

Behold The Immortal, rendered in a deathly shade of gray



# HOW TO

## LATEX PAINTING TECHNIQUES, PART II: Using the Iwata Eclipse with FW Inks

By Arnold Goldman of The Monster Makers

Welcome back everyone to part two of my latex mask painting series. For this demonstration I'll be using a precision airbrush and acrylic ink system that allows for finer paint application than the last demo (in **HorrorShow** Issue #5).

For this lesson I've cast a fresh latex copy of my classic vampire mask, "The Immortal," which I originally created back in 1994. Despite a few hairline cracks and many castings later, the mold was in surprisingly good condition. So I thought I'd give it another go and put the airbrush and inks to the test. It's been quite some time since I painted this mask, but it was always a fun and challenging design and a perfect candidate for lots of detail. My usual paint job for The Immortal is a fleshy, Caucasian color scheme, but this time I think I'll try another route and go with a deathly shade of gray.

So away we go...

**1.** To begin, you'll of course need a fresh, unpainted mask and an assortment of FW Inks. I've picked out a selection of the primary colors—white, black, and burnt umber. We should be able to make nearly any color we need from these. But in case you're looking for greater variety, FW Acrylic Inks come in 31 colors, the majority of which are transparent.

Though not inexpensive, they are highly concentrated and can be thinned with alcohol or water. Also, in addition to being relatively safe for spraying, they are great for making transparent washes of color for layering and creating the illusion of depth. Once you begin to use these inks for masks you'll find them to be an excellent complement to your arsenal of mask painting mediums. They can be layered over mask paint and rubber cement paint. It is not uncommon for people to use all three mediums on one mask to achieve different effects. In addition to the inks you will need your airbrushes, some rubbing alcohol, a water source, and a paint respirator, along with a few other assorted items as shown.

**2.** I begin with a fully cured, trimmed, and clean copy of my mask. The casting shown here is made from the ever faithful RD-407 latex maskmaking compound, which offers a nice balance between soft and firm rubber. Before starting it's always a good idea to wipe down the latex with rubbing alcohol using a clean rag. This will prevent any of your hand oils from interfering with paint adhesion. Depending on your mold substrate, the alcohol will also remove some of the fine powder that is usually transferred from the mold to the latex during the casting process.





**3.** Now the fun begins. I start by transferring about an ounce of gray mask paint and mix in a little light Caucasian flesh tone mask paint for my base color. The flesh paint will serve to tone down and lighten the gray a bit. I am going for a pale gray. Mask paint is a rubber-based medium, so I generally like to stick with that for the base color to insure that I have complete adhesion. (All mask paint, except red and black, have a considerable amount of white in it. It's not generally known, but the white acts as a UV block and adds a lot of longevity to the mask. Unprotected latex does not hold up over time in most lighting conditions.)

We will use the single-action Paasche H to apply the mask paint since it handles thicker mediums much better than the Iwata. You will want to set your compressor to 60 PSI for the base coat. Incidentally, any basic air compressor with 1 HP or more will do. I would avoid the high priced art airbrush compressors. They may be quieter but they cost considerably more and, from my experience, do not last very long.

**4.** As you apply the mask paint, keep your hand moving and hold the brush at a distance of about six inches using a medium wide spray. You can use the number five needle assembly for the base coat. Be careful not to get too close to the mask or the paint will end up very glossy and runny.

**5.** When applying the base coat, you want to apply the paint in the same manner that you would use with a can of spray paint. The goal here is to create a nice, even mist until there is no natural colored latex showing though. Move the mask around and flex the rubber as needed. Be sure to check all areas for any spots you missed and go back over them if needed. Also, remember that proper lighting is essential when painting a mask or any three-dimensional object. Natural light is always best, but you can use florescent as well as incandescent. Just



make sure you have enough of it or you may end up with a headache and your paint job will likely suffer.

**6.** Once the latex paint is dry, I switch over to the Iwata Eclipse. This is an airbrush that I have really come to love. The Eclipse is a very sturdy, very well-made airbrush. It comes in several different models for different applications. Shown here is the HP-BCS, which is the bottom feed version. This allows you to attach larger quantities of bottled paint to the brush and is therefore great for large masks and props. It is a perfect airbrush for thinner inks and paints.

Incidentally, the Eclipse also comes in several gravity feed versions that are designed for even finer detail work. This version will be plenty sufficient for our painting demo, though. I'm not sure if this brush is actually designed to accept a small color cup, but I found that one of the Paasche cups fits perfectly. Also important to note is that the Iwata is a double-action airbrush. This means that when you push down the release button you can control both the spray size and the airflow. The downward action releases air and the horizontal action releases the paint. This allows for a high degree of precision when applying the paint to any surface.

**7.** Once the mask paint base coat is dry, we start with our first ink color. Since the inks are transparent we are able to build multiple layers of color for a variety of realistic human and creature skin effects. Spraying the paint in thin layers allows for color mixing right on the mask with each previous color showing through. I start with red and transfer a few grams of ink into a mixing cup followed by some isopropyl alcohol. I am using 91% isopropanol, which will evaporate faster than a weaker solution. FW Inks can be diluted easily with the alcohol. I am mixing around 10-15 parts alcohol to one part ink.



