

Bridey's New Shoes

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When I was a really little kid, one of the must-have toys was an 18" fashion doll dressed as a bride. (She also came as a ballerina or a fashionista with a host of sumptuous outfits, but the bride version was the most common).



I recall these dolls vividly, but their time was almost over: Barbie had already arrived, and 18" fashion dolls would soon disappear from the market.



As it happens, a doll collector friend gifted me with one of these dolls a few years back. Instead of her original bridal outfit, she arrived wearing what I think is a homemade gown made of brushed nylon. As an homage to those long-ago bride dolls, I named her Bridey. (In Ireland, this is a diminutive form of Bridget, and it seemed appropriate under the circumstances.)

When new, Bridey and her ilk typically wore a strappy plastic sandal-style shoe on their high-heeled feet, but Bridey came to me without shoes.

Lately I've been thinking it high time she was given a pair.



I've made doll shoes before, not only for my own handmade dolls, but also most recently for Kimmie, Melinda, and my friend's Donnie Osmond doll, so I wasn't a stranger to the method.



Typically these shoes are made with a felt or leather upper, with cardboard insoles cut to just fit the doll's foot.



Making the shoes is a fairly straightforward process once you get the hang of it, but Bridey presented a couple of challenges.

Other than fashion dolls, most dolls have flat feet, but Bridey's are formed for high heels. So before I could make up shoes to fit her, I had to figure out how to make the shoe sole hold its shape, and second, how to incorporate a heel that won't be at risk of working loose.



After pondering the problem, I decided on a metal shank that could be bent to the shape of the foot.

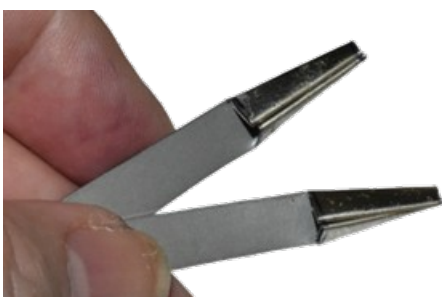
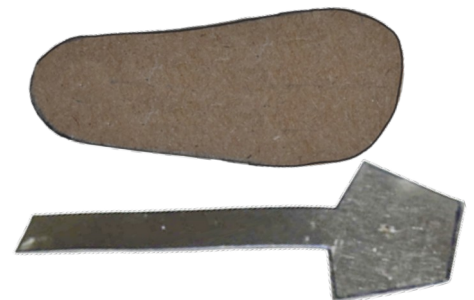
As for the heel, I decided to incorporate it to the shank, so that it's part of the shoe structure and can never break away.



This black/gold shoe is my first prototype. I think the heel could be a touch taller, but the shoe itself fits nicely, holds its shape, and doesn't fall off the doll's foot. Success.

Here's how I did it.

As with my other doll shoes, I started with a cardboard sole, sized by tracing around Bridey's foot. I made the metal shank from a discarded tin can – a food can or cookie tin, not a soda can, which isn't strong enough to hold the shape.



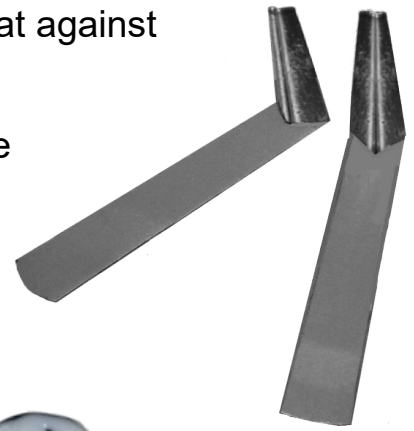
I sized the shank to fit the sole of the shoe. Then, using pliers, I folded the sides of the flange toward the centre, enclosing the raw edges.

The rolled flange will form the heel.

I bent the heels perpendicular to the shanks, which will lie flat against the cardboard soles made from discarded cereal boxes.



