

# The Virtual Costumer

A monthly publication of the Silicon Web Costumers' Guild

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[www.geocities.com/siwcostumers](http://www.geocities.com/siwcostumers)

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## Salutations!

A message from the President of the Silicon Web Costumers' Guild

SiW is the youngest of the chapters of the

International Costumers' Guild. Although our "mission" is slightly different than the other chapters, as, in spite of our home address, we exist as a group on the Internet, we were formed, as are the others to expand and support the Costuming Community.

We have discovered that all over the world there are people who enjoy making, wearing, studying, photographing or just looking at costumes. We enjoy talking with each other because we share an interest. That is the first reason the community began to take shape: finding others who understand our fascinations. Building friendships.

Costuming is more than a social topic of conversation, however. There is a body of knowledge. Understanding the design, construction and function of clothing across time and culture gives a view of history and of the societies of humanity. Sharing our knowledge and learning more is part of the culture of costuming, too.

Then there is Costuming as an art form. The hands on building techniques, both Historical and purely creative are also things we can share. Design, and all the myriads of the creative application of the ways all of us have learned or devised to transform our concepts into a tangible form can be fascinating to learn, to share and to do.

So, we are building an International community for ourselves and for each other. Where am I headed with this?

What I am trying to say is that I have enjoyed the company of other costumers. I have friends around the continent, and beyond. I have been fascinated by the work others have done, and I have done work of my own. I sincerely appreciate the existence of this collection of interesting, creative people. Because of all I have gained, and because I want to share the excitement and satisfaction I feel with others, I do what I can to contribute to this community.

There is so much satisfaction in participating in panels at conventions, in giving workshops, in going to workshops, in writing articles on costuming and related experiences, in working backstage at Masquerades. It is a joy sparking other people's interest and getting them excited and involved.

Come along. Step up and participate. You will reap more than you sew. (Sorry, I couldn't resist that one.) Write an article, or email us with your latest costume undertakings. Go to one of the conventions, and get on a panel, or work back stage. Share a technique; get someone excited and turned on to costuming. Or even join the board (although I prefer we call it a Steering Committee.)

- Dana MacDermott  
SiW President



ICG News  
Dana MacDermott

The annual meeting took place at CostumeCon 22 in Decatur, GA the beginning of April. I was in a position (that of ICG Recording Secretary) to

pay a great deal of attention to the meeting. .... I had to take the minutes. Several significant issues were taken up.

The annual dues were raised from \$4 to \$6. This allows the ICG to send out six Newsletters a year, meet our yearly fixed expenses, and have a small amount left over for special projects.

The willingness of the membership to back the small increase also indicates that the ICG has begun to regain the contact with and respect of the membership.

Second, the members have charged the Board of Directors with examining and making recommendations about membership and Newsletter distribution issues. This includes such concerns as whether there should be discounted household memberships (one Newsletter per household), and whether the Newsletter should be available electronically by request. There are both financial and record keeping issues at the chapter

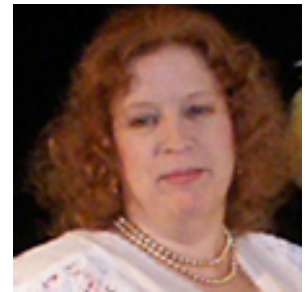
and ICG level. The question of how to handle memberships in multiple chapters may also come up.

The ICG Officers for this next year look pretty much the same as for the last year. Only the position of Corresponding Secretary has changed, with Sandy Pettinger taking over those responsibilities.

Just so you know about whom we are speaking, here are this year's ICG Officers:



Carl Mami, President



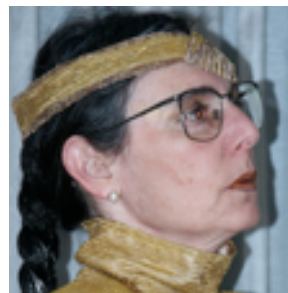
Nora Mai, Vice President



Dora Buck, Treasurer



Sandy Pettinger,  
Corresponding Secretary



Dana MacDermott,  
Recording Secretary



Betsy Delaney,  
Newsletter Editor



A column by Sharon Trembley

La Couturiere Parisienne is another one of those wow! Historical costume resource sites.



The English version of the site is at:  
<http://www.marquise.de/en/>

What is so serious about this site? Besides writing it in more than the author's native language, this site concentrates on finding source material of the time such as paintings for the early periods, and grouping them by time period for our convenience.

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Bonus Site!

How do you wear a sari?

Hakoba Saris sells them, and just for that reason, they want to help us wear them!

