

Creampuf's Custom My Little Pony Tutorial

So after a while I've been asked the eternal question, "How do you do that?" So I've decided to write a basic tutorial on how I customize a My Little Pony.



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And so it Begins

For this tutorial I'm going to walk you through the basics of how I customize a My Little Pony by inviting you to walk with me as I customize "Lollipop Heart." I hope to answer many questions about the process and give you an idea of how much work can go into one of these beauties. Most of my customs take upwards of a total of 16 hours over the course of several days to create. I take a very methodical approach to my girls and I think it produces some beautiful results.

What do I need for this?

Lots of money! No, seriously the upfront cost to making a pony is very small; I compiled a list of links at the end of the tutorial for suppliers. In the meantime here are the basics needs:

- ♥ Pony, in gently used or mint condition. (I say that only because I'm finicky)
- ♥ Pliers
- ♥ Acetone
- ♥ Pony Hair
- ♥ Tapestry Needle
- ♥ Dental Floss or 20lb Beading Cord
- ♥ Zip Ties
- ♥ Paint Brushes (finer sizes and spend a little more to get great ones)
- ♥ Acrylic Paints
- ♥ PITT Artist Pen
- ♥ Sketch Paper
- ♥ Pencil
- ♥ Colored Pencils (optional)

- ♥ Mod Podge or another matte sealer
- ♥ Future Floor Polish or other high gloss varnish
- ♥ Satin varnish like Delta Cremacoat
- ♥ Apoxie Clay or Apoxie Sculpt (optional)

Choose your Victim (I started writing this tutorial after I was finished with this part, so thus no pictures)

To be beautiful is a painful process even for a custom My Little Pony, but it's a lot of fun. I randomly buy a big lot of ponies from eBay; I shoot for a decent price tag per pony, including shipping fees. Once I get them in I inspect them for flaws, such as chew marks. Ink and other blemishes along the lines are easily dealt with paint, good cleaning or even sculpting to cover it up. Chew marks and fakes get tossed into the radical experimental pile. You want to have one of those piles especially if you plan on trying new things. Once a pony is selected it's off to the cleaners.

The Naked Pony Bath

First thing I do is gently wash the pony to remove some other types of dirt and then wipe the pony down in acetone to remove the symbols. I leave the eyes intact, it give me a good base to paint on top of. Now go ahead and cut the hair, that's right cut those beautiful locks(sometimes beautiful, most likely a little frazzled). If you can try to pull the head off; sometimes that just does not work! I recommend you try to avoid cutting the head off, as it leaves cut marks around the neck and those just aren't nice to look at. To get around this use boiling water, oh that's right you are going to boil the pony. You only want to leave the pony immersed in boiling water for about a minute. Remove the pony with a pair of clean tongs and wrap the pony in a white towel and begin to pull at the head. Usually this works out beautifully, sometimes it doesn't. Try it about three more times, if you have no luck then resort to cutting. Also during this stage I remove the hoof magnet, I just don't like them; I use the spot to fill in with Apoxie Clay for my artist signature. The magnet should just pop out when it's soft, if not, resort to cutting.

Once the head is off it's time to remove the hair. If the boiling trick worked out well for you the hair should just slide out with pliers. Reach on in there with your pliers and just pull! If you are having glue problems you can soak the head in boiling water again and see if that helps. If not, then place the head on a clean surface, with your palm firmly on top of it roll the head around so that you hear some very nice crunching noises. Usually that's glue wearing down. As a last resort, pure acetone dissolves the glue and the hair come out, but you'll need a lot of acetone, so I just don't recommend it. The tail on the other hand just pulls right out with pliers, no mess no fuss, gotta like it.

Leave the warm pony alone for a while to cool down; after about an hour come back to it. I wash the pony in warm soapy water, rinse and let dry. Once it's dry again go ahead and do one more acetone wipe down and now the fun begins. **Note, if you think the pony has warped a little from being boiled. To fix that: boil some water, put the pony in a bowl, cover with water and let it sit for 5 minutes. Gently take it out, barely touching it with tongs or better yet scoop it out with a pasta ladle. Let it sit without being touched for like a half hour, it will reform.* If you removed the hoof magnet this is a great time to fill in the hole with Apoxie Clay and let it sit overnight.

