

EYE ON MONTREAL/MONIQUE DYKSTRA

Monsters take shape in his hands



MONIQUE DYKSTRA, GAZETTE
 "People don't realize it, but there are a lot of steps in making a monster - designing, sculpting, mold-making, casting and painting. They think making a monster is like ordering a pizza," says artist Mario Soucy.

Decapitated heads, bug-eyed aliens greet those with courage enough to peak inside this artist's studio

MARIO SOUCY
 Monster maker

Decapitated heads, bug-eyed aliens and hairy-faced monsters crowd the shelves in Mario Soucy's studio. There was also a dismembered torso lying on the workbench, two blue monsters on the refrigerator, a three-fingered hand on the bookshelf, and - of all things - a set of human testicles hanging on the wall (the latter was a special order from a particularly raunchy comedian).

Most kids go through a monster stage. Most of us grow out of it. But Mario Soucy never did. For the past fifteen years, this 33-year-old Montrealer has been creating creatures, monsters and special makeup effects for TV and movie productions, as well as for clients as diverse as the Detroit Tigers, the Cirque du Soleil and - most recently - the Ontario Science Centre.

"I'm not sure how I first got interested in monsters. Maybe it's because my brother took me to see four horror movies for 99 cents when I was a kid. I had so many nightmares after that! Plus, my brother was always buying these monster books. I was really impressed by those monsters - so impressed that I started making them as a hobby.

At first, I started by doing step-by-step animation. I'd make things out of clay, take a picture, move the figure slightly, then take another picture. But for that, I needed twenty-four different shots to make one second of film. It took too long to see the results. It was fun, though. I remember one movie was about a volcano with lava coming

out - the lava was shaving cream. And another one was about this jungle world with monsters and spaceships - pretty cheesy stuff.

After that, I started getting really interested in making monster sculptures. I preferred that because I got to see the results right away. I didn't know how to do much at first - there were no courses on that, no books like you have today. But I met people who showed me the proper techniques and, eventually, I learned.

Then, one day, I realized I could make a living from that.

People don't realize it, but there are a lot of steps in making a monster - designing, sculpting, mold-making, casting and painting. They think making a monster is like ordering a pizza. Take the devil with the horns over there (Soucy points to a sad-looking devil sandwiched between a Frankenstein mask and a toothy green monster). That was from a movie with Dolf Lundgren. It took us two weeks to make that, and we were a crew of four.

I like working in the movies. All the actors come to my studio for casting and mold-making. There was one actor, Andrew McCarthy, who I remember liking as a teenager. He was here shooting the Jackie Kennedy TV series a few years ago. Then, there he was in my studio, right in front of me - it was very cool."

◆ In addition to his own work, Soucy offers correspondence courses on monster creation and special makeup effects. For more information, call (514) 351-1280.

◆ Comments and suggestions? monique@StudioIris.ca.