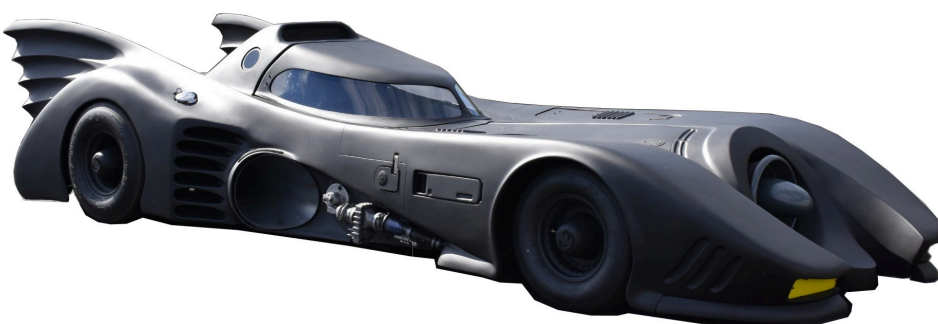


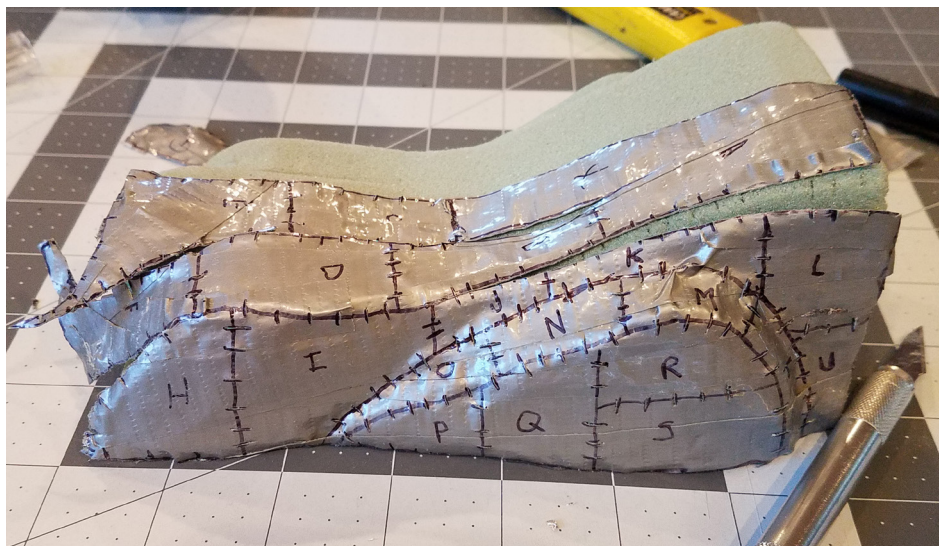


There have been many Batmobiles in television, animation and movies over the years. Some are more iconic than others, but there seems to be a draw to the 1989 Tim Burton/Michael Keaton version of the film that people seem to like. That version of the Batmobile had such a unique look and style that is difficult to replicate. We have had a few of our volunteers attempt it over the years, but Dan, one of our volunteers, took a unique approach when he was building this Batmobile for Jonathan, that I wanted to share in case some others wanted to use this technique for many other types of costumes, not just a Batmobile.



STEP 1: Floral Foam Block

Dan started by using a block of floral foam and carved out the general shape of the costume he was going to build. The actual '89 Batmobile is very long and would be very awkward to drive in a wheelchair so there was a lot of creative freedom to squish the costume down to make it much more feasible for a child to drive it around in their wheelchair, while maintaining the general look of the car.



STEP 2: Duct Tape

After the design was carved out, it was covered with duct tape and then a pattern was drawn on it in sections. These would be flat sections that would later be cut out of foam and pieced together to build the overall shape of the costume. Each piece was labeled with a letter and hashmarks at every 1/4 inch were added where they connected.

STEP 3: Overhead Projector

After cutting out each piece and transferring to an overhead projector, Dan projected the pieces to the size he needed them to be. He used a ruler or measuring tape and was able to calculate the size based on the fact that the hashmarks were 1/4 inch on the original. He knew what scale his model was so he knew what size his hashmarks needed to be in order to get the pieces the right size. Once they were the right size, he locked everything down.



STEP 4: Tracing and Transferring

He then transferred all the templates from the projector to paper. Then used those to transfer them all to foam floor mats. Foam floor mats can easily be found at many home improvement stores or online.



STEP 5: Cutting Out Foam

Foam floor mats can easily be cut with a razor blade but it dulls the blade quickly and you will need to constantly sharpen it. Or you can use Dan's method and use a band saw. Cut out all the pieces and you can start to reassemble them to see the costume start to come together.



STEP 6: Some Assembly Required

Now that all the pieces are cut out, start glueing all the pieces together. Barge glue is a great glue to use for glueing foam. Contact cement works well too. Just be sure and glue both sides first, let it dry and then apply a 2nd coat of glue. Let the 2nd coat dry and THEN stick the two sides together. The reason is because the foam mats will actually soak up most of the first layer of glue. If you try and stick it together after one layer of glue, it won't hold well. The first layer will create a barrier. Then the 2nd layer will actually sit on top of the foam on top of the first layer of glue. Then when you connect the two pieces together, they won't come appart.

The glue dries quickly, so you can actually glue a few pieces and let them dry. By the time you finish 3-4 pieces, you can come back to the first one and be ready for the 2nd coat. The glue usually dries in a minute or so.



STEP 7: Apply Heat

After everything is glued, it's time to apply heat. You can see here that Dan is using a torch. I will typically use a heat gun. You see, the foam mats are very porous. Because of this, if you try and paint them, they just soak up the paint like a sponge and you will waste a ton of paint. So when you heat the foam, you will see all the holes close up and the foam will slightly change color and become shiny. This kind of seals the foam so that it won't soak up so much paint. It doesn't seal it completely, but it helps tremendously.



STEP 8: Plasti Dip

I find this step to be very beneficial. Plasti-Dip can be found at Wal-Mart or most home improvement stores in the spray paint aisle. It will cover the foam in a kind of rubberized shell and will completely waterproof the costume and seal it up 100%.

STEP 9: Paint Me

After you apply Plasti-Dip, spray paint goes on like a dream. It won't soak into the foam and the color of the spray paint should really pop because of it.



STEP 10: Details

Tap lights are easy to find and are rather inexpensive. The cool thing about them is that you can take a colored Sharpie marker and color them to make them just about any color you want. They are self contained, battery operated and you can stick them anywhere on the costume.

STEP 11: PVC Frame

This step should have come much earlier, but unfortunately, this was the first photo I had that showed it. The PVC frame is very important to holding the entire costume. The frame is what typically attaches to the wheelchair. The PVC frame can easily be attached to the wheelchair with zip ties to lock it down tight. Then the costume shell can be attached to the PVC frame by velcro so that it can easily come on/off easily.

STEP 12: Bat Symbols

Be on the lookout for any Bat symbols or stickers that you can add to the costume. These can be light up items, or toys or anything. You never know what could be used. This picture is of a bat symbol that sat on your desk that had lights in it.



STEP 13: Completed

The final costume with Jonathan in his Batmobile. Dan did a great job with this costume.

