

Stop Motion Puppet Construction 1st Edition Part 7

Written by Marc Spess

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11. Once the mold is clean, block it up underneath to level and steady it. Make your clay wall for the second half of the mold as above. Seal it against the ultracal. Make your separation keys for the ultracal. The silicone does not need separation keys since you can't pry it of course.

12. Coat the silicone with a thin layer of Vaseline, using a fine artist's brush. Don't build it up too thick, but make sure you cover the whole silicone part. Since silicone does stick to silicone, you need a release agent to get the two halves of the mold apart later.

13. Follow the same steps as above for the other side of the mold. When applying the silicone, just match it to the edge of the bottom half when making the top half. Make the ultracal mother mold for this side the same way as above.

14. You now have a puppet, encased in silicone, encased in ultracal, with a cylinder of clay surrounded by silicone sticking out of its private area. Pry it apart, and peel the silicone apart. Clean all clay out of the mold, and pull out your sculpture. Sometimes it's easier to pull the silicone off the sculpture instead! Now is a good time to have a really good look at your mold and see how you did for thickness and where the air bubbles are so you can do an even better job next time. WHEW!

15. Assemble your mold and bake it as in PART I. Prepare your armature to fit and be suspended in the mold. You do not need any release agent since foam will not stick to silicone. Remember, nothing sticks to silicone except silicone! Drill some tiny air release holes on the uppermost levels of the mold using a piece of very small brass tubing in your drill. Continue the holes with a regular drill bit through the ultracal so the air has somewhere to go when you inject the puppet. To figure out where to put these holes, just imagine: with the injection spout up, where is air most likely to be trapped as the foam slowly fills the mold? Drill from the inside of the mold out in these cavities. Place the armature inside the mold so it is suspended and clamp or strap the mold tightly together. Put it in a secure place on the floor or between blocks glued to the table so it doesn't slip away when you press the injection gun into it.

16. Mix a batch of foam according to the manufacturer's directions. **WORKING VERY QUICKLY** fill the gun and press the nozzle into the injection hole. Slowly depress the plunger and fill the mold until foam begins to squeeze out the air holes and seams. Use bits of traditional wet artists clay to block any holes that are really gushing long before the rest of the holes show foam. When the puppet is clearly full, don't let up on the plunger, but pull the whole gun out and **IMMEDIATELY** block the opening of the injection hole with a wad of wet clay. The idea is to get a bit of pressure built up inside the puppet. Then don't touch or bump the mold until the foam gels. If you can't do this all in about three minutes then you may have to un-clamp or unstrap the mold, remove the armature, clean off the gelled foam and start all over again. We've had foam set up in the injection gun, only half into the mold, and in the bowl before we even got it into the gun. Call the help number for the foam manufacturer if you are having these problems.

17. Once the foam has gelled, carefully move the mold clamps and all into the oven. Bake according to the instructions. You may find with a silicone mold that the baking time is quite a bit

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longer than what is recommended in the instructions. That's because the silicone prevents the moisture from escaping the foam as quickly, and you need to bake it longer to drive the moisture out. Remove the puppet from the mold the same way as above, powdering it thoroughly, and be sure to hang it to dry overnight before you handle it too much. DONE!!

PREPARING A PUPPET FOR FINISHING: Your fresh new smelly puppet has long wires sticking out of it and lots of thin latex hanging from the edges (flash). You'll need a pair of tiny medical scissors or cuticle scissors to trim the flash as close as possible to the surface of the puppet. This takes practice. The better you get, the less the seams will show. Seams may be sealed with brushing latex or with a paste made of latex prosthetic adhesive ("prosaide") mixed with cabosil which is a very toxic thickener usually used for fiberglass. Use a dust mask when mixing this paste, and keep your cabosil container sealed shut at all times. This stuff gets in your lungs and never goes away. The paste, called "puppet patch", mixed to the consistency of gel toothpaste, can be pushed into bubbles and deep seams with a dampened cotton swab. Too much water on the swab will wash the patch away and not enough will cause the fibers of the cotton swab to be pulled off and stuck to the puppet. This takes practice too. The patch shrinks so you may need a second coat the next day. And there you have it: a completed puppet and a mold with which to make many more. Best of luck.!

7.0 Puppet examples:

This section will cover different types of puppets, their construction and will give examples of similar puppets used in well known TV & Film programs.

8.0 Good books on puppet making.

This section will give a list of books that will be helpful in puppet making.

9.0 Conclusion:

Of course this is really only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to puppet-making. This advice should result in the construction of a suitable puppet for stop motion animation. The best way to really learn this craft is just keep practicing and evaluating each puppet as you go.

You will find that you learn something new each time you make a puppet as your knowledge and skills improve. This guide has given you a brief introduction to the main types of puppet construction but if you discover a new technique or process or a new material that can help in puppet-making, please send it to this list for inclusion in this guide for everyone's benefit.

[Part 6](#)