

Professional Shoulder Mount Deer

Part 4 — Finishing

By Dan Rinehart

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WELCOME BACK!

We are almost at the completion of our professional deer mount. Throughout the past three issues of Taxidermy Today, we have focused on the professional mounting techniques I use when skinning, fleshing, auto tanning, manikin prep and mounting a deer shoulder mount. From the very beginning of Part #1 of this article series, I made it clear that the purpose of this article series was to concentrate on the specific techniques involved in creating a high quality professional mount for your customer. Providing you with techniques that can be repeated a thousand times to satisfy the American sportsman has been my goal from the beginning. Techniques that you can build a business upon and satisfy your customers is the heart and soul of the taxidermy industry. It's not the competitions and the "thousand hour" deerhead that makes the taxidermy industry GREAT. Instead, it's the consistent quality of a "repeatable" professional whitetail mount that keeps the financial gears of this industry turning. It's the professional taxidermists (full-time or part-time) across America in their taxidermy studios, basements or garages that have built our industry and created a strong livelihood that we enjoy today. This article series is dedicated to you. YOU are the reason America has the strongest taxidermy industry in the world!

Our deer has dried and is ready for finishing work. In general, I like to give a deer mount at least two weeks to dry. If you live in a humid climate, I strongly recommend an air conditioner and de-humidifier to achieve complete drying. For those of you in a dry climate such as Arizona, a few days to a week might be all the time needed for drying. Be aware of your climate and judge your drying time accordingly.



First off, let's take the carding off our ears. This carding has held the edge of the ear in perfect alignment throughout the drying process. The edge is crisp and clean – just like we want it!



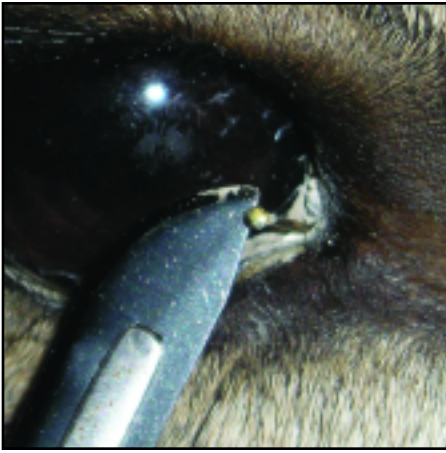
Brush-out the inner ear hairs with a wire brush. This helps remove any debris from the hair as well as get the inner-ear hair pattern in proper placement.



With the nose fully dried, we can remove the plastic that we inserted into the nostril to lock the inner nostril skin in place during drying.



The plastic has done its job perfectly! The inner nostril skin is locked in place throughout the concave inner nostril structure.



Prior to finishing work, the eye and eyelid need to be trimmed and cleaned. The three pins placed in the eye (tear duct corner, upper corner, trailing corner) need to be removed. Use a sculpturing tool, scalpel or pliers to grab and remove these three pins.

Place a new scalpel blade in your scalpel and trim the lower and upper eyelid. The goal here is to remove any inner eyelid debris that is NOT part of the eyelid. Such materials might include clays, pastes and/or un-tucked inner eyelid skin. We want a nice, clean and crisp arch to the lower and upper eyelid.



The "V" of the tear duct is created with the arcs of the upper and lower eyelids coming together. We want this "V" clean and precise (no jagged lines).

With the upper lid, lower lid, and tear duct "V" trimmed and clean – use your scalpel to clean the glass eye surface by scraping away debris and paste film. With the eyelids trimmed and eyes cleaned, we can move-on to finishing Apoxie work.



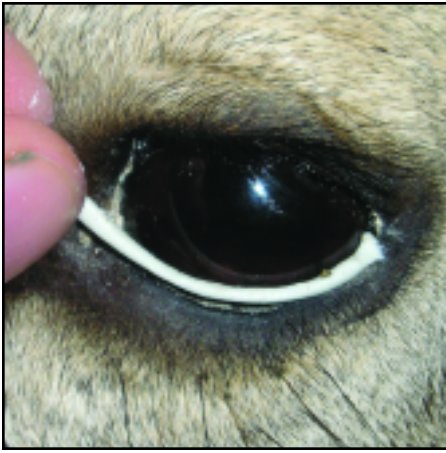
I use the epoxy sculpturing compound known as Apoxie to smooth and finish around the inner eyelid. Apoxie is a two-part epoxy-curing compound with sculpturing characteristics similar to clay. Apoxie consists of two parts (A&B) that need to be mixed thoroughly. The mixture consists of equal parts of both. Notice that there is a color difference between the two parts. When properly mixed together, the Apoxie compound will be one consistent color tone without color-separating striations.



When mixing Apoxie, dip the mixture in warm water and thoroughly mix the two parts together. The warm water prevents the Apoxie from sticking to your fingers as well as assisting in the mixing.



