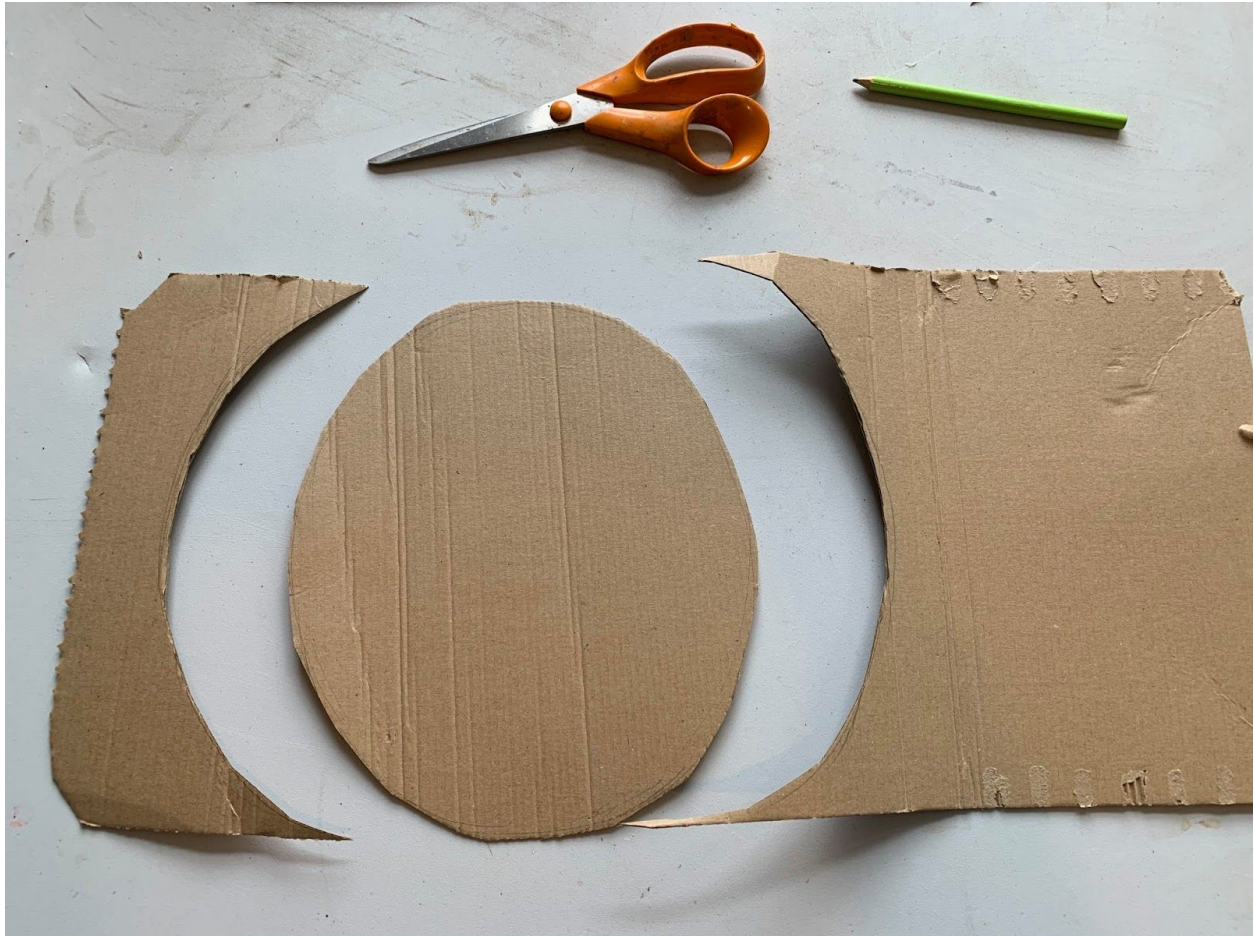


Find step by step instructions in the captions of each photo.



Mask making from stuff you have around your home by Thingumajig Theatre.



Cut an oval bigger than your face from a piece of cardboard. Mine was about 22cm wide and 25cm tall. Use the thinner, 1-layer cardboard (like you get from an online delivery). Have the grains of the cardboard running up and down.





Soften the cardboard by pushing it so that it starts to curve inwards on all sides.



Cut about 5-7cm cuts at the chin, 2 on the forehead, and 2 at cheeks.





Overlap these cuts and fasten with a stapler. If you have a hot glue gun, you can use this instead. Make sure you are stapling from the inside of the mask towards you, so the pointy ends of the staple are not towards your face (ouch!). If your stapler is not strong enough to go through 2 layers of cardboard, you can use masking tape for this instead.



The mask should look a bit like this. It's important that the mask is as round as possible without sharp corners where you made the darts.





Hold the mask to your face and find where your nose touches the mask. Cut a triangle out with a knife or scissors, so your nose pokes through, and the mask can sit comfortably close to your face.



Hold your mask to your face again, find out where your eyes are, and cut a hole. I suggest you cut a small hole at first just to make sure it's in the right place and then make it bigger. Most adults' eyes are about 6-7cm (2.5 inches) apart--closer than you might think.





It should look like this. What's so funny?



Cut a square of cardboard, fold, and staple or hot glue to the sides of the mask just above the eye line. This is to reinforce the area where the straps will come through.





Cut a triangle of cardboard with rounded corners and bend it.



