

KITBUILDERS MAGAZINE TACKLES THE TWO TITANS OF THE SCULPTING WORLD

THE SHIELETT BROTHERS



Before we got started I want to thank each of you personally for taking the time to talk with all of us here at Kitbuilders Magazine. I know you both have a very busy schedule with all the projects you are involved in.

KB: First off why don't you tell the readers a little about yourselves and how you got started in all of this.

B: We love comic books. That's really what got us started. We started trying to sculpt some of our favorite comic characters and then we took them out to the San Diego Comic Convention. People saw them and we started getting hired. We were unbelievably lucky. One of those Right Place, Right Time things.

J: I could tell a story here about being rejected from a three-person Dungeons and Dragons club in the sixth grade that I think looking back made me really bitter. I had memorized slash traced a John Buscema Mephisto head to where I could draw it at a moments notice and I was all ready to go on the bleachers but they wanted no part of it. This utter humiliation by my own kind, nerds, was horrible and damaging. Damaging I think about it every day, sometimes many times. That's not going to be an awkward start is it?

KB: How did you guys start into sculpting? Has this been something since childhood?

B: We've always dabbled in art, usually trying to draw in the style of our favorite comic book artists. But we started sculpting about 12 years ago.

J: I just remember a lot of comic book conventions. At some point we started noticing a dinosaur sculptor named John Fischner. He would have all types of fight scenes, dragons and it was all very Harryhausen-esque right at these local conventions and in 3-d. We bugged him thoroughly I think and tried to emulate I guess.

KB: Who decides what you guys are going to work on or is it a joint decision?

B: It's a joint decision, but in the case of a disagreement, I get to choose because I'm way bigger than Jarrod and I can beat him up.

J: I'm lucky to be out right now.

KB: Do you each sculpt a part or does one do the rough and the other finish?

B: It's different every time. Usually one of us takes the lead on a project, depending on who is more excited about it. Jarrod likes muscle guys and monsters and I like to sculpt girls. He probably likes fantasy subject matter a little more and I like science fiction.

J: I'll work on anything as long as I don't have to finish it.

KB: I know that I was influenced by many artists such as Frazetta, Jusko, Buscema and Adams to name a few, but who influenced your artistic side?

B: We were influenced greatly by Frazetta, of course. Also French comics artist Moebius, and England's Simon Bisley. Right now we are really in love with the art of a guy named Jon Foster. If you haven't already, check him out!

J: I like Bill Sienkiewicz, Wayne Barlowe, Mark Texeira.

KB: Many of us get involved in modeling with clay, you pretty much have to create basic dioramas, (mine really never got past play dough), but who influenced you both enough to start sculpting on your own?

B: Seeing Moto Hata's old Hulk kit for the first time was a very big deal to us. And then Kiya's Horizon Venom. I still think that Venom is one of the greatest anatomies I've ever seen sculpted. Not long after seeing those two pieces we got a hold of a copy of Nirasawa's Creature Core book and we were off to the races.

KB: What started you off on the whole garage/figure-sculpting hobby?

J: I was trying to make an Andre the Giant out of notebook paper for a dice role-playing game I had invented when it occurred to me it was all messed up, and should be more 3-d. The Hulk Hogan was no better. I started crumpling paper and taping it with masking tape, all the monsters would have two legs and a tail so they would stand up. It was great, the good 'ol days.

B: Well we started out as just a couple of big time comic book geeks. And if you're going to sculpt a lot of comic book characters or comic inspired pieces, then this is the industry for you.

KB: Are there any particular sculptors out there in the garage kit hobby that you like or follow their work?

B: There are tons. We have great respect for anyone who gives it a go in this business. The people we try hardest to emulate are our Japanese heroes





original sculptures for the hobby market?

J: Absolutely. We've already produced our first original design resin kit: Chloe: Aviator-for-Hire. And we have many more coming soon. We're trying to create an entire world of characters and monsters. This is the stuff that we're really excited about right now. On our sculpting forum (which you can get to from www.shiflettbrothers.com) you can see a lot of these pieces at various stages of completion.

KB: Do you do a lot of prototyping that never gets produced and if so can you name a few?

J: We've sculpted quite a few pieces that for one reason or another haven't been produced. Most famously, probably, is the Creature From the Black Lagoon piece Jarrod sculpted for Moore Creations. Sometimes people lose licenses or there are just circumstances beyond your control. You learn that that is part of the game in this industry.

