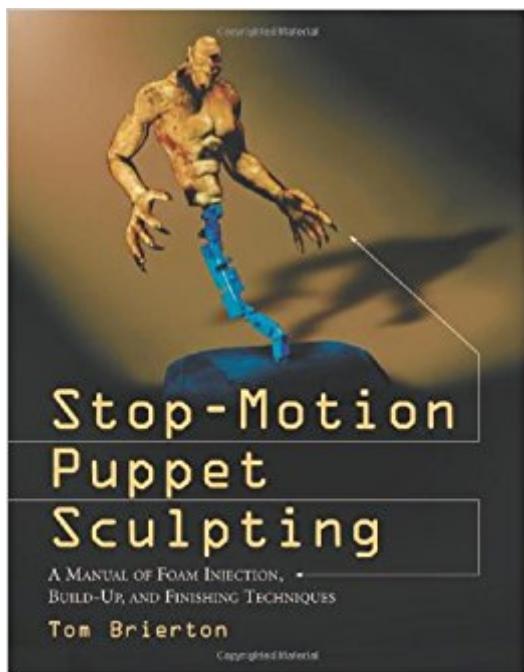


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# Stop-Motion Puppet Sculpting: A Manual Of Foam Injection, Build-Up, And Finishing Techniques



## **Synopsis**

Stop-motion puppet animation is one of the most unusual and demanding art forms in the world. It uses a variety of skills, including design, sculpting, metal work, mold making and casting, taxidermy, filmmaking, storytelling and acting, and can be seen in the simplest commercial spots on television to more complex animated shorts and science fiction and fantasy feature films. This work explains research and design of puppets, and details the fabrication of stop-motion puppets around a metal armature skeleton using the build up and foam injection processes. The former technique uses pre-cut blocks of foam formed with a pair of scissors or other instrument into the shape desired and attaching them to the armature. In the latter technique, the character is sculpted in clay over the armature. This clay sculpture is then replaced with foam by using a plaster mold and injection gun techniques. Finishing techniques described include the making of hair, eyes, eyelids, teeth, horns, nails, and chitinous (insect-shell-like) surfaces. The manual also covers the process of creating replacement heads using rubber molds (such as RTV) and urethane castings. A glossary and bibliography complete the extensively illustrated work.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 73 pages

Publisher: McFarland & Company (July 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0786418737

ISBN-13: 978-0786418732

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.2 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,029,764 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Puppets & Puppetry #64 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Puppets & Puppetry #668 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > Reference

## **Customer Reviews**

"superbly illustrated...Brierton generously shares the knowledge he has gleaned from more than 30 years of puppet-making experience...various steps are clearly explained and are accompanied by detailed, black-and-white photographs"--Animation Magazine.

Tom Brierton is an educator, independent filmmaker and stop-motion animator. He lives in Griffith, Indiana.

This book is pricey but the information it contains is very hard to get elsewhere. Its for a person who wants to make professional level figures for stop motion animation, maybe advanced hobbyists who are pretty serious about it. There are three major sections to the book: 1. how to sculpting of figures in clays 2. How to take these clay sculptures and turn them into foam injected puppets 3. How to do the foam build up method over an armature to create a puppet. This is a fifty dollar investment so I will give you more about these things. Parts 1 and 2 are all about sculpting a clay figure then casting a plaster mold around it. Once that mold is done you put the armature in and cast the foam into it. This whole process is pretty involved and you have to take care of a lot of details. But, if you get this all down you will create some amazing puppets. I tried this whole process but could never get it right. That's my failing not the book. I ended up moving on to the process in section 3.... In section 3 you create an armature then build up pieces of foam around it. This makes the musculature and shape of the figure. Then you coat it with materials and latex rubber to give it a skin. I did all this and successfully created my puppet (2 foot dragon) So, The book is good, shows the processes but you have got to be serious about the making of animation puppets.

This product was delivered extremely fast. The book is amazing

Book came very quickly and in great shape. That's all I ask. Thanks so much.

