

Modeling the Face

The leather has different properties when it is soaking wet than when it is damp. If you have let the mask dry completely, dampen the face with a water sprayer. If you have tooled leather you may think of this stage as “casing”. The leather will now take and hold the impressions of the modeling tools. I use the ball modeler in the eyes and nostrils. When the eye socket is defined I like to finish the eye with the spoon modeler. I use the ball modeler to separate the lips and the spoon modeler to help define under the lower lip. Each time I use a modeler I press and rub the area with my fingers and thumb to get rid of the tool mark look. I like a softer edge. If you like your detail sharper you may leave the tool edges.



Wet Formed Leather

Face with Scarf

by Cheryl Smeja



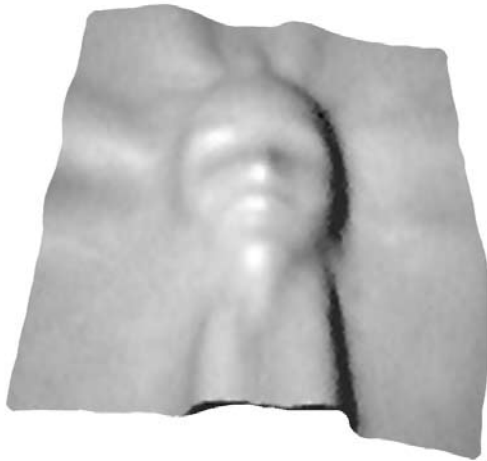
Leather lends itself very well to sculpting faces since it is, after all, skin. You must choose the right leather to achieve the best results in wet forming. It must be vegetable tanned leather known as tooling or molding leather. Some leather can look wonderful for tooling and will not mold very well. If it has been split after tanning you have a better chance of it having the stretch you want. I have found that more expensive leather is the best (of course).

Tools and Supplies

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 4" plastic face form | hot water |
| t-shirt rag | ammonia |
| spoon modeler | 8x8" molding leather |
| ball modeler | (3ozweight) |

Press in the Face

Water for wet forming is best heated to 120-130 degrees F.. Don't let the water get over 150 or the leather may burn and shrink. A little ammonia (1/8-1/4 cup per gallon water) helps soften the leather while wet, and makes it dry stiffer.

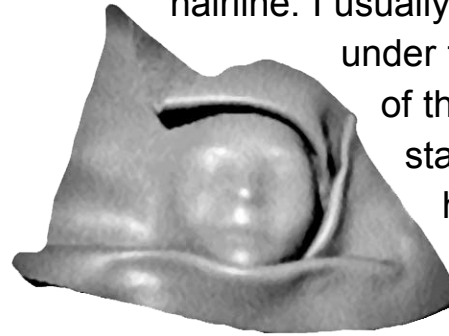


Agitate the leather in the water with a stick to help saturate all the fibers and soften the leather. Place the plastic face on an old towel and put the leather grain side up centered over the face.

Use the t-shirt rag spread smooth over the leather while pressing the leather over the face. This will help get rid of some excess water and is easier to grip (the leather will be slippery). Remove the rag and continue pressing and smoothing the leather over the face with your fingers. Don't try for ultimate detail at this time. Most important is the nose stretch and the dome shape around the head and under the chin.

Wrap the Scarf

The inside edges of the folds around the face help hide any wrinkles under the chin and define the hairline. I usually start by bringing up a fold under the chin. From there I fold one of the sides along the cheek and start a new fold across the forehead.



Continue wrapping around the face until the folds look good to you. There is plenty of time to adjust the folds so that they flow and perhaps suggest movement.

Allow the mask to dry modeling the details features.