Colors, Themes and Design

I find this to be the harder part - you have a nice clean pony in a color that appeals to you, but now what the heck do you do with it.

Some people have this all thought out, I very seldom do, I pick a pony in a color I like and then work out the details. Of course once you clean your pony, you may have a small color change which you may not like, if



that's the case choose a new victim, otherwise keep on going.

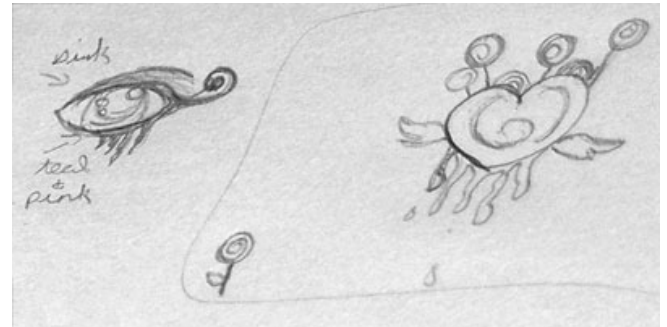
Pick your Colors not your Nose!

www.colourlovers.com A great place to find wonderful color palettes. Just go to Palettes > Search and put in your keyword or dominate hue. In this case I wanted to find something with pop that worked well with silver/grey. So I searched along those lines until I found something that I loved. Make sure that the palette you fall in love with works with any hair you can buy or ideally hair you already bought. Since I did a bulk buy of pony hair, I had many colors to choose from and thus limited my palette choices. The key is to effectively use what you have or what you can afford.



Got Colors, need Symbol

Google Images is your next stop, I searched for vector candy. I use the word vector in there to call up some of the more fun modern art styles that I adore. When I see something that really strikes my fancy I go to the web site. Usually it's something like www.istockphoto.com or www.shutterstock.com and I go through their illustration categories looking for candy. After a while I found a couple different images with things I liked. So using my trusty pencil and paper I began to sketch. You will want to sketch on paper because it trains your hand to think about the motions you'll use to transfer the design to the pony. Also don't forget to sketch out a couple eye designs that match the feeling of your symbol design. The eyes are a very important element to consider when pulling your theme together. It sometimes helps to ink and color the sketch; you can try it and see how it looks. You may have to do a couple different versions of your sketches and colors to make it all work. The key is to make sure you like it, an artist who is happy with their work appeals more to clients or collectors.



The other thing to consider is this; there is a fine line between inspiration and copying, in fact it's a very large and active debate in the design industry. If you want the design as is then you will need to purchase the design. If you are inspired to create something from it or mix it up then it's inspiration, but the work must be your own. For example I see an awesome image of a lollipop, I like the colors, but I think the wrapper has to go and the swirl should be a little tighter. I create a lollipop from what I like from the design and tweak it to match my tastes, thus I was inspired. At the end of your day it's all on your conscience as to where you draw the line.

Okay we got our colors; we got our symbol design and this is the basis for our theme. We want pop candy art with a little love; it's a good theme but now we have to pull it all together.

All About Hair

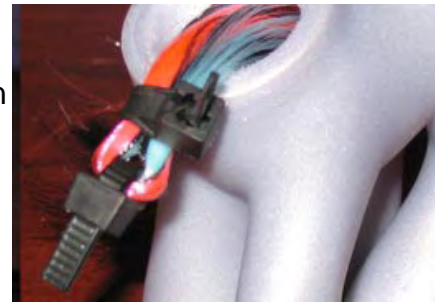
I use the needle and thread method for rehairing a pony, there are methods for using a rerooting tool and glue, but I have not tried them. Needle and thread method takes the longest but I really like the results. I will also add in additional hair plugs with a push pin, as I need to for fullness or changing the way the bangs lay down. I also use zip strips to secure the tail, you only need two of them and they hold beautifully.

