

Sculpture (Notes thanks to Eric Schwarz)

Mold Making - Part Two

Take the wet newspaper off the back. Using a hook tool, clean off all the edges and remove any support wedges from the back of the wall (they should leave no mark). Make sure no plaster is in the reclaimed clay.

Carefully peel the wall away from the piece, keeping any salvageable pieces. This might require some gentle wiggling to remove, but note how clean the edges are.

The next step is CRITICAL: make a pinch pot using some of the wall clay. Using a wet brush, swirl it around inside the pinch pot to make a small amount of slip-like liquid. Paint this clay liquid on the back of the plaster wall in a thin even layer. This will ensure that the back will not stick to the front. Paint the sides of the wall as well.

Rebuild a retaining wall at the bottom (even if it extends off the board, build it up with clay.) The retaining wall goes from the outside edge of the wall to the same point on the other side.

After this point, the back is built up in the same fashion as the front. Proceed with water in a bowl, add blue pigment and plaster as before. The backside generally does not require as much product as the front. While the plaster is slaking, it can be left in this state for quite a while, it is only when the plaster has been mixed and lumps broken with the fingers that it must be used immediately.

Begin applying the plaster starting at the top. Keep the fingers together and use a picking up and splashing motion. Make sure to blow into holes and crevasses, and that all air bubbles are broken. Excess plaster should be poured in the garbage if no one is around to share the mixture. Use this time, while the splash coat dries, to tidy up your work area.

Continue adding layers of plaster as you did to the front, keeping a margin of about one inch at the side of the wall. Each time you apply a layer to the backside, be sure to scrape the front side of the plaster wall. This area should always be kept smooth and clean. The thin blue line separating the front and back of the mold should always remain visible.

The burlap layer.

Cut a wide strip of burlap off of the roll approximately twelve inches wide. Cut this strip into four inch strips. You should have about 10 strips for each side of the mold, working horizontally. Some strips should be shorter than the others for the less wide areas of the mold. Mix plain plaster in a bowl as before, let slake. If it crusts too much, you may add water at only this stage.

We begin the burlap layers with perimeter double reinforced strips. Submerge a piece of burlap in the plaster, remove and gently squeegee off the excess with your fingers (do not overdo this), fold the strip in half lengthwise and place all around the perimeter, overlapping by at least an inch. This layer must not extend beyond the edge of the plaster wall, the seam where the sides meet must always be kept neat. Once this is complete, place lateral pieces of plaster-soaked burlap from top to bottom, overlapped in a shingle fashion.

Next, we will place a central pinched rib of burlap from the top to the bottom. Load a burlap strip in plaster, and give it a cursory wipe. Place this strip folded in half all along the perimeter, making sure it does not go past the edge. Then using the fingers, pinch it into position. Tuck in and fold up at the bottom, it should only go to the edge of the dam. Keep adding perimeter pieces, overlapping by one inch. Keep them flat, do not have them sticking out. Keep the edges clean and square.

Next, begin at the top with vertical strips. Pinch out a rib so that a phalange of one inch remains. Pull the edges of the phalange back so that this rib is quadruple layered. Continue straight down the middle and tuck in at the bottom. Next place lateral ribs in the same fashion at the weak points, usually three or four per side.

Do each side separately - this is easier than going straight across. The vertical ribs take out stress and prevent warping. Keep the edges of the wall clean so you can always see the blue line. Work quickly and note that this step requires a much higher volume of plaster than the other plaster steps. All the mold strength is in this layer. Keep it rough and 'finger tipped'.