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When the topic of stop motion animation comes up most people immediately think of Ray Harryhausen and Willis O'Brien. O'Brian was an early pioneer who used clay and then improved his armatures using ball and socket joints with foam and latex covering. He made many films starting in 1914, and was a huge inspiration and influence on a young Ray Harryhausen, who later was able to work for O'Brian in the 1949 film, MIGHT JOE YOUNG. Ray Harryhausen went on to becoming a living legend in the field of stop motion and special effects, and he, in his turn, inspired and worked with a young Jim Danforth, who has been twice nominated for the Oscar for Visual Effects; once for George Pal's THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO, (1964) and the second time for WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH, (1971).

Danforth got his first professional break at Art Clokey's studio of GUMBY fame, and later was hired by Project Unlimited to work on George Pal's THE TIME MACHINE. (1960). He continued to produce films with Project Unlimited, working on JACK THE GIANT KILLER,(1962) and THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM (1963).In this film he animated the very lifelike dragon. He also worked on Stanley Kramer's comedy, IT's A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD.

Later in the mid-sixties Danforth went back to work with Project Unlimited. They were tasked with c

In 1964 Danforth worked on the pilot for STAR TREK, The Cage," but received no credit. Also in 1964 D

Danforth helped a young filmmaker named Dennis Muren to make a 16mm short film titled THE EQUIN

During this time he found a way to add more personality to his models by refining the facial animation. The emotional resonance of the mother dinosaur finding a human in a cast off baby egg shell, and her subsequent adoption of that human, brought a new level of characterization to stop motion animation. In 1975 he refused an offer by Dino de Laurentiis to work on the remake of KING KONG. That movie won an Oscar for best effects, though the effects nominating committee had not actually ever recommended the film for a nomination. Additionally the effects in question were shots of a man in an ape suit. Danforth quit the Academy as a protest. He was celebrated as a heroic rebel by film fans, but was persona non

grata with the Hollywood Old Boys club.

Danforth continued to do occasional matte paintings for films and returned to England to work again with his mentor, Ray Harryhausen, on Harryhausen's last film, CLASH OF THE TITANS,(1981). He continued to do matte paintings trough to '80s and 90's. Today he lives in the Los Angeles area and works on fine art and fantasy paintings. He is a wonderful example of how artists inspire each other and then pass their passion along in order to keep an art alive.

References:
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