

Fibre Glass Mould Jacket -part 3

Video Workbook Stuart Bray



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This is part 3 of this video series looking at making a *Master Mould* of a plaster head.

In this last video, the fibreglass shell is opened, cleaned out and the void left by it is filled with silicone. I am using a tin based RTV silicone with 10% catalyst.





Precautions must be taken when working with these materials - it is important to use a correctly graded respirator mask to protect against the dust and fumes, you must wear gloves when working and ensure adequate ventilation and extraction is used to remove harmful vapours.

This work is for your information only and is given in good faith. It is not advised that you use these materials without adequate instruction or supervision



Opening the mould should be pretty easy. I will leave the back half attached, and still screwed into the base as this was glassed directly onto the plaster. Only the front is in silicone.

I use a big screwdriver to pry the front halves off, and clean out the clay inside.



Use a plastic scraper, wooden spatulas or a wire loop tool to scrape the clay out onto a bench top. Be careful to avoid any sharp edges that may be on the inside of the glass jacket.



The tool I love to use is this potters loop tool. It has a short handle, and does a great job of scooping tubes of clay out without scratching up the surface of the fibreglass.



Scrape out as much clay as you can, and get in all the grooves around the edge. Water based clay is sticky, so be sure to get it scooped out from the keys.



Once you have scooped out as much clay as you can, mush it all together into a block, patting the sides to make it into a rough cube. This will then allow you to figure out the total volume of silicone you will require. Multiply the height by the width and then multiply that by the depth.

I add about 5-10% extra for the pour tube, spills and bleeding - more of this later! This is about 5 litres



To get the mould spotless, take it to a bathtub or preferably outside and use lots of water to rinse it out and scrub using a chip brush with cut-down bristles. A watering can makes it easy, although if you have a pressure washer, you use that!

This can get in all the grooves made by the keys around the edge and is easily washed out to be reused.



Putting one half of the front together, you can see now the space where the clay had been.

This void is where the silicone will go, creating a perfect reproduction of the plaster head.



Before we can assemble the mould and pour it though, we need to prep the jacket. First, I mark dots with a Sharpie around the keys and the surface at regular intervals.

The jacket will need air holes to allow the air to escape as it is slowly filled with silicone.



These dots mark where small holes need to be drilled. I use a small bit (between 1.5 - 2.5mm is best) to in a battery drill. A rotary tool such as a Dremel would do the job too.



Drill all the holes, taking care to manage the dust created and wear appropriate health & safety equipment such as goggles and respirator.



Once all the holes are drilled, we need to fit a length of tube to the jacket to allow the silicone to get in the mould.

I am using plastic waste pipe from a plumbing suppliers, and you need to use something wide like this, about 35-45 mm in diameter.



The silicone is a thick liquid, and won't flow into the mould quick enough with smaller pipe.

I will pour this mould lying back, so I need the tube to come straight up. As the mould surface is at an angle, the easiest thing to do to correct this is to offer it up and mark the angle with a pen.



Holding the pipe in a vice, a hacksaw makes quick work of the cut. Clean any burrs off that usually happen when cutting pipe using sandpaper or scraping with a sharp blade.



Offering the pipe up, you should be close enough.



I then mark around where the pipe hits the jacket with a pen, and mark a smaller shape inside. This part inside need to be cut out, and if you have a tank cutter or hole saw then this will do a great job.

Otherwise, a series of smaller holes around the inner circle line will do just as well. It takes a little longer, but works a treat!



Eventually, the holes join up and the disc in the middle pops out.



Use a small file or sand paper to neaten up any ragged edges. Here I am using a small file used in bronze casting called a riffler, but any kind of small file will do.



Once the tubing is fitted in place, you can check on the inside that the hole is the same size as the inside diameter of the tube.

Doing it this way ensure the tube stays on the outside of the jacket, and can't be pushed through from the outside accidentally.



Hot glue is great for temporarily attaching things. You can also use plaster bandage, although it's messy. Some people like to put the tube in and glass around it at the clay stage, so it's already in the jacket when you glass it.



Once the tube is securely fastened, I want to attach a strong plastic cup to the end to act as a funnel. Actual funnels taper to a thin spout which slows down the silicone too much, hence this cup.

Tracing the inner shape using a pen, mark out the shape of the pipe.



Trim this out with a pair of scissors.



Check the fit. You can see that by trimming to the inside diameter, the cup sits on the tube and won't slip down when it gets heavy and full of silicone later.



A little hot glue around this hole will stick the cup on creating a water tight seal at the same time.



Once this has cooled, I decided to beef up the glue, allowing the hot glue to cool in sections.

Add too much at once and the whole thing will just remelt and slid off.



Once all that hot glue has cooled and solidified, carefully assemble the mould.



The keep the mould sections firmly together, I use M6 bolts with hexagonal heads. This allows me to use a driver-drill to tighten then quickly.

This is the industry standard here, and allows for quick assemble for large moulds which may require dozens of bolts to keep everything secure.