I would probably be more forgiving if this book were less than half the price it is, but since this is nearly a \$50 investment I have slightly higher expectations. As an earlier reviewer noted, this book is 74 pages in length (including an index and glossary). If it weren't bound, this book could have been stapled together. I don't have a problem with a short book if it is packed with unique, focused insight into a topic, but unfortunately in my opinion this book only achieves this on a shallow level. This is a book focusing on a specialized technique by an industry professional. I would expect it to contain a wealth of insight reinforced by a number of examples outlining different levels of complexity and various challenges facing foam puppet builders. Instead this book offers one simplistic example of sculpting a figure on a wire armature. It then takes the reader through a single example of the steps to create a foam injection puppet and an example of the foam build up technique. In about 25 pages the author covers sculpting, mold making, foam mixing, injecting, baking, removing the cast and

painting. It feels more like an instruction pamphlet than a resource on the topic. I would have liked to see multiple examples illustrating varying levels of complexity. How would the author have dealt with a 4-legged puppet? After reading this book (in about an evening) I'm left with many basic questions, such as materials appropriate or to be avoided in armatures for foam injection, issues surrounding undercuts in puppet sculptures, poses puppet sculptures need to be in for an injection mold, and there's practically nothing on feet anchors, a topic I believe there must be enough information out there to fill a few pages. I also completely agree with a complaint from a previous reviewer. Most of the illustrative photos in the book are low resolution, pixilated and muddy. Nowhere near the quality of the beautiful colour photo on the cover. In my opinion there is no excuse for this in a published book, especially at this price. For the price of this book you could get a number of books focused on various aspects touched on in this book. For mold making I recommend *The Prop Builder's Molding & Casting Handbook*, by Thurston James (\$13.59). I also recommend *Stop Motion: Craft Skills for Model Animation (Focal Press Visual Effects and Animation)* by Susannah Shaw (\$23.07) which looks at foam injection puppets (in almost as much depth) plus other puppet building techniques along with information on lighting, animation and set building, for less than half of this book's price. Also, a word of warning for those of us who thought we could create foam injection puppets at home. The author states that standard ovens in our kitchen don't generate a consistent enough heat and special curing ovens that have fans to circulate heat are required to bake foam. He also notes that curing foam releases toxic fumes, something you probably don't want in your kitchen. So homemade foam injection puppets seem to be out of the question.

As the title of the manual suggests, the book is a primer of learning the fundamentals of foam injection and build-up techniques, material which is (especially the unique process of build-up technique) difficult to find when wishing to create realistic Ray Harryhausen/Willis O'Brien-type animation puppets (as outlined in the build-up chapter of the manual). The book is called "A Manual of Foam Injection, Build-Up, and Finishing Techniques", not "The Manual...", and therefore one would assume before purchasing it that is yet another text on creating stop-motion puppets, and would be a viable addition to one's stop-motion library. The copy at the back the manual (as well as in web advertisements) indicates that this manual also covers the creation of replacement models for animation. This topic was discontinued by the author for a later manual that he is writing on stop-motion animation, lighting and cinematography. Prior to going to press, the author contacted the publisher to edit the replacement models topic out of the advertisements, but they did not do so. If you would like to see this topic included in the manual, you may want to consider purchasing the book.

count of a given manuscript, so that consumers can know the size of the book in question. The cost of this manual is, in my opinion, overpriced, but the pricing was the decision of the publisher, not the author. The manual is also printed on substandard paper stock. Other stop-motion books currently on the market do not cover build-up technique as detailed as this manual, especially as it pertains to a machined armature. Virtually all stop-motion books on the market cover sculpted puppets using only wire armatures. The manual adequately explains what it set out to do, namely to explain the process of foam injection and foam buildup techniques. A chapter is devoted to basic sculpting techniques to initiate a beginner in the amenities of muscle structure and its importance to the creation of more realistic stop-motion models. This was, however, not the crux of the manual per se, which is why only one chapter was devoted to sculpting. The primarily complaints seem to be in its cost and the quality of the paper stock and images, as well as absence of more material to make the book more "saleable". However, further detail explanations of other types of anatomies (i.e. quadrupeds, fantasy creatures, etc.), would have driven the cost of the manual up exponentially. The manual is overpriced as it is. An entire chapter is devoted to the foam injection technique, and is explained in a simple and concise easy-to-follow explanation. As such, the manual has been geared to people interested in the art form, but who do not have advanced skill levels in sculpting, mold making, and foam injection. Regrettably, the publisher chose to use black and white photographs, and at low resolution. As such, the images suffer. It would have been preferable to use higher resolution images, and in color. If a kitchen oven cannot be used for foam injection in one's home, one might try to be resourceful enough to not give up and think of an alternative solution; namely, to use a kiln oven in a garage or other room that is out of harms way. It is common knowledge in the visual effects/stop-motion community that hot foam can be difficult and toxic to work with. The manual only confirms this. Given the subject matter and material covered within the manual, it should be less expensive, given what one gets for their investment. One should consider contacting the publisher if they feel that the manual is overpriced, or at the very least return the item if they are not satisfied.

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