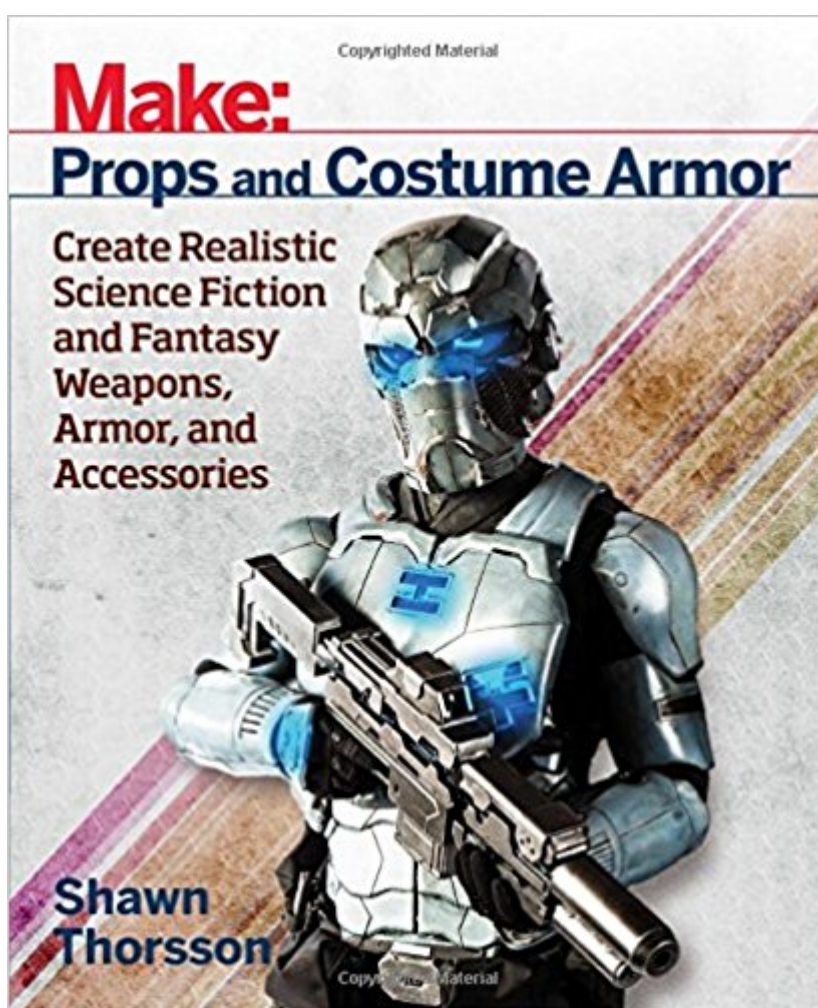


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# Make: Props And Costume Armor: Create Realistic Science Fiction & Fantasy Weapons, Armor, And Accessories



## Synopsis

Have you been trying to think of a way to conquer your local comic convention through cosplay? Do you gaze with envious eyes upon the fan-made suits of armored awesomeness strolling around every year on Halloween? Do you have a spot on your wall, bookshelf, or desk that desperately needs to be filled with a screen-accurate replica of your favorite science-fiction or fantasy weapon? If so, look no further. We've got just the book for you! In this book, master prop maker Shawn Thorsson uses his unique blend of humor and insight to turn years of painful experience into detailed explanations. He'll show you many of the tools, methods, and processes that you can use to create professional-looking science fiction and fantasy props and armor. The ultimate collision of creative imagination and practical maker skills, making props and costume armor involves sculpting, molding, casting, 3D printing, CNC fabrication, painting, and countless other techniques and technologies. In this book, you'll learn:

- Basic fabrication methods using inexpensive, commonly-available tools and materials
- Simple, low-cost methods to make foam armor out of easy-to-find foam mats
- How to use the popular Pepakura software to build 3D models with paper
- Multiple molding and casting techniques
- How to build a "vacuforming" machine to make armor from plastic sheet stock
- Painting and weathering techniques that will bring your props to life
- Just enough safety advice to keep you from losing body parts along the way

Whether you're just a beginner or a seasoned builder with countless projects behind you, this book is sure to be an invaluable addition to your workshop library.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Whatever It Takes: Three Questions for Shawn Thorsson Who is your book written for? This book is written for anyone interested in building prop replicas or wearable costume armor. It's designed to be useful for everyone from the beginner with no idea where to begin all the way up to the experienced craftsman looking to expand his or her repertoire. What's your favorite material? I don't really have a favorite material to work with. Every project is different and each one brings along new lessons learned. Lately I seem to be building a lot of things with fiberglass, but it's absolutely not my favorite material. It's sticky and stinky and gross. Whenever I'm just starting to plan a project and someone asks me what I'm going to build it out of, I always give them the same answer: 'Whatever it takes.' What's going on with cosplay these days? Cosplay and prop collecting is increasingly mainstream. You're starting to see it more in popular media and news coverage. My book describes processes for building amazing things with simple tools and materials, most of which can be found in your local hardware store or office supply shop.

Shawn Thorsson is the founder of Thorsson & Associates Workshop. A lifelong tinkerer, he learned at a very young age that the best way to have the coolest toys is often to make them yourself. A hopeless Halloween addict and fan of all things science fiction and fantasy, Shawn's hobby of building prop and costume pieces for his own collection has long since gotten out of control. He now spends his days immersed in his workshop for countless hours turning whatever he can find into pure, concentrated awesome. Shawn and his props and armor have become a major attraction at the annual Bay Area Maker Faire. Today, his workshop regularly produces props, costumes, and set pieces for films, convention appearances, and collectors.

