

Techniques For Life Casting Hair

PART 1

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Photograph #1



Photograph #2

Hair has always been important; so important that even in two biblical stories, hair was critical to the plots. Remember the brothers Esau and Jacob. Esau was a hairy man but Jacob was a smooth one. Jacob glued lamb's fur to his hands and convinced his poorly sighted father that he was his brother. Skip a few books, chapters, and verses, and one finds Samson whose strength was in his hair. Unfortunately, he fell for the wiles of Delilah who whispered, "Hey handsome want to come up for a good time and a haircut?" Not only are there many more references to hair in the Bible, but hair seems to show up just about everywhere. If it hadn't been for her long hair, Lady Godiva would have had to take the time to cover her assets before jumping on the horse. Don't forget Repunsel and Goldilocks. Poetry is filled with hair,

"My hair is gray but not with years Nor grew it white in a single night As men's have grown from sudden fears."

And then there is music. Look no farther than old English folk songs:

'Black, black, black is the color of my true love's hair..., " "... then a flash of phosphorus in her seaweed hair and I looked again and my mother wasn't there..., " or

"She wept, she cried, she tore her hair, ah me what could I do... "



Photograph #3



Photograph #4



Photograph #5

In the sixties, there was a whole musical devoted just to hair in which some of the cast members stripped down buck naked to show off all the hair they were born with! Almost certainly, religion, history, art, poetry, music, theater, and civilization would not be the same without hair.

Amazingly, when I began life casting about twenty years ago, hair was something that just got in the way. It was usually tied back and covered; what stuck out was smeared with petroleum jelly or Crisco, neither of which washed out very easily. I don't remember exactly when, but it must have been at least 15 years ago that I got lucky. I was preparing a little girl of about eight for a face casting. As I was covering what little hair was visible with petroleum jelly, her mother who was a hair stylist, mentioned that she knew of something that might work better, a thick hair conditioner called "Cholesterol." The name seemed odd to me then and still does. Just imagine someone coming into a marketing meeting and announcing that he/she has just thought up the perfect name for their new hair conditioner, "Will Harden Your Arteries!" But I got some and tried it; it worked great and was easy to wash out. From that time on, I could promise that getting cast is like a stay in an expensive spa, including getting a seaweed wrap and the best hair conditioning ever.



Photograph #6

Photograph #1 is of what often passes for a life casting of a face yet falls short because it doesn't include either the ears or hair. Photograph #2 is a more complete casting which looks a whole lot more like the subject partly because both ears and hair are included. (For casting ears, see SJ, "Casting Perfect Ears," May, 2004 by yours truly.) I have to be careful here and not say something that may not be the truth and make me sound even more arrogant than I really am. Remember who claimed that he had invented the internet and ended up losing the big election? Being able to cast hair makes an incredible difference in life casting and he/she who solved the problem should certainly be remembered in the Life Casters' Hall of Fame. But just because I was the first person I know of to figure out how a practical solution doesn't mean that I was the only or even the first. Even though I suspect that this was another original Parvin's perfectly pertinent procedures for pleasure and profit, I will only take credit for spreading the "good news" and not keeping it to myself.



Photograph #9



Photograph #7

Fortunately, casting hair turns out to be quite simple, all you need are the right product, a willing subject, and some instruction. Cholesterol should be available at any beauty supply store. ArtMolds, see advertisement in this issue, offers its own product for this purpose called "MoldEse," which is also an excellent choice. Caution, there are releases that are intended to prevent skin safe silicone rubber from sticking to hair. These will work but just as petroleum jelly and Crisco will be very difficult to wash off.

Photograph #3 shows a willing subject, 13 year old Laura who has long, thick, beautiful hair that is just made for casting. We have her apply the Cholesterol. While a plastic bag with a hole for the head will work, I purchase paper medical gowns which are very inexpensive and more comfortable cover-ups.

In photograph #4, another assistant, Audra, and myself are helping Morgan apply the Cholesterol. Don't just cover the hair; the trick is to work the Cholesterol



Photograph #10



Photograph #8

completely through the hair right down to the scalp. You almost can't apply too much. It will take at least a pound for someone with as much hair as Laura's. Once applied, wait at least 15 minutes before starting the casting to allow the Cholesterol to dry out slightly stiffening the hair and enabling you to tweak it into the exact position desired. I usually use this time for any final preparations such as measuring the water and the alginate.

