

Monster Mud

"Monster Mud" is a hauntings answer to having a forboding static prop at a fraction of what you will pay at the retail level for a "static". The beauty of using this medium is that it is limited only to your imagination of what kind of monster you wish to create. They can be a tall, overshadowing dark figure that looms over your "victims", er, guests. Or a small Gremlin like creature that waits unexpectedly in the shadows. Monster Mud can also be a basis to expand into animated,moveable prop as well. For this tutorial we will use a simple "cloaked" figure to learn the basic principles and techniques of monster mud.



"Monsters" can come in all shapes and sizes, but it is important to have a basic knowledge of anatomy to help in getting the proper proportions of your static. We will use the simple "head" method to do this. The average human figure is 7 heads tall, artists use 8 because it is more appealing visually. For our monster we will extend this to 9 to give a little more of that "creepy" feel to it. Because this static will be wearing a cloak, we do not need to be as specific with the other proportions, but you can still use the figures below as a reference for this and future projects you may choose to do.

Width from shoulder to shoulder - 3 heads wide

Distance from hip to toes - 4 heads long

From the top of the head to the bottom of chest - 2 heads

Distance from elbow to the end of outstretched fingers - 2 heads

From chest to bottom of feet - 6 heads

Remember that these "ideal" measurements are used by artists in drawing composition and are merely a guideline for us to follow in figuring the general diminsions needed for this project.

Ok, all monster mud statics start with a base and a "T" armature to form the basic support system of which you create the figure on, these can be done with wood or pvc, depending on the scale and weight of the figure. There is also variations on how to form the " T ", again depending on the scale (see examples on the next page). We will use 3/4" pvc for this figure. Once you have the "T" formed, you can then add the various extensions to this, (neck,arms, ect.). This is the base or skeleton from which you will begin to create the body form on. Below is a list of pvc that we are using for this prop. These dimensions are based on the skull (4") using the 9 head formula this figure will be 3 foot tall. See figure next page.

Body: 29 1/2"

Neck: 5"

Shoulders: 3 1/2"

Upper and Lower Arm: 6"



This figure shows our skeletal structure when assembled, we have found the center point of the base, and drilled a slightly smaller hole in it for the main upright to fit into, making it snug and also glued around the pvc for added strength. All the pieces have been glued in place EXCEPT the skull and joint where the upper arms attach to the shoulder, we will do this after we have formed the chicken wire body.



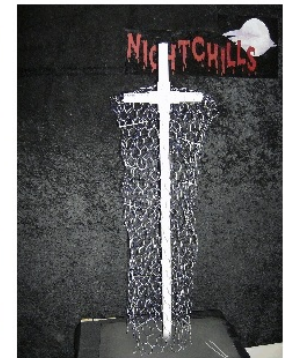
The first piece we will cut will be the main body for the figure, to figure your width, use the shoulder width and add extra to give the body "thickness". There is no set rule for this, but an easy way is to measure the width of the shoulder line (9" in this case) and add what you think is in proportion to your perspective. Since this figure is a "skeleton", I wanted to keep it slender and added 3" for the width , (thickness) of the body.

The length is figured by taking the shoulder line to the floor (30") x 2 to get 60", so the overall dimensions are 60" x 12". You also want to allow an extra section to go over the ends of the shoulder. Finally, cut a small hole in the center of this piece for the "neck" to fit thru. Once you have this piece cut, drape it over the armature and begin joining it together with zip ties and forming the wire to make a body form. Remember to cut the excess off the zip tie and turn the tie inward to the body so it doesn't create a "bump" when you begin applying the burlap. See figures 1A and 1B.

Next we will attach the arms, still leaving them loose until we have the sleeves attached. To figure the arms, I took the overall length and added enough to cover where the "hands" would be so we won't have to worry about those on this figure. So, for this project the sleeves are approx. 16" x 7". Next you will form the sleeve using zip ties and "flange" out one end, (this will fit over the shoulder cap). Work the sleeves on the arm, form to taste, and glue the arms and skull into position. See figures 2A thru 2D.



1A



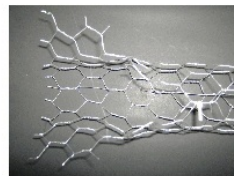
1B



2A



2B



2C



2D

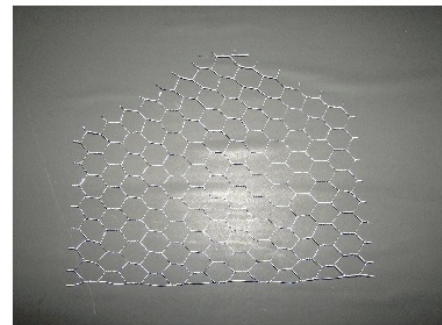
Footnote: You may also want to paint areas of the pvc black that may show once the figure is complete as in figure 2D.

Other examples of basic frame armatures for statics



Next, we want to add our "hood", again this is a matter of what looks good to you, start with a rectangular piece of chicken wire, cut triangle on one side and attach to the body. See figures 3D thru 3F. I also will add a long triangular piece to each cuff to exaggerate the bottom of the sleeve and also "conceal" where hands would be.

Now that we have the body formed, it's time to get messy! To mix our "monster mud" we want to use about 1/3rd of a 5 lb. bucket of joint compound to start with. Add paint and mix in thoroughly until you have a "pancake batter" consistency. You will also want to put on a pair of latex gloves before you begin dipping the burlap into the mud. Aside from being messy, the mud can dry out your skin.



3D



3E



3F

Before you begin dipping the burlap, cut out several pieces starting with 2 about 5" x 48" to initially lay over the shoulders, down the front and back. These will act as an anchor to begin layering the other pieces onto. The others will vary but will all be smaller. Once you get started, you will get a "knack" for about what size is easiest for you to manage.

As you dip the burlap into the mud, make sure that it is completely "filled" with the mud with no bare spots. Using your hands, "pull" the excess mud back into the bucket as in figure 4A.

As you begin layering the burlap, you will want to "layer" over another piece so it anchors the pieces. Also, add extra mud to where the seams are to help conceal them, we will add another layer to these areas after the burlap has dried. On the inside of the hood, you will want to "fold over" the burlap on the inside to help conceal the chicken wire. Once the burlap has dried, we can go back and add mud to the seams to help conceal them. For this step, we can use the joint compound straight from the bucket, be sure to smooth it over the seams with your hands. See figures 5A,B,C.



4A



5A



5B



5C



After this has dried, paint the wire inside the hood to help conceal, eye sockets of the skull, and the rest of the MM to your liking. I used a flat black for the robe, but it still had a slight sheen, so I "misted" it with a gray to help give it a "worn and dust" look. See additional figures to the right/ upper right. You now know the basics of MM, I hope you decide to continue and make many "monsters" in the future. Your imagination is your only limit.....

Happy Haunting