

How Do I Cast Thee For Profit,

Part IV, Bodies

by David E. Parvin, A.L.I.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

In three recent articles, I discussed casting faces, hands and feet and suggested that in order to distant yourself from the competition, go beyond the “normal” life castings by being more creative in your designs and taking advantage of materials that most life casters have not mastered; in other words, produce a better product. The same strategy can be applied to casting bodies as well. Anyone who has read my articles in this magazine over the last few years may remember that I am concerned about repeating myself and thereby consuming any more of our precious resources than is necessary. So in order to reduce the number of trees required to produce this issue, please review “How Do I Cast You for Profit, Part III, Heads” by yours truly in the May issue of *Sculpture Journal* in which I discussed this strategy in detail.

But bodies open up possibilities that faces, hands and feet are less likely to. This is true with other art disciplines as well. E.g., if one has an individual or

family portrait done, even if the result is dynamite, it isn’t very likely that anyone other than the subject(s) or family members would want to own it. There are exceptions, of course. In my recent article on faces, which I mentioned above, I showed a face casting of the current Miss Colorado, U.S.A. a copy of which I have had on display in a gallery to encourage people to get casting made of him/herself or a loved one. It just so happened that someone came by the gallery and just had to own my sample. At



Photo 4

least to that one person, it wasn’t just a portrait but a piece of art fulfilling someone’s wishes for a price is something I am quite willing to do. Generally speaking, however, bodies have more potential for being of interest to others besides the model or the model’s family, opening up additional marketing venues.

But whatever the intended use of the casting, the strategy for

Photo 1: Plaster casting that was made in the alginate mold of the model. The few little imperfections were repaired with clay and/or wax (dark spots) and a silicone rubber secondary mold was made of it.
Photo 2: The same body but cast in the rubber mold in Forton MG (FMG) with copper powder (CP) and a chemically applied patina (CAP).
Photo 3: The same body with a detachable cloth which was dipped into FMG with MP and the same CAP. The cloth is held in place with velcro. This particular style is, I have found, the most requested for portrait torso castings.
Photo 4: The FMG in this casting has powdered limestone (PL) instead of (CP) to give it the look of marble. The cloth which is also detachable is lace dipped into FMG, with CP and a CAP.



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

success is the same as for faces, hands and feet: be more creative both in designs and using different materials. The “standard” beyond which one should excel really isn’t all that great. Actually there isn’t just one “standard” but three. The first and least is a casting made of plaster bandages where the finished product is just the actual plaster bandages. In this case, there is no detail whatsoever, it looks like the outside of a medical cast. Even painting something on it, like one’s “feelings” doesn’t help much. Number two is hardly any better, using the plaster bandages as a mold for a positive impression using plaster or other doesn’t help much. Number two is hardly any better, using the



Photo 8

Photo 5: Also cast in FMG with PL. The effect of very thin cloth was achieved by covering the nude plaster torso with plastic from a dry cleaning bag and then another mold was made.

Photo 6: Made by cutting parallel lines in a plaster casting before making the silicone rubber mold. Cast in FMG with a red brick colored dye. The mortar between the bricks is just a painted gray acrylic. This piece is titled "Built Like..."

Photo 7: A little more complicated casting because of the arms and hands. FMG, CP and CAP.

Photo 8: Lying down torso in the round. Note the alginate mold of the model was made in one piece. Cast in FMG with CP and CAP.

Photo 9: Raku fired with flowers and white crackle glaze.

Photo 10: Raku fired with leopard spots and white crackle glaze.

Photo 11: Raku fired torso in the round as if a vase. Glaze is also white crackle.



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12: Raku fired with half black and half white crackle glazes.

plaster bandages as a mold for a positive impression using plaster or other gypsum material. All one gets is the basic shape but minimal detail. The third and best of these is a casting made from an alginate mold. Even if only made of plaster, hydrocal, etc., but skillfully done with minimal imperfections, the results can be quite satisfying. Adding a faux patina cranks it up another notch in quality and professionalism. But to really do it right, consider some alternative materials.

Photographs #1 through #5 and #9 and #10 are of the same torso and are intended to emphasize the possibilities that arise if one uses a secondary mold. Any of the plaster or Forton MG examples could have been cast in the alginate mold made of the model. However, since I wanted to use this torso in different ways and an alginate mold usually can be used only once, it was necessary to make a silicone rubber mold of the plaster casting. (See "Secondary Molds in Life Casting," SJ, November and December 2004, yours truly) Also, Raku firing require that the object be cast in pottery clay which will not dry out in an alginate mold. There are other materials that could have been used as well. For example, melted wax can be painted into either rubber or alginate molds and turned into bronze using the lost wax process. The disadvantages are high cost and weight. Also, some foundries might have a problem trying to cast a life-size torso in one piece and reconstructing skin texture where welded together is extremely difficult.

Photographs #9 through #12 are of torso's that were raku fired. In order to do these, the torso's were made by pressing clay into rubber molds. After letting it dry for a about a week, the clay was removed and fired. In some cases, a design was painted on. Next the torsos were covered with various glazing materials. After a second firing, they were placed while still cherry red from the kiln in a barrel containing combustible materials and covered with a lid engulfing the torsos with smoke as they cooled. I have many more examples of really interesting glazes but the black and white format of this publication doesn't do them justice. However, I hope that what I have shown here will inspire others to expand their horizons.

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