So if you've dragged home bags of sari fabric from the sari districts surrounding Costume-Cons and Worldcons, here you go:

<http://www.hakobasarees.com/wearasaree.asp>

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## Costuming with Silicone

by Carole Parker

[A special thank you to Dana MacDermott for the photographs and contributions that she made to this series.]

Most people think of silicone when they need to caulk their tub or seal around leaky windows. While numerous costumers have espoused the joys of going into the hardware store for materials, most of them were talking about pipe, insulation, and paints. No one had mentioned silicone as a costuming material before.

Yes, the material that you use around your bathtub can also be used for costuming. The effects that can be achieved on cloth can be magical, alien, or weird. On a cold San Francisco January day, several of us had the opportunity to participate in a workshop lead by professional costumer Janet Bloor, who has been working with silicone for 20 years.

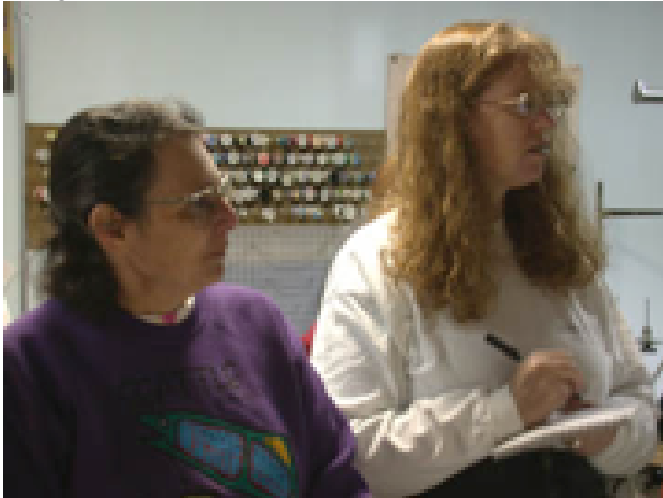


*Janet Bloor is in the foreground, Dana MacDermott, another attendee, and Carole Parker (with notepad) are in the background.*

The Costumers' Alliance, a San Francisco Bay Area organization of professional costumers (<http://www.geocities.com/costumersallia/>)

brought Bloor to San Francisco for two days of workshops.

Bloor claimed that almost all of her techniques began as mistakes or serendipitous discoveries. Working largely with stretch fabrics, sheers, and laces, Bloor has developed techniques that achieve effects that qualify for the "How Did They Do That?" designation, but are surprisingly straightforward to achieve.



Dana MacDermott and Carole Parker learn from Janet Bloor.

Bloor brought a portfolio showing her work, and one workshop participant (a theatrical costume designer) exclaimed "I designed a dress like that several years ago, but no one wanted to apply all the bias tape to the edges," so her dress did not get made. Silicone can be used to finish edges without having to sew them.

While the basic approach is easy to describe - you squirt and then press silicone into fabric - these techniques transform fabric dramatically.

### How Silicone Works

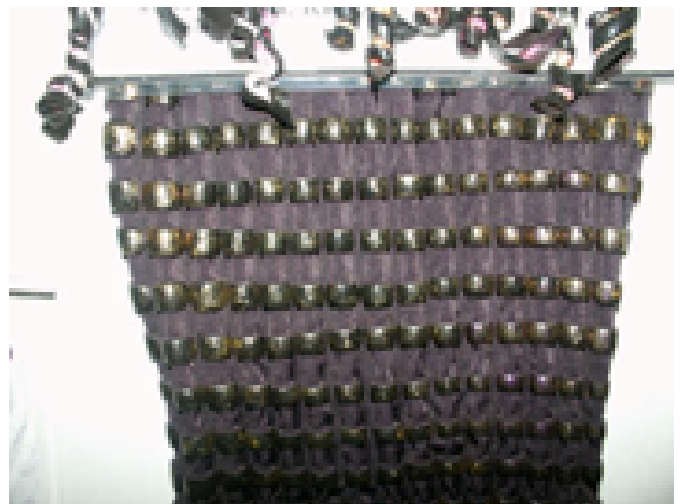
The silicone acts to fuse and seal layers of fabric together or provides a texture that would otherwise take extensive handwork to achieve. Different fabrics achieve different effects with the amount and direction of the fabric's stretchiness having a major impact on the process results. The adhesive quality of silicone can be used to set beads, jewels or other decorations onto fabric quickly.

When silicone is applied to stretched material (Lycra or similar) and released, the area not covered by the silicone will look the same. The areas covered by the silicone show a texture. Bloor described some of the effects as:

\* Bubble Applique - When the silicone outlines a second fabric - creating an applique - the applique fabric contracts around the perimeter causing the center to puff or "bubble" up.