Photograph #5 shows Laura standing in position for the casting. Audra has just arranged her and is touching up some places that need a little more Cholesterol. The very last preparation will be to apply a little petroleum jelly to the eyebrows and eyelashes. The PJ will help define the eyebrows and will reduce the chance of putting out the eyebrows eyelashes. Cholesterol might sting the eyes slightly and this small amount of PJ is no problem to wash out. Note that Laura is now wearing a piece of



Photograph #11

lace which will add a very nice texture to the casting and make it look as if she was wearing something preserving her modesty and reputation!

In photograph #6, I have just lifted off the alginate mold. As it came free from the bottom, I had one of my assistants pull the hair loose from the mold. The hair will not be stuck into the alginate but will cling slightly because of the thick butter-like conditioner. Short hair comes free with no assistance. Note that Laura is smiling and in no discomfort at all.

While Laura was in the shower washing the conditioner out of her hair, I made a plaster positive from the alginate mold. In photograph #7, Laura has emerged from the shower no worse for the wear. If you have read my recent articles in SJ, (See esp. May 2006 for faces) then you are aware that I do not use plaster as a final casting material but will clean up this plaster positive and make a silicone rubber mold for the completed mask usually cast in Forton MG with metal powers. The completed casting is in photograph #8.

Casting hair does have some limitations. First of all, the hair will be matted down as if wet minimizing the styles that can be achieved. However, it is possible to shape enough texture into the conditioned hair so that the effect can still be very appealing. In any event, the results will be far better than covering up the hair. Short hair such as most men have and hair long enough to fall below the shoulders cast just fine. Hair length in between is the least advantageous. The problem is that if the hair will not reach and therefore touch and stick to the shoulders, the cast hair will just hang straight down and not be very interesting. It is possible for the model to wear a wig, even a cheap costume wig works quite well. Also, additional hair can be sculpted onto the casting.

Facial hair, beards and mustaches, cast very well this same way. However if the hair is short, I usually use petroleum jelly since it tastes better than the conditioner and will still easily wash out. If you are casting torsos, Cholesterol works for both pubic and armpit hair. Always let the model apply Cholesterol to her/his own pubic hair. Make sure that she/he applies a liberal coat; pulling out clumps of pubic hair is not conducive to friendship. Chest hair for the gorilla types can be a problem because matting down the hair will cause it to be very visible in the casting. If you do not want the hair to be part of the casting, it isn't necessary to shave or wax (ouch!) it off, trimming it back so that it isn't more than about a half inch (one centimeter) long and using a very small amount of conditioner will solve the problem. Alginate doesn't stick to hair but it does tangle in hair that is long enough. Hair on arms and legs is usually short enough not to need any release at all.

Photographs #9 through #14 show examples of hair cast in different ways. #9 is what I call mermaid hair. White very appealing, the model must have hair long enough and be comfortable in this somewhat more revealing pose. The young lady in # 10 had her hair in a long braid. We did work a light coat of conditioner into the hair prior to braiding it and then applied some to the surface as well. The ballerina look in #11 was done the same way. #12 is different only in that the head was cast completely in the round with no difficulty.

Photographs #13 and #14 have hair that was sculpted. #13 is a face in the round. The subject had very fine blond hair that didn't cast with sufficient bulk to look right. I cast the head in oil based clay and sculpted on additional hair. For # 14, I cut the mask of a Native American model in half and sculpted the flowing hair complete with a wolf's face. Both of these were then remolded and cast in

metallic Forton MG. Hair is really pretty easy to sculpt; I intend on describing the process in a future article.

There isn't enough space in this article or even in this entire magazine to cover the casting of hair in its almost infinite varieties. But if you have been avoiding hair, I hope I have given you enough information so that when you start your next casting you can say, "Walk right in, sit right down, daddy (or mommy, sister, brother, etc.), let your hair hang down."



Photograph #12



Photograph #13



Photograph #14