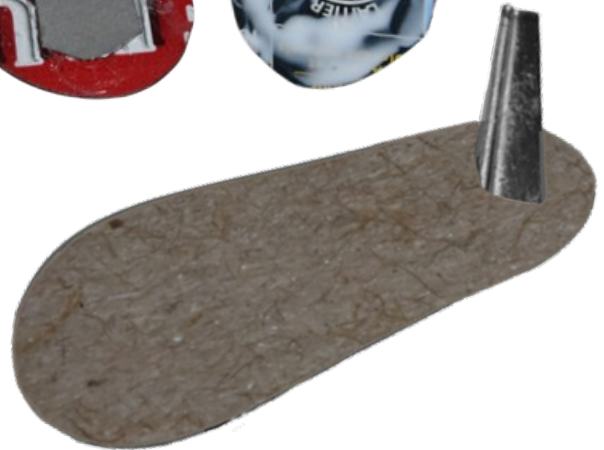
I used GOOP to glue the shanks in place on the soles and clamped them with clothespins until the glue had set.



To further strengthen the shoe structure, I cut an additional cardboard sole with an opening to accommodate the heel. I applied tacky glue to the entire surface, then pressed the two surfaces together until the glue grabbed.



Once the tacky glue sets, the resulting shoe structure is solid. The next step is to cover the shoes before bending them to conform to Bridey's high heeled feet.

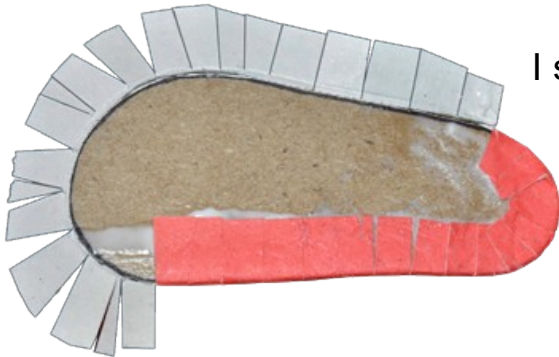
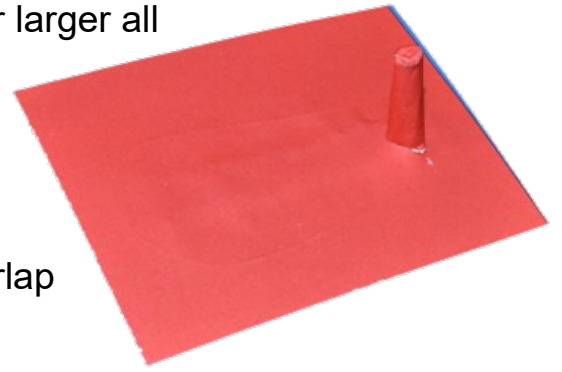


I initially planned to use fabric for covering the shoes, but after some experimentation I decided to go with paper instead. (In the illustrations I am using paper that's red on one side and white on the other, but if I make another pair of shoes, I'll go with construction paper instead – it's a nice weight and is soft enough to mould easily around the heel and the sole of the shoe, and both sides are the same colour, an advantage when folding around edges.)



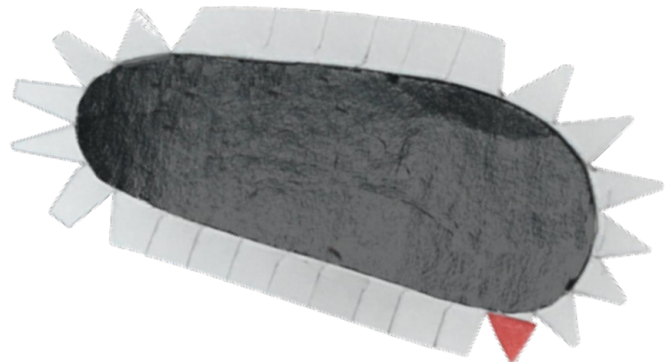
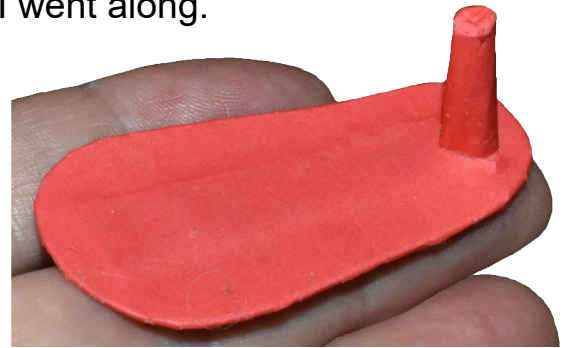
I started with the heel, using tacky glue to attach the paper sheathing and trimming the paper to fit as I go along.