\* Rings - Using transparent tape at equal distances, the effect of jewelry or armor can be quickly achieved.



Curls - Diagonal lines of silicone can create alien or fairy hair.



\* Pineapple - A grid of diagonal lines that can curl fabric, cause fabric to lift when stretched over a body, or add texture to non-stretchy fabrics.

\* Spots - A solid or nearly solid spot becomes a bump or raised portion if pushed out well.



*Pineapple is second row middle and bottom row right.  
Spots are top row left. Splooging middle row left.  
Repeats top row right.*

\* Splooging - Bloor's special technique for getting an additional texture when doing spots.

\* Repeats - Using a stencil can give dramatic repeats and textures.

When silicone is applied to non-stretchy fabrics, it can be:

\* Used to achieve effects and textures.

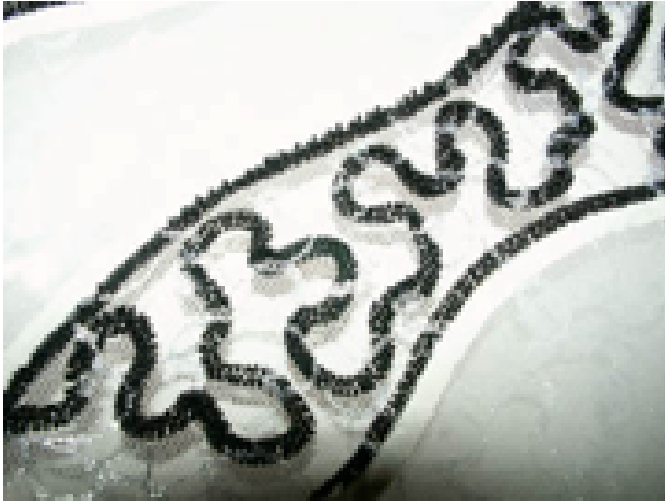


\* Used as an alternative to sewing, bonding two fabrics together.

\* Used to create a ravel proof edge.



\* Pushed through lace or mesh to get a texture on the reverse side from your original application.



To achieve most of these effects, the silicone needs to be pressed into the fabric. Sheet vinyl is used in the process to press silicone into your fabric, as well as to not have fabric adhere to your working surface.



### **It Takes Time and Practice**

Getting silicone to come out a consistent width was a challenge. You can start out with a medium line of silicone to have it go thread thin and then to a fat blob very quickly. Because you often follow lines or patterns drawn onto the fabric, or that are part of the fabric itself, developing control over

the size and placement of the silicone lines is important.

It turns out that all caulk guns are not created equal. A recalcitrant caulk gun can tire your hand and arm. We learned through experience that an awkward caulk gun is not your friend when you're going to want to caulk lots of fabric.

Bloor has experimented with silicone, and she has achieved some impressive effects. The things to keep in mind when working with silicone are:

1. Have fun and experiment.
2. It takes patience and practice.
3. Practice moving at a steady pace.
4. A too thick line is better than a too thin line.
5. Remember that once it is in your clothes or on your glasses, it's there for good. You can't get it out. Bloor recommends working in clothes you don't care about getting ruined.
6. Keep in mind that silicone does produce fumes (though not known to be toxic), and that you'll want plenty of ventilation.
7. If the air is humid, the silicone will take longer to dry. Temperature also impacts drying time. Bloor allows several hours for drying, overnight is best.
8. Once silicone is pressed into fabric and dry, it is washable. It won't wash out.

With this in mind, here are the things that you need to get started.

### **Tools and Materials Needed**

GE Silicone 1 for Windows and Doors

Bloor has experimented with several brands, and she feels that the GE brand is the best one. Check several places if you can because not all stores stock all colors. While black, white, clear, and brown are common colors, you can also find colors like bronze in some stores.

Look in hardware stores, lumber yards, home improvement stores like Home Depot or Lowe's, and even some drug stores. Bloor has also noted that foreign countries sometimes have different colors available in their hardware stores or hardware store equivalents.

Be sure to buy 100% pure silicone if you can't buy the GE brand, and always check the expiration date before purchasing.

Do \*not\* use Silicone 2 because it sticks to vinyl.

#### Caulk Gun

A good caulk gun is your friend. Try out caulk guns for ease of squeezing and stiffness.

#### Razor Blade

To cut the caulk tube tip.

#### Piece of Wire

To pop open the inner seal of the caulk tube. If you have the caulk tube in the caulk gun, and you're squeezing and squeezing and nothing is coming out, it is because you have not popped the inner seal. The wire can be an unfolded paper clip or an old wire hanger long enough to get to the top of the caulk tube body.