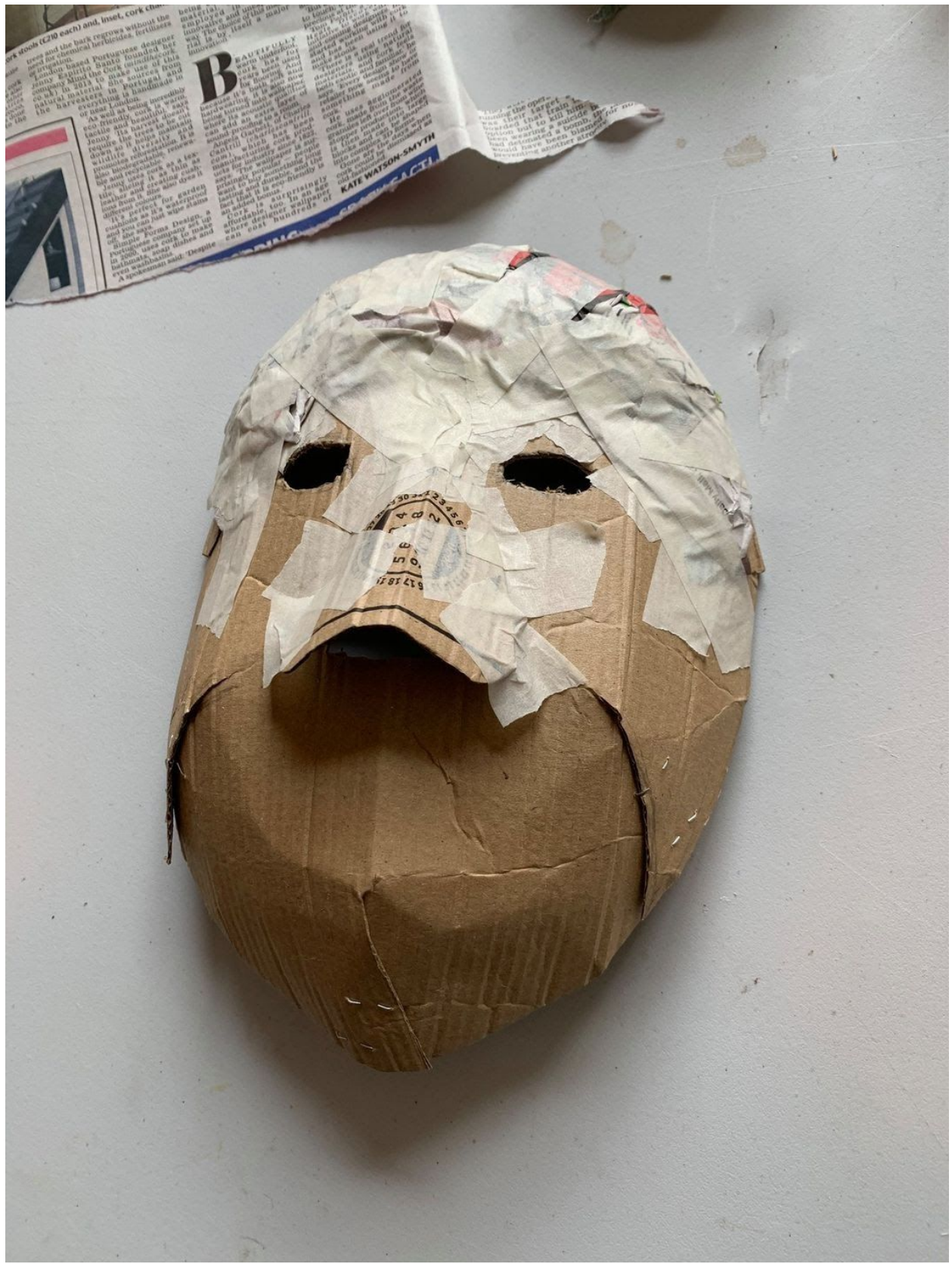
Tape over the nose hole with masking tape. Don't use shiny tapes like Sellotape (Scotch) or duct/gaffer tape as the papier-mache will not stick to this.





Now for the sculpting. Crumple up newspaper and tape it to the mask. I suggest you start by building up the forehead area.