Usually wing nuts are used, as these can be held with pliers should the threads get stuck or jammed with silicone or resin.





Take care not trap fingers when using a drill to tighten. You can usually set the torque of the chuck to avoid such injury.



The back piece of glass is already screwed to the baseboard, but now I also add screws to the front halves too.

This ensures that the whole mould is well secured to the board, and minimises any leaks which may occur.

Once that is done, I hot glued all around the base seam to prevent leaks.



Use hot glue around all the seams.



I pour out 5kg of silicone. I marked out the approximate volume by placing a line where 5 litres of water levelled at. (if you recall, 5 litres was the approx volume of the block of clay cleaned from the jacket earlier).

Should I be out slightly, I can always mix and add more.



I went slightly over, but not bad considering how heavy the huge barrel was!



I weigh out the 10% catalyst, but because I am in no rush, I actually go for slightly less. It will take longer for the silicone to cure, but that gives me more working time so no need to rush the pouring.



Add the catalyst to the silicone.



The catalyst needs to be thoroughly mixed in, and to do this I grip the bucket with my feet and stir using a piece of timber.

Take your time, ensuring the catalyst doesn't get flicked over the edge of the container as you mix. I spent about ten minutes mixing, just to be sure that everything was thoroughly mixed. The blue catalyst makes it easy to spot if you missed any.



Once done mixing, I let the silicone sit for five minutes, and allow the larger air bubbles to rise and pop.

If you have a degasser, now is the time to suck the air out. If not (I didn't) then tap the bucket to get the worst out, and be sure to pour the silicone in a thin stream. This will pop more bubbles than dumping it in one go.



Lay the head on it's back and on the floor.

Pouring from high up means lifting the bucket high, so maybe stand on a stool or chair to get extra height if that is going to be too difficult to do.



Keep adding, gradually filling up the void inside.

The silicone should flow everywhere inside, and will eventually appear through the holes. This is known as 'bleeding', and allowing the holes to bleed for a minute before blocking them with plasteline is a great way of minimising air pockets that may occur.



Ideally, each hole will bleed silicone. If not, try poking it with a needle or the drill bit to unblock it.

Once they bleed, you know how much of the mould is filled. Block them by wiping the silicone away with tissue or gloved hand, and swiftly plugging it with plasteline.



It makes sense to block the lowest holes first, and work gradually upwards, ensuring no air gets trapped.

It seems as though the silicone is just vanishing into the mould, then suddenly, almost all the holes bleed out at once. Calmly wipe and plug one hole at a time.

The silicone is thick and flows slower through these little holes than you think.



Once the silicone in the cup on top of the tube ceases to go down, you can be sure the mould is filled.

Leave it overnight to let the silicone cure properly, and check the mould now and then to see how the silicone is setting. After a few hours, it should be noticeably thicker when you touch it with a wooden stick.



The following morning, I check everything has fully cured. Then, I just need to pop the pipe off the jacket. Simply hitting the pipe will lever it away, breaking the seal.



Carefully pull and flex the pipe away, revealing the silicone inside. This is easily sliced with a sharp blade.

Take care to not cut into the face - be cautious and leave some sticking out. You can always trim more off later.



Pliers make it much easier to pull the hot glue away from the edges. Once you get an edge up, it tends to pull away in bigger pieces.



Carefully undo the bolts, and undo the screws in the front halves. Leave the screws that are in the back half, as these will help in opening the mould.



Using a big screwdriver or pry bar, lever the front half away from the back near the base. As the back is securely screwed to the base board, the front should move.

Slowly lever all the way around until you feel it give and free up.





Take your time, and gradually the front should come away easily.

Pull the jacket away from the silicone, and check the mould filled correctly.



Use a blade or scissors to trim off any excess silicone which leaked into the seams and bleed holes.



Then, carefully peel the silicone off from the plaster head. The silicone is pretty robust and flexible, so you can be pretty brutal to get it off if necessary.

The ears are thin and undercut so will inevitable break off. This is not an issue, as the mould will allow us to make dozens more heads. Simply flex the mould and peel out the broken bits.



These can be super glued back on if needed, although often on full head makeups I remove the ears anyway and make them as separate appliances anyway, so this plaster head is still good to keep.



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In order to get the silicone back into it's jacket, it's handy to apply a mixture of dish washing soap and water into the assembled front half.

Simply brush it all over the inside of the jacket, taking care to get into the keys around the edge.



Then push the silicone back into place, and the mixture lubricates the surface, allowing it to pop back in.

Vaseline would also work, but remains greasy forever, and picks up dirt. This mixture is easy removed or reactivated with water.



Take care to ensure the keys are all in place around the edge.



Check the keys are lined up properly, and feel everywhere to check the silicone is sitting correctly.

If you find a spot where it moves, then push and wiggle the silicone until it slides into place.



Remember to check the pour hole stump is located too.







This head will be the basis of many makeups, starting with a vampire.

Stay tuned for more prosthetic goodies!

-Stuart



As always, questions, comments and feedback always great to hear! -5TUART





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