

SCHNÖRKELSTIL²

OMPA 43



This is SCHNÖRKELSTIL #2, published for OMFA by Dian Pelz who lives at Box 100, 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024 (And if you think it's not crowded with two of us and all our fanzines in that little tiny box...) United ever-lovin' States of America! 2/8/65

SCULPTURE FOR THE NEWLY HATCHED

For those of you who like to dabble in art for the fun of it I'm including a few pages of material on the techniques involved in sculpture. Although there are many who paint, and countless who draw, sculpting seems to fall way behind as a choice for those spare hours. This is, probably, because sculpting involves a good deal more mess than the other two. If you have a spare room, a large garage, or a back yard you have room to sculpt. Most of the materials involved are inexpensive, and the results are often surprizingly pleasing.

CLAY This is the basic medium that most begining sculpture students start out with. It can be used in a fairly small area, keeps well if covered, and is quite cheap. Clay can be purchased in an already prepared state (containing certain drying ingredients) for about \$4.00 per 50 pound box. The box contains two plastic encased 25 pound blocks usually. These will keep almost indefinitely as long as the plastic is left untouched and the air does not get in. Clay is very simply what it is named. It dries out rapidly to a brittle, crumbly, unworkable mass. Once the clay has dried the only way to re-use it is to pulverize the pieces and remix with water. Working in clay has its limitations in that any attempts to create long extensions usually meet with failure. If a piece is extended it will either break of its own weight, or it will dry faster than the parent piece, crack, and break off. You can sometimes use external supports to hold up an extension until it dries, or wrap it in wet cloths to prevent it drying too fast. The limitations of clay work are best discovered by experimentation. An internal support cannot be used unless it is something like a piece of fairly heavy paper which can be crushed. This is becuase clay shrinks as it dries and anything that will not give way to the shrinkage will cause the clay to crack. If clay is built up around a piece of crumpled paper the paper does not have to be removed when the clay is fired as it will burn out. Many hobby shops have facilities for firing clay pieces, and they charge by size, i.e., so much per square inch. Most fees for firing are quite inexpensive, but I would suggest that you ask around before deciding on one place. (Of course, if you are loaded you can go out and buy a kiln of your own. For small pieces electric kilns are quite satisfactory, but larger work usually demands the greater efficiency of a gas burning kiln.) A clay piece must be thoroughly dry before it is fired or it will explode in the kiln, often taking any attendant pieces along with it in a sort of horrible suicide pact. The process of firing begins by a gradual raising of the temperature within the kiln to drive off any residual moisture. The temperature is then further increased until it actually drives off the water within the chemical makeup of the clay itself. This causes the clay to form a new, glassy, substance. If pieces are over-fired the edges of the pieces will actually become molten and begin to flow. In some cases this is desirable, but if there is any surface detail on the piece over-firing will completely destroy it. This however, is a problem for the kiln operators and not for you. The fired piece is hard and much less breakable. than before and will last as long as any other piece of earthenware.

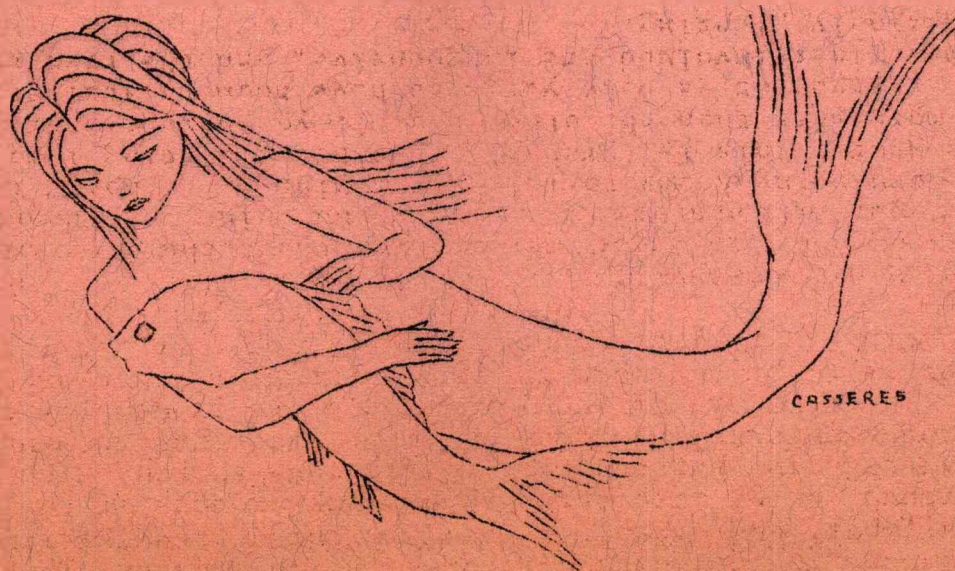
PLASTER Plaster is composed of a white powdery substance that is created by driving off the water from calcium sulphate through the application of heat. When water is re-added to this powder the heat is recreated and the powder solidifies into what is, to all intent and purposes, its original form. When mixing plaster, fill a flexible plastic basin or disposable water-tight container with water to $\frac{2}{3}$ the amount of plaster you wish to mix. Taking a handful of plaster from the sack, sift it gently through your fingers into the water, being careful to remove any hard lumps or foreign matter. On no account simply drop the plaster by handfuls into the water as it will not mix correctly and will result in an uneven mixture filled with bubbles. Plaster should be added to the water until it forms a mound which reaches to the surface and leaves some dry plaster above the water line. This dry plaster will be absorbed into the water. You may now mix the plaster with your hand by inserting the hand under the water and mixing gently with your fingers until any lumps are removed. Do not dip your hand in and out of the plaster to mix it as this will cause bubbles. The plaster will just lie there in a soggy mess for a while and then will begin to thicken and warm up. Do not remix the plaster once it has started to set as this will upset the interlocking of the crystalline structure and it will never set at all. (And there you'll be with a bowl of plaster soup on your hands.) You can use the plaster any time between the beginning of the set until the time you have to apply the nearly hardened plaster with a spatula. Try to form some estimation of the amount of plaster and water needed for a specific amount and try to use the same proportions each time you mix the plaster. This will eliminate the plaster cracking off in layers as you are working on it. If you plan to cast a large block of plaster for carving, do it all at once. If you do not, the plaster will have layers and perhaps soft and hard spots which will interfere with its usage as a good carving medium.