To form the Apoxie to be used along the eyelid, I wet the palm of my hand and role a VERY THIN coil. This coil will be placed and smoothed along the lower and upper lids. Notice that the coil is extremely thin. This is important due to the fact that VERY little Apoxie is needed for inner eyelid smoothing. One of the biggest mistakes I see in gamehead finishing work is the over use and excessive build-up of Apoxie along the eyelids. You only need enough Apoxie to smooth the inner eyelid transition to the eye. Sometimes the inner eyelid is only 1/64".



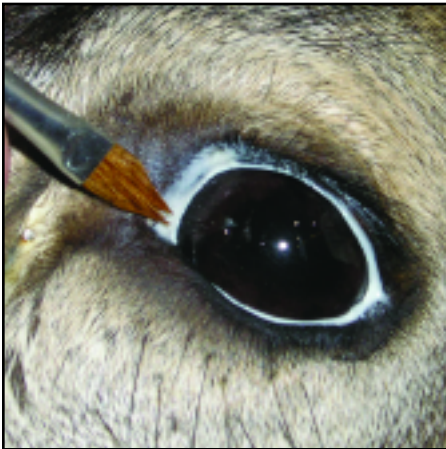
I simply start at the back corner and place the coil along the lower eyelid, ending at the tear duct "V".



Once the coil is placed, I use a stainless steel sculpturing tool to smooth the Apoxie and remove any excess.



I then place the remainder of the coil along the upper eyelid, starting at the back corner and ending at the tear duct "V". Again, I use a sculpturing tool to smooth, sculpture and remove excess Apoxie.



Sometimes the BEST sculpturing tool is a quality sable brush. I find that I can smooth and feather Apoxie best with a small flat edged sable brush. I use this brush 360 degrees around the eyelid and tear duct to smooth the Apoxie perfectly with the eyelid skin.



I am purposely placing the tip of my metal sculpturing tool on the inside edge of the lower eyelid to demonstrate that the inner eyelid drops down to the surface of the eye. Over filling of this inner eyelid would un-naturally fill-in this area. So, be conservative with the Apoxie rebuilding.



With both eyes cleaned and sculpted, let's move on to the lower lip. It's easy to see that the lower lip has shrunk during the drying process. This lower lip should be full and fleshy. Therefore, we are going to need to rebuild this area with Apoxie to recreate the natural fleshiness.



Similar to the coil placed along the eyelid, another Apoxie coil is placed along the lower lip. Again, I grab my "trusty" flat sable brush to smooth and feather the Apoxie throughout the lower lip.



The lower lip has vertical creases and folds. I recreate these by using a pin to sculpture these creases in the lower lip. The pin creates un-natural "edgy" lines in the lip.



I use my flat sable brush to smooth these lines – changing the "edgy" lines to smooth full folds. The lower lip is done.



Moving-on to the inner nostrils, we can see that there is a gap between the inner nostril skin and the fleshy-pink septum. Manikin foam is visible in this area. Using Apoxie, we need to smooth and bridge the gap between the inner nostril skin and the septum.



Mix and roll a small coil of Apoxie and use a sculpturing tool to place Apoxie between the end of the inner nostril skin and the septum. Use a sculpturing tool to press, sculpture and feather the Apoxie between these two points.



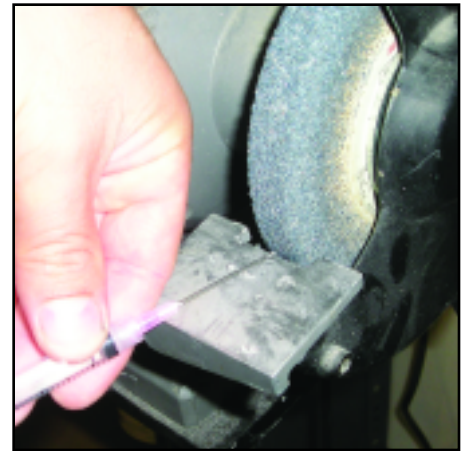
Again, use the sable brush to perfectly feather the Apoxie at the nostril skin and septum juncture.



I've taken a "straight-on" photo of the nostril so that you can see the depth of the nostril. You can see that the nostril cavity remains open and deep. This "disappearing" nostril matches the live deer and is an excellent "selling-point" to show your customers—they will be impressed! Notice that the nose pad is flat and un-textured. We are about to change that!



This is a side-view of the finished nostril. This angle shows the feathering at the septum juncture.



I'm going to show you a fast and easy way to recreate nose pad structure. First, grind the point of a syringe flat.



Place the needle in rebuilding gel and slowly pull the plunger, drawing the gel into the syringe. NOTE: I used our white fin glue to rebuild the nose pad structure. Any rebuilding material that flows into a syringe will do just fine.

Applying slight pressure to the syringe plunger and moving the tip of the flattened syringe from nodule to nodule creates quick and easy nose-pad structure. I rebuild every-other nodule over the entire nose pad surface. These individual nodules need to start to dry before I fill in the remaining nodules – completing the nose pad structure. NOTE: If the nodules touch when they are wet, the smaller nodules will flow together, creating one un-naturally large pad. Therefore, let the first nodules dry and then come back and complete by placing the remaining nodules.





