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Interview with Seth Wolfson

Seth Wolfson with his alter ego in plaster



Seth A. Wolfson was born in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. He got started in the mid-80's as a professional make-up FX artist in film and television while still in high school. Eventually, Wolfson left Pennsylvania after teaching at The Art Institute of Philadelphia. He moved to Orlando where he made wax figures for Ripley's Believe It or Not!, worked on animatronic dinosaurs for Universal Studios, and even created some hoaxes for Haxan Films, the company that made the Blair Witch Project. After teaching in New York City, Wolfson went to Mississippi where he did a reconstruction for the Hinds county sheriffs department, and was lead sculptor for Alatheia, a medical prosthetics company known for creating realistic prosthesis. After Hurricane Katrina he decided to move back to NY and continue his work as a medical sculptor creating the most lifelike silicone prosthetics available.

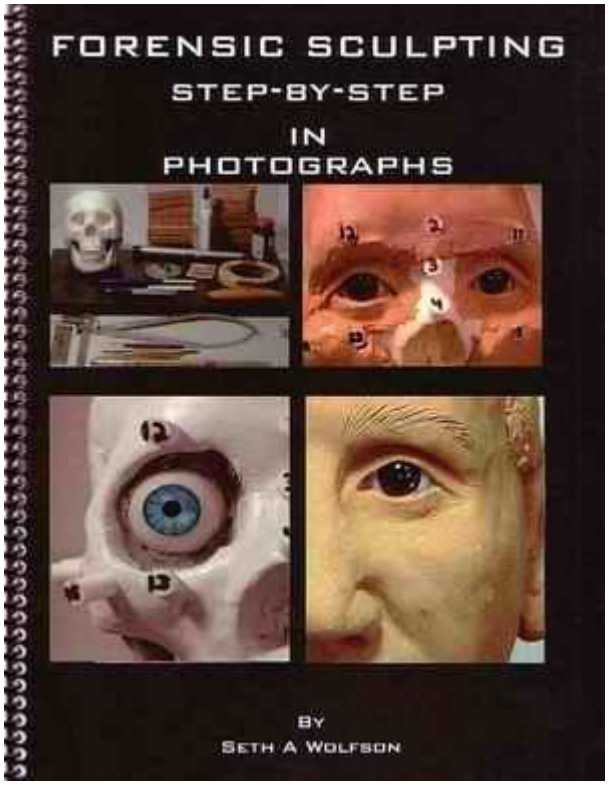
Forensic sculpting is a well-recognized, respected if somewhat mythical craft. It has its own importance and has been in use for a long time. However this highly skilled craft has had very few practitioners. Wolfson is one of them, and that is why we becamse interested in him.

We at the "*Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*" also became interested in him because of his seminal work on Forensic Sculpting [*Forensic sculpting step by step in photographs* (Realsculpt Press, 2005)]. This book was reviewed by nine different reviewers from five different continents, and everyone rated it as a first class book. As many as three experts - from different parts of the world - were requested by the editorial board of the journal to interview him. The idea was to grill him thoroughly on his life, work, future plans and ambitions, so our readers could really understand the intricacies of his specialty and work. The experts chosen to interview him were Dr. Gaurav Aggarwal (GA) of India, a professor of forensic medicine at Amravati medical college, Dr. Puneet Setia (PS) of India, a senior resident of forensic medicine at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Nigel Cockerton (NC) of UK, a seasoned forensic sculptor himself. The interview was conduted online for well over two months. Some excerpts....)



Q. NC: Please tell us something about your early life.

Elements of Murder, the best selling book by Emsley. Click cover to read its review



A. I was born in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania on August 17th 1971. Interestingly I share my birthday with Anil, the editor in chief of this journal...



Q. NC: ...Is it August 17th? Great! Then you share your birthday with me as well. What a great coincidence! Well, let's go on please.

A. Oh, that's really cool. Okay, when I was a little kid I saw on TV an episode of 'Ripley's believe it or not' about a forensic sculptor. I was instantly interested in it and wanted to find out more, but there was no Internet at that time to look deeper, and being only ten years old and I found almost nothing but I never forgot that show.

A few years later when I was seventeen I started working as a sculptor professionally on films and TV doing make-up effects and puppets. At twenty-one I began teaching at Art schools, and eventually moved to Florida.

