

Sculpture: Plaster Bandage Masks

Materials

Plaster bandage (CAUTION: use gauze 'approved for skin' to avoid chemical burns)
Scissors
Petroleum jelly
Newspaper
Paper towels
Bowl of water
Hair pins, hair ties

Goal

Students learn positive casting, one of the most popular mask-making techniques. It involves making a mold of your own face as the base of your mask. Because you see the outside of the form, this type of mask is best for broad, bold designs where fine details are not important or can be added or painted.

Preparation

Cut the bandage into 1/2" squares, about 50 per mask. Set them aside.

Have a bowl of room-temperature water beside you.

Tie or pin the subject's hair away from the face.

Cover the surface of the face with a releasing agent like regular petroleum jelly.

Be sure to cover eyebrows and along the hairline, too.

Another option is to place two large pieces of plastic wrap on the face, one piece to cover the top and the other the bottom. Leave the nose open for breathing.

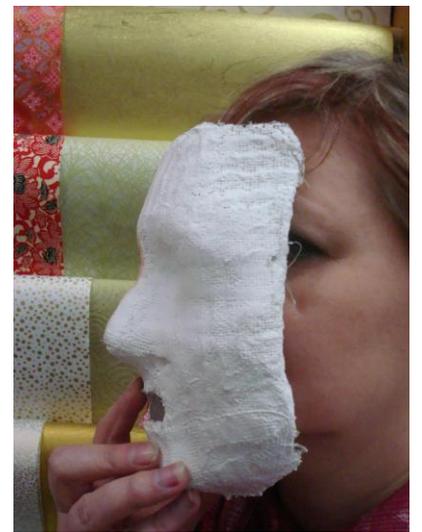
Layer Plaster Bandages

- Put a few plaster gauze squares at a time in the water. The gauze should absorb water but should not soak too long (usually just a few seconds).
- Work with one square at a time to build up an overall layer. Smooth out the bandages to help them better adhere to one another and create a smoother surface for painting or decorating later.
- Alternate the directions of the layers as you go to strengthen the mask.
- Continue until mask is 3 to 4 layers deep (depending on the model's comfort and tolerance).
- Then, let the plaster set until it is almost dry (about 10 minutes).



Remove the Mask

Gently lift the mask off the face. Starting from under the chin, pull upwards. (The plaster will still be flexible at this stage but will retain its shape.). After removing, let the cast dry further to improve its strength. When the mask is dry, you can build up more layers to improve strength or add features. When you are satisfied with the base structure, let the mask dry thoroughly. Now you can carefully sand, prime, paint and decorate it as you wish.



Ready-to-use plastic mask forms are available and are an easier option for those uncomfortable with having their face covered with plaster.