#### Pastry or Icing Tubes

If you have a dead pastry or icing tube container, you can use these instead of a caulk gun. For the store-bought icing tube, cut the bottom of the tube (the end that you squeeze from), clean out the tube, fold over the bottom and clamp shut when you have silicone in it. The important point to keep in mind is to get all of the air out before using the caulk on your fabric.

Note: Your caulk will only last two or three days in the tube.

#### Polypropylene Syringe

When mixing colors, you can use a polypropylene syringe found at a friendly vet's, scientific supply house, or a feed and grain store. Other sizes are available from the scientific supply houses. More on this topic in Mixing Colors.

Note: Your caulk will only last two or three days in the syringe.

#### Work Surface

Homosote, sometimes called sound board. Sold in sheets at many building supply stores, it can be cut into useful sizes. Call first as not everyone carries it. Bloor likes to have several boards going at the same time. While one piece is drying, she can be working on another one.

#### Plastic/Vinyl

Cover your work board with plastic. Drop cloths used for painting will do. For the overlayer, however, a heavier weight vinyl such as tablecloth or upholstery vinyl available at most fabric stores is preferable. The heavy weight is usually sold in 54 inch widths. Sheet vinyl is key to working with Silicone as Silicone 1 does not adhere to vinyl, cellophane, or sheet plastics.

#### Table/Workbench

Experience at the workshop shows that table/workbench height is very important. If standing while using silicone, start experimenting with a table/workbench height about high hip level and adjust for your comfort. At the workshop, the tables were tall, and one petite woman had to stand on a milk crate to be able to get the control that she desired.

#### Scissors

Bloor has found that scissors work best when cutting silicone. When asked about an Exacto knife, Bloor stated that it did not cut any better, and she prefers scissors.

#### Fabric

Fabric content - cotton, polyester, silk, rayon, etc. - does not matter when working with silicone. However, fabric weight/thickness is very important. You'll have the most success with chiffon, sheers, lace, and stretchy fabrics like swimsuit fabric. In fact, the stretchier the fabric, the better it can be. The caveat to keep in mind is that the thicker/heavier the fabric, the harder it will be to work with.

#### Marking Implement

A Sharpie works well. A pen can also work, depending on the fabric. One workshop attendee found a pencil almost useless. Keep in mind the color of the silicone and the marker. Workshop experience shows that a black Sharpie line shows through clear or white silicone.

#### Old Socks

For rubbing the silicone into the fabric. Optional. We did not find that we really needed socks in the one day workshop.

### Heat Transfer Foil

An additional means of decorating the silicone that produced very nice effects. While you can probably get it at your local art store, we have a couple of places for you to contact in our resources list.

### Texturing Materials

Silicone takes textures very nicely. If you want to see if you can get a textured effect, play with it. Bloor handed out pieces of textured vinyl that she found gave interesting effects. Your imagination is the only thing that will limit you.

### Beads and Jewels

Optional for decorating. You can get the effect of beading strands very quickly with silicone. We'll describe the technique in Beading. It's a nice technique to know when you're coming up on a deadline.

Note: Bloor says that silicone does not work with sequins unless you cover the sequins with clear silicone.

## Setting Up

One of the longest parts of most any process is the setup. These are the setups that were used in Bloor's workshop.

### Board Setup

If you use clear vinyl to wrap the board, you can put a pattern or illustration under this layer, and use it to guide your caulk line if your fabric is sheer or translucent enough. However, you can use any plastic material that you can afford.

1. If you have a sheet of hemostat/sound board, cut it to a usable and manageable size. Bloor provided boards that were 24 by 24 inches.

2. Sand any rough edges.

3. Cut clear vinyl/plastic to the board width.

4. Wrap clear vinyl/plastic around the board.

5. Staple clear vinyl/plastic to the back of the board. Do *\*not\** staple the sides. This will allow you to slide patterns or illustrations underneath.

6. Cut another piece of clear vinyl to cover the board top. This should be the side that does not have staples.

7. Keeping the clear vinyl flat, use a couple of thumb tacks or push pins to pin it to the front of the board.

### Caulk Setup Using a Caulk Gun

Note: You can buy small tubes of silicone, but this is a much more expensive method. However, for a small project, it may be worth it to purchase silicone this way. If you purchase the small tube, remove the cap and cut the end off.

Caulk Gun with Sealed Tubes

1. Purchase a caulk gun if you do not already have one.

Tip: Spend the money to get one that is easy to use/manipulate. It will be worth it.

2. Purchase caulk in the color(s) of your choice.

3. Spread newspaper over your table/work surface.

Note: You do *\*not\** want to be doing this work over your fine dining room table.

