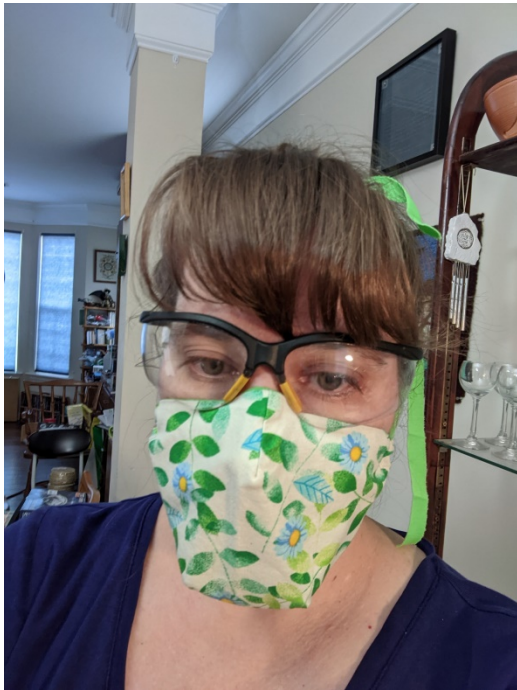


Bone Carving Is the Messiest Art I've EVER Done:

A Story in Pictures By Ceara of Novgorod

Bone Carving is absolutely the messiest thing I've ever done. I've dyed outside and accidentally colored my wooden drying racks. I've block printed fabric (and my hands, dress, tables, etc in the process) I've had to use paint thinner to remove block printing ink from my walls due to transfer. I've done stone carving and had to sweep the stone dust off my table and floor. I've accidentally leaked molten pewter onto my tabletop while learning to pewter cast. I've gotten wool all over the living room doing fiber processing. Raw angora plus the breeze of a kid running by leads to fiber everywhere. I've covered my work bench with saw dust. I've covered my hands with the grease/oxidization coating while working low carbon steel wire. After all this, bone carving is still, hands down the messiest thing I've ever done!!

First, bone dust is nasty and dangerous. You in no way want that in your lungs, eyes, or anywhere else. I use only hand tools and this is my PPE required. If I were to use power tools, I'd have to work in a dedicated shop and wear a full respirator.



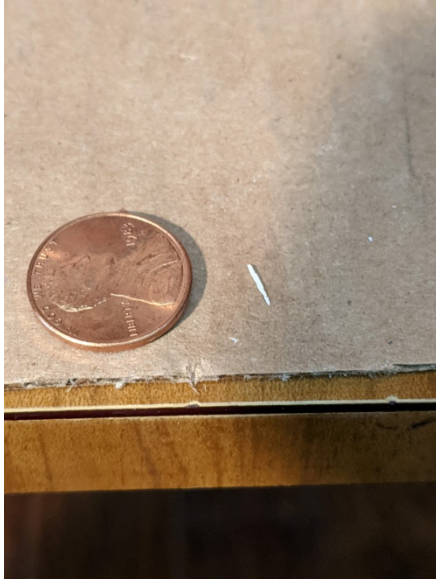
It's also the only A&S I've ever needed to work in a filtration booth. My booth contains a hepa filter to trap the microscopic bone dust and the draw from the box fan will pull in a piece of notebook paper dropped before it hits the bottom. Front/work area on left, back on right:



In addition to the fine dangerous dust, bone doesn't actually make nice saw dust... it makes fine, and sometimes not so fine, shards. These will slice your finger tips to ribbons or become the worlds worst splinters if you aren't extremely careful. The larger dust-shards are partially drawn in by the filtration booth. As pictured below:



It also produces larger incredibly sharp shards like this one pictured next to a penny for size comparison:



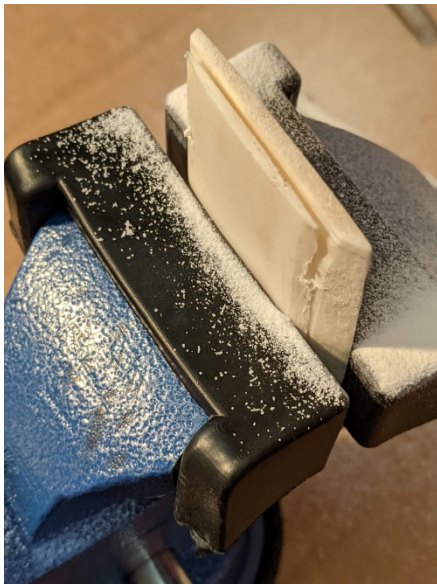
All this bone dust means that this is the one and only art I've needed a shop vac next to me for. I found myself stopping every 5 – 10 minutes to clean off my work surface, my tools, my vice, the bone piece itself, etc. I literally couldn't even re-position my clamp without vacuuming it off:



Unlike wood working and metal working where I could simply tap the debris off and test a newly sanded or drilled edges smoothness with my finger. I had to vacuum both the bone tablet and the chisel or even the sandpaper to before I could check it. So while I eventually get something lovely like this:



Most of the process looks like this:



In conclusion, what makes this the messiest A&S I've ever done is not that I can cover everything with dust and make a giant obvious mess, but that it makes a thousand tiny messes that must each be cleaned up every five to ten minutes.