



Bradley De La Torre

Having been an artist all my life and an airbrush artist for the past five years. I had a dream that one day I would open this business and with love it would grow. It started from scratch, in my mom's basement. I then landed a job painting the local middle school gym floor and with that down payment I bought the first supplies for my business. Everyone saw the heart and soul I put into that Spartan head I painted, which landed me my next job and so on. From that point on I have never turned back and I pour passion, determination, prayer, and lots of hard work into every project for "You're only as good as your last piece of work".

How To Make a Helmet Look Like a Character Head

Some of the supplies, equipment I used in the following helmet project are as follows. Airbrush(Omni4000), Auto Air paint (semi-opaque black, semi-opaque red, semi-opaque white, transparent brown, transparent red, transparent pink, and pearl silver), Auto Prep, saran wrap, blow dryer, sand paper 600, 800, cotton rags, tack cloth, masking tape, vinyl mesh, Windex, paper towels, spray can clear coat.

Disclosure: This helmet is for novelty use only. Have your customers sign contracts stating that this helmet is not intended for riding and they cannot hold you accountable for any accidents.



Preparing the Helmet

1. Take the visor off of the helmet.
2. To protect the visor, wrap a piece of saran wrap around it nice and tight.
3. Roll out and cut enough of the vinyl mesh to cover the visor
4. Place little rolls of masking tape on the back of the mesh or spray it with spray adhesive.
5. Start folding the mesh tightly over the visor and tape it down, making sure no tape is visible from the front
6. Cut off the excess mesh, leaving about 1/3 of an inch so you can pull the mesh tightly over the surface.
7. Sand the mesh surface with 600-800 sandpaper. I also suggest to start prepping your helmet the same way.
8. Spray some Prep-All on a clean cloth and wipe off all your fingerprints on the entire visor and helmet then wait 5 minutes.
9. Wipe it off again with a clean, dry cloth and again with a tack cloth.
10. Mask off the open area on the helmet so you can clear coat the helmet later and also so you have a backing to tape the visor to. Use little rolls of tape to put the visor in it's spot on the helmet.
11. Clean it off one more time to make certain there are no oils on the helmet and visor.



Now you are ready to paint!



The basics: What you must understand in order to view the helmet from every angle.

1. The eyes and mouth must be viewable from the front as well as the sides. It's okay to stretch them a bit more than its actual proportions to make this possible.
2. Make sure you can see the ears when viewing it from the back almost at a 3/4 view as well as the sides.
3. Keep in mind that when viewing the helmet from the front, the teeth are straight and start to angle off towards the back of the helmet. When the teeth are viewed from the side they are straight, not at an angle.

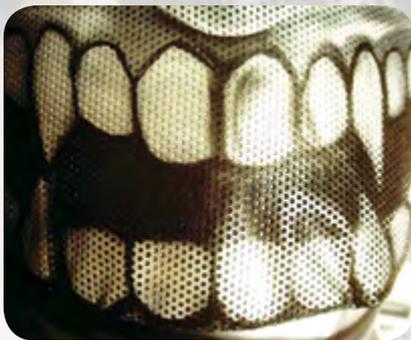
4. Now that you have put some thought into the different angles of the helmet it is time to paint everything in its place in black and white. This will serve as a basic layout for where you will add your details later.

Start by very lightly airbrushing with white if you are on a dark helmet, or black if you are working on a light helmet. This is mainly a sketch of where everything will be use black or white to further enhance and correct areas. Don't go after the details yet, only the areas where parts will be and the contrast.



Now that I have all the basic parts of his head in

place on the helmet and I have double-checked to make certain it is viewable from all angles I prepare to lay down a few coats of silver. You can use whatever color you want so long as you make certain that your basics are still viewable (transparent



Working the Details Around the Helmet

If you notice that there is not enough contrast in particular areas, it's okay to add white and a few layers of silver around those areas (I.E. the eyes, nose and a bit on the chin). As soon as I work my way around the helmet in black with my details, I add the hair of The Pitt, keeping in mind what it's going to look like at all angles. Pitt's brown not silver, but the customer's bike is silver, so I'm going to put a little transparent brown on him and I'm

using transparent colors so the silver will show through. Next I started going in on all the details of the teeth and make my lines crisper with black. Keep in mind that when you are working on the windscreen that your shadows must be as dark as possible and you must have the maximum amount of contrast. Then I worked on the lip and jaw line area, making those areas more defined and detailed while enhancing the shading.



Adding Color to The Helmet

Next I tinted the gums with transparent pink, very lightly air-brushing. Then I did the same with the skin using transparent brown. After that I went in with some transparent red on the very edge of the gums and opaque red on the eyes to help give them a very chromatic glow in the color so they show up really

well. As soon as I have the effect I want from my colors, I move in with my white to highlight the highest points and edges of the teeth. I do the same throughout the helmet on all the features. Also make sure the hair is highlighted; keep in mind not to let it detract from the rest of the work.



Tightening Lines and Details

Now I go in with black and white to tighten all my details. I always like to start in the front and work my way around the helmet, giving every part special attention. Each part should be considered a work of its own. When I finish making it around the helmet it

is time to finish the hair. Now everybody can see why it was so important to sketch the whole helmet out in black and white in the very beginning. A lot of artists would have stopped at that and called it finished, but that's what makes it possible to get a clean image with all the details.



Assembling the Visor

Now that I'm finished painting I take off the visor and pull off the vinyl mesh and saran wrap. You can throw the saran wrap away but keep the vinyl mesh. I clean the visor with Windex and a paper towel, leaving no fingerprints on the windscreen. Spray the mesh with about three coats of spray-can clear coat. Wait for the clear coat to cure then peel off the adhesive back-

ing from the vinyl mesh. Then I lay the vinyl mesh on the visor starting from the center and working my way to the sides. As I'm laying the vinyl mesh down, I lightly blow dry it to help rid the mesh of any creases and air bubbles so everything will look smooth and professional. Make certain to wrap all the edges tightly to the back side of the visor. Now the visor is complete.

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Almost Finished

After going through all the steps, the airbrushing on the helmet is finished. Now it is time to use auto clear coat preceded by buffing the helmet (not the visor). Maybe I'll teach you how to

pull off show-quality finishes using inexpensive auto clear coat in an upcoming article. Once your clear coat is cured and the helmet is buffed reassemble the helmet and visor. Now you have a final product!



The Final Product

This is the end result after clearcoating, sanding, and buffing. I hope this How-To was helpful and remember that this helmet

is for novelty use only.
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