

Bruce Reynolds In the Studio Notes 12/10/22

Process of making castor frieze. Bruce says a frieze is really a frozen moment in time or a 2000-year-old movie; a narrative.

Prepare a slab of clay – as thick as you like. Bruce's slab was about 15cm but it can be profoundly deep.

1. Let it dry out a bit so it isn't too tacky otherwise all the textured objects will stick to it. Keep it covered with plastic if pre-preparing it, to avoid further drying out.
2. Have a collection of textured objects/ plastic toys/ coral, plant matter/ skeleton kit/ action figures/ animals etc
3. Roll on a background texture – Bruce used a log of wood and rolled it over the slab to create consistent background.
4. Bruce presses in the animals and objects to build a "story". Pressing and dragging a form will suggest movement in the end product. Layers of impressions, overlapping and repeating
 - A parade of animals
 - Visual puns- connections between shapes and textures. Eg similarity in texture between tree fern and hand bones.
 - Hybrid and imaginary creatures
5. Build a timber frame around the clay tile so the plaster will be contained. The timber pieces are taller than the clay. Use tape to hold the frame in place.
6. Prepare a hanging device by bending a 20cm piece of coat hanger wire into a v shape and then splay out the legs so they can be buried in the plaster.
7. Spray the mould and the timber frame with a light spray of lanolin (Lanotec heavy duty) or spray on vegetable oil or 50% water / detergent mix in a spray bottle. Don't allow the liquid to pool on the mould. Spray lightly in a few directions and hold spray can about 60 cm away from mould. Aim for thinnest possible coating. This will assist the release of the plaster from the clay mould without damaging it and means you can then reuse the mould.

Mixing the plaster

1. Bruce used about 1.4 litres of water for a pour that was about 15mm deep and about 30 cm by 40 cm. plus he had lots left over for a second pour
2. Wear a dust mask, protect skin with lanolin or olive oil or gloves.
3. Always add plaster to water. Sprinkle it onto the water don't add it in clumps. Don't stir it yet. Continue adding handfuls until an island of plaster sits on the surface of the water and starts to crumble a bit. Then add a touch more. Let it soak for 2 mins. Don't stir it yet.
4. If you get the mix accurate you get a strong mix with a quick set time.
5. After 2 mins stir with hands or paint stirrer for 1- 3 mins.
6. It should be like very thick cream.

Pour into mould

1. Pour gently over the clay mould and agitate it gently with your fingers to remove air bubbles and push the plaster into all the recesses. Half fill.
2. Place a reinforcement such as hessian, or fibre glass scrim, or fibreglass flyscreen to onto the plaster and insert the hanging device. Then add the rest of the plaster to fill the mould. Aim for 15 – 20 mm thickness for a small wall plaque. Bruce suggests having a back-up project for any left-over plaster ready to go.
3. Leave it to set until the next day.

Remove from mould

1. Carefully remove the tape and gently lift the plaster off the clay.
2. If the mould is intact, you can take another cast of it. Remember to respray with the releasing agent (lanolin, oil or detergent)
3. If there is no plaster embedded in the clay mould you can actually fire it.

Alternative mould material

Bruce uses 'closed cell polyethylene foam' which is the type of foam that rubber thongs and yoga mats are made of. This can be carved into and arranged in various ways to make moulds. It is flexible so is easy to remove the plaster. The foam can be bent and taped into 3D forms. Bruce builds his 3D forms gradually in stages. Adding reinforcing fibreglass scrim as he goes.

Plaster suppliers

Gyprock Casting plaster <https://www.gyprock.com.au/products/specialty-casting-plaster>

Bunnings or Barnes sculpture supplies

Alternatives to plaster for exterior situations and added strength.

For his good works he uses Hydrocal. Hydrostone or Ultracal 30. All available at Barnes.

White Hydrocal is a gypsum product used for slip latex moulds and case moulds. Offers slightly better heat resistance than pottery plaster with higher wet and dry strengths.

<https://www.barnes.com.au/single-product/white-hydrocal/>

Hydrostone TB is one of the hardest and strongest gypsum cements. Slightly higher setting expansion than hydrocal, but is ideal in case moulds, press and stretch dies. The most widely used product for solid casts and statuary. <https://www.barnes.com.au/single-product/hydrostone-tb/>

Ultracal 30 is the most widely used gypsum cement with the lowest expansion rate available. The industry standard for casting of foam latex. Highest strength with less tendency to warp. Excellent for case moulds, close tolerance tooling and applications requiring exceptional hardness.

<https://www.barnes.com.au/single-product/ultracal-30/>

Pigment

Bruce uses Langridge Pigments. They are intense, expensive, gorgeous. Bruce likes ultramarine blue because it represents the trade of ideas and the ideas of crossing ideas and geography.

<http://langridgecolours.com/langridge-pigments/>

Concrete colouring pigments are used and can be cheaper if buying in larger quantities through concreters. Such as Mac Technology in West End <https://www.mandct.com.au/>

Joining pieces

Large pieces can be made in sections and using multiple pours. To do this score the set section well before pouring the next section so the two pieces will bond.

Cleaning up and finishing

Can enhance with watercolour. Can carve away any untidy bits or flaws while still fresh from mould before it sets really hard. Always wear a mask. Avoid making dust.

Words of wisdom: Bruce says if you design the thing to death, it has no surprise left.