I already know and use several of the techniques presented, but even after years of mold making and casting as a hobby, there were tips that I already know are going to save me money and give me better results. Also, a number of techniques I have never tried are very well explained and documented, and I look forward to broadening my skill set. The information is accessible, and presented clearly with much enthusiasm and a dash of humor. If you are just starting out in making props and costumes this book could prove an invaluable resource, and if you are experienced it will still likely earn its place in your library.

Are you ever called upon to make stage armor? Perhaps you just have an interest in learning more

about the subject, or perhaps you want to dress up like Iron Man at some point in the future. Regardless, get your hands on a copy of the new title from Maker Media, *Make: Props and Costume Armor* by Shawn Thorsson. It's a must-own reference manual on a whole host of materials, methods, and techniques for creating such things. The book is written in an accessible, knowledgeable way that demystifies a complex and often daunting area of costume production--the full color photographs are often helpful but occasionally hilarious (like the shot of an unfortunate housefly which got stuck in mold medium). Thorsson has aimed the book at primarily a cosplay readership, but the practical concerns of the cosplayer are the same as those of the theatrical costume artist: cost, time, quality, weight, mobility, etc. And, while I've purchased self-published books on these sorts of topics written by cosplay authors, the probably from a professional's perspective with a self-published text is the potential lack of vetting of the methods/media described within for accurate industrial health and safety practices. This book has clearly been edited by an IHS professional for proper practice and PPE recommendations. Thorsson divides his book into five sections: Prototypes and One-Offs, Molding and Casting, Vacuum Forming, Painting and Weathering, and Bringing It All Together. He covers everything from the tools and materials you'll need for various processes, through several how-to sections, up to and including movement tips for wearers of costume armor. In fact, I have to give big ups to this book for actually tackling the question of how to assemble armor in such a way that the wearer can conveniently answer the call of nature. The topics and illustrative projects range from the very simple to the extremely complex, so whatever your skill level and experience coming to the book, there's something new to see. I'm particularly gratified to note that the book contains sections on the application of digital technologies--from using Pepakura software to create faceted printable PDF patterns, to 3D printing and CNC carving of armor and prop shapes. This is an area of production which is only going to increase in importance--we've been 3D printing costume elements at PlayMakers Repertory Company for over two years at this point, and we had a show with ten Pepakura-style masks in it last season. My one tiny quibble pertains to the section on straps, specifically leather strap construction methods to which Thorsson only makes passing reference. Due to my time spent working at a high-end custom leather shop, I'm a bit of a strap snob, as one might surmise by my *La Bricoleuse* blog post on the various means of making strong but beautiful leather strapwork. But this is such a minimal grouse about the book that it makes no impact on my wholehearted, unreserved recommendation of this title. At only \$30 for a copy, it feels like a steal. This review initially written for *La Bricoleuse* costume crafts artisanship blog.

I follow this guy's blog. This book is good for the learner and the experienced crafter. It is NOT a step by step detailed guide for every little thing, what it IS is a good summary of best-practice ways to build something with basic tools and materials and written with humor. It won't help a noob who hasn't done research, but it will get them familiar with terms and tricks for how to get started. For the advanced or experienced builder it is a good refresher of things we forget, with some new tips for sure. Good all-around and you should have it in your drawer to consult for sure. Not an almanac. Not a blue print. No hand-holding. Good "what's this?" "Why do that?" "why don't do that?" etc.

An excellent guide. A fun read while describing the techniques with clarity, along with excellent detailed accompanying photos. As the title says, "Props and Costume Armor", so the methods and materials used were focused within that scope, though still discusses their application to other items somewhat. Since there are so many additional mold making materials and their variations available, if the author wrote a 2nd book covering a greater range of materials and their application to more commercial and industrial items, I would buy it in a microsecond.

Not only is Shawn Thorrson a brilliant builder or "Maker", he's a hilarious writer. I laughed with the text while learning some amazing skills. I've dabbled in scratch building and mold making for years. I wish this book was available way back when. Oh well, we have it now. Brilliant!!!

I have been interested in prop making for as long as I can remember. While, it seems, most are interested being in front of the camera, I've always had a fascination with everything that goes on behind the scenes. I've done small projects, created molds, casts and some prototypes; I've read books and other how-to guides, but I've just really never got all the details I've needed - and certainly not in one place (granted, I'm sure I could have done a lot more research, but hey :)). I saw this book and pre-ordered it immediately and I just received it. It's great! The book is full of details, how-to's, and humor. Reading it has been entertaining as well as informative. While I've not had a chance to start any of the projects or use any of the tips, I have a much better understanding of what and how I need to do things moving forward, and I've had a good chuckle or two (or three, but who's counting).

Make: is my goto favorite for informational titles with do-able projects. This one on Props and Costume Armor is a good example. The author starts you off with a huge axe, walking you through the production process with lots of pictures and the "why" behind the steps he takes.

I have a very short attention span. This is especially true for how to books. This read actually kept my attention, was humorous and informative. Great tips for being able to create things from home for pretty cheap! Definitely recommend to anyone interested in cosplay or conventions as well as just casual collectors and miniature painters.

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