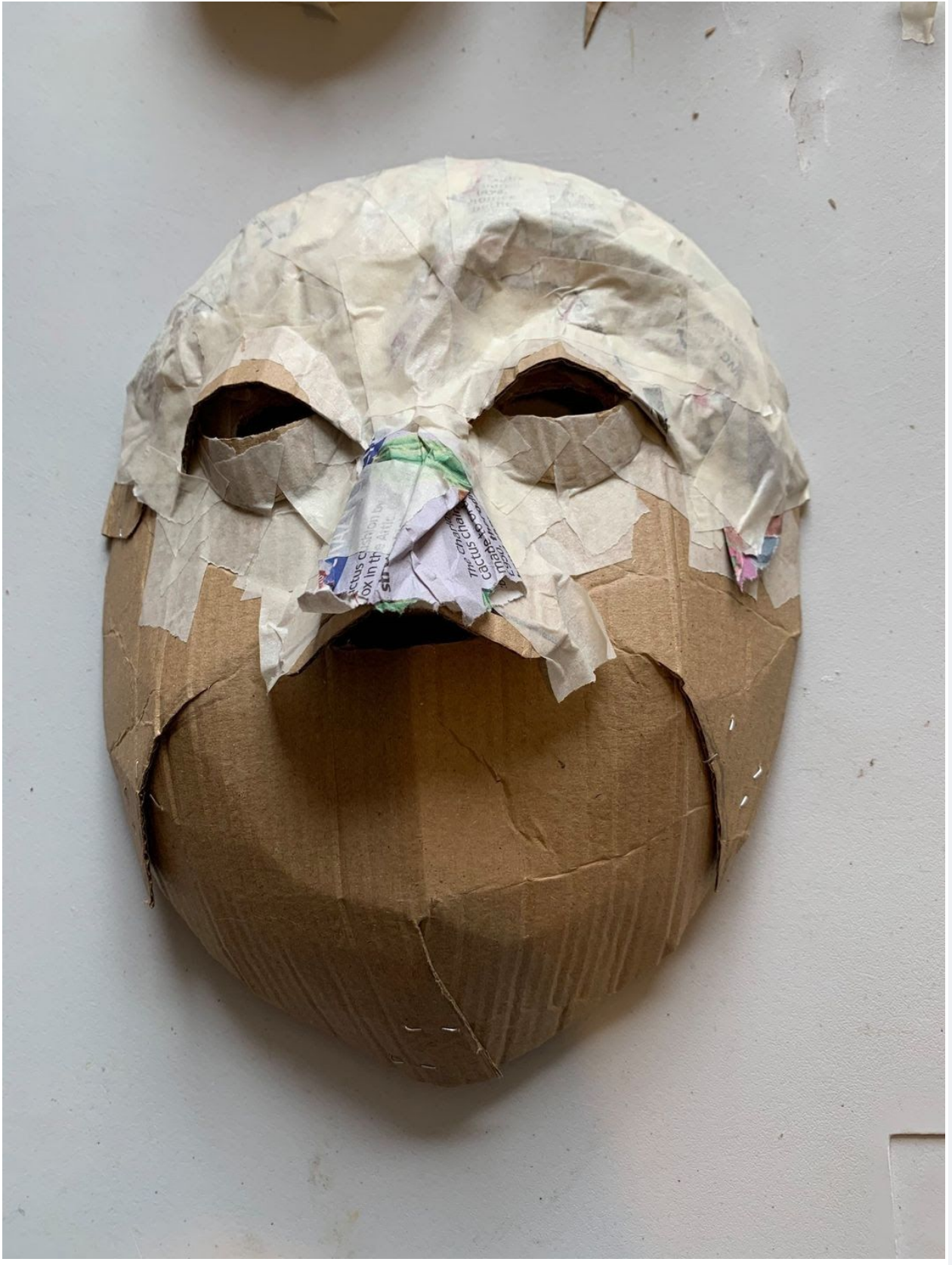


Ensure the area between the cardboard and the newspaper is gradual, so the contours are smooth and natural. This will take some practice and some time.



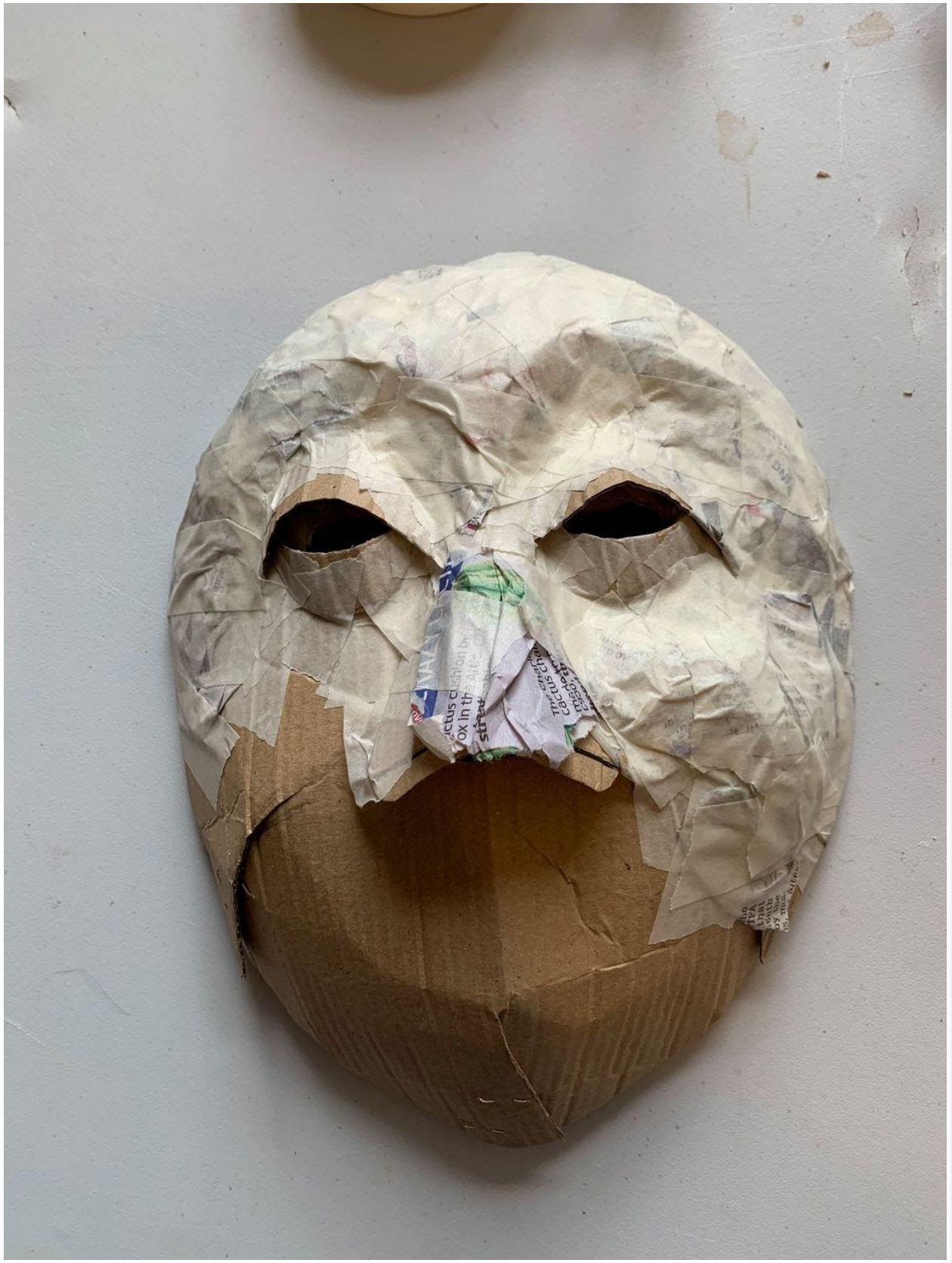


Cut cardboard crescent shapes for the upper and lower eyelids. Tape on the lower lid first, then the upper.

