

Zippy Gets a New Suit

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These stuffed monkeys were very popular when I was a little kid, but they've been out of fashion for decades and are very difficult to come by nowadays.

So I was delighted to find this little Zippy in a local thrift store. He's about 14" tall, with his adorable molded features and especially the banana in his hand, which I remember so clearly from back when. He really wanted to come home with me, so for the sake of nostalgia, I brought him along.



He was in pretty rough shape, with gaping holes in both his arms, and very dirty face and hands. I had already given his face a wash before I thought to take pictures, but you can still see how soiled and torn his coat was.



I knew when I rescued Zippy from the thrift store that I'd need to remake him completely, so I got to work dismantling him, taking care not to damage the vinyl parts as I removed the stitching.

I also worked carefully so I could save the fabric pieces to use as a guide for creating the new body pieces.

He turned out to be stuffed with a weird combination of dark-colored fibrous material and flecks of styrofoam (you can see some of it clinging to the fabric in the photo). I removed all of this mystery material -- keeping the vacuum cleaner handy, because the styrofoam bits flew everywhere -- and decided to fill the new body with polyester fiber.



I used the original fabric pieces as a guide for making a new pattern, with only a few small changes.



To make his new body, I drew from my stash of vintage fake fur, saved from my days of designing soft toys. I chose tan and pale yellow, then traced and cut out the pieces. I stitched him together by machine as far as possible, and completed the rest by hand.

Most of the hand sewing involved stitching the vinyl pieces into the fabric body; for this purpose I used a modified blanket stitch and a thick string to do the sewing. (Finer thread risks slicing through the vinyl when pulled taut).

The longer needle aids in this process, because you have something to grip when pulling it through the plastic as you sew.



Here you can see the face from the inside, after the sewing is almost complete. Once that's done, I'll stuff him with the polyester fiber and stitch the opening closed.

To close him up after stuffing, I used buttonhole thread to do a ladder stitch, which closes up the opening so that it's nearly invisible, as you can see by the back of the head, which has already been closed up.



Here's the finished Zippy looking resplendent in his new suit, and as good as he must have done when new.



Judging by his expression, he's as chuffed as I am at how well his new clothes turned out!