My first job there was making wax figures for 'Ripley's believe it or not museums' And it was working there that sparked the memory of that forensic sculpting show I saw years earlier when I was ten.

Unfortunately even then no one had ever heard of such a thing as 'Forensic Sculpting'. Still undeterred I tried to find more information about it until one day, after six years searching I found some journals through the library of congress, and then a year later I learned of a class.

In 2002 I took a couple classes in the art of facial reconstruction with Betty Pat Gatliff of Norman, Oklahoma, and joined the Doe network (www.doenetwork.org) soon after that.

Later I moved to New York, and met Officer Danny Sollitti. We began a case for the Bensalem Police dept in Pennsylvania, about ten minutes from my hometown out side Philadelphia.

Since then I have noticed a huge interest in forensic art, especially since the airing of CSI, but still no how-to information for the budding artist interested in working in this field.

I had been teaching at different schools and noticed that there is very limited sculpting information in books and, even then, most professional tips and tricks are kept out of them. Art schools don't teach this stuff either; you have to learn it from experience!

So, after a few years of people requesting I write a book and put in it all my tricks of the trade, knowledge of clays, sculpting, and what nots I decided to fill the gap and write the book that seemed so greatly needed. 1) What is the scope of forensic sculpting in today's world where computers can do the same job much faster and give more realistic pictures? In other words, what kind of threat do computers and other such digital gadgets pose to your profession? Ans. To be honest I don't believe the computers can really be as accurate as a person in the sculpting. There is a need for intuition and artistic training to get the realism and put life into the piece. I have not seen a computer model that is always perfect, nor a sculpture, but even when computers can do

that and they will, they will still require an operator. The truth is this profession is about solving cases and identifying the dead that is really more important than my job. I can always find another career or job, but identifying the person is much more important in the grand scheme of things in the world than some artists looking for work. I can always go back to being a dishwasher. Ok I would probable go back to teaching. 2) What advise you would like to give to youngsters who want to take up sculpting as a profession? Ans. Practice. Learn realism, bone structure, anatomy. Never stop taking classes ever. 3) Is forensic sculpting a financially viable profession? Ans. It can be especially for a law enforcment professional. 4) And why? Ans. You can make a good living at it and do a lot of good in the world.

...I have been mainly apprenticing as a sculptor and artist since I was in my mid-teens, working on movies and film, as a forensic artist I took the classes available here in the states in 2002. I took classes in forensic sculpting in Texas and in Oklahoma with Betty Pat Gatliff. I also graduated the Dick smith Professional make-up course which is very well known in the film industry and teaches sculpting, mould-making, animatronics etc. Most Oscar winning FX artist have taken that. Most of my experience is work related. I have been sculpting professionally since high school...



Q. PS: Can you tell us about your educational background?

A. I have been mainly apprenticing as a sculptor and artist since I was in my mid-teens, working on movies and film, as a forensic artist I took the classes available here in the states in 2002. I took classes in forensic sculpting in Texas and in Oklahoma with Betty Pat Gatliff. I also graduated the Dick smith Professional make-up course which is very well known in the film industry and teaches sculpting, mould-making, animatronics etc. Most Oscar winning FX artist have taken that. Most of my experience is work related. I have been sculpting professionally since high school.

Q.  GA: Your work and professional experience?

A. I have done a case at the Doe network, have another case pending, but hopefully they will not need me, it is better if they don't need me, because that means they identified the person sooner and that is really the most important thing in this situation, more than my desire to have some work in the field. I have taught at the Art Institute of Philadelphia, LIBS in NYC, and other private seminars. I have had sculptures in 'Ripley's believe it or not' museums all over the world, worked on films, TV and Theatre. I had worked for Universal studios in Florida for over 6 years in the animatronics character dept. Currently, besides the book and seminars on forensic sculpting I am lead sculptor for Alatheia prosthetics famous making realistic medical prosthetics.

Q.  PS: What are the various professional positions that you have held? Which of them you liked the most and why?

A. I have been a teacher, a cook, made wax figures, a sculptor, a make-up FX artist and other things, really varied over the years. I think all of my favorite jobs have involved sculpting. Currently I am a sculpting lead for the leading medical prosthetics company. (you can see my resume on www.realsculpt.com but it does not include all of the retail and restaurant jobs) I always had a full time job since I was 16, plus the apprenticeships. That meant I had to work in food service, or videotaping weddings or what ever I needed to do to make the gas and food money I needed to get to my apprenticeships.