4. Use a razor blade to cut off the tip of the caulk tube.

5. Take a wire - unbent paper clip or old wire hanger - to puncture the inner seal of the caulk tube.

Tip: If the wire is long enough, wiggle it around to help create a larger hole in the seal. This may reduce the tendency of the silicone to curl.

6. Put the caulk tube in the caulk gun.

7. Manipulate the caulk gun, so that the tube is held firmly in place.

8. Squeeze the caulk gun trigger until you get caulk coming out.

Tip: If you are squeezing the caulk gun and nothing comes out, the inner seal is not broken. Repeat step 5.

9. Keep squeezing the caulk gun trigger until the caulk does not show any air bubbles. Bloor notes that it is important to not have any air bubbles in your caulk.

10. You are now ready to start practicing on newspaper.

11. Cover end of tube when putting it away, so caulk does not dry out.

Caulk Gun with Screw Off Cap Tubes (Note: do we really need all these rules repeated? Can't only the different ones be added here? Rima)

1. Purchase a caulk gun if you do not already have one.

Tip: Spend the money to get one that is easy to use/manipulate. It will be worth it.

2. Purchase caulk in the color(s) of your choice.

3. Spread newspaper over your table/work surface.

Note: You do *\*not\** want to be doing this work over your fine dining room table.

4. Use a razor blade to cut off the tip of the caulk tube.

5. Screw off the cap.

6. Peel off the inner seal.

7. Screw the cap back on.

8. Take the caulk tube and put it in the caulk gun.

9. Manipulate the caulk gun, so that the tube is held firmly in place.

10. Squeeze the caulk gun trigger until you get caulk coming out.

Tip: If you are squeezing the caulk gun and nothing comes out, the inner seal is not removed. Repeat steps 5-7.

9. Keep squeezing the caulk gun trigger until the caulk does not show any air bubbles. Bloor notes that it is important to not have any air bubbles in your caulk.

10. You are now ready to start practicing on newspaper.

11. Cover end of tube when putting it away, so caulk does not dry out.

Caulk Setup Using a Pastry or Icing Tube

Note: Caulk will only last two or three days this way.

1. Follow steps 1 through 9 on setting up a caulk gun with a sealed tube.

2. Make sure that your pastry or icing tube is clean and open.

3. Squirt caulk into the tube.

4. Fold over the tube end and clamp the end shut.

5. You are now ready to start using your caulk.

Caulk Setup Using a Polypropylene Syringe

Note: Caulk will only last two or three days this way.

1. Follow steps 1 through 9 on setting up a caulk gun with a sealed tube.

2. Pull the plunger out of the syringe.

3. Make sure that the syringe and plunger are clean.

4. Squirt caulk into the syringe.

5. Put the plunger back into the syringe.

6. You are now ready to start using your caulk.

Practicing on Newspaper

Bloor had everyone practice on newspaper, and I will probably practice on newspaper again in the future. With a prepared caulk gun:

1. Pin/thumbtack newspaper to board.
2. With a marker, pen, or pencil, draw on the newspaper:
  - \* a long curved line
  - \* a long angled line
  - \* straight short lines

3. Squirt out a bit of silicone, so you get a 1 inch (2 cm) dangle hanging down.

Tip: If the caulk comes out as a thin thread, start further in on your line, and backtrack over it like you do when tucking the tail on embroidery floss or needlepoint yarn.

Tip: Hold the caulk gun at a 30 degree angle or so. Do not hold straight up and down.

Tip: Watch out for the silicone curling. You do not want this.

4. Trace the curved lines with silicone.

Note: Getting the caulk to go smoothly for long distances was difficult.

Maintaining consistent pressure takes practice.

Tip: If you get sharp angles when you're trying to get curves, it could be because your arm or hand is tired.



5. To end a line, tap the caulk gun to the newspaper.

Tip: When your arm or hand is tired, end the line and shake your arm or flex your hand for a few moments before continuing.

6. Trace the angled line with your silicone. Watch out that you do not get curls at the corners.

7. Trace the straight short lines with your silicone.



Note: This will be the hardest to do because it is difficult to start and stop silicone and get it to look right.

After practicing on newspaper and getting comfortable using a caulk gun, it is time to try some of Bloor's techniques for texturizing fabric. The best order for successfully learning these techniques are:

1. Read the General Process instructions by going to:

[www.costumingtips.org/Instruction/SiliconeWorkshop](http://www.costumingtips.org/Instruction/SiliconeWorkshop)

2. Find a technique that interests you.

3. With scrap fabric, try out the technique.

4. Enjoy experimenting.