KB: I have asked many sculptors the same type of question so I guess this is a good time for you guys to answer it as well. Do you do any preliminary sketches before you start sculpting?

J: I don't. In fact, I kind of suck at drawing.

J: Lately I might take something from a little sketch and use it in a sculpt. It's fun, and it makes drawing more fun to think ok I might use something here.

KB: What kinds of sculpting medium do you like to work in?

J: Super Sculpey. We love it. We mix a little black Fimo Soft and a little white Fimo Soft in with the block of Super Sculpey to get a medium gray. This helps with being able to pick out the little imperfections and nicks in the Sculpey because by itself the stuff is a little translucent.

J: Sculpey just has a lot of properties that suit our style, or lack of it. It can be hardened and added to by baking, it can be sanded, carved and all that. I think what seemed enjoyable to work in aside from that I'd say Plastalina. That was slick and quick and I remember it as enjoyable for some reason.

KB: Do you use armatures for your work?

J: You have to with Super Sculpey. We use aluminum wire wrapped with floral wire and covered with generous amounts of super glue.

J: And I think the key here is not to use too much thick aluminum because you want to keep things thin like wrists and ankles, so instead just use a couple of pieces but bind it super tight with the Floral Wire and yeah hit it with super glue.

KB: Many sculptors develop their own special sculpting tools to suit their individual needs. Do you use any special sculpting tools or is most of it home made?

J: We use something called a "burnisher" for about 90% of our work. We've also gone to our dentist and asked for old dental tools. You'd be surprised how most dentists are just waiting to give old tools away. Especially if you bring in some pictures of the type of stuff you're trying to do. I also like very small loop tools.

J: And I think the "burnisher" in question is used in some sort of leathermak-

ing, but we use it for sculpting and it's what I do 99% of the sculpting with aside from my fingers. Although I love loop tools I never really use them.

KB: I noticed on your web site that you host a chat group on sculpting. When did that all come about and where on earth do you find the time?

J: Norm Platt asked us to host a sculpting forum online in this great model kit community called "The Clubhouse". There are pros and amateurs alike in there passing around ideas and tips. Many people show their work in progress. Stuff you won't see anywhere else. There is nothing that Jarrod and I won't let an up and coming sculptor. We love to see these young and talented guys come in for the first time. There are also great pros in there constantly like Andy Bergholtz, Casey Love, and Sandy Colora. You can reach it by going to www.shiflettbrothers.com. We have a link to it from our site and visit all of the other cool modeling forums they have in The Clubhouse while you're there.

J: I don't know what you're talking about. Those people are crazy. If I get dragged into one more online flame war I swear I'm deblogging.

KB: Do you guys attend the modeling conventions? I don't recall meeting either of you before?

J: We've been to the Chiller Theatre in New Jersey twice. We went to the old Mad Model Party in L.A. twice. Nowadays we usually just do the San Diego Comic Convention. We may also do Wizard World Texas in Dallas this year because we're Texas boys ourselves.

J: Life starts at the con. Is that just me? I wanna do some folk singing, watch Rocky Horror, and watch some anime till light filters in the yonder window.

KB: What if any is going to be your dream project, your holy grail project that you are planning to accomplish, whether in the near or distant future?

J: My Holy Grail project would be to produce a "Creature Core" type book full of our original pieces. Mostly my stuff, but I would probably let Jarrod sprinkle a-piece in here and there. Of course, that might change if Moebius calls tomorrow!

J: Maybe some Frazetta stuff. Harryhausen would be cool. The coldcast stuff we had a good little run of cool characters and artists to work with where I couldn't believe it. We were lucky to have stuff produced by Clay Moore who taught us a lot and Randy Bowen who's obviously a legend in the statue field.

KB: Can you give our future innovators of the sculpting world any advice as to how to get started with their own businesses?

J: My advice is to get a good portfolio of your stuff and go to the San Diego Comic Convention. Almost every great industry sculptor is there and your stuff will be seen. It also has an art show. Good luck!

J: Tony Robbins, Tony Robbins, Tony Robbins. I'm down with Tony, Tony's cool. It's just a series of things to make you think - maybe I can. Word. Dan and Barbara thanks for the interest in our

work it is much appreciated.

Cheers to Kibuilders!

Brandon and Jarrod

www.shiflettbrothers.com





Yasushi Nirasawa, Takayuki Takeya, and Yuji Oniki. We love Paul Komoda. And although he's more of a Hollywood guy we follow closely the great work of Jorju Schell. We're greatly inspired by the work of all of these guys.