Q. GA: How did you become interested in sculpting? Did you choose sculpting by choice or by chance?

A. I originally wanted to do stop motion animation puppets like King Kong, and monsters from the old Sinbad movies. But since the material were too expensive I got into makeup FX, which is sculpting life size monsters and people. I was lucky enough to go to a camp for kids where they made movies, the only camp like this in the world that I know of.



Q. PS: Where are you working at present?

A. I am currently in New York making medical prosthetics, and freelancing. I have also done a case for Hinds county sheriff in Mississippi, and am talking to some people in Maryland about doing a few cases for them.

Our Interviewers - Dr. Gaurav Aggarwal (GA) of India, a professor of forensic medicine at Amravati medical college (extreme left), Dr. Puneet Setia (PS) of India, a senior resident of forensic medicine at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (center) and Nigel Cockerton (NC) of UK, a seasoned forensic sculptor (right).









Q. PS: You mentioned you are working at Alatheia prosthetics. Can you explain your nature of job there?

A. Yes, of course. I am the lab manager and lead sculptor. I am responsible for the sculpting of all of the prosthetics, we have two other sculptors, one who is actually the one I replaced who is now freelance for us, and who trained me in their methods (he is incredible) and a new sculpting trainee (he is really a fast learner). I oversee the prosthetic hands, fingers and feet being sculpted, then I make sure they get molded and the silicone skins get made and sent to paint. Its really a lot of fun and very rewarding. I am very proud to work there, the artisans there are incredible and we deliver the most realistic prosthetics available and the longest lasting. So I must admit being proud to work there.



Q. GA: What are you more interested in- sculpting for art/ museums, sculpting for Hollywood or Forensic sculpting?

A. I actually would like to do forensic sculptures for museum-displays, start with the forensic sculpture and finish with a realistic wax figure.



Q. GA: What is more satisfying for you and why?

A. I like things going on film, but I fell like there is more respectability doing museum work or forensics. Plus it is nice to know that I am one in a few hundred that can do forensic sculpting, or one in a few dozen who could make a wax figure from start to finish.

Seth Wolfson, using his book to make a forensic sculpture (Click picture to enlarge)





Q. PS: Why did you choose your profession?

A. I chose forensics sculpting because I have been fascinated with the idea of it since I was a kid and saw an episode of Ripley's believe it or not about it. I also remember the original King Tut reconstruction in the 70's or 80's. I chose medical prosthetics because I was tired of teaching make-up FX, and I was amazed at the quality of this one company, so I emailed them and by chance they needed a sculptor.



Q. PS: Was it by choice or by chance?

A. I think all my choices are from watching too much TV and seeing something amazing and deciding the I want to do that too.



Q. GA: What is the kind of money one can make at your level, in your profession?

A. I have been working full time in the art field since 1989/90 roughly and currently have enough for me and my wife to live comfortably. I think the problem is that most artists take too little. It also depends on the job itself and the cost of living. I would say I am doing very well.



Q. GA: You have done a variety of sculptures, some of the sculptures are so real-looking that it gives me the scares (as seen in one of the photos in your book on 'Forensic sculpting-Step-by-step- In photos'), has any of your sculpture ever scared you?

A. Not really, it is not so scary when they are yours, but I must say waking up and seeing them after a bad dream is creepy.

...as a sculpting teacher, and as an artist I noticed that the books out there on this subject, or even just sculpting in general were not very hands on. Close, but not enough to really guide the reader as if they were in one of my classes. Also with the huge resurgence of interest in forensic art since the airing of CSI there was an obvious demand for practical teaching literature, but, there was still no "how-to" info out there. A few books are indeed there, but are very technical. There is nothing really that teaches sculpting for beginners or standard sculpting methods used in the FX industry or wax figure trade...



Q. NC: Let's talk about your current book. It's the lack of practical information in the common textbooks that made you decide to write your book, and from a 'hands on' angle, right?

A. Yes, as a sculpting teacher, and as an artist I noticed that the books out there on this subject, or even just sculpting in general were not very hands on. Close, but not enough to really guide the reader as if they were in one of my classes.

Also with the huge resurgence of interest in forensic art since the airing of CSI there was an obvious demand for practical teaching literature, but, there was still no "how-to" info out there. A few books are indeed there, but are very technical. There is nothing really that teaches sculpting for beginners or standard sculpting methods used in the FX industry or wax figure trade.

