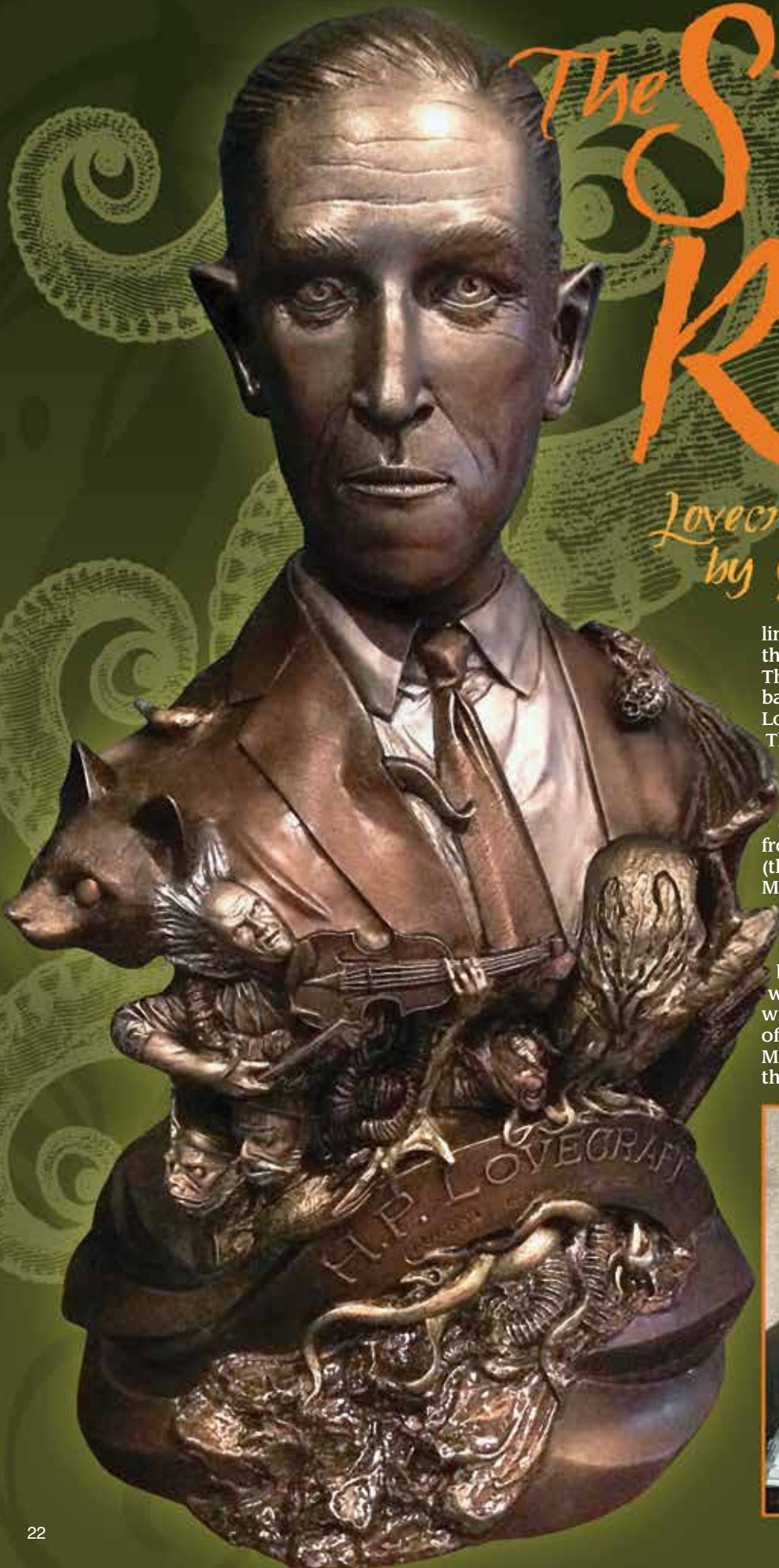


The Stars Are Right

*Lovecraft Colour Theory
by George Stephenson*

When Black Heart embarked upon our line of tribute busts, H.P. Lovecraft was one that I thought might be most intriguing. There are lots of images from the films based on his stories (Re-Animator, H.P. Lovecraft's The Unnamable, From Beyond, The Dunwich Horror), other easily recognizable elements (Cthulhu, the Gillmen from Innsmouth, and Nigger-Man, the author's beloved cat), and original interpretations of characters from some of my favorite Lovecraft stories (the eccentric, tormented violinist from The Music of Erich Zann and the "possessed" artist who had seen too much in Pickman's Model).

I always imagined Black Heart's tribute busts as classy, rich-looking, bronzed works of art. But a standard bronze finish with a nice patina might not bring out some of the hidden and subtle detail that artist Mat Brouillard killed himself sculpting into the body of this bust. So, after painting a





dozen or more of our tribute busts with a “bronze” finish, I developed my own method; a finish that is very easy to effect; a finish that shows off all those hidden details.

No airbrushing is required for this.

