Day of the Dead Skulls: Mold Making

We used a plastic mold intended for sugar skulls for this project.

1. Start by filling the plastic mold with Accu-Cast 880 Alginate Blue alginate to create a model.

2. Use the alginate model to create a single-layer plaster mold. You'll use the plaster cast to produce a wax positive of the skull.

3. Hydrate the mold in room temperature (or slightly warmer) water. If the mold is cold, it can leave ridges or chill marks on the wax.

4. Sponge any standing water out of the mold prior to pouring in casting wax.

5. Fill the plaster mold with the melted wax. At Bullseye, we use a sculpture wax called Victory Brown.

6. Wait until the wax against the mold cools. The amount of time varies depending on the temperature of the wax. Cooler wax only needs a minute or two.

7. Pour the liquid wax back into the pot and place the plaster mold into room temperature water. The wax will cool further and float away from the mold.

8. The single-layer mold can be used to create multiple wax positives. (We did not re-use the waxes in skull form.)
Day of the Dead Skulls: Mold Making (Continued)

9. Affix the wax positive to the work surface, either with some melted wax from the pot or by using a hot plate to warm up the edges.

10. Over the wax skull, build a two-layer plaster silica mold from a traditional investment mix of plaster and silica flour. Two-layer molds are stronger than single-layer molds and promote uniform heating and cooling. The outer layer includes grog, a modifier that adds strength. For more information on making a two-layer plaster-silica mold, see our video lesson Open-Faced Kilncasting.

11. Once the mold cures, release it from the board and peel/pry out the wax. Clean up any flanges with a surform. Thinner waxes are generally simpler to peel out/remove.

12. For this project, work with a fresh, damp mold. The moisture will help hold the frit and powder in place while you're working. If your mold has dried, rehydrate it.