

# STRETCHING SKULLMASTER

Taking a vintage stencil, and showing that it still has some gimics left in it

By Craig Fraser

**R**emember that just because this is an automotive column doesn't mean you have to stick to painting cars and bikes. These stencils can be used for everything from body art, to wall murals, to cake decorating, and they're made with a solvent-proof polymer, so you don't have to worry about what you paint them with because you aren't going to hurt these babies.

In this 20th installment of *Mastering Skullmaster*, I decided to revisit the past using the original *Frontal*, the first stencil I designed for Artool, and still their biggest seller. It's not that it's so spectacular, but it's just so darn simple, effective, and versatile. I'll use *Frontal* to render a stretch-face, one of the most requested demos at the Airbrush Getaway workshops. You can use just about any object for this effect, but skulls are among the coolest. The stretched part mimics cloth, goo, slime, etc. that the object it's pulled over is trying to escape from.

This step-by-step was shot at the October Airbrush Getaway in Las Vegas. >>



**1.** Starting with House of Kolor BC-26 basecoat white, I airbrush the basic shape of the skull with the original *Skullmaster Frontal* stencil. Masking off the areas around the skull itself not only helps reduce overspray, but also helps the stencil to adhere better to the surface.



**2.** After rendering the general highlights of the skull, I add the lower teeth. Whatever you intend to stretch, it must be rendered before you create the furls of the stretch pattern.



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**3.** With the skull fully rendered, I airbrush the furred lines. Starting from the cheekbones and working around the skull, you want to give the overall design a radial balance with a bit of a random look. I rotate the lines from the skull out, to the border in, and even create a couple that furl back. If you want a good reference, drape a piece of fabric over an object and observe the shadows, contours, and folds.

**4.** Here, you get a better idea of the furred effect and where we're going with the design. When rendering white over black, you create the highpoints and reflective edges of the furls. The brightest part of the white may be the highlights, but you still need the overspray to give a good background for the black in the next step to play off.

**5.** With BC-25 black in an Eclipse CS airbrush, and using the same stencil, I spray in the eyes and nose of the skull. The overspray also fills in the gumline on the stencil, allowing me to see where the teeth will be drawn later.



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**6.** I airbrush the black of the skull the same way I applied the white. Adding a few dagger strokes later makes the design look free-handed. Here's the key: the stencil should only serve to provide continuity to an image, not obviate it. Further, if the technique upstages the image, the artwork fails.

**7.** Starting from the dark side of the image (the light source is from the upper right), I begin airbrushing in the shadows of the furls, leaving the white highlights behind. The trick to creating depth is to establish a tight edge on the top of the furl and to blend the black away as you fade into the highlight of the following furl.

**8.** Switching back to the original white, I airbrushed a few select highlights—just enough to punch out the design, but not enough to overpower it.



**Students.** Here are a couple of brave souls who dared giving the design a shot after the demo. By the next morning we had well over a dozen very successful stretch-faces.

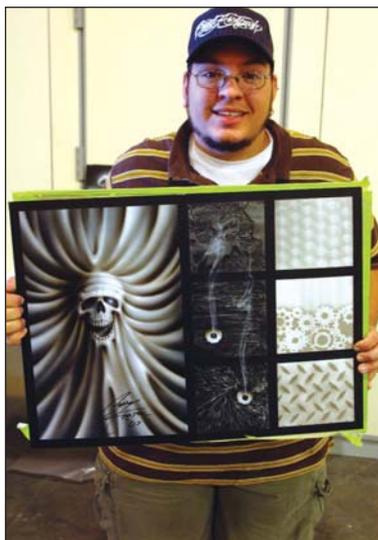


**Craig Fraser**, author of *Automotive Cheap Tricks & Special F/X*, has been airbrushing for nearly two decades. The owner and operator of Air Syndicate, Fraser has also been the in-house airbrush artist and designer for Kal Concepts since 1992. Located in Bakersfield, California, Kal Concepts/Air Syndicate 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](http://www.gotpaint.com).



Stretch-face is ready to clear. Done well, this image can yield some serious coin. If you don't like skulls, you can always substitute a face, a logo, lettering, and more; it's up to you.

**The Winner:** This lucky student won the actual demo panel in the class's raffle.



**FINAL.** Well, hope you enjoyed this article. I will try and change it up as much as possible in the future, but remember, if you want to see something done, you have to ask for it. If you have any comments, suggestions, or requests, please submit them to Craig Fraser at [Fraser@gotpaint.com](mailto:Fraser@gotpaint.com). You can also cruise [www.kustomkulturelounge.com](http://www.kustomkulturelounge.com), the new Q&A forum and source for occasional step-by-steps. See ya there!

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