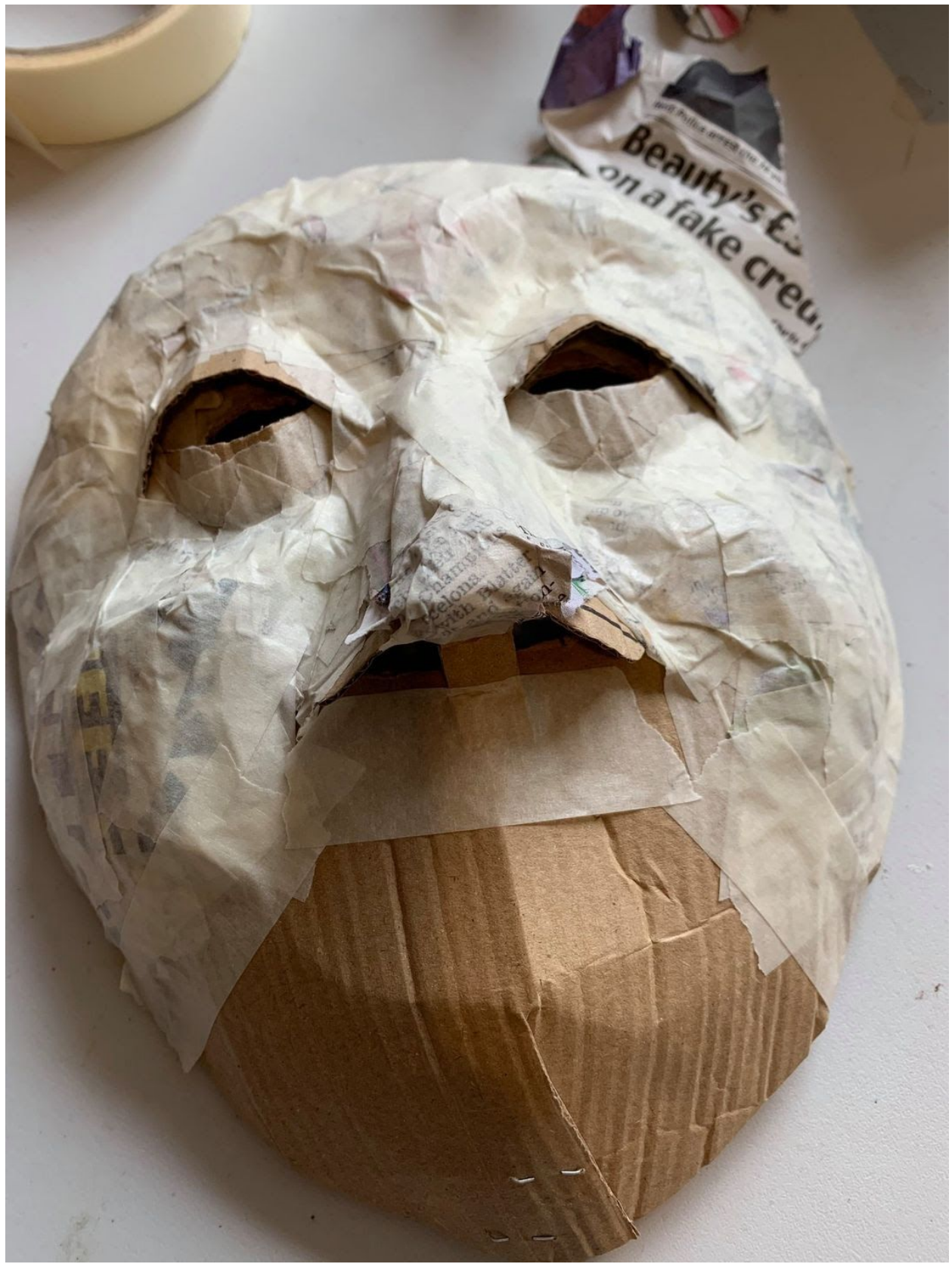


Build up the brow.





Build up the cheeks. Make sure you are keeping the peaks and valleys clear and exaggerated. Pay special attention that the corners of the eyes, nose, and mouth are deep (right down to the cardboard) compared to the areas around them.

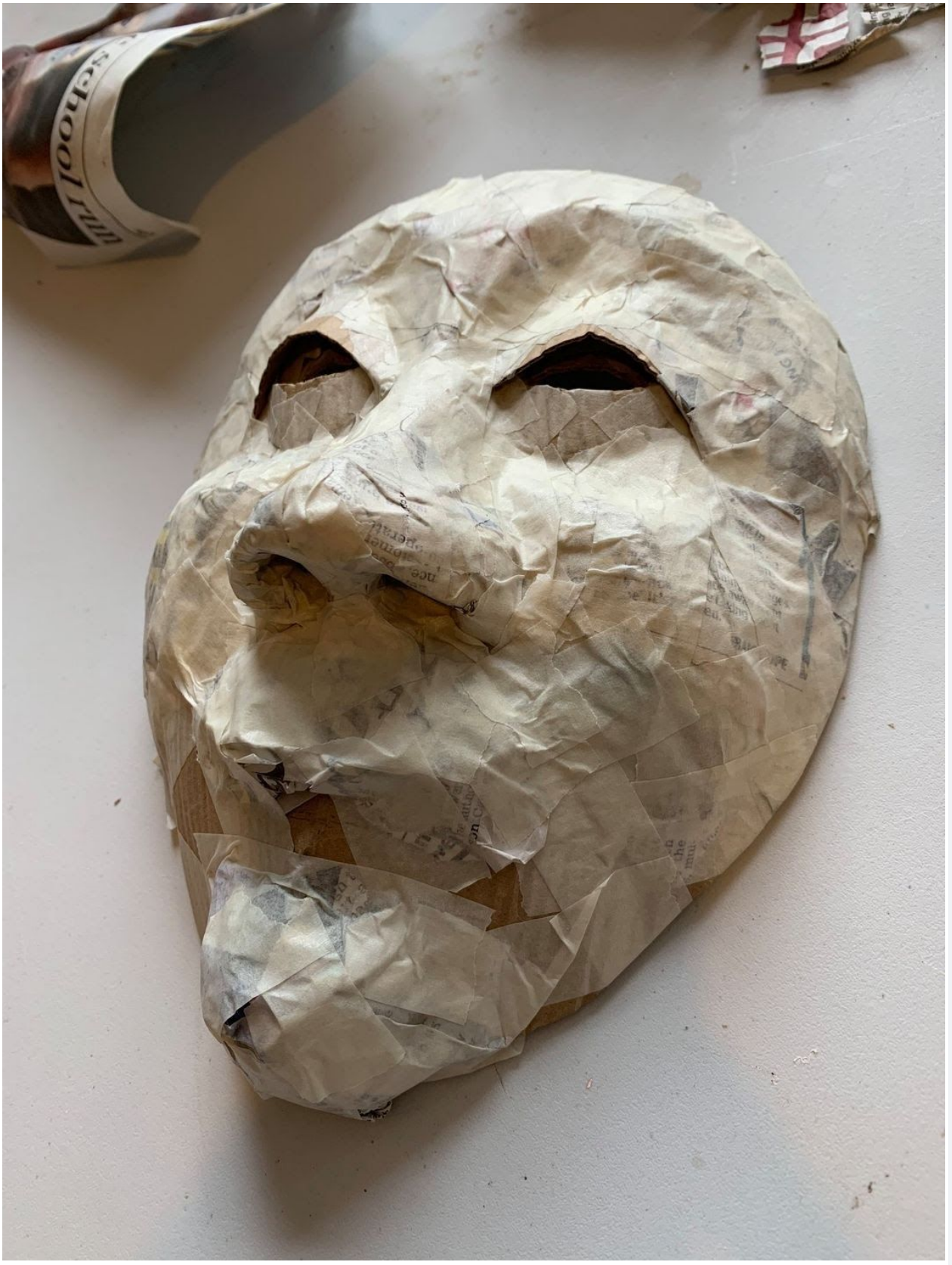


Tape a piece of cardboard to fill in the area between nostrils and build up the nose. Once again, take the time to make sure all newspaper pieces blend into the area around it.





