

Finishing a Custom Reproduction from Bauman's Taxidermy

All blanks are scrubbed with soap and water, and then rinsed in acetone to remove mold release. It may be worth the effort to wipe the blank down good with acetone or lacquer thinner, to remove any lingering mold release. Your paint may not stick properly, if any mold release remains. I actually lightly sand the blank with 220 grit sandpaper, to insure the adhesion of paint.

The excess flashing can be ground off with a Dremel cut-off tool and a sanding drum.

I prefer body putty and white hardener to finish out the seams. Lacquer thinner on your finger will smooth the wet Bondo on the seam. Fixit Sculpt will work, also. Silicone press molds can be used to replicate scales into epoxy or a small engraving pen can be used to trace them back into Bondo.

The mouth insert is made of latex rubber. Cut out and smooth out the mouth opening with a cut-off tool and sanding drum. Trim the latex mouth cast to fit the opening. Super glue gel and super glue accelerator will stick the latex to the blank. I tack the mouth in at 12:00, then 6:00, then 3:00, then 9:00 to make sure it is aligned, properly. The gap between these can now be super glued. Fixit Sculpt can also be used to smooth the transition out nicely. A small, stiff bristled artist brush or a toothbrush tapped into the medium will simulate teeth patches.

Some of my molds have been designed to be closed gills or open gills. To open the gills slightly, use a Dremel cut off tool to trace the line where the body scales meet the membranous tissue coming from the branchiostegal rays of the operculum. I extend upward towards the jaw, further than the normal position. It will allow the gills to be opened more, and can easily be sculpted back later. Then heat the operculum, by using very hot water and use wooden wedges to keep the gill plates open. Running cold water over the gill plates will set the resin in place. I highly suggest that you coat the back of the rubber mouth insert with a body filler/resin/chop fiberglass mixture, from the open gill area. Once cured, partially damn off the openings with blue painters tape and 2-part foam the head and gill area. CAUTION: When using 2-part foam, do not overfill areas. Use minimal amounts, until you are accustomed to the proportions, to achieve your goal. Excess amounts have to have expansion room and can put excess pressure on the blank, causing warpage or cracking. Always make sure my mouth plug is backed with a cured Bondo/resin/chop mixture, before foaming. I also pack the inside of the mouth snugly with paper towels, to insure support from the expanding foam. Fake gills can be carved out of the foam, formed from Apoxie Sculpt, or artificial ones may be purchased. I typically smooth out the soft tissue areas beneath the gill plates with Bondo and lacquer thinner. (The process is similar to finishing the seam.)

I find it best to rough up the fin pockets and bases of the paired fins, before attaching them. Gorilla Super Glue Gel / Zip Kicker works best for me, to attach the fins. Once cured, Fixit Sculpt can then be used to smooth the transition. When all the putty work is completed, I prime my blanks with Zinser 123 white primer; just make sure it is fully cured, before spraying a light coat of lacquer over it. Acetone will easily remove any over spray into unwanted areas.

If you have any problems or need some help with the blank feel free to call. (405) 570-1051.

Thanks

Kenneth Bauman