While teaching Special effects, I noticed that with a little guidance I could get someone who never sculpted before to do a decent sculpture while also teaching them what not to do, and the importance of choosing the right materials.

I had been teaching at different schools and I noticed that there was very limited practical sculpting information in the books available to my students, most of the professional tips and tricks that could enhance a sculpture were kept secret, and most schools don't teach this stuff!

So, after a few years of people requesting I write a textbook and include in it all my tricks, tips, knowledge of clays, sculpting experience and what nots I decided to go ahead and do it. And keep the price of the book under twenty dollars. I want this book to be affordable to everyone.


Q. PS: How many books you have published apart from "forensic sculpting"?

A. Just that one so far. I am working on expanding that book, as well as some more books, all involving sculpting, molding and make-up fx for TV and film.


Q. PS: You said you are planning to expand the book forensic sculpting. Can you give some details what you are planning to do?

A. I want to add some mold making parts to the book, like how to mold the skull and then the final sculpture and even how to paint it for museum displays.

...I am hoping to do either an entire mold book, life casting, and a make-up fx books. But first I think I am going to do a teacher's edition of the forensic sculpting book. In addition to this, a B/W inexpensive or free add on to help, if people want to use this for teaching a class...


Q. PS: Also you said you are planning other books also. Can you give some details as to what you are planning to do and when they are expected to be in the market?

A. I am hoping to do either an entire mold book, life casting, and a make-up fx books. But first I think I am going to do a teacher's edition of the forensic sculpting book. In addition to this, a B/W inexpensive or free add on to help, if people want to use this for teaching a class.



Q. GA: How do you manage to perfect the 'model' down to the last detail?

A. I use certain sculpting method I learned for makeup fx, in which I use plastic wrap and a solvent to get each pour. On some characters we have to do each pour of the skin one by one. It takes a while but it is not as bad as some think.



Q. GA: Do you 'talk' to you 'creations'? Or rather, do your 'creations' talk to you?

A. I think it is a combination, but I try to not be influenced by anything but the Skull. If I don't, I can accidentally add unwanted character to the model, such as unnecessary wrinkles. As for the movie

stuff, usually I have to go by designs created by others. But with the figures, it is when I put myself in their shoes- it helps capture the moment of time they are frozen in.



Q. GA: How much time does it take you to complete a model e.g. involving only the head-part?

A. I can do a forensic sculpture in about 3 days.

...In my book, I did pretend that the skull was male to make the features larger for instructional purposes. Female features can be too subtle for teaching beginners. As males the features are much larger and easier to photograph and demonstrate, but in a real case I would not make that choice. If it was that questionable, I would have to do both a male and a female version...



Q. PS: Have you worked with criminal investigation agencies? If yes, what kind of experience was that?

A. I have worked through the Doe network and project Edan for the Bensalem Police department in Bensalem Pennsylvania USA.


Q. PS: We did a case in which some bones were found. There were in total four skulls in them. A couple of them were such that it was very difficult to identify whether they were male or female. Have you encountered such cases? If yes, how do you deal with them? I mean, when one doesn't even know the sex of the individual, how can he/she make that individual's sculpture?

A. I am not a forensic anthropologist, so I would not really make that sort of choice. In my book, I did pretend that the skull was male to make the features larger for instructional purposes. Female features can be too subtle for teaching beginners. As males the features are much larger and easier to photograph and demonstrate, but in a real case I would not make that choice. If it was that questionable, I would have to do both a male and a female version.


Q. PS: When you do the male and female versions of the same skull, how different are the results?

A. The would be very different because the base measurements from the depth chart are different.


Q. PS: Can you tell about some interesting incidents that you may have met in your professional life?

A. I have been a subject of a Norwegian BBC documentary on forensic art. I was contacted randomly by a policeman to help with a case; he did not know where I lived, and by chance it was just 15 minutes away instead of thousands of miles (he thought I may live in Florida). It turned out that we both lived in New Jersey. Because of that I got to work on a case for Bensalem PA, which is 15 minutes from my home town, again all chance. I have had a lot of cool jobs and meetings, working on movies. Once I worked with the people who made "Blair witch" before and after that film. I don't know if these are that interesting though for your readers?