Here is the upper lip.



Build up a chin.





And finally, the lower lip. Hold this to your face and pull the edges back, so the mask fits your face. It's important that it's not flat but round to fit your face.



On to the papier-mache paste. You can use wallpaper paste (in the UK, we use LAP, in the USA, we use Golden Harvest). Or you can use cornflour (corn starch in the USA).

Mix 1/4 cup of cornflour with 1/2 cup of cold water--use your hands to break this up. Boil 2.5 cups of water.





When the water is boiling rapidly, slowly add the cornflour mixture and whisk vigorously. The temperature is critical here, so you must add the cold mixture SLOWLY. If it stops boiling, don't add any more mixture until the temperature rises again to a rolling boil. Soon you should start to see it thicken to a gluey texture. This glue is ready to use as soon as it is cool enough to touch. You can use it for about a week. Don't cover it up overnight. If it gets thick, just add a tiny bit more warm water and mix.



Now for the paper. You can use most paper you have in your home but don't use a glossy magazine or office printer paper. I suggest you use 2 types of paper so you can tell the layers apart, such as brown bags and newspapers. You can do 2 layers or 3 layers. I suggest you end with brown paper.





I will do 3 layers, brown, newspaper, brown. If you are using heavy grocery bag brown paper, I would just do 2 layers: newspaper first, then brown paper. I am using brown wrapping paper. I prefer to tear off the machine cut straight edges from brown paper as the torn edges blend together better. This doesn't matter with the newspaper. Tear a piece about this size, bring the glue to the paper and rub it into the paper. Don't dunk the paper into the glue; it gets too wet and hard to work with. If you are using heavy brown paper, be sure to work the glue into the fibers until the paper is very soft and pliable before you apply.

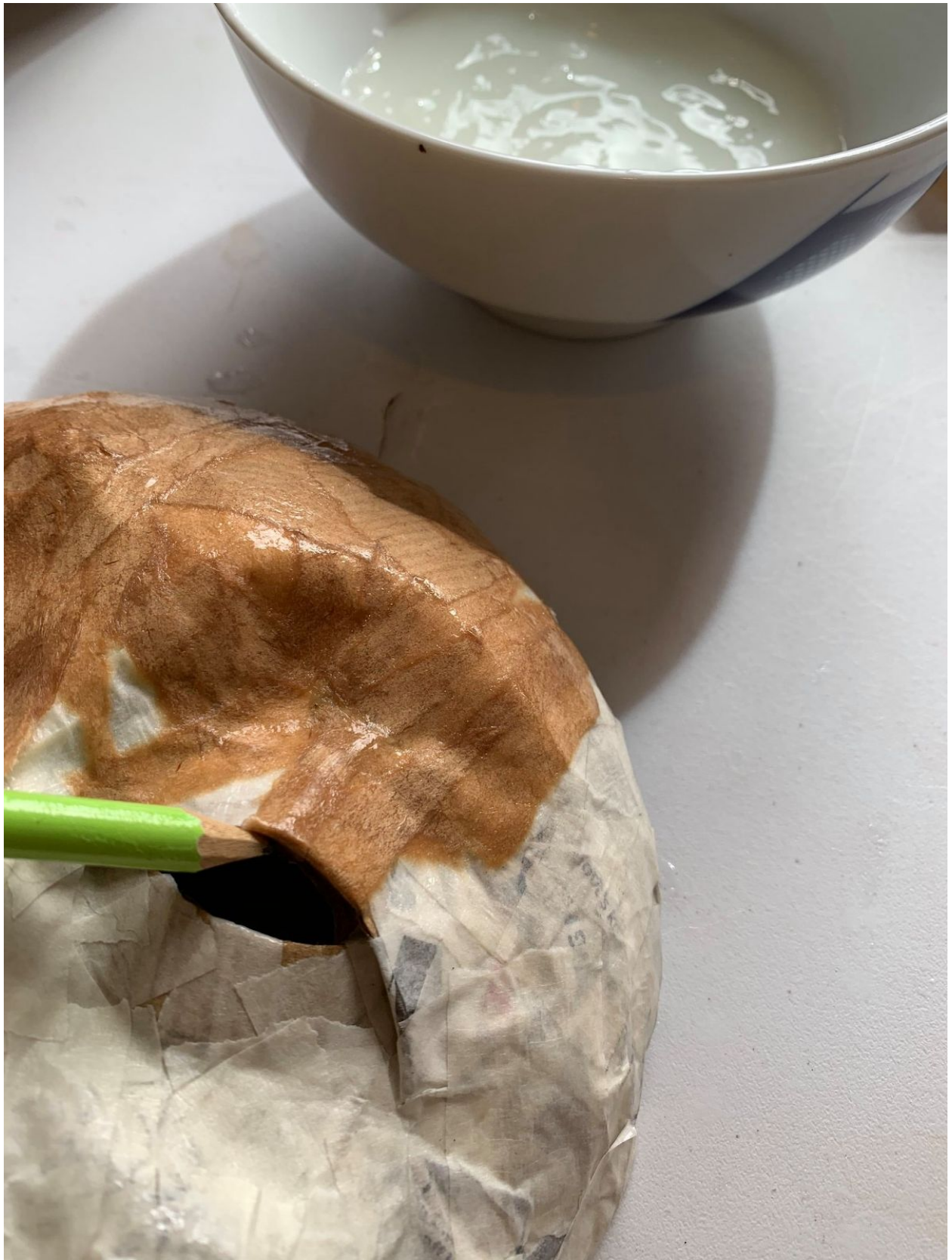


Tear a small piece of the glue soaked paper and overlap onto the mask. Use small narrow pieces in more detailed areas such as the eyes, nose, and mouth.





