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SHAMANIC MASK-MAKING



by Purusas



The artist and his creation is linked by the power of doing. All art is, in a sense, an extension of the artist. However, in the creation of a personal mask of power, the self becomes externalized and accessible to the conscious mind. This externalization is essential for communication to be initiated.

The process itself consists of making the mask, feeding the mask, and, finally, communication on a one-to-one basis within ritual and without. The final goal is com/union.

Masks by W. T. Benda

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What you paint the mask with is dependent upon what you are invoking. If you are creating your power self -- guardian angel -- paint it with your favorite colors. If you are conjuring the dead, leave it white, the color of skeletal bones. If you are calling down god/desses, paint the mask according to corresponding colors. You may also wish to add feathers or stones or other talismans appropriate to the force.

The next step is the ritual of empowerment. You may feel, of course, that the mask is already pretty powerful, but you are going to increase that power manyfold by a ritual dedicated to it alone. You are going to "feed" the mask. Prepare in advance the objects you want to use for its food. If it is a particular godform, take care to give it food and objects appropriate to that force.



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To create the physical manifestation for the mask, we have been using the recently popularize medium of plaster bandage wrap. It can be ordered through an artist supply store and is inexpensive. Cut the bandages into three-inch strips of varying widths. Cover the subject's face with vasoline petroleum jelly, especially the eyelashes, brows, and anywhere the plaster might stick. Have a bowl of water handy and wet each piece of bandage. Lay it on the person's face, working from the edges inward. Be careful of the hair line. Do not cover eyes or nostrils. If you create the mask with its mouth open, you will find it easier to speak with and feed, but there is power in silence, too. Cover the mask with three layers of bandage and wait five to ten minutes. The subject should then make exaggerated expressions behind the mask to detach it from his skin; then, you can gently lift it off. Wait a day to paint it; it needs to be absolutely dry.



Feeding the mask is done through creation of an altar or sacred space with the mask at the center. Give to it your gifts of power; send energy through the palms of your hands; breathe the breath of life into hir. The eyes may begin to glow. Speak to the mask then. Open your mind and wait. Do this until you feel your mask's power, until there is a sense of presence in the room. Do not hurry. The mask will become a spirit house.



When you feel ready, in privacy or in the company of other magickians, put your mask on. The results will be dramatic. Each person will receive a unique power gift. Dance its presence, letting its power flow through you and transform you. Look at yourself in a mirror. Open yourself to the experience -- do not let your mind get in the way. The time to process it is after the ritual is over.

In time, the power of the mask will integrate itself into your psyche. When that has been done, the power will leave the mask. Burn or bury it with respect; it will have done its job.

Calling the Dieties through the creation of masks is a method that has been used repeatedly around the world for centuries. It is powerful and successful magick. Remember, feed the mask according to its nature, and always respect its power.Ω