Here's how to secure the tail:

1. Fold your tail in half and use your thread to wrap around the fold and pull it through the hole. (You may need to enlarge the tail hole if you go really thick)
2. When the tail is through pull it till it's outside the body (but leave



- some hanging out the back), so you can work with it.
3. Take a zip strip and stick it inside the loop and secure it.
4. About a 1/4" from the zip strip you just secured, put another one on wrapping the two halves together
5. Snip the ends so you have about 1/4" or so of slack left
6. Pull the tail back through the hole



Yellow and Blue make Green

You have to make a critical decision before you begin to work on the mane. Just how are you going to blend the hair? Do you want large streaks, small streaks, under coat colors, what pattern and so on? If you want nice smooth transitions, I recommend buying a custom blend of hair from either www.dollyhair.com or www.restoredoll.com. The design should let you know what kind of effect you want in your hair. For this example since I'm going modern pop, let's use some fun streaks.

As a note you can trim the hair to any length you like. I tend to trim about an inch off so that the hair is even and any ratty ends are gone. (They sometimes happen) Also I tuck the hair down between the legs to help it conform to its shape. I find that hair can be kind of poofy when the work is done and sometimes I just don't like the look.



I Can See!

Now let's get out our paints and begin the painting, I like to start with the eyes. If I'm ever going to be finicky about one pony section it's the eyes. Hopefully you have a sketch of what you want to do with the eyes, if not I recommend you begin with a sketch.

Build from the background to the foreground, it makes painting much easier. So let's start with the eye white. I use enough to fill in the sides but only go over the iris and pupil very lightly. This is where you will be glad you left in the original eyes. Wait about a half hour to an hour (yes you need to make sure that it is completely dry between coats) and then grab your black paint and fine brush. Just use the black to paint over what you see of the original iris. This helps you with eyeshape and makes it just a bit easier.



Now let's build up that iris. This section is grueling, as you will use many layers of watered acrylics to form nice transitions. The more time you spend the better the results. It took Michelangelo 4 years for the Sistine Chapel and I think we all know the results. This is also a time where you can consider some neat effects, like using one of your other colors to make a few little dots or add in a color transition. The choice is yours.



Don't forget to give your eyes a little sparkle. I use a toothpick for this part as it makes nice round glimmer spots.



Lights, Camera, Makeup!

Okay so now we can see, how about a little makeup to add in some drama. A little eye shadow and liner is good. The best thing I can tell you is to take your time. I use the black for the liner (but feel free to use any color you want, I just love black eyeliner) and just layers of acrylic for the eye shadow. Additional accents like gems and things are up to you.



Now you need some eyelashes and those I just simply do with a fine size 10/0 brush and a little black paint. You can add in just a thin swipe for a nice color for a fantasy effect. The trouble with lashes is the upper lid, there isn't much you can do around it, so just be careful and watch your lines. In essence you only get one shot at this. If you are nervous sit back and sketch your lashes a few more time, it helps your hand with the motions and creates a more fluid look.

When you are happy give everything about an hour to dry, and then use a very thin layer of Mod Podge to seal the eyes. Wait another hour and then add your gloss varnish. I use Future Floor Polish, I got this tip from a polymer clay forum and it's worked beautifully for me for charms and pony eyes. Leave it alone over night and tomorrow we begin symbol painting.

Symbolism not Symbology! (If you've seen Boondock Saints you get the joke)

Here we come down the last stretch, it's been a few days and a good number of hours to get this far and we still have several hours to go. The symbol is not just a cute mark on the pony, it's the central focus of the theme or what makes it stand out in a crowd. So like the eyes you must be patient and methodical to get great results.

Sketch Pad!

Did you do a proper sketch of your symbol? If not you may want to and if you did, do it again. That's right we want good natural hand movements, practicing makes that all happen. Two or so times should do the trick and now it's time to draw on our pony. Put the pony down! That's right; you don't want to hold her/him in your hands while you draw. It isn't very natural feeling and the results can be less than stellar. I use my PITT pen for this, a pencil works just as well. I also have a couple Q-tips and some acetone nearby so if I make a mistake I can erase and draw again. This part is very important as it's the backbone for your symbol. What you sketch here is what you paint later.

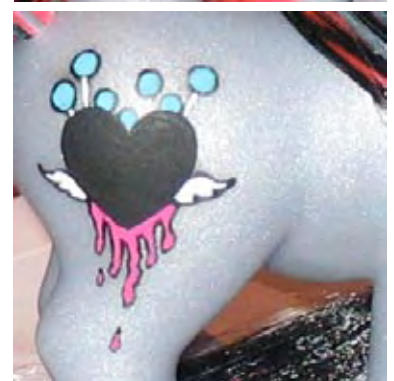
Layers, Layers, Layers!