Use long pieces and go around the edge of the mask. All masking tape should be covered with your first layer of papier-mache.



Use a pencil or chopstick when your fingers can't reach to go around the edge of the eyelids and nostrils.





The first layer is done! Once again, make sure the mask is not flat, but the sides are curved back to fit your face. You don't have to let it dry between layers, but it's OK to leave it and do the next layer the next day. You might want to let it dry face-up on an upside-down bowl, so the sides don't flatten as it dries.



Next newspaper. I won't bother going around the eyelids and nostrils on the 2nd and 3rd layers.





Papier-mache complete. Take the time to add tiny pieces to make sure everything is as smooth as possible.



Inside of the mask when complete.





When the mask is still a little bit damp, but the outer layer is dry, take the back of a spoon or a wood dowel and gently rub on any bumps to smooth it down. Be careful not to push too hard!





When the mask is completely dry, you can lightly sand some of the accidental ridges and bumps that always appear when papier mache dries (as some areas have more layers than others.)

Next, paint the mask with white water-based paint (acrylic or latex emulsion). Let dry completely.

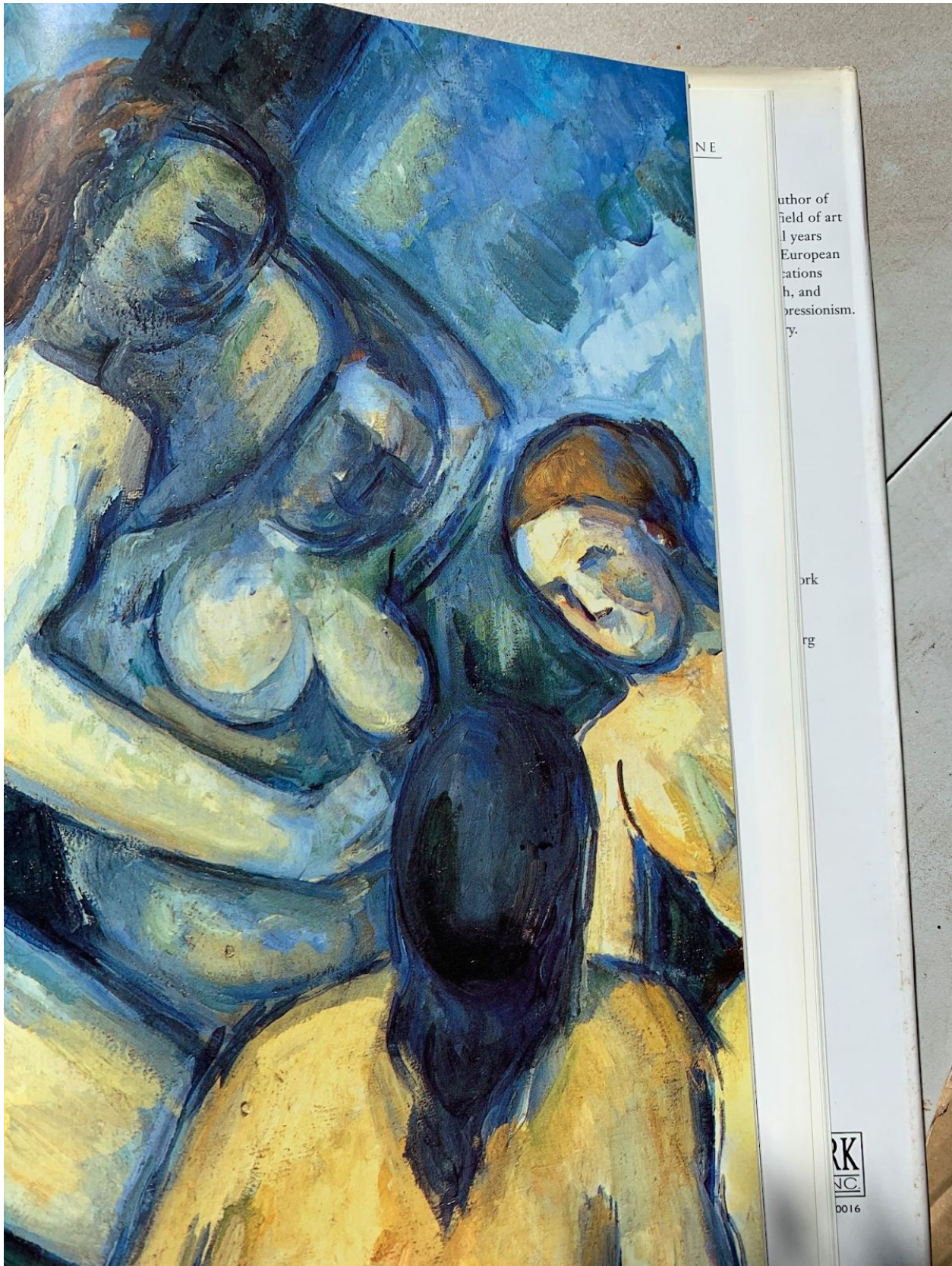
If you don't have paint at home, you can leave the mask brown or do one more layer of papier-mâché with any colored paper you might find around the house. Colored tissue paper works well as a last layer.





Optional: You can paint the inside of the mask with PVA or wood glue thinned with a bit of water. This seals the paper so it won't absorb your sweat or natural oils.