J. Takeya, Nirasawa, and ok, she's twisting my arm, angelataibot.com.

KB: Which kit inspired you to try your hand at sculpting and if you had to pick a favorite could you?



J: Takaya's Operation in Progress. Takaya's Skull Soldier. Nina Darkness. Nina Gullotina. Erosive Guyver. Oniki's Devilman. Just all of the stuff in the books Creabe Core, Nira Works, and Takaya's Angles of Hunters. Brandon mentioned the Moto Hata Hulk from Horizon, that piece I can remember really looking at and wondering how it was even done, had no clue.

KB: What was the first kit you sculpted?

J: The first kit we sculpted was Dakiel for Glenn Danzig and Verotik Comics. Then Jaguar God and Satanika for them also.

J: Motherf! That was my Danzig. Bislei rules. Some of that old Lobo stuff is unreal. Slaine, its all good. We're really only done 4 resin kits, the 3 Bislei/Verotik pieces and our Chloe.

KB: Which piece was the first to be picked up and produced?

J: That Dakiel kit was produced as a resin kit and limited to I think 500 pieces. The first cold-cast porcelain piece we had produced was Draco from Dragonheart, which was produced by Moore Creations. I remember the scales on that Draco almost giving Jarrod a nervous breakdown. I would be kicked back watching MTV and drinking a beer shouting over my shoulder, "One scale at a time Jarrod, one scale at a time!"

J: Well I'm a huge Phil Tippett fan and so in that way it was cool.

KB: Do you have any special characters that you like to produce such as Monsters vs. Comic Heroes?

J: So many of these comic jobs have been like dreams come true for us. We got to work with David Mack on Kabuki, Matt Wagner on Grendel Prime, Alex Ross on Earth X Captain America. But Jarrod is an incredible creature designer and I'm trying to kick him in the butt to do more of it.

J: I'd like to do the Juggernaut vs. Everyone. The old Marvel characters are fun. I guess it's the time we grow up in but some of those characters seem so powerful.

KB: Which do you prefer to work on, full figures or busts?

J: I like full figures better. At the same time busts are a lot easier to finish and there is a cool design challenge with busts. I'm always thinking about how I can make this bust different from every other bust out there.

J: The full figure is more fun, there's so much more available to get across whatever's going on.

KB: Do you spend more time on composition, likeness or clothing?

J: We spend far and away the most time on detail work. We can start and sketch out a piece so fast it'll make your head spin and then we slow way, way down. We haven't done a lot of likenesses. In fact we avoid them like the plague. Clothing is extremely difficult to make look real and subtle. Clothing is one of those things where if it is done well, you don't even notice it. If it's wrong, it sticks out like a sore thumb.

J: We can sketch them out really quick, and are notorious for being painfully slow on the backend. I've received some vulgar email about this subject and I just forward them to Brandon.

KB: What kind of references do you use? I have a huge library of material that I can pull from, helps to be the youngest of seven and all of us where into monsters and stuff. Did you keep your material from when you were kids?

J: We have all of our old stuff. We use tons of photo reference. We also really like Drawing Comics the Marvel Way by Stan Lee and John Buscema for posing ideas. And we study the work of classical guys like Michelangelo and Rodin to see how they did things. Again, those guys are hugely inspirational to us.

J: I love Rodin and rip him off best I can. Yes we have some Jaque Costeau Encyclopedia Of the Sea or something that we've had forever, some books about Loch Ness which was damn near my religion for awhile until I realized how many pleisiosaur it would take to have any kind of colony, and a Thesaurus.

KB: I noticed that you do a lot of work with various pre-paint companies such as Bowen Designs and McFarlane Toys. How did you get hooked up with them?

J: We met Randy Bowen at the San Diego Comic Convention. He is a great guy and a great sculptor and when he has something he thinks is right for us, he gives us a call. It's a great situation for us because of the enormous visibility of pieces produced by a company like Bowen Designs.

J: We'd love to work with Todd Toys but they don't want to give us name credit. They've done a lot for toys and I hope some of those sculptors start getting credit.

KB: Most companies fail to give sculptor credit when producing figures and statues. Are there any other companies that you have worked with or are currently involved with that we would know?

J: We always demand name credit. We think that is a basic artists' right and we fight for it not just for us but also for all the sculptors out there. We have been lucky.

J: We've worked with companies like Bowen Designs, Moore Creations, and Dynamic Forces and Toy Biz.

KB: Are you planning to produce a line of your

