

Through The Lens

THE JADE PROFILE: KEN CLARKE - SCULPTOR - ENGLAND



Kenneth Anthony Clarke was born in London in 1948, but it was not until he left junior school at the tender age of twelve and went on to the Christopher Wren Arts and Crafts Secondary School that a serious interest in fibrous plastering developed which would one day lead him to his present occupation as a body sculptor. It was a well-know fact at the school that from a class of sixteen pupils just two would be lucky enough to be chosen to begin training at the famous Shepperton Studios.

In June 1964, after a successful interview, Ken was one of the two chosen to join the artisans at Shepperton on a five year apprenticeship as a plasterer (and we don't mean the kind who splashes that pinky-red stuff all over your ceiling and ruins your floors and worktops), and the



rest, as they frequently say, is history. Ken accepted the apprenticeship and on 22nd June 1964 took his first steps along his long and varied career path.

Five years later he earned his City and Guilds and was now fully qualified. Rather than move on to pastures new, Ken opted to stay with the studios. The film industry had plenty to offer and Ken still had much to learn. He has always set high standards for himself and his work, and it was not enough for him simply to be good at what he did, but always to strive to be the very best in his field.

Ken's list of film credits reads like a shopping list of some of the greatest movies ever made – we kid you not. Even whilst serving his apprenticeship he had worked on spectacular historical epics like 'Moll Flanders', 'Anne of a Thousand Days' and 'Cromwell' – he was also developing a keen interest in the industry. A job that particularly appealed to him was closer to the camera as a stand-by plasterer, his first film in this role was 'Wuthering Heights'.

He was also taking an interest in design and in his free time, between working and film shoots, he began sketching, drafting and designing. Later, with a small portfolio of work tucked under his youthful arm he took to tackling directors, looking for that all important break – their advice was to go back to college and perfect his techniques.

Always keen to learn, striving to be the best, Ken took their collective advice and went back to college at Lime Grove, enrolling in a course of TV Design at night school. He stayed on the course for eighteen months before discovering that the Shepperton Studio administrators would not transfer, assist or even encourage him to get into the Art and Design Department because, in their view, they had trained him as a plasterer, at great expense and so would not help him to change his craft. It was a kick in the teeth. A blow Ken felt profoundly, feeling let down by the very people he had grafted so hard for for the last nine years. It was too much of a blow to recover from and





with a huge industry beckoning he took the road to Freelancing.

It was at about this time he was about to take another important, life altering step in his life, he was about to get married. At the same time the BBC offered him a short term position as a design assistant to cover for staff holidays. But the difference in salary between the Studio and the BBC was substantial and at the time when he needed the money most, and with the millstone of a mortgage around his neck, Ken reluctantly chose to stay with plastering, passing up the BBC's offer.

The world of Freelancing was hard, and even with a list of fine credits to his name he quickly realised that he was only ever going to be as good as his last job. In 1974 he worked on his first film, 'Juggernaut', as a freelancer and moved from there to work on many other films as a freelance plasterer.

From that time to the present day he has always loved his craft, felt inspired by it and creative. His huge list of film credits (far too long to list here) which have seen him travel all over the world, includes such hits as the 'Star Wars' films, 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', 'Dark Crystal', 'Greystoke', 'Alien', 'Superman', 'Ghandi', 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit', 'The Fifth Element' and 'Planet of The Apes' the credits just go on and on and on.

During this time Ken has had to develop and produce new moulding and casting techniques in order to provide



the ever more demanding film industry with better and better quality products for construction, props, special effects, make-up and wardrobe. The combination of new technologies, higher standards of directing and camera equipment, computers and video has forced those working in the industry to constantly evolve, improving and bettering everything which went before. Ken has kept pace and has never allowed himself to fall behind, working with new modern resins, silicone, rubber, latex, wax and plastics has proved a constant challenge, but one he has been equally to.

In July 2001 he opted to change his career path entirely and entered into the world of sculpture, creating in clay female form moulds for casting in different mediums for art galleries and this in turn led him directly to actual 'life' casting and the formation of his own company 'Body Sculpture'.

What exactly is 'lifecasting'? Well, put as simply as possible, 'lifecasting' is a sculpture that is cast from a mould taken directly from a person's body (or part thereof). The finished result is a piece of high quality fine art which can be displayed anywhere the client chooses.



Throughout history sculptures have tried to convey the true uniqueness of their models, now, by the use of these new techniques developed by Ken over many years, that uniqueness can be fully captured for the very first time, not only down to the shape and tone, but down to the fine details like expression which make us all so individual.

Ken works now with his wife and partner 'NAME' and their studio is designed with the privacy and comfort of their 'models' in mind. Prior to any modelling sessions the couple meet the client to discuss the process and the pose the client is interested in. Clients are encouraged to bring along their partners, or a friend to observe and take photos of the process if they so wish. The products used are natural and non-toxic and it is interesting to note that the primary moulding materials can even be used

internally! Ken describes the lifecasting process as something akin to going to a health spa for a body wrap or mud bath, but with the end result of a work of art which can be treasured for the rest of the client's life - how many health spas can make that claim?!

Because holding a pose for any length of time can be tiring and uncomfortable even for a professional model, the process is design to be very quick. Most mouldings take less than thirty minutes to complete and remove from the client. Once removed, the mould is used to make the cast and the final sculpture is left to dry for a couple of weeks before being sprayed ready for the client to collect and treasure.





The experience of having a sculpture made of your own body, or that of a loved one, is quite unique and is not only an exciting event but a gift you both can treasure forever. Few things are as precious as our memories, and it is little wonder therefore that we go to so much trouble to try and capture those memorable moments in our lives on film, video and dvd. Lifecasting now provides a three dimensional memory, a memory you can not only see and admire, but reach out and touch. And lifecasting is not solely confined to the erotic fine art sculpture, or to the most intimate parts of your body, but can be applied to any form the client wishes to capture and keep for posterity. Now you can capture a point in pregnancy, the growth over time of a child's hand, or simply hold forever the memory of what you or your partner were like in there prime, or at a specific point in time.

Ken and 'NAME' are always pleased to welcome potential clients to their studio to explain the process. Alternatively clients can visit the Body Sculpture gallery at Beaumont Hall Studios, outside St Albans, Hertfordshire, both the studio and spiritual home of the Guild of Erotic Artists, of which Ken is a founding member.

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