To cover the bottom of the sole, I cut a piece of paper larger all around than the soles and punched a hole to allow the wrapped heel to pass through. I affixed the paper to the bottom of the sole with tacky glue, then trimmed it about 1/4" from the sole edge.



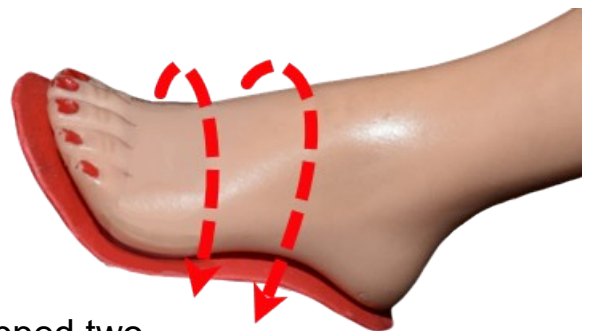
I snipped into the overlap at short intervals all around, and folded all the little tabs over the edge. Once again, I used tacky glue to secure them, smoothing the edge carefully as I went along.

The bottom sole of the shoe is complete, needing only to be shaped to Bridey's foot. The metal shank will retain the shape as I bend the sole to fit.

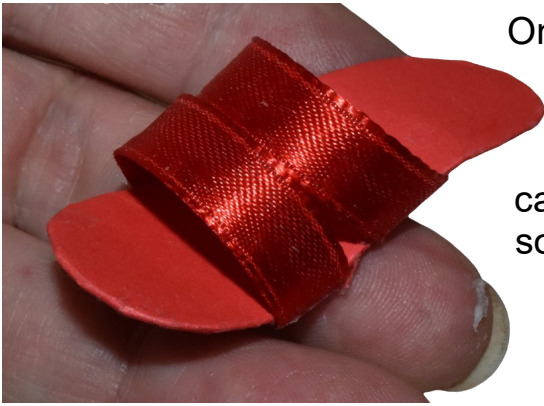


To finish the shoe, I cut a third cardboard sole shape to serve as the insole and covered it in the same way, using the same paper. Now to attach the straps.

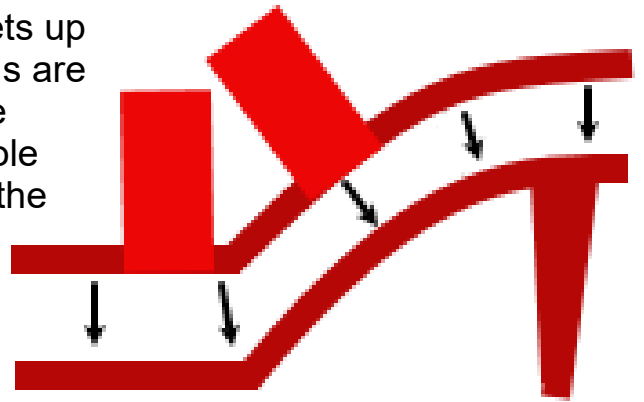
I pressed the insole against the bottom of the foot, bending it to fit and holding it temporarily in place with a bit of masking tape at toe and heel. (There's no metal shank in the insole).



That done, I wrapped two pieces of 3/8" ribbon snugly around the instep and glued the ends in position on the bottom side of the insole. These straps will hold the shoe to her foot.



Once the glue sets up and the ribbons are secured, the completed insole can be glued to the sole of the shoe using tacky glue.



I clamped the two parts of the shoe together with clothespins until the glue had set. The ribbon straps are securely caught between the two soles, so they won't pull out or let go when the shoes are on the doll's feet: just what I wanted!



Bridey's shoes are finished, and we're both pleased: the shoes slip onto her foot without difficulty, and they stay put, held in place by the ribbon straps.

They turned out well enough that I may just have to make her a couple more pair. After years of being shoeless, she could have a whole wardrobe of shoes!

Now to do something about her dress . . .