**5.**

**6.**

**7.**



**8.** The key to painting with the inks is not to lay the colors down too heavily. We want to build them up slowly. It's a bit difficult to see in this shot, but I am applying a light wash of red around the gums, eyes, and some of the recessed areas. If you are used to using a single-action brush like the Paasche H, the double-action feature will take some getting used to. Most people seem to pick it up quickly, though, and the trigger mechanism is very smooth and easy to manipulate for almost any desired effect.

**9.** Next, I dilute some blue ink and start to accent the veining and begin to build up some additional color; again, making sure not to go too heavy. Some colors seem more concentrated than others, so you will want to test the spray on a white sheet of paper or a scrap piece of latex before spraying it onto your mask. If the paint seems to bead up on the rubber or looks too weak, you simply add more of the ink and try again.

**10.** The colors are still very light at this point so it's hard to see the effect. In this image I am spraying the blue on and around the same areas that the red went down. In areas where the two colors meet, a violet color will be created, but some areas will only have the straight blue and red at this point. By the end of the paint job I hope to have a nice color range with lots of areas of interest.

**11.** One technique that is very popular with mask painting is the use of textural effects. In this shot you can start to see the color build up taking place. I've also added the next color, which is a yellowish white. Here I have applied this color in very fine and irregular, squiggly line patterns over the entire mask. To create this effect you will want to get the finest line possible and keep your hand moving as you apply the paint in a thin lightning bolt type pattern. It is a technique that takes some time and practice to master, but is well worth the extra



effort. Once this marbling texture is complete, we will go back over this pattern lightly with a little of the original base color to tone down the effect. We do not want to completely cover the effect, but use just enough to move it into the background a bit. By repeating this pattern in multiple layers with a clear coat in between each layer, you can create an extraordinary level of depth to the painting.

**12.** Here I have switched back to the red to enhance the gums, tongue, and add more color around the eyes. You will want to be sure to spray some alcohol through the airbrush to clean out any leftover ink before you switch over to the next color. Even though the alcohol evaporates quickly it is a good idea to keep your respirator handy and use it when necessary.

**13.** After the second round of red I move into the shadowing. Here you can see that I have applied some brown around the mouth, eyes, and nostrils. One nice feature of the inks is that they can be reactivated with the alcohol and wiped off; so, if you make a mistake, you can fix it and go back over it with more ink. Fortunately the alcohol will only wipe away the ink and not the mask paint beneath it. You can see that the shadowing is starting to pull the mask together.





14.

**14.** Here is a close-up image of the shadowing and the progression of the paint job so far. I've tried to apply the color in irregular patterns as well as following the peaks and valleys of the mask topography as a guide. You will want to be careful to break up the colors as you lay them down. This will help you achieve a much more lifelike effect.



15.

**15.** Here I've switched over to black and gone back over the same areas where I applied the brown. I have outlined the teeth, gums, and deepened the nostrils and eye sockets. Notice also that I have darkened the gums and aged the teeth using the brown ink. I will continue to adjust and darken the colors as I go along as needed.




16.

**16.** At this point I am not sure where I am going with the eyes yet. I know I want them to stand out so I lay down a fairly bright white to use as a background color. It's actually too bright at this point, but I'll be covering this completely as I build the eye color scheme. For spraying in the eye area you will want to bring your air pressure down and use as fine a spray as necessary. I will cover the overspray with the black we are using for the shadowing.

bright, but I will tone that down once I apply the gloss medium to the eyes. I want the eyes to really pop, so I am overdoing it a bit. Once I apply the gloss there is no going back, so in this case it's better to have too much than too little.

**19.** There are lots of options for eyes and pupils, but it seems that I am really into the slit iris these days. It does seem appropriate for the look of this character. Again, for the slits I use the finest brush I can find and do the outline in pencil first before I commit. I am really liking this color scheme.

**20.** Here is a shot showing the final eyes with gloss applied. As with the last demo I applied five-minute epoxy to create a wet look for the eyes. This time, though, I added a little bit of red ink to the mix so I could knock down some of the brightness of the yellow. Had I not done so, the eyes would be so bright they would've likely glowed in the dark. They may still.

**21.** And here is the final mask. With FX Inks you do need to seal the paint so it will stay put. For that you can use our Perma-wet gloss coating. To bring the shine down some you can mix in about 25 percent Liquitex matte medium to the Perma-wet. I decided to use the gloss straight this time, though. For building up multiple layers of color and depth, this same clear coat/matte mixture works excellent. 

**17.** I decided to try a new color scheme for the eyes on this paint job, so I start with a green outline over the white. An air pressure of around 25 PSI will work well. Again, it is important to adjust your paint flow for as much control as possible. This is true for any areas of detail on the mask. Any of the green overspray will be lost in the black that surrounds the eyelids.

**18.** I next apply some bright yellow inside the green, overlapping them to get a nice blending effect. The yellow is super

So that's it: The Immortal in gray using FW Inks applied with the wonderful Iwata Eclipse double-action airbrush. I went a little subtle on the detailing for this mask. But with the Iwata you can go bananas with details if you so choose. I highly recommend this airbrush if you want to take your airbrushing skills to a new level. The layering and detailing possibilities are enormous with this airbrush.



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18.



19.

20.



21.



I hope you enjoyed this demo. Please contact me via e-mail or phone at [www.monstermakers.com](http://www.monstermakers.com) for any comments, questions, or suggestions for future demos. And thanks for letting me indulge myself once again. Until next time, happy monster making and remember that rubber monsters rule!

*For more info on latex monster mask making and mask painting, please visit [www.monstermakers.com](http://www.monstermakers.com).*

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