

ARTOOL INSTRUCTOR SERIES:



MASTERING THE DRAGON SKIN STENCIL PART 10

"Everything you wanted to know about your new stencils, but were afraid to ask."

By Craig Fraser

In each issue we systematically explain the uses and recommended techniques for the stencils I have created with Artool over the past six years. From the *Skullmasters*, to *FX*, to *Flame-A-Rama*, to anything else we have laser-cut out of plastic, we demonstrate the techniques we designed them for, along with some accidental discoveries.

Keep in mind that while this is an automotive column, that doesn't mean these stencils are only for cars and bikes. They work for everything from body art, to wall murals, to cake decorating. Because they're made with a solvent-proof polymer, you don't have to worry about what you paint with them; you won't damage these babies!

For this article I return to the *FX-II* line of stencils that I never got to finish; don't remember why, just got sidetracked, I guess.

Although the *Dragon Skin* stencil doesn't really look like much, it packs a lot of design punch. That's my favorite kind of stencil, primarily because they are not so specific in design. *Dragon Skin* is a textural, not a subject-based stencil designed to create skin for snakes, dragons, fish, various backgrounds, and tons more!



STEP 1: Here's the *Dragon Skin* stencil. Looks more like a spaghetti strainer than a versatile paint stencil, huh? Well, play with it for a while and you'll believe differently.



STEP 2: I masked off a few flames on the black panel so you can see how the stencils are used for excellent background filler and graphic effect.



STEP 3: Using one of the inner repeating patterns, I airbrushed lemon yellow in one of the flames. While all of my stencils are hand-drawn, we did use a computer on the inner pattern of this stencil, just like the diamond plate, so that you can easily overlap and layer the stencil to fill any design size.



STEP 4: With the flame filled with the pattern, I freehand airbrushed a glow in the center of the flame with the lemon yellow. This gives the design a rounded, 3-D look, and allows a little overspray to hit the edge of the flame to separate it from the black background.



STEP 5: One of the other inner patterns to the design is this cool snakeskin effect. Using the same yellow, I filled in the second flame. Can this be duplicated with a computer-cut vinyl sheet? Sure, but do you really want to weed the design and remove the masking later?



STEP 6: I switched to a mixture of HoK limetime pearl and yellow, and used another part of the *Dragon Skin* stencil. I airbrushed the layered scales with an Iwata Eclipse CS. I created a slight curve to the arched groupings so you may easily change direction and follow a graphic if need be.



STEP 7: Of course, you can always choose to track the design straight, too. The beauty of a truly versatile stencil is that it can be used in a multitude of ways. *Dragon Skin* also works terrifically as a one-handed speed stencil once you get the hang of laying the scales.



STEP 8: Using kandy organic green KBC pearl, I airbrushed a nice fade on the yellow areas of the flames, and extended some green to the edges of the center flame as well. Never leave a stencil alone, and always combine a little freehand detail airbrushing, or at the very least a nice fade. This not only punches the design better, but it also softens the harsh stencil edge.



STEP 9: Airbrush a little pattern over the existing snakeskin, and take a look at what you get. It's amazing how a few drops of Root Beer kandy and the simple yellow snakeskin pattern replicate a diamondback rattler.



STEP 10: To show you how the negative and positive parts of the stencil complement each other, I airbrushed violet pearl on the edges. You may not think that violet pearl blended with green works, but trust me here. The pearlescent color creates a really cool colorshift when you walk by the design.



STEP 11: As a cool closer, I wanted to show you how easily the stencil wraps around things. For the smaller scales, I used the other two edges of the stencil. All you have to do is slide the curved stencil down the tubes of the frame to give a killer all-over scale effect that would otherwise take forever to mask, and would look terrible if freehanded.

Craig Fraser, author of *Automotive Cheap Tricks & Special F/X*, has been airbrushing for nearly two decades. The owner and operator of Air Syndicate, Fraser has also been the in-house airbrush artist and designer for Kal Concepts since 1992. Located in Bakersfield, California, Kal Concepts/Air Syndicate specializes in custom graphics, automotive airbrush, and the fine art of the custom culture. Craig divides his time between working in his shop, writing magazine articles, and instructing. He has also appeared in a number of instructional videos, and is credited with pioneering the original automotive custom paint workshop for the Airbrush Getaway more than 10 years ago. Craig works directly with a number of manufacturers to develop new and innovative custom paint products. You can check out his artwork at www.gotpaint.com.



FINAL: So how do you like *Dragon Skin* now? The stencil is a lot more interesting when you can see its uses. Talk about time savers, the masking of this effect alone could give you a stroke! Better to leave the brain damage to your paint fumes, and not your techniques. As you can see, *Dragon Skin* is excellent for background graphics, flame effects, or even as a pearl ghosting tool. With the stencil's ability to wrap around objects, you can easily manipulate and move it into areas that would challenge the most dexterous vinyl guy. And, no weeding makes everyone happy! Be the first on your block to fish scale your dad's Caddie, or neighbor's poodle. Just remember that no stencil is a replacement for good design work, freehand airbrushing, or creativity. It just allows you to make more money in less time! Now, go forth and paint.

Tune in next issue for the continuation of our stencil adventures. I think I'll stick with the FX-II line, so the next one will probably be *The Blob*. That thing is pretty bizarre! We also have some new ones coming out in March—Can you say *Horror of Skullmaster* and *FX-III*? I can't show them to you yet, but no one said I couldn't talk about them!

If you have any comments, suggestions, or requests, please submit them to Craig Fraser at Fraser@gotpaint.com.

Paint to live, live to paint...and sometimes with stencils...Fraser