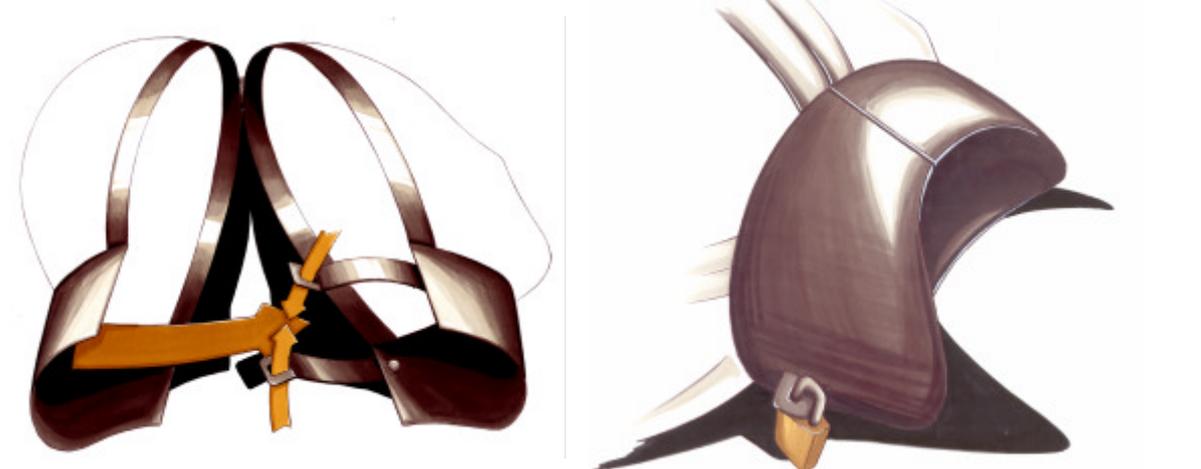


The making of a unique head cage – the "Ypsilon mask"

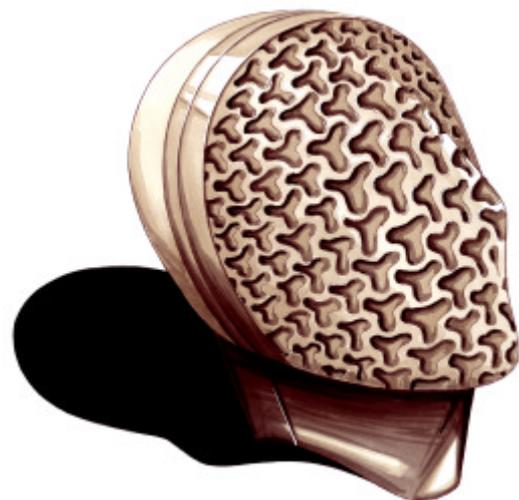
At the very beginning there was – as usual – just a thought. Not clearly visible, sort of nebulous. A new picture, called "Dinner for One".

Imagine some fine dining room, a couple, a very expensive stylish dinner. Unfortunately only one of both could enjoy the dinner. Of course, it is not the girl. But why? I thought about this for about two weeks. Handcuffs? A straight jacket? Some of the other known restraints? No way, it had to be something really special, something no one has ever seen before. Some kind of head cage, not crude but delicate, very stylish to fit into the scene.

I remembered a picture I had seen months ago in a material catalog, showing a metal cast shaped like a gummi bear. It was a promotion for "Formetal", a special sort of perforated aluminum metal plate mainly used in rapid prototyping – this material would be great for the head cage. In my imagination the head cage should enclose the model's entire head almost skintight, it should have a high-closed collar around the neck to support a graceful posture and – of course – it had to be equipped with a locking mechanism (just to secure the head cage against the possibility of accidental removal).



So far so good (and very ambitious) ... The realization of this piece of "vaporware" meant to figure out how to build a cage which had to fit perfectly over the model's head. So I decided to make a cast using plaster bandages. I began with the rear part of the head, using a cheap latex mask to protect the model's hair. The first attempt was successful and – after the plaster had hardened – I carried on with the front part.