The main theme of most Photoshop junkies is just that, building layers is the best way to achieve the most complex effects. Let's start with the base layer, the basic or flat colors. Just build up your basic colors to achieve a nice bright and smooth base layer. Then let it dry for a while. *You can also paint your hoof at this time too, if you need to.

Now we can add shading or color transition effects, this is where your layers come in handy. Like the eyes just build up layers of thin acrylics to create nice highlight and shadow or color transitions. This is a very tedious part of the process; again you get out of it what you put into it. Let this dry for a while.

I'm sure you can guess by now that I don't crank out one of these babies in a day. Nope, I spread the work out over the week, it helps me relax and I usually do two ponies at once so I can work back and forth. One dries while one gets painted and so on.

Okay so we got the symbol and it looks nice, but now what can we do. Well let's add some nice effects or anything that will add dimension to your painting



work. For mine I usually like to outline them in black and then take one of the colors and very finely paint around the black. This creates the emblem/sticker effect, which adds something whimsy to the pony. You can also add fine glitter, micro beads, or flat back jewels, just follow the directions for their application and of course make sure everything is completely dry before sprinkling glitter on things.

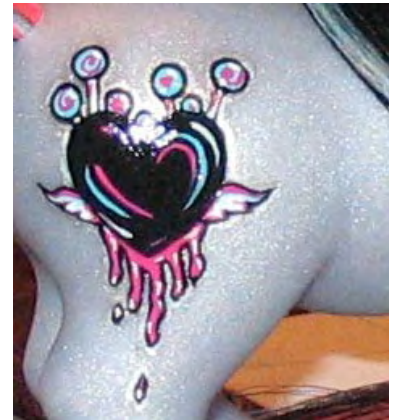
Seal the Deal!

Just like the eyes, use a thin layer of Mod Podge, let it dry then go over it with your satin or gloss varnish. Sometimes you want to add that sparkle to it and sometimes you don't. The decision is yours, I've done it different ways and each time the consideration is to the pony design itself. Some symbols need to sparkle and some just need to shimmer a little. Either way you do it, leave the pony out overnight to let it all sink in.

Finish Her!

Okay everything dry, sealed, sparkly and ready? Okay good now let's talk a few extra touches. You can style the hair with some ribbons, pins, or other fun things. Don't forget to add any jewelry, accessories or other things you may have in mind for your pony. Just remember an accent is just an accent she is still your visual focus.

When the hair is styled, the accessories added, don't forget to sign your pony and things look good, you can take a break! She's done and good job!



After Thoughts!

Pony customizing is something anyone can do, you just have to find your own style and be prepared to devote some real time to it. Make sure that the time you devote is all about the love; once you become annoyed or fed up she will show it. Some people take months or years to create a beautiful pony and you know that each of them will tell you it was time well spent.

Good luck and hit me up with any questions!

-Jenny

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Where to Buy!

♥ Ponies

- ♥ <http://www.ebay.com> - Find almost any pony you need or buy a lot.
- ♥ Your local Goodwill, rummage sale or stores like Toys r Us, Target or Kmart

♥ Pony Hair

- ♥ <http://www.dollyhair.com> - Big selection of all the popular hair types
- ♥ <http://www.restoredoll.com> - Katsilk saran hair in a wide selection of colors

♥ Everything else

- ♥ Your local craft or hobby store
- ♥ Beauty salon supply store is the best place for 100% pure acetone
- ♥ <http://www.avesstudio.com> - Apoxie Clay
- ♥ <http://www.ebay.com> - Fantasy film, microbeads, other ornaments. Whatever you need

Other useful links:

- ♥ <http://www.mlparena.com> - Fun and informational, I love it here!
- ♥ <http://www.colourlovers.com> - Colors!
- ♥ <http://www.shutterstock.com> - Inspiration
- ♥ <http://www.istockphoto.com> - Inspiration
- ♥ <http://www.deviantart.com> - Just plan cool and their deviants have tons of free reference images