

Ty & Marcia Schultz Prop Masters

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I met Marcia Naiman at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design during the 1982/83 school year. We became good friends and actually collaborated on our grad piece installation which was something almost unheard of with budding young egos. We were both fortunate to be at ECCAD when artist Mark Prent, a colleague of David Cronenberg's, came to teach for a year.

Marcia and I were exposed to life casting and fiberglass and learned to integrate it into our sculptures. Fiberglass and silicone rubber moulds were unheard of in art school. The thought of casting objects in faux materials and not sculpting every piece individually was radical and the materials thought of as something nuclear and dangerous especially in an environment of wood construction and pottery. We fell in love with moulding and casting and found new ways with new materials to pursue our art.

At some point in our grad year Betty Thomas of Thomas SPFX called the sculpture department at ECCAD looking for sculptors to work on a big new feature film called *Clan of the Cave Bear* starring Daryl Hanna. The head of the sculpture department recommended Marcia and together we went to see what this new opportunity was all about.

That phone call changed both our lives in a radical way and opened a door to a world we would likely never have known and we will always be grateful. It came at a time when we were both wondering what we would do after art school and how we could cement our relationship as a team.

Thomas Special Effects was the movie industry for a many of us. Grant Swain and Ken Hawryliw along with Jimmy Chow, Wayne McLaughlin and Bill Thumm headed up the props department. It is nostalgic to remember the camaraderie and “gung-ho” environment of those early days. People spent less time fussing over nickels and much more time asking “How can we do that?” and concluding “Make it happen!”

John Thomas was a pioneer, an innovator and the leader of a new brand of heroes. John and Betty brought the work to Vancouver and a great many of us cycled through their doors on the way to a career in the film and television industry.

For the first few years Marcia worked at Thomas SPFX while I played “Mr. Mom” to five small children and started a home-based business in commercials and television and worked on the occasional feature. When our business became large enough to support us Marcia rejoined me and we became “Creative Props Inc.” We worked side by side for twenty-six years, our bond ever strengthened by the demands of this growing industry.

There was a time in the late eighties to the mid nineties where we had a tiny piece of everything that came through town. The opportunity to work on something different every day was fascinating and exciting. The adrenaline of the deadlines is always pushing you to be more than you are with failure never being an option.

The industry provided work for all our kids, my brother and others over the years. Our daughter, Aleya Naiman, apprenticed with us for eight years until the bright lights of set and greater responsibilities called her. She is now the Prop Master of *Smallville* and part of the next generation of film technicians.

Working on *MacGyver* marked the first time we actually thought of the film business as a “steady job.” Stephen Cannell series like *21 Jumpstreet* and *Wiseguy* solidified things and working on *The X-Files* with Ken Hawryliw (Props) and Dave Gauthier (SPFX) made careers a reality. Recently *Battlestar Galactica*, *Smallville* and *Supernatural* (Chris Cooper, Props) have provided challenging work.

As the audience has become more engaged with the creation of film projects, we have pursued opportunities to teach our skills to other artists at art retreats such as Artfest and Art and Soul. Teaching film technology to artists and the public increases their interest in movies and keeps us all “entertaining.” A trip to the Thomas FX showroom shows visitors a kindred philosophy.

Marcia and I are proud of the work we have done for the industry and the fact that we have maintained our personal standards and relationships with clients and each other under great pressure. The physical and psychological demands of the industry eventually take its toll so after years of around the clock service we were looking to retire completely.

In the process of our “exit” a unique opportunity unfolded. Thomas FX Group bought much of our rental stock and all of our breakaway glass moulds which makes them the greatest source for “breakaway” glass in the world. An invitation to be part of this vibrant future was irresistible. The opportunity to create things and service the film industry in new ways rekindled a spark. The impressive vision of John Quee is inspiring and as the movie industry emerges from the Olympics, we look forward to this wonderful new venture.

In 2010 we will be adding lifecast fish and biological specimens, replica food and custom prop building to Thomas FX. We invite all the brothers and sisters of IATSE 891 and others to Thomas FX to work with us in a different venue than our home-based shop. Thank you to so many who have supported us as “Creative Props” and we look forward to future service with John and Betty Thomas Quee at Thomas FX Group. ■



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