The materials I use are: Sophisticated Finishes Blackened Bronze (a metal-infused acrylic paint and a perfect primer and basecoat) available on-line and at Michael’s Crafts; Metallic Rub-Ons (metallic paint wax) by CraF-T Products; Freak Flex Pearl White from Badger Air-Brush Co.’s Transparents paint line; Testor’s spray Dull-Cote and spray Gloss-Cote or any other brand of clear acrylic spray in matte and gloss; Triple Thick Brush-On Gloss Glaze; and Medium firm paint brushes in different sizes for wax painting and dry-brushing.

I start with a clean model, with mold release washed off and minor seam lines removed with a touch of sandpaper (Photo One). I brush on the Sophisticated Finishes Blackened Bronze (Photo Two). The product comes in several colors but I like painting light colors on top of Blackened Bronze for a more “sophisticated” look. It cleans up with water and covers very well. With this product, I don’t need a primer (Photos Three and Four). This stuff dries quickly enough that within as little as 20 minutes, I can spray on a light mist of Dull-Cote to seal it.

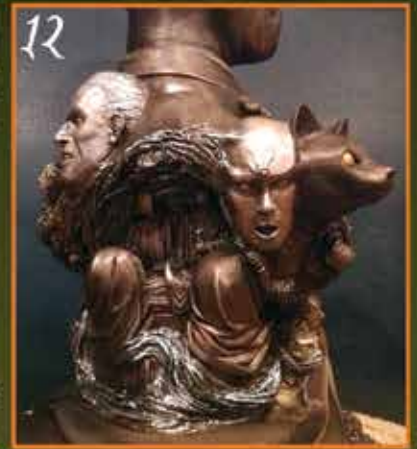
The next step is where the fun really begins. I identify those portions of the bust that, in a full-color world,

would project grey and white and other light colors. I lightly dry-brush silver wax over the faces, teeth, eyes and light-colored hair. I build this up very slowly because a little goes a long way. I paint the silver wax a little more heavily on the parts that I want more solidly silver like Lovecraft’s shirt, the shirts of the other characters on the bust, and the tendril-like mist that encircles the “Black Mass” vignette on the back of the bust (Photos Five through Seven). Step back and you can already see those details beginning to stand out.

When I’m done with the first application of silver, I start with copper paint wax. Staying away from the silver details, I lightly dry-brush copper wax over the dark surfaces that I want to have a lighter bronze look: Lovecraft’s hair, jacket and tie; the robes of the participants in the Black Mass; Miskatonic University; the Gillmen; the Lovecraft banner; and all of the tendril “filler” between sculpted elements (Photos Eight and Nine). I also go heavy with copper wax on the eyes for the cat, the Gillmen and the melting side of Dr. Pretorius’s face. I lightly misted Testor’s Dull-Cote over the bust and let that dry. At this stage it might appear that I’ve just killed the metallic effect--not to worry, it comes back.

The next step is to add a little copper on top of some of the details I’ve already painted silver. I do this lightly to give an even lighter bronze color, especially to Lovecraft’s





face and the faces and arms of the smaller characters (Photos Ten and Eleven). Another light mist of Dull-Cote finished this step.

Since Cthulhu is Lovecraft's best known character, I wanted him to stand out among all the other details sculpted onto the body of the bust. So, I gave a more heavy-handed dry-brush of olive green paint wax on his head, body, wings and on the untextured tendrils flowing from under the Lovecraft banner and coming up out of his suit jacket. I then dry-brush gold paint wax on portions of Cthulhu's head and body, the bony, structural parts of his wings, and all of his mouth tendrils and the tendrils flowing from under the banner. This gives some depth and variation to the color and to make him stand out even more. This also gives the impression that his lower body consists of tendrils that match those flowing from around his mouth. I also hit the cat's medallion with a little gold wax so, if you look closely, you can read part of his offensive name. I couldn't resist!!

I sometimes go back and bump up the finish on faces or other details when I want them to be more prominent. Sometimes I even go in with acrylic paint to give some colored accents here and there. The final bit of painting that I did on this bust was to hand brush Badger's Freak Flex Pearl White Airbrush paint on the mist around the Black Mass. I really like Badger's Transparents line whether airbrushed or brushed by hand. The Pearl White and the other pearl colors Badger produces have a really nice iridescent quality (Photos Twelve and Thirteen).

Feeling satisfied with the painting, I had two things left to do. I lightly misted Testor's Gloss-Cote over the entire bust. I did so very lightly because I wanted just enough of a sheen to bring out the metallic finish of the wax. Then I used Triple Thick, a really thick gloss gel, to give certain portions a glossy, wet and/or slimy look. I learned about this product at one of the Badger/Black Heart airbrushing classes at a model kit convention earlier this year. I gloss all the eyes and tendrils and other select parts (see finished shot).

This kind of faux bronze finish relies on subtlety, a little bit of planning and patience. The materials are inexpensive, easy to work with and have applications beyond a bronze finish on a bust. No offense to folks who prefer the full-color treatment for Black Heart's tribute busts, but this was what we had in mind when we conceived our tribute bust line. I hope you will give it a try--you will be impressed.