...To be honest I don't believe the computers can really be as accurate as a person in sculpting. There is a need for intuition and artistic training to get the realism and put life into the piece. I have

not seen a computer model that is always perfect, nor a sculpture, but even when computers can do that and they will, they will still require an operator. The fact remains that this profession is about solving cases and identifying the dead, a job which is really more important than my job...



Q. PS: Oh, these are quite interesting. What is the scope of forensic sculpting in today's world where computers can do the same job much faster and give more realistic pictures? In other words, what kind of threat do computers and other such digital gadgets pose to your profession?

A. To be honest I don't believe the computers can really be as accurate as a person in sculpting. There is a need for intuition and artistic training to get the realism and put life into the piece. I have not seen a computer model that is always perfect, nor a sculpture, but even when computers can do that and they will, they will still require an operator. The fact remains that this profession is about solving cases and identifying the dead, a job which is really more important than my job. I can always find another career or job, but identifying the person is much more important in the grand scheme of things in the world than some artists looking for work. I can always go back to being a dishwasher. Ok I would probable go back to teaching.



Q. GA: Do you ever get tired of your work? What do you do in your spare time, not working?

A. I do get tired of art sometimes. In my spare time I like to go to the movies, play video games. When I have a motorcycle I like to go for a ride.



Q. GA: What is the kind of place that you work at- Studio or Home?

A. I work at home on the forensic stuff. For my regular job I work in workshop, actually my space is in a secluded hallway. I am kind of hidden away in the dark.



Q. GA: Which has been your most famous/ most admired work by others?

A. My most famous forensic sculpture was the Bensalem Jane Doe. My most famous art work is probably from the 'Blair witch' makers website "freakylinks". There are some pictures related to this project here (plase see below).



Q. GA: Which is the work you admire most and why? Something that is close to your heart?

A. My favorite is the current forensic sculpture for the book, because it was for my first book. My favorite art piece is probable the "Artist : 1" figure since it was so realistic and I did it just me and my business partner Amy.

...I work at home on the forensic stuff. For my regular job I work in workshop, actually my space is in a secluded hallway. I am kind of hidden away in the dark...



Q. PS: Would like to tell us about your family?

A. I was born in Pennsylvania USA, I have a brother, sister and two living parents. My Father sold antiques and oriental rugs, my mother worked for him. I am engaged she is going to school full time to get her 4 year degree in Human resources. That's about it, I am now far from my home town and family but I am sort of a loner anyway.



Q. GA: Have you sculpted a member of your family, how did the person like it?

A. I never sculpted anything family related. My family is artistic, my father went to music and art school, then ended up owning an Oriental rug store.



Q. NC: Do you have any plans for a follow up book?

A. I am hoping to get 'Forensic Sculpture - Step by step in photographs' published traditionally, and for that I have chapters planned in moulding a skull, moulding your finished sculpture for display, and so much more. Granted then the book may be a little more than twenty dollars but, I also know that no one has been willing to divulge these secrets until now, things such as modelling a skull, and a creating a high standard sculpture without huge expense, and imparting knowledge of the different ways of getting perfect detail in sculptures.

Q.  PS: What advise you would like to give to youngsters who want to take up sculpting as a profession?

A. Practice. Learn realism, bone structure, anatomy. Never stop taking classes ever.

Q.  PS: Is forensic sculpting a financially viable profession?

A. It can be especially for a law enforcment professional.

Q.  PS: And why?

A. You can make a good living at it and do a lot of good in the world.



Q. GA: Have you sculpted for living persons also? Is there a difference between working for living persons and working for dead persons?

A. I do most of my wax figures and even movie stuff based on real people. We actually mould their faces with a dental impression material called Alginate, pour plaster into them and re-sculpt them or sculpt in clay over them to change their features. With forensic sculpting you just have the skull. It is difficult for me, but most think it is difficult to mould a living thing. I once had to mold a live dog- that was cool; we sedated the dog for an hour while we molded him.



Q. GA: Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

A. In ten years I hope to still be at the current company doing medical prosthetics, but I would also like to do more forensic sculptures and turn them into museum displays with the final of a person in a pose. Like the king 'Tut' that was just done, but I'll prefer more of an action pose.



Q. GA: Madame Tussaud's at London is the most famous wax-museum in the world, what do you like better- working with plastiline or wax, and why?

