

Photographs During Life Castings

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Photo 1



Photo 2

Last month, I wrote about having some inexpensive trinkets to give to visitors to one's studio. The idea was that taking something home might encourage a collector or potential collector to come back and actually acquire

something. (Remember, people *buy* from fish mongers and used car salesmen but *acquire* art.) What I didn't mention is the most obvious giveaways of all, photographs.

I always tell anyone coming in for a life casting to bring a camera. Not only do I want the person to have a record of the historic event of getting immortalized, but I have an ulterior motive. I know that the castee will be excited enough that she/he will relate the experience to anybody in listening distance at least for the next few days. Just perhaps, some of those who hear the adventure will decide to be turned into a work of art as well. Nothing enhances a presentation better than visual aids and most do bring cameras. Surprisingly, some either forget or don't realize just how important a visual record will be to them, not to mention my future bank account, and actually show up sans camera. Not to worry, I always have one available.

Since the invention of the daguerreotype in the 1830s, photography has gotten progressively easier. At first, one had to prepare his/her own glass plates, make a multi minute exposure, develop the plates, and finally print the photograph. Around the turn of the 20th century, E. Kodak invented a camera that came with film already in it. After using up the film, you only had to send the camera with the film inside to Kodak and in a couple of weeks, you got your printed photographs along with the reloaded camera. As

incredible a concept as that was, the drawback was that all the future Ansel Adams were without cameras part of the time. Then the always thinking E. Kodak decided that the average person could be trained to unload and reload a camera and from then on, one only needed to send the film in for processing and picture taking could continue uninterrupted. While E. Kodak got very rich, better things like color and one hour photo finishing were on the horizon. Remember how just a few years ago, every strip mall had a one hour photo finishing establishment? Then digital photography changed everything and which got even simpler and faster. Now one can take photos and immediately transfer them to a computer. They can be edited and viewed on the computer, printed on the spot, emailed, or if you have the right equipment, projected onto a screen. Your client can relive the experience on the spot and then over and over later.

Usually the castee is accompanied by a family member (s) or friend (s) whom I ask to take some photos. Not only does this free me to concentrate on the casting but it also make the photographer feel as if he/she is part of the process. One of the really great things about digital cameras is that there is almost no limit on the number of photographs that one can take. In the old days of film, most tried to keep the number within a roll of film. Now there is no such



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5

restraint. The card in my camera holds about a thousand photographs. I always tell the designated photographer to take all the photographs she/he wants. Many times the person takes far more photos than are necessary. What that tells me is that the photographer finds the life casting experience so interesting and exciting that there is a need to capture every little detail. Sometimes I end up with dozens when it really only takes as few as five to seven photos to tell the story. I am hoping that the castee will be saying "Look what I just did!" and show the photos to other people, potential customers. But since I don't want my potential customers to become bored, if the photos are on my camera, I edit out all but the best. The more I have to choose from, the better my chances are of getting really good shots. I may print up one of the photographs on the spot for the person to take with her/him but I do the editing and email the series of photos later the same day. It is important that the castee get the photos by email so that they can both easily be sent by me and shared by her/him.

The first seven photographs in this article are a good example of all that is needed to explain how a life casting is done and allow the model to brag about suffering for art:

Photo #1: Assistants Jessica and Kelsey applying Cholesterol hair conditioner. The castee is Jennifer Lamont who was Mrs. Colorado a few years ago.

Photo #2: The old fat guy who shows up in so many of my photographs having just applied the alginate.

Photo #3: Kelsey putting on the first layer of cheesecloth.

Photo #4: The old fat guy returns and is finishing putting fast setting plaster to two layers of cheesecloth.

Photo #5: Removing the mold. Please note that this step is usually makes the best photograph in the series.

Photo #6: The plaster positive made from the alginate mold. Also note that this is not the final product. What I do next is clean up any flaws in the plaster and make a secondary mold in silicone rubber which takes about twelve to thirteen hours of work spread out over several weeks. I then cast the finished portrait in Forton MG with copper powder for a realistic bronze look.



Photo 6

Photo #7: The finished product. I email this photo as well so that the castee a record of the the whole process.

Photo #8: This is a photograph that I like to take but somehow missed in the sequence above. This is a group shot. The subject in this photo is Tara Conner who was Miss U.S.A. in 2006. She is best known for almost loosing her title. However she was absolutely as nice as she could be when we cast her.

There is a photo that I have always wanted to take but just haven't had the right people and probably never will. I would like to do a group photo with all the people present including friends and family members but while the castee still has the mold on since can't see and has no idea what is

happening. Everybody except the castee gets buck naked! When I imagine the castee getting the email with the photos and finding the *special one*, priceless...

Most people bring their own cameras which may be still or video or both. I know for a fact that most take far too many photographs because they often send me a disk titled "Jessica (or Eric, etc.) Gets Plastered." You would think that they would all know that I must have photos out the ying yang of people getting cast. However parents are so are certain that their son or daughter is so special that I will appreciate having dozens of photographs recording the event. What I do appreciate is the sentiment because it tells me that I have a satisfied client.



Photo 7



Photo 8