This was trickier because I had to cover the entire face of the model with plaster bandages in order to get an exact replica including nose and mouth. The latex mask was fully closed except for two small holes at the nose. Being aware of the possibility that plaster could flow through these holes, short tubes were plugged through the holes into the model's nostrils.

In the end I had a pair of half cups representing the exact form of the model's head on the insides.

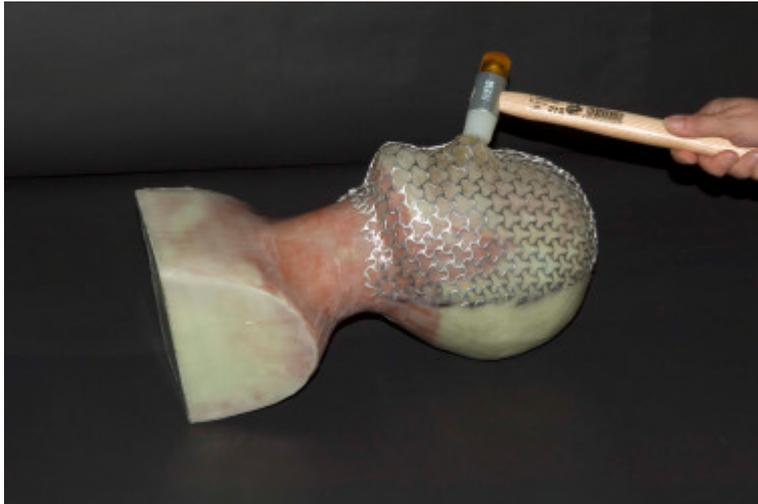
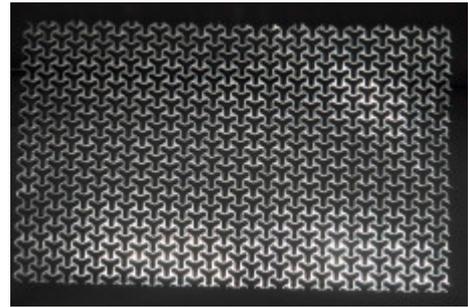
After the cast had dried the half cups were attached to each other and thoroughly coated with mold release agent. Everything was ready for the next step – making the positive mold. I used PU foam to get the base of the positive mold.



Since the model wore a cheap latex mask when I made the plaster cast, the positive PU foam mold unfortunately looked exactly like anybody wearing a cheap latex mask. The model's nose was deformed and there were a lot of crinkles spread all over the head. All these things had to be corrected with a sharp knife and a lot of plasticine.

Finally the head was glued on a spare "neck and shoulder body part" (which I had used earlier to make a neck corset) and was coated with fiber glass and epoxy resin to make it durable.

Now I started to model the head cage. I took a piece of Formetal of a size of about one square foot and started to bend, stretch and squeeze the material until it roughly matched the shape of the fiber glass head.



To adjust the head cage exactly I used a plastic mallet. After cutting off the redundant material one half of the head cage was finished. I repeated the procedure for the other half.

At this stage we were ready to go for the first try-on. The cage did fit but the pattern of the Formetal was not symmetrical and the holes around nose and eyes were much to huge. So I had to start again – this time I paid more attention to pattern and symmetry.

Formetal consists of aluminum and is relatively soft. In order to get more stability I build a frame made of stainless steel. The two parts of the frame were joint with a hinge at the top and the locking mechanism was attached to the front part of the collar. Then, the Formetal half cups were glued into this steel frame.



The final fitting was made using the plastic mallet while the model was wearing the head cage – very gently of course. In the end the head cage fitted perfectly. The last step was polishing the metal to get a glossy finish, which was unexpectedly – because of the many holes – a very time-consuming work.

The finished head cage, worn by the person it was made for:



Overall it took me almost two weeks to finalize the project but it was absolutely worthwhile. Retrospective, if I had to build another head cage again, I would change a few steps of the molding procedure.

For any reasons, I have not realized the picture "Dinner for one" yet. But sometimes in the near future I will – and perhaps the scene will look like this:

