
Safety And Creativity

Based on 14 years of research and experiment with plastics and various non-traditional materials, this book supplies information to designers and interpreters on specialized techniques for use in costumes for theatre, film and TV. Also included are charts detailing the effects of dry cleaning and laundering on adhesives, coatings, colourings and metallisers, allowing the designer to make appropriate choices for specific needs and longevity. This reference delivers many exciting new choices to designers and craftspeople, with the bonus of improved safety, maintenance, comfort for the wearer and visual effects for the audience. The author has worked and lectured in costume for many years; she was Professor of Costume Design at the University of California, Los Angeles; and her research has taken her throughout Europe and Asia.

My Personal Review:
This is the best reference book out there, hands-down, bar-none, for those in the field of crafts artisanship. It is an indispensable bible of fantastic resources and, despite its high price tag, I highly recommend that anyone interested in costume construction buy it ASAP, PDQ! It was published in 2004, after years of grant-sponsored research and development, and thus may be the most up-to-date resource of its kind in the field of costume production.

It's divided into two halves, the first half comprised of materials and safety information, and the second half devoted to process explanation and documentation.

The first half covers an enormous range of products, divided by purpose (paint, adhesive, dye, etc.), type (cold process dye, acid dye, disperse dye, etc.), brand name, and so forth, and then goes on to test the efficacy of the
product in a variety of situations (washfastness, lightfastness, dry-cleanability, etc.).

Moss lists proper protective equipment for all potentially dangerous materials, clean up information, and warnings if applicable (i.e. "Do not clean up with bleach!") She worked with industrial health and safety advocate Monona Rossol to make absolutely sure that the information in the book was vetted for safe process instruction. The book would be worth its weight in gold as a reference volume just on the strength of the first half alone. The second half, however, is the gravy on the biscuit.

The second half is a compendium of an enormous number of specific costumes--walkaround mascots, monsters, masks, wings, crowns, body padding, armor--with precise information on how they were built, often with process shots, original design renderings, construction methodology, and tips from the artisans who made them. Some you will recognize from film and television, theatre, dance, advertising, all kinds of sources. There is no better insight into the costume engineering process than reading about how someone has done something and seeing steps along the way. Many incredible-looking costumes are demystified--once you read the process outlay, you may frequently find yourself thinking, "Hey, I could do that!" or "Wow, so THAT'S what they used!"

Seriously, i cannot sing enough praise about the quality and scope of this textbook; don't be scared off by the title--it's not full of equations and molecules! It's a wealth of amazing, helpful, illuminative information for costume engineers, both veteran and aspiring. (Can you tell this is one of my required textbooks?)

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