Apply gel along the vertical folds in the lower lip to enhance the fullness of the sculpted folds. Allow the Apoxie and gel to set (approximately 3 hours) and then you are ready for airbrush finishing.



When airbrushing around the eyes, I use Dark Brown by Lifetone. Lifetone comes pre-mixed and ready for the airbrush. For small airbrushing jobs such as deer finishing, I use a Paasche H1 airbrush with a color cup for the paint.



A light fade along the tear duct and the eye is done.



It is important to use as little paint as possible when performing the airbrush coloration around eyes, nose, lips and ears. A common mistake I see is the over coloring of these areas, resulting in a "Tammy Faye" Deerhead. In my school I use the term "toning" to describe the coloration around eyes, lips, nose and ears. The term "painting" represents a heavier application of paint that I work to lead my students away from. When coloring around the eye, I adjust my airbrush to a very light spray and apply color around the eye. Notice that I keep paint off the hair and I create a smooth subtle fade. The color is dark along the juncture of the eye but fades as you move away from the eye. Also notice that even less paint is used on the upper eyelid.



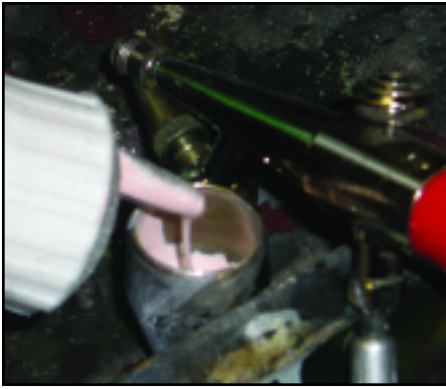
I start the coloration of the inner ear with Pure White.



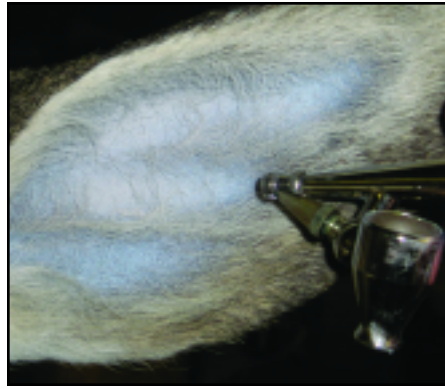
You can see that I have moved the hair and toned the top two inner ear creases. It's important to move the hair out of the way so that you can achieve an even toning throughout the inner ear surface and keep paint build-up off the inner ear hair.



While we have the Pure White in the color cup, lightly mist the inside of the nostril. Keep Pure White off the dark colored hair of the inner nostril skin. Also, do not over paint the septum. We still want to see some of the fleshy pink of the septum.



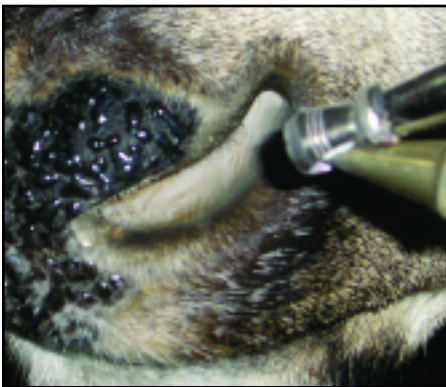
Clean the color cup and add Natural Flesh color.



Apply a mist of Natural Flesh over the Pure White in the ears to give a LITTLE fleshiness to the inner ear surface.



Apply a light mist over the Pure White in the nostril to achieve the same fleshiness as in the ear. NOTE: Be VERY light with the application of the Natural Flesh or the interior of the nostril/ears will be too bright.



Place Dark Brown in the color cup once again and lightly feather over the inner nostril coloration. Lightly done, this Dark Brown will slightly tone down the Pure White and Natural Flesh just enough to achieve the perfect subtle tone.



Our final tone will be throughout the nose pad. I use Jet Black to color the nose pad. Notice that I have toned the nose pad but have avoided coloring the hairline along the outer edge of the nose pad. The Jet Black should be exclusively on the nose pad ONLY! Paint on the hair is unnatural AND ugly!



Finally, I'm going to mix and apply a gloss over the nose to give the nose a LIVE look. I use the quick-building clear coat AQUA CLEAR to gloss the nose. AQUA CLEAR is mixed 1 part (catalyst) to 4 parts (clear) and easily sprays through an airbrush or can be applied with a paint brush.



Fill color cup with AQUA CLEAR and apply directly to the textured nose pad surface.

It's DONE! Thank YOU for joining me for this 4-Part deer mounting article series from fleshing through the finishing work of a professional deer shoulder mount. It's been my pleasure to share my techniques with you ALWAYS remember, YOU are the "Heart and Soul" of taxidermy in America. YOU are the past, present and future of taxidermy. I hope we cross paths someday. I hope you gain satisfaction from your taxidermy work. •