A. They are just tools I use what the project calls for. I like them both equally.

Stretchy Face - self portrait of Seth, made from a life case of Seth's face (Click picture to enlarge)



Q.  GA: Ever thought of making a self-portrait in a sculpture?

A. I did a life cast of myself once, and the "stretchy face" you see on the right, is my self portrait, it is actually made from a life cast of my face.

Q.  GA: Any regrets in life- personal or professional?

A. No, I think things are what they should be.



Q. GA: What is the message you would like to give to the young professionals desirous of or pursuing a career in sculpting, especially forensic sculpting?

A. Practice, practice and practice more. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, always help others learn, and remember that you never pay your dues, you just keep growing. I find that when people really believe that they paid their dues they stop learning and growing. I feel there is always room to learn something new. Also contact your heroes in the field of your choice most are very nice and helpful.



Q. PS: How much emphasis would you give on natural talent and hard work respectively if you were to predict a person's success in this profession?

A. It's more about hard work and training. I think with the right teacher anyone can learn the basics. Sometimes natural talent breeds stagnation. I find that the natural artists sometimes think they can do anything and end up making mistakes or even worse become pompous and feel they paid their dues and no one can teach them anything. Thus they stop growing, and don't get any better from that point on. The not so natural artist can be more creative and is always willing to grow. The best artist is the natural artist who has no ego. They tend to be the best of both worlds.


Q. PS: Are there any other attributes apart from the two mentioned in the previous question to succeed in this profession?

A. Creativity.


Q. PS: I had asked you earlier about the attributes that must be present in a forensic sculptor. Can you please tell the basic education that a person should have that will help him in this profession?

…Basic qualifications for a forensic sculpture? Well, I think taking as many forensic art workshops as possible will help. I hold one, but there are others and they are all excellent. I recommend searching for the one that best suits your interest. I also recommend anatomy classes, and sculpting, sculpting, and more sculpting . It is really a matter of practice. If you are able to get a forensics degree, that is great. Or do it through the police or FBI. Overall it is really about practice and taking art classes that deal in human anatomy and portraits. Oh and the willingness to market yourself and not get discouraged…

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Q. PS: What is your daily routine?

A. I get up at 7am, check my email, got work at 8pm come home at 5pm check email, spend time with my fiancée, and go to bed. Nothing too exciting.



Q. PS: Can you tell us something about your hobbies and how you get time to fulfill them?

A. I spend time on the computer a lot, but really it's not as a hobby, I would say going to the movie theatre is a hobby, or playing video games. I used to do art projects but I am not really into any kind of art methods now to be creating things for fun, I am also spending a lot of time on my book.



Q. NC: What of your plans for conducting workshops?

A. I am going to do the unthinkable; I am holding forensic sculpture workshops and will actually be giving the students the materials and their sculptures to keep!

I found that during the workshops I took, everyone really wanted to keep their stuff. Even if the finished sculpture goes in the trash, I really don't mind anymore, but, as a student it is very important to look back and learn from your positive and negative aspects of your work.

The cost to attend will include sculpting tools, a copy of the book, the base, the skull and the markers. The students will get the use of some other tools that are really hard to find, or just obscenely expensive! Clay rolling board, glue, everything they need, and all theirs to keep. That way when they leave, they can carry on and practice what they learned in class at home, in their own time, and as often as they like.

The price of the workshop includes everything but the student's food, hotel and travel costs. But while in class I will demonstrate on a model skull how to make a silicone mould from a skull, and pour it in plastic. This will be just a demo, and some things will need to be pre-made to save time, but it can help the students learn how to do this with practice. It is very tricky and you can still break the fragile bones in the nose if undertaken without the necessary care and training.

I will be announcing the details of these workshops on my website (www.forensicsculpting.com) very soon.

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Q. GA: What has been the biggest project you have worked at?

A. King Kong at universal studios, he was 40 feet tall.



Q. GA: Any other book(s) in the pipeline?

A. I want to add onto this- one thing is about molding a skull and pouring it in plastic. No one else teaches that. I also am going to do some books on make-up fx, and life casting.

Q.  GA: What are you currently working at?

A. Well, Just the book right now. I am holding a workshop in February.

Q.  PS: Is there something else you want to add to what I have asked you? That could be something about you or your profession?

