

At the National Gallery of Modern Art – Ray Harryhausen: Titan of Cinema

The largest and most comprehensive exhibition of Harryhausen paraphernalia ever shown is to open in Edinburgh this Saturday.

The movie maker and producer who inspired others like Stephen Spielberg and George Lucas was a one man band who nowadays would be replaced by the thousands of animators and artists creating CGI films.

The National Galleries of Scotland were forced to delay the opening of the exhibition due to Covid-19, and will open it with a few changes to the visiting process that now seem fairly usual. Bookings may be made online up to three months in advance, and there are the usual Covid-19 safety measures such as mandatory face coverings and hand sanitiser.

This is a thrilling and immersive exhibition all about the unparalleled work of the late Ray Harryhausen (1920-2012) who would have celebrated his 100th birthday this summer. It was his work and his movies which shaped the face of modern cinema.



A phontrope made by animator Eleanor Stewart in the exhibit space of Ray Harryhausen: Titan of Cinema. The phontrope displays the models from Harryhausen's iconic films such as Jason and the Argonauts (1963) and Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956). Neil Hanna Photography www.neilhannaphotography.co.uk 07702 246823

The exhibition is the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of the art of the Harryhausen to date. He elevated stop-motion to an art-form between the 1950s-1980s, with films such as Clash of the Titans, Jason and the Argonauts with the iconic skeleton warriors and The 7th Voyage of Sinbad.

I joined an online talk about the exhibition hosted by the Director of the Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Simon Groom, speaking with Ray Harryhausen's daughter, Vanessa Harryhausen, and filmmaker, John Walsh, both of whom are trustees of The Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation.

They discussed Ray's life and work. For Vanessa the memories of coming home from boarding school and running upstairs to see her father were all associated with him drawing and making models in a little annexe off his attic studio. She commented

that it might have been a bit of a lonely existence for him, working alone, and that he was a very hard worker. She said: "He had so many talents, and he never turned me away. He was very kind and patient and always welcomed me in. He put a lot of thought into his characters and wanted people to enjoy the magic of the films. It is astonishing that it is now 40 years since Clash of the Titans and 80 since his work on film began. This exhibition takes up a whole gallery and he would have been so thrilled to see it."

Her fellow trustee John Walsh was fortunate to meet Harryhausen in his home studio several times, the first when he was making a documentary about his work narrated by Tom Baker.

The Foundation was set up to gather and maintain all the artefacts of the artist's life and work, of which there are around 50,000. Needless to say they are not all on display in Edinburgh, but you should expect something remarkable when you book your visit to Modern Two.

Ray Harryhausen | Titan of Cinema runs at Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Modern Two) from Saturday 24 October 2020 – 5 September 2021. Tickets on sale now www.nationalgalleries.org



Ray Harryhausen's daughter Vanessa Harryhausen with the skeleton warriors from Jason and the Argonauts PHOTO Neil Hanna Photography www.neilhannaphotography.co.uk 07702 246823