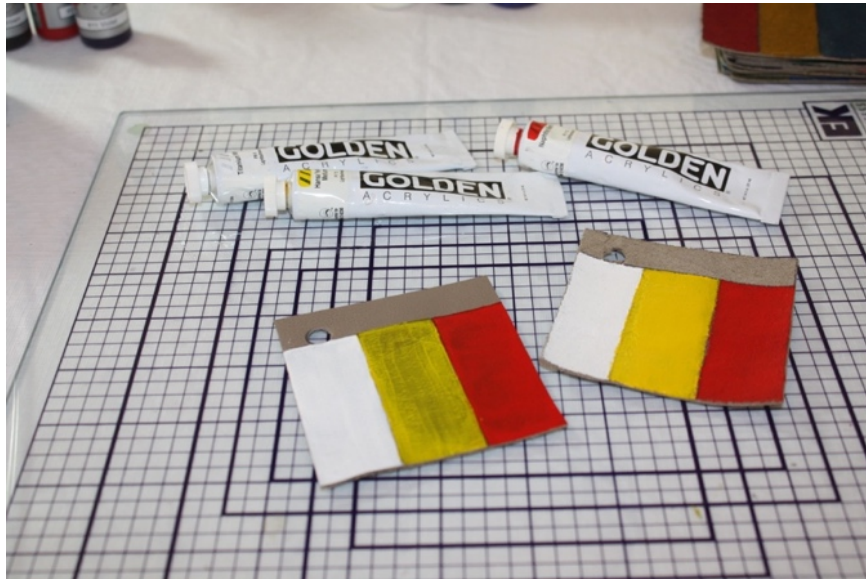


Figure 276

This set of swatches have been painted with Golden brand acrylic paint. As you can see this paint looks better on the rough out (suede) side on the right than it does on the smooth left side.



Figure 277

This set of swatches have been painted with Golden brand liquid acrylic paint (often used for airbrush work). As you can see this paint looks darker and more evenly applied when painted on the rough out (suede) side on the right than it does on the smooth left side.



Figure 278

This set of swatches have been painted with Createx brand liquid acrylic airbrush paint. As you can see this paint looks more evenly applied when painted on the smooth leather side on the left. The right side is much darker indicating that this paint is most likely thin enough to soak into the suede.

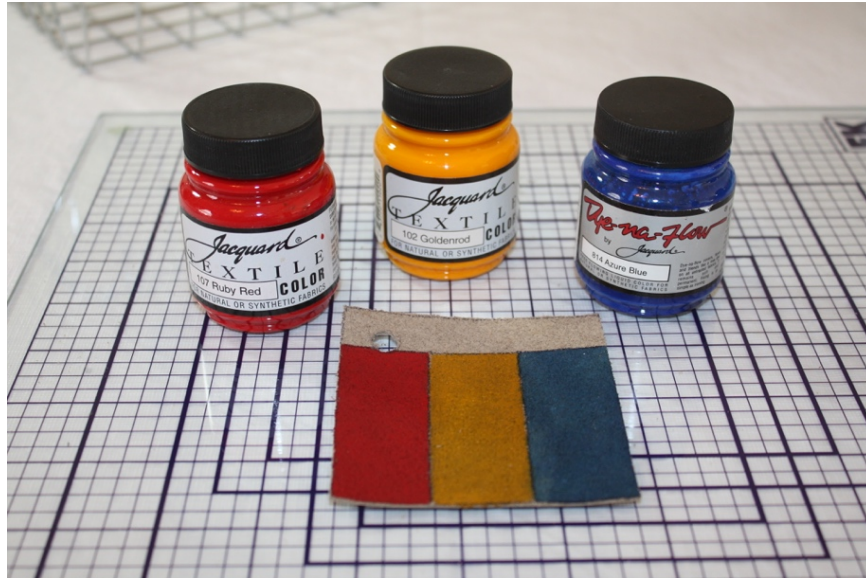


Figure 279

This set of swatches have been painted with Jacquard brand liquid textile paint. As you can see this paint looks even and vibrant when painted on the suede leather side. From my notes I know that this type of textile color does not paint onto the smooth leather side. It beads up as there is no ‘tooth’ to hold this thin paint. If you wanted to use this type of color you would need to prime your leather with gesso prior to starting (which would be a separate set of swatches).

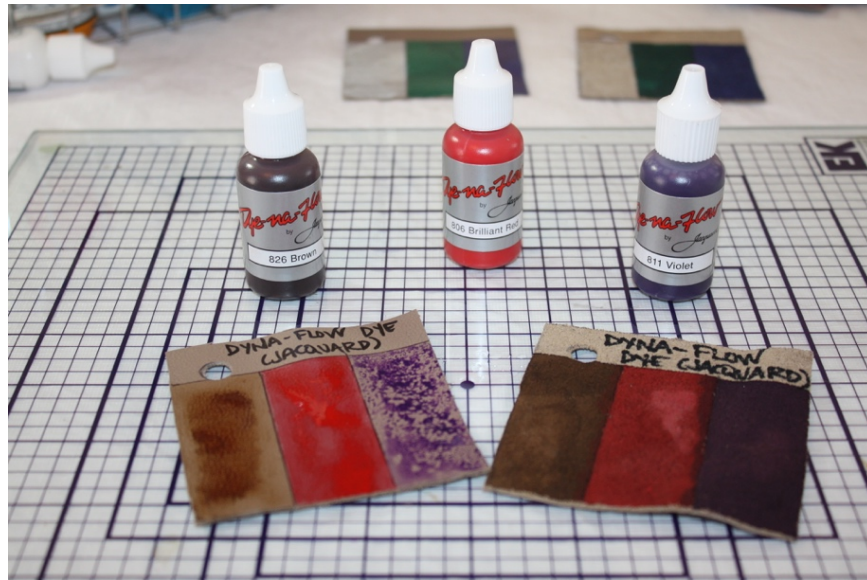


Figure 280

This set of swatches have been painted with Dyna-Flow Jacquard brand fabric dye. This dye does not work well on the smooth leather on the left side. In fact if the leather is flexed it flakes off. The right side looks OK...but if you are looking for an even color you would probably do good to avoid using this on leather or suede. If you wanted to use this type of color you would need to prime your leather with gesso prior to starting (which would be a separate set of swatches).



Figure 281

This set of swatches have been painted with Yudu Silkscreen Ink. When painted onto the suede side (right) it works very well. The metallic in the silver looks bright and sparkly. This ink looks a bit splotchy on the smooth leather side. If you wanted to use this type of color you would need to prime your leather with gesso prior to starting (which would be a separate set of swatches).



Figure 282

This set of swatches have been painted with the cheap and easy to find Folk Art and Accent brand acrylic craft paint. Both the suede side and the smooth leather side came out vivid and smooth. This paint is the best buy for the money and comes in many colors and finishes. This is what I have used on the builds in this tutorial.



Figure 283

This image shows just a few of the cut up coats and jackets that have gone into my leather 'collection'. These were had at a much lower price than what a single piece of leather from a tack store, saddler, or online. If it can be avoided (unless you are desperate) don't purchase leather from an art or hobby store. They cut it into small pieces that are priced at a premium.

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