A. Don't expect an immediate job, or full time job. It will take some hard work, perseverance and marketing to get the jobs. This is why I am such a fan of the www.doenetwork.org they are a great way to get started and also you get to help people where your skills are the charity donation. They also will help you find a mentor within the group. I am currently am helping an artist learn sculpting and he is going to help me learn the illustration version of forensic reconstruction. It is a great organization that any forensic professional or student can get involved in.

Q.  GA: What would you have been if not a sculptor?

A. I have no idea.

Seth's 2002 Royal Enfield bullet 500 (made in India) [Click picture to enlarge]





Q. GA: Are you connected with India in any way?

A. Yes of course. Here is a picture of a 2002 Royal Enfield bullet 500 I once owned. The coolest looking motorcycle in the world! Made in India. I sold it about two years back. I am looking for another now.



Q. GA: Please tell our readers what is 'FX', life casting and skin animatronics.

A. Fx refers to "special effects" from films (please note the similarity of sounds). I think it was coined by Michael Westmore, or his father in the 80's. It is either FX, or SFX . Makeup fx is the art of making the monsters for movies, fake-cuts and bruises, fake bodies, stuff like in Lord of the rings, or star wars.

Life casting is when we use a dental impression material called alginate that is used to make a mold of teeth; we use a special version to mold the human body, head, feet, or anything else.

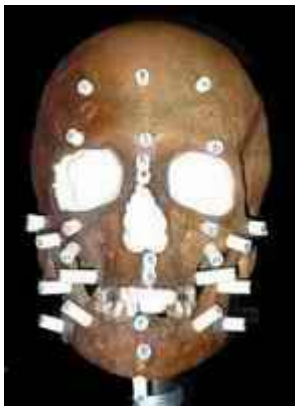
Animatronics are silicone or rubber skins over robotics to give the appearance of a real creature or person,. like an android, or giant dinosaur that moves at a theme park.

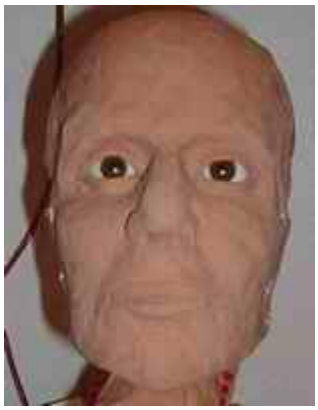


Q. GA: You have worked as a special-effects make-up artist & sculptor for museums, stage, television, films, and commercials and for individual persons, which one of these do you like the most?

A. I like making figures the most, it's really cool to see people go up and try to ask a statue for the time because they think that is a real person they are talking to!!

The pictures of "The Bensalem Jane Doe project" in various stages of the project development, i.e. the various stages in the development of identity of the individual from the skull [Click all pictures to enlarge].











Q. GA: Which one of these is the most challenging job?

A. Figures are the most challenging, because even if the person does not know why it looks fake, they still will know it even if one little thing is wrong. Usually it is in the eyes or hair.

Here are some photos of one of the sculpture in serial order (the Bensalem Jane Doe project), and then to an old age. It was a practice piece.



Q. GA: Anything you would like to change in this world for your own sake, given an opportunity?

A. I would have gone to college part time to learn more. I wish I did not faint at the sight of blood, because then I would be in more forensic areas besides art.



Q. NC: And finally Set, what do you hope for the future?

A. I would like to do a new addition of this book, there are some things to add in the current version, add some new chapters on moulding, and then do a series of other books, on life casting, Make-up effects, and some other stuff. I hope to do a workshop in the UK or other countries. I cant wait to see some of the readers photos of their sculptures and look forward to hearing how my students have progressed'.

After the interview was concluded I took the time to have a general chitchat with Seth one of the things I brought up was the origin of the skull he uses in his book. You see I have one just like it and know that face almost as well as my own, it was a pleasure to it included in his book, especially as my own has been an invaluable teaching aid for myself over the years, one thing I did want to clear up for anybody who notices is the question of the Gender and Ancestry of this particular resin skull, Seth explains it perfectly when he wrote,

I realize that this skull is not a white male, but I picked it because it is an easy way to teach the basics, I figure it is a nice middle of the road person to sculpt.

Men have large features, not to many hidden nuances. So I went down this road.

I don't pretend to be an anthropologist, and also figured if I state that I know its not a white male, people wont complain as much.



Seth Wolfson can be approached via E-mail at realsculpt@hotmail.com.

Interviews : Collective Index
Interviews in our sister publication : Collective Index

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