Because plaster has virtually no strength of its own, it is necessary to construct an inner rigid, self-supporting framework upon which to base the plaster. This inner framework is referred to as the armature. For the small plaster sculpture, that is, one not much over a foot in height, aluminum armature wire will probably suffice. (In a pinch, use metal coathangers.) This wire is about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter, and is easily bent into different conformations. It is generally fastened to a block of wood at the base, or set into a cast section of concrete or plaster. The basic structure of armature wire is then covered with screen or wire mesh to the size desired. A layer of plaster saturated cloth or sisal fiber is then patted over the screen and the rest of the plaster built up over that. If the sculpture is to be one with extensions not much larger than the diameter of the armature wire, it is best to tightly wrap iron wire (about 24 gage) in a wide spiral around the armature wire to give the plaster a purchase.

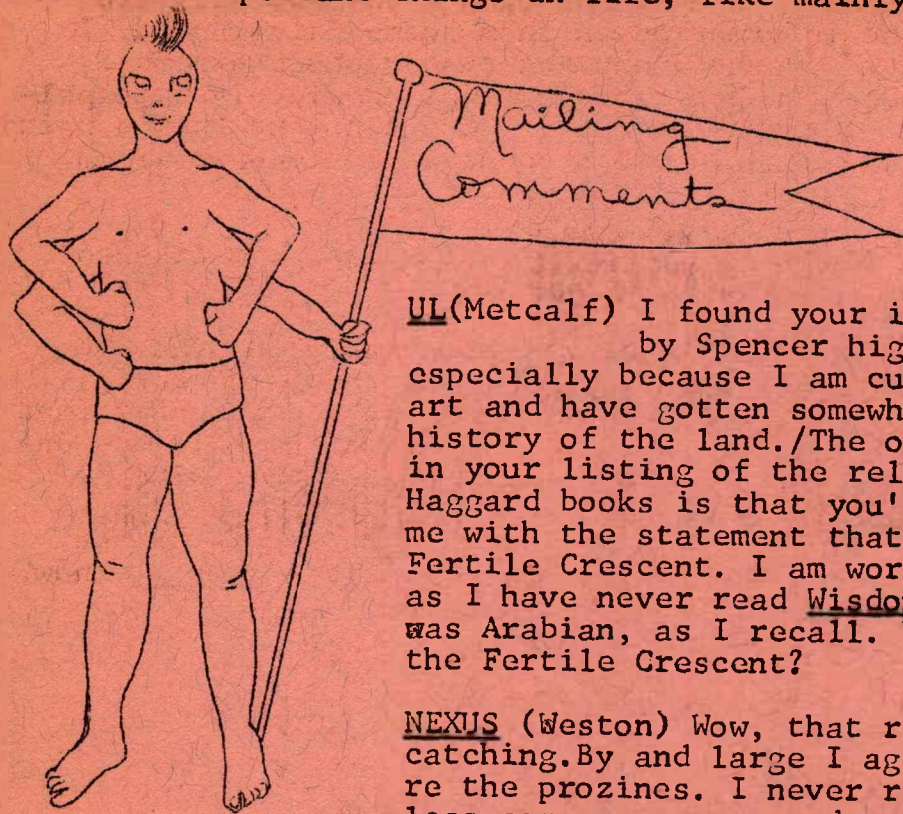
The large sculpture must have a stronger armature. It might be stated as a rule that the larger the sculpture is to be the more rugged an interior framework it must have. The armature of the large sculpture is usually composed of iron reinforcement rods, or pipe. The reinforcement rods have an advantage in that they are fairly easy to bend with a vice and wrench, or by main strength and awkwardness if the tools are not available. Rod is often easily midnightrighted requisitioned from an unsuspecting neighborhood construction project. These rods,

like the armature wire, are usually sunk into a base of some cast material. Pipe is somewhat more sturdy than rod, but also more expensive and a trifle more complicated to work with as there are so many connections to make. The pipe armature terminates at the bottom in a flange which is then screwed or nailed to a block of wood, or set into concrete. Any section where rods or other materials come together should be thoroughly wrapped with iron wire so as to preclude any interior movement of the armature. Ideally, the armature should, when finished, form a single, solid unit, of which no portion can move independently. Besides materials such as rod, pipe, wire and screen, plaster sculptures can be built over practically any item found in a junk yard. Interesting shapes such as generator housings, portions of automobiles, and other modern flotsam can be turned into interesting plaster sculptures when partially or entirely covered with plaster.

