



#1 Nine year old twins. They were too young to hold this pose

# When Two Heads Are Better Than One

By David Parvin, A.L.I.

Even if you have been life casting for only a short period of time, you probably have been asked if it is possible to cast two people together, and if not, you will be. Fortunately, it is not only possible, it isn't that difficult. Both faces and bodies can be cast in pairs. Here I am going to discuss how to do faces. I will describe three different situations and then through in as an added bonus (no, not a set of steak knives) an example of how to combine three faces that were cast separately. I will save casting two bodies together for a future article and hopefully give any reader who might just possibly be on the fence about renewing her/his subscription a reason to remain in the fold. Amen.

Casting two together is not so much more difficult, it's just more complicated. The first thing is to figure out the composition to express whatever feeling you want the result to convey. In the following three examples, I had a brother sister, two lovers, and a mother and daughter, three very different expressions of love. Once you get the pose just right, you have to decide if the two can hold the pose while the impression is made. In the first case below, they couldn't and we had to find another solution. The second and third were no problem.

Before I get down to particulars, let me point out that I always work with an assistant, usually female. There are two reasons for the hired help. The first is that since most of my castings are of females (in various states of dress or

undress). I follow the medical professions example and have another female present. The second is that as my castings have become more complex, i.e. covering more area. I really need a second pair of hands. But since two hands have exactly twice as many parts as one, the process is a whole lot easier with an extra assistant or two.

As far as the casting process goes, I suggest that you go about it the same way that you would for a single person. In other words, follow the same steps you are used to only for two. As you probably have already discovered the most critical step is supplying the alginate without suffocating the model. I leave the detail around the nose until the last. From that point on until the alginate has setup, my attention is put on keeping the nostrils clear. I rely on my assistant to look for and fix any other problems. When doing two, one of my assistants will concentrate on the person's nostril. The single biggest mistake that people do is mix the alginate so that it is too funny and it doesn't want to stay in place. My alginate of choice is Fibergel EFX made by ArtMolds. The mixing ratio is 5 ounces of Fibergel per pound of water. At this mixture, about a quarter inch layer will stay in place on a vertical surface with almost no dripping.

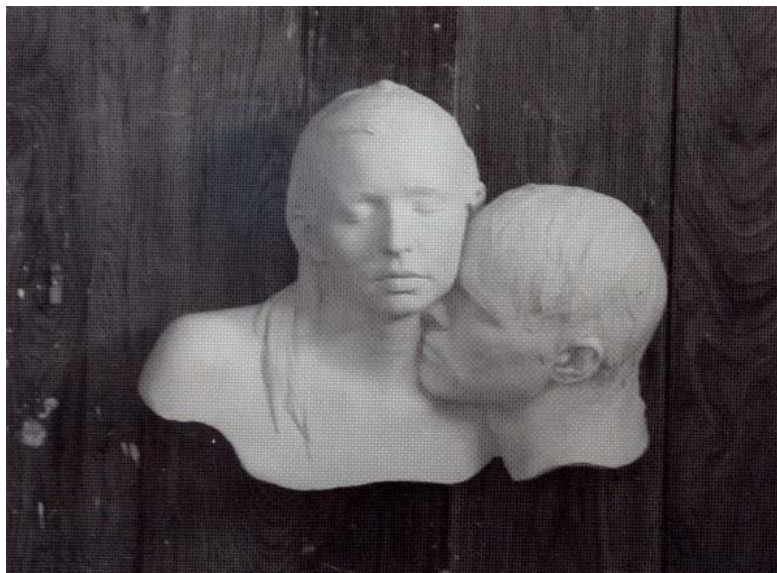
My first example involves nine year old twins, a boy and a girl. Normally I cast someone, either face or body standing and leaning against a padded board. While one might think that the logical position for the castee would



#2 The same twins lying down with the help of mom and dad and my assistant Lisa, the casting went off without a hitch.



#3 The finished twins in metallic Forton MG



#4 The young lovers in Forton MG with crushed marble mixed in

be lying down, one would be wrong. If the person is lying down, the face is very much distorted and the older the person, the more distortion. If a woman's breasts are included, the effect is even more noticeable. In this case, I positioned the two kids' faces standing up but they just couldn't remain in place during the casting. Since we're talking nine years old, distortion was minimal. But because the girl's hair had to fall back rather than cascade down her chest, it is obvious that the children were lying down. Fortunately this composition of two innocent children asleep worked and they were easily able to hold the pose.

The second were a young couple in their last year of college. Casting this couple was the easiest of the three. We tried several poses and decided on the guy snuggling up to the girl in this position, the guy is the one seeming to say, "I love you so much..." If the faces had been reversed, then it would have been the girl doing the talking.

The last were a mother and her fourteen year old daughter. This was a little more difficult compositionally. After all, sleeping together wasn't quite right and neither was snuggling. What we came up with after trying several poses was to have the daughter rest her head on the mother's shoulder. As luck would have it, they had just returned from a Caribbean vacation and both had dread locks making their hair more interesting.

I should point out that I do not cast faces (except as a demonstration) in what is the usual method for most people where the final product is cast directly in the alginate mold. This finished product is likely made of plaster, hydrocal, or some similar material which is left in its original color or given a faux patina. While I do use the alginate mold to produce a plaster positive, for me it is only an intermediate step. After allowing the plaster cast to cure for a few days, I correct any flaws and then make a second mold in silicone rubber. I usually cast the final product in Forton MG with metal powders which is patinaed with different chemical solutions and finally mechanically buffed. The result is a much more professional product that resembles metal better than any faux finish can. In addition, the silicone mold allows me to produce additional copies if requested





#5 Mother and daughter in position. Notice how helper Meijian is smiling because she is the gooner and not one of the gooes!



#6 Mother and daughter covered in Fibergel EFX

and lets me use other casting materials. Forton MG can also be mixed with aggregates and water soluble dyes to look like stone. I have also used polyurethane and polyester resins both colored and clear, wax, fiberglass, clay for Raku firing, and others. It is this system that allowed me to combine three faces. My last example, of a brother and two sisters, was pretty straight forward except that the mother mold got a little complicated as described below. The easy part was casting the three heads separately and arranging them. I had been instructed that the finished composition would have to fit into a specific area in the home. The size, shape, and location of this area pretty much dictated the positions of the faces. To provide a backdrop and supporting structure, I made the shape I wanted out of half inch thick

clay spread out on a piece of MDFB. The faces were positioned and then attached by pressing clay around them. I covered three faces and the backdrop with two coats of silicone rubber. Because the heads protruded far enough that there were undercuts, the mother mold had to be made to come apart into seven pieces. After curing overnight,



#7 Mother and daughter being buffed by the author



#8 The three heads in plaster arranged on a sheet of clay

the faces are demolded, the old was reassembled, and the final piece was cast in Forton MG with metal powders. After a few hours, the mold was removed, the patina solution was applied, and a little buffing completed the piece which I thought looked like a miniature Mt. Rushmore. (Sorry I do not have a picture of a finished mini Mt. Rushmore. I even "remember" taking such a photograph just before the father of the three took it away. But when I got the film back, no photograph. This getting old stuff is no fun).

If the opportunity knocks to cast a pair of heads together, give it a try. I suspect it will not only be a confidence builder, but it will also expand your product line and increase your income. As we say around the Parvin Studio, "Modo Fac" which is Latin for "Just Do It!"

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