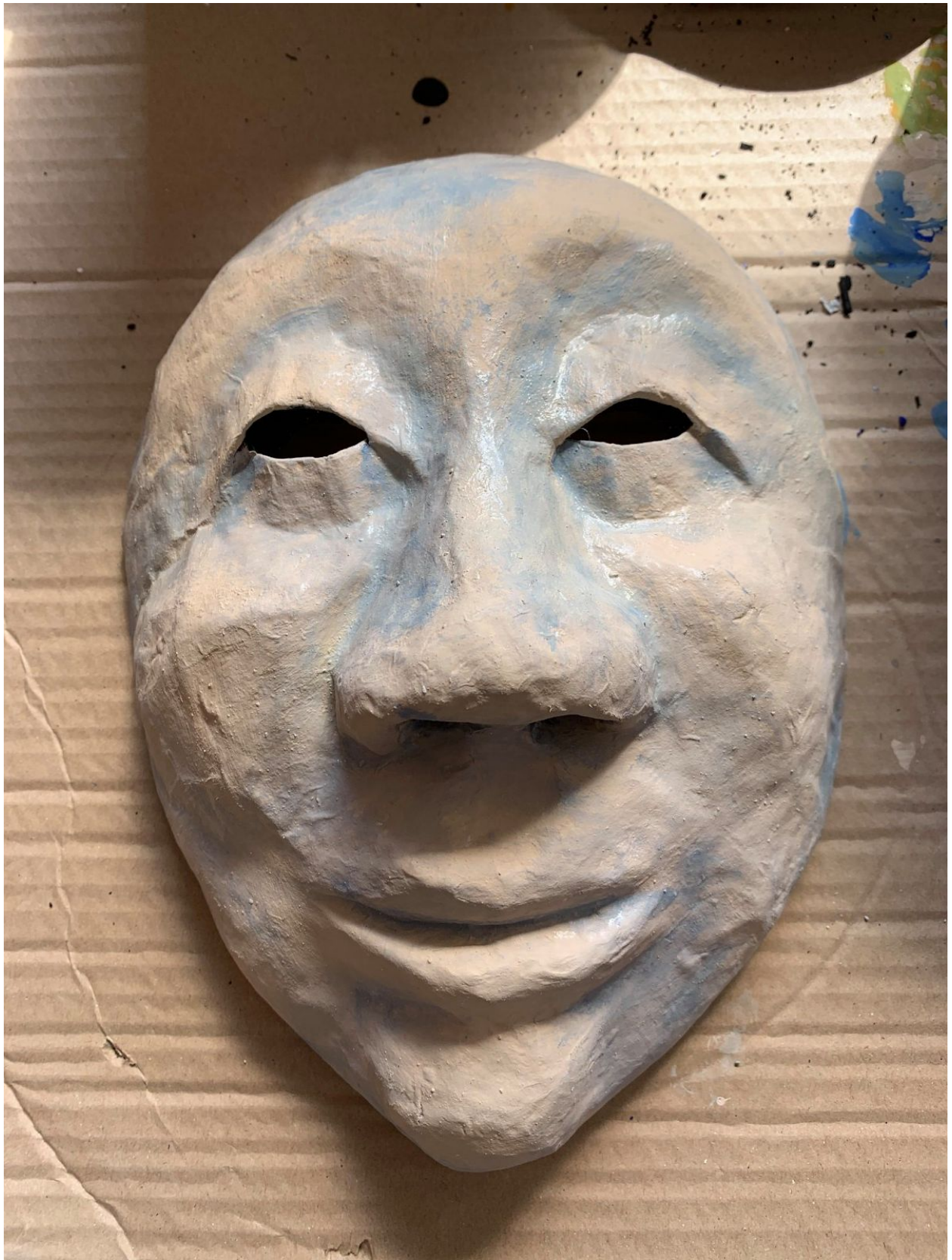
Now for painting. This is entirely up to you, but I was looking at some paintings by Cézanne and thought I'd take some inspiration from him.





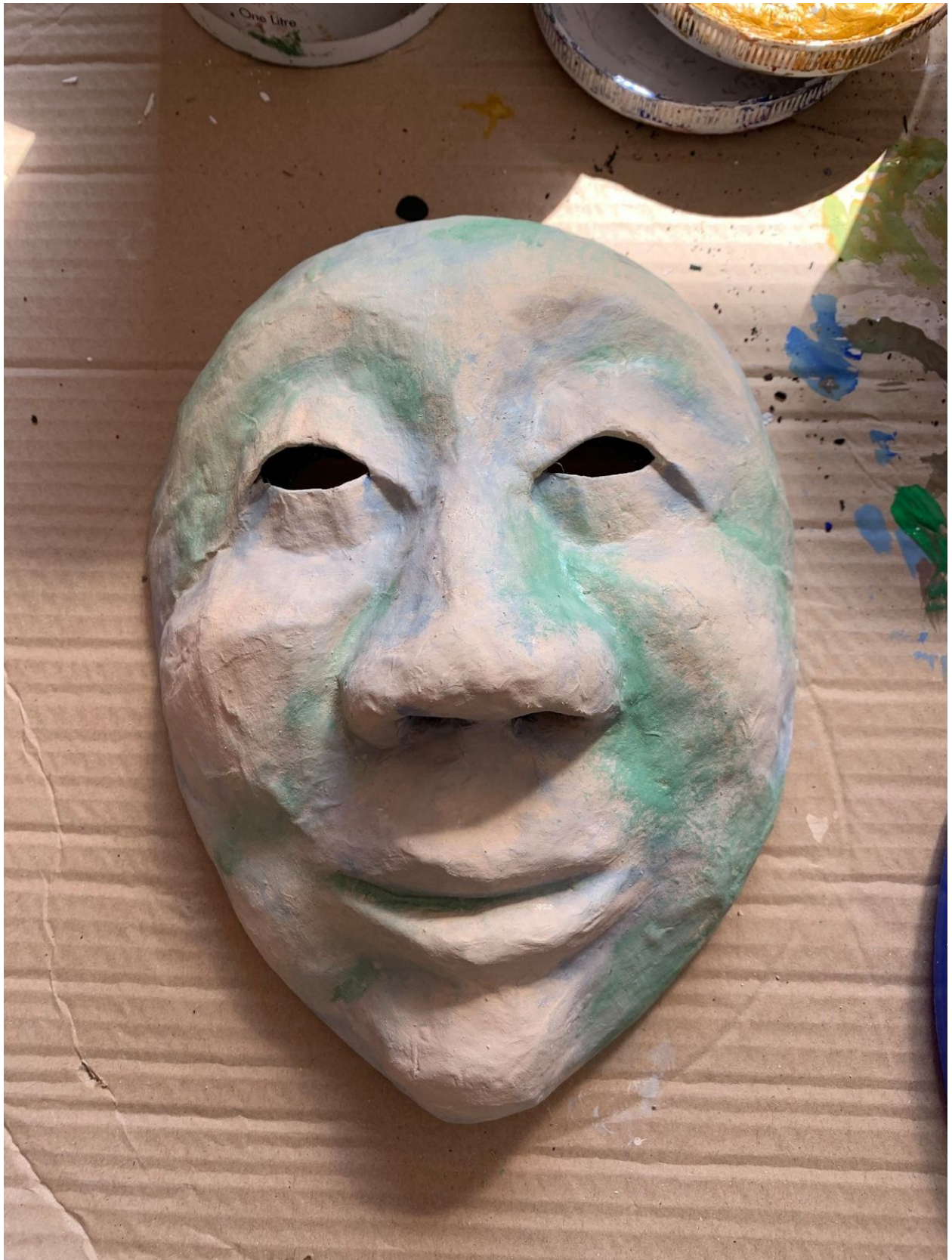
I am using scenic paint, which is a very saturated acrylic. Acrylics are best, tempera paints are fine, household paints are ok but harder to mix colors. First, I mix a base tone. This is the middle color. Paint an even layer of this and save some of this paint.