Basically the technique involved in plaster sculpture is an additive one. The material is built up until it approximates the shape required. It is then chiseled, filed, and sanded into the exact conformation wanted. When the piece is correctly shaped it must be surfaced in order to eliminate the chalky look, and to cut down on the dust that is continually being scraped off of the plaster when it is touched. Surfacing can be done with oil paint, lacquer, varnish, shoe polish, latex paint, graphite dust, parafin, epoxy, or fiberglass. Almost anything can be used with the exception of water color paints which sink into the plaster and do little beyond giving it a tone. If the sculpture is to be painted a flat color such as white or black, a touch of pigment should be rubbed into the paint here and there in order to help with the modeling, which a flat color tends to destroy. Plaster pieces cannot be left outside in the weather as the continual absorption of moisture will cause the material to break down. The only way to avoid this is to encase the plaster completely in a waterproof cover. If there is any crack at all in this casing the plaster will eventually crumble within it. Probably the most satisfactory medium for complete water proofing of a plaster piece is fiberglass. However when this is done what you have is essentially a fiberglass sculpture rather than a plaster one. In the long run it is best to plan on keeping plaster sculpture indoors and utilize some other, more sturdy material (such as concrete) for outside decor.



Well, that's the article for this time. More interestingly useless information next time. Maybe an article on woodcarving or using plastics, or the domestic habits of the pangolin or something. Anyway, on to the important things in life, like mainly...



UL(Metcalf) I found your inclusion of the article by Spencer highly interesting. More especially because I am currently studying Indian art and have gotten somewhat interested in the history of the land./The only problem you have in your listing of the relative merits of those Haggard books is that you've managed to confuse me with the statement that Ayesha lived in the Fertile Crescent. I am working at a disadvantage as I have never read Wisdom's Daughter, but Ayesha was Arabian, as I recall. What was she doing in the Fertile Crescent?

NEXUS (Weston) Wow, that red ink is sure eye-catching. By and large I agree with your comments re the prozines. I never read them myself, unless someone recommends a particular story to me. / The Jeeves article on fanzine criticism particularly enjoyed. There are, however, fanzines which are totally bad, such as the one which Bruce and I got that had some of the pages run backwards, and a couple of the ditto carbons run instead of the masters. It was virtually unreadable. In all fairness, I must say that it might have been good if it could have been read. Then there are things like four pages of mailbox locations and the pick-up times... /The Berry article also muchly appreciated.

AMBLE(Mercer) Ogggg, but that grey ink is hard on the eyes!

I believe in Hugo Drama awards, but every con should think for itself.

HAGGIS(Peters) Errr, how exactly do you get a sick Haggis? It has Hoof & mouth disease maybe? My little old feminine heart just blanches at the thought of those poor innocent sick haggises being cruelly taken out and shot. Shudder. Is there no ASPCH down under? /Your article on Art is very interesting. I think that the average viewer has to use a bit of discretion when going to any art show. There is always a certain amount that is done tongue-in-cheek and there is generally a fair amount that is managing to exist by the sheer force and obstinacy of its creator. In other words, just because someone says its great art, you don't necessarily have to believe him. Art changes in style just like anything else. Modern artists look down their noses at a lot of the pieces that were once lauded as the be all and end all of artistic creativity. For an average man, neither an artist, art student, or art critic, the best criteria is still whether or not it pleases him, and to hell with the opinion of the "experts".

BINARY(Patrizio) Gee, your comments about the encyclopedias sound like the schtick Bruce and I ran into a few months back. The only difference is that we bought the damned things. Ours are Colliers and although the information in them seems fairly good, I have been highly irritated by the amount of typographers errors I keep finding - sentences transposed or left out completely, misspellings, ambiguities, etc. I am making a list so I can send them a nasty letter. Besides one entire signature was bound in upsidedown in one volume.

RINGWRAITH(Bailes) LB I sounds like the sort of fellow I'd like to know.

THE SCARR(Charters) Very enjoyable issue. I especially enjoyed the McAulay and Shaw articles. You know, lavatories bother me too. Some of the things that worry me are conveniences that don't flush. I feel like a criminal if I leave. Then there is the uncooperative toilet paper dispenser that rations out little bits as though they were covered with gold leaf. But let me tell you, you haven't lived until you've tried to cope with the bathrooms on the American Grayhound Bus. Ask Walt and Madelaine Willis - they'll know.