Next, I mixed a blue with a little bit of the base tone and blended this into the valleys of the sculpture.





Same thing with some green.





And again with some brown (burnt sienna and burnt umber). Now we see the contours of the sculpture emerge.





Then lightly with purple in the valleys. It's easy to go too far with the shading. If you do, go back on the peaks with your base tone (this is why you kept some back).





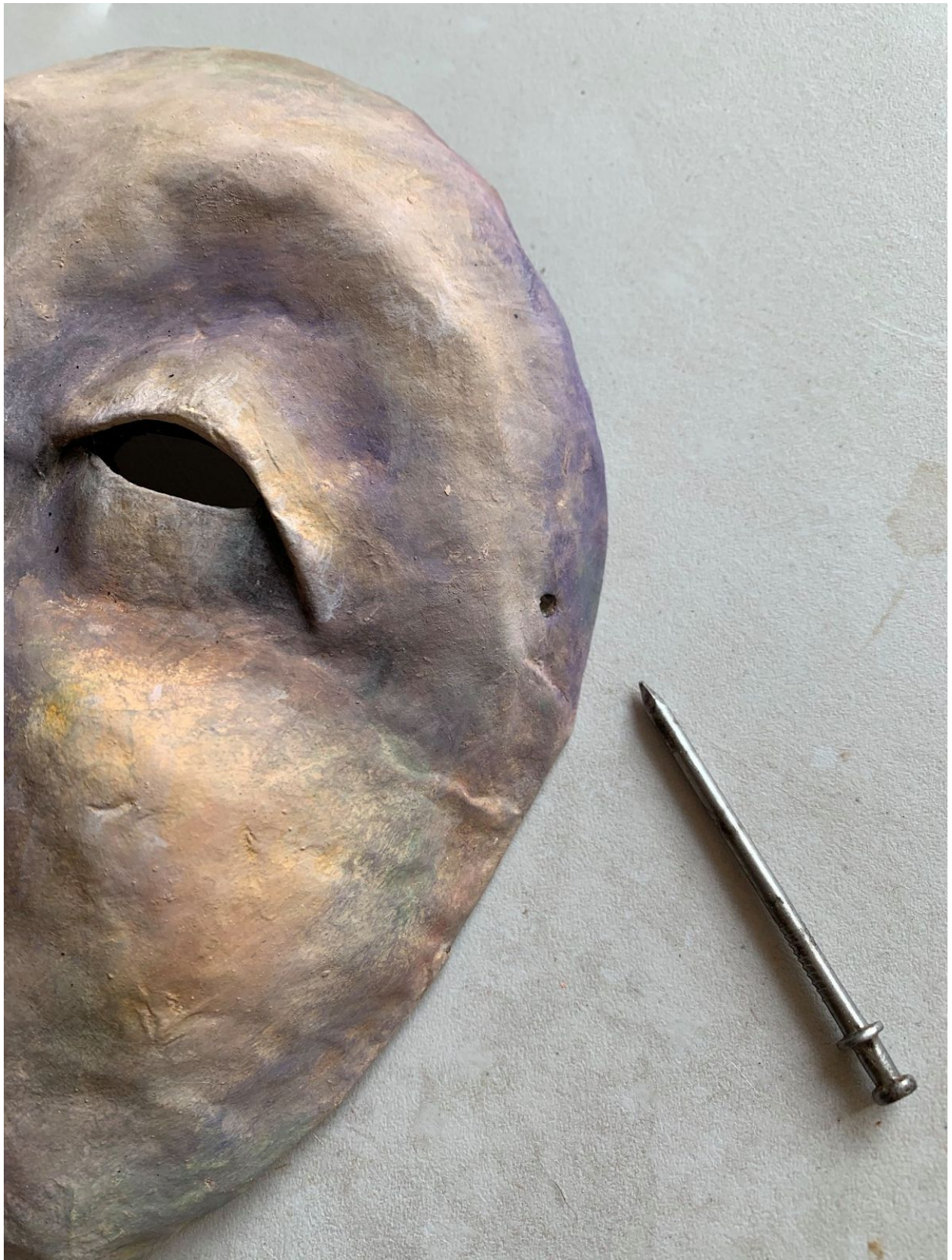
Finally, add just a tiny bit of black into the deepest valleys (corners of eyelids, inside of nostrils, and deepest part of the mouth). Then brush some white on to the highest part of the mask. Painting takes a lot of practice. If you're not happy with it, you can let it dry completely and touch it up later. But I think it looks fine, move on.





To make the strap, you can use elastic 10mm or 1/2 inch, or you can cut up an old bicycle inner tube. I cut mine about 1cm thick and 60cm long.





Poke a hole in the sides of the mask about 1cm away from the edge, just above the eye line. The strap should go right above your ears.





Push the inner tube or elastic through the holes. Adjust the strap so that it is snug on your face, and the mask doesn't shift if you move quickly. Tie the strap. I prefer the strap to go twice around to the back of the head, so you don't notice the knot as much, and two straps are more comfortable than one strap.



Now put on the mask, find a mirror, and discover this new character you have created.





You can add a hat, a scarf, or hot glue some fake fur or yarn for hair. Have fun and post a photo as a comment to this album.

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/ThingumaTheatre>



Here are some masks made by folks following our tutorial—how great are these! Send us a photo of your masks.