

# The life of an overqualified gig-worker

An interview with theater artist

## Bradley Erb

By Emily Silver. November 11, 2024

The ability to be transported into a new place and time and to alter perceptions about reality is powerful. I have always enjoyed performance art and the theater so much and I have my own history of years spent backstage creating worlds for so many wonderful shows performed by so many talented friends and children. When given the opportunity to speak with the wildly talented Bradley Erb about his contribution to the performing arts and entertainment community of Atlanta, Georgia I couldn't pass it up.

Bradley Erb's skills and contributions range from his ability to work lighting and sound tech, to his ability to create set pieces and structures. His true artistry though, is in the special effects make-up, masks, monsters, and creepy creatures that he designs and creates both on his own and with a team of other talented artists in the Atlanta area. Bradley is sought after by all creators searching for an expert in the creepy and spooky. As well as anybody who wants a talented lighting and sound technician. While he is supported by both his skills both back and behind the stage, is his mask making and monster building that shows his true passion and skill. Bradleys work can be seen in short films including *In Dreams*, *The Fort*, *Secluded*, and *Sanctuary*. Bradleys special effects make-up skills can be seen in the 3 last movies mentioned. A skill that has been recognized by his winning of the Best Practical Effects award at the End of Days film festival.



***"... I literally walked in and said, Hey, I want to work here. And they're like, well, we don't really have any space for you. Cool...well, I'm just gonna be here until you do"***

***-Bradley Erb***

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**Me:** How would you define the kind of art that you do, and how do you define yourself as an artist?

**Bradley:** All right. How would I define myself as an artist? Oh, that's a tough one. I've never really thought about it. The kind of art that I do? Bloody gory and horrific. Masks.Halloween. I mean, you know, I do some costumes and stuff like that. But it's mostly, you know, film work and entertainment stuff.

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## *“I want to make monsters”*

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**Me:**Okay. So that takes up the bulk of your time, your film work. Okay, So, that's your work. Now, back to your gory *Halloweeny* creepy stuff. How did you get into that?

**Bradley:** Um, I took, I went to college, like, for theater, and part of that was a makeup class that we had to take. And we started doing gore makeup and stuff and I was like, this is a lot of fun. And I just kind of kept doing that. And, you know, doing prosthetics and stuff and making people uglier is more fun than trying to make them pretty.

**Me:**Yeah, definitely.

**Bradley:**Probably because there's so many ways to be ugly and pretty, there's only one kind of pretty, which is bullshit, but like, I feel like there maybe is more freedom in that because it's not just like trying to make it fit into a standard like you can do so much. Like, you know, you learn about the face and how to shadow and highlight and other things just like normal makeup, but then you go like, but if we move that down here it makes you look, you look haunted

**Me:** So where do you find inspiration? I feel like I know the answer to this, but for the sake of the question, where do you find inspiration for your stuff?

**Bradley:** I mean, some of the classics like John Carpenter. I mean, I worked with Casper Kelly. Exactly. He did the Yule Log movie and so many cool things on Adult Swim.He was like one of the creative minds behind CatDog, that little cartoon.

**Me:** That's really funny. Okay, cool, cool, cool.

**Bradley:** And like, you know, Billy, like a lot of the Cartoon Network shows I grew up on, like Billy and Mandy and all that stuff. It's just like that horror side that's like super fun.

**Me:** Yeah. Like the kind of scary, but in a non-threatening kind of way Okay, so who do you think then is the prime audience for your work?

**Bradley:** I mean, right now Adult Swim,

**Me:** If you were to have an art show, right, who would you want to show up?

**Bradley:** Oh, the geeks, the sideshow geeks and everything.

**Me:** Cool. I would definitely be there. Okay, so how did you first discover that you had a knack for making things?

**Bradley:** How did I first discover that? It kind of goes back to that makeup class I took, you know, where like, I just started, like, one of the things that we had to do was do like a whole prosthetic thing and I was just like, what if we had like an angel that like, burst into flames and then half of them turned into a demon. And so like I did that. Yeah. Yeah.

**Me:** Yeah, cool. How, so I mean, you are working in movies, you're doing the thing, you're making money. When you first started being like, 'arts is going to be my career' And I know, you have always been like, 'This is what I'm going to do. I'm gonna make it happen. Like, it's not an issue'. So did you ever deal with other people telling you that you're not going to make money in the arts or get a real job?

**Bradley:** Yes.

**Me:** Who were those people?

**Bradley:** Mostly from my family. You know, my parents are always like, well, you know, you could get like an actual job, you know, a nine to five and, you know, I'm like, but that's not what I want to do.

**Me:** That's no fun.

**Bradley:** Like, I've gotten job offers from like Lockheed Martin and Korski and people have told me, well, I need to take those jobs. I'm like, because I don't want to do that. I want to make monsters.

**Me:** Yeah. you want to make monsters. You're so good at it, too. Okay. So, and then, but how do your parents feel now that you've been doing it? Do they still feel like you should get a nine to five or?

**Bradley:** Yes, because, you know, work has been inconsistent at best.

**Me:** Yeah, but are you happy?

**Bradley:** Yes.

**Me:** Do you get along with your parents, though?

**Bradley:** Yeah.

**Me:** Yeah. All right. Okay, so on your, in your work, like your personal work, do you ever work with people or is that more just you?

**Bradley:** I mean, I work with Silver Screen Effects Lab.

**Me:** Okay.

**Bradley:** That's the team I got in with a while ago. Like, I literally walked in and said, Hey, I want to work here. And they're like, well, we don't really have any space for you. Like, cool. Well, I'm just gonna be here until you do

**Me:** Hang out till you do.

**Bradley:** Yeah.

**Me:** All right. Do you enjoy working with people in creative settings?

**Bradley:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

When it's like all of us, when we get the whole team together, it's a lot of fun because the guys that I work with are really cool. Like, one guy, he's an old English Lit professor, he now just makes rubber masks.

**Me:** Awesome.

**Bradley:** He's nice, he asks weird questions, but he's fun.

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***“ We all love what we do. And the projects that we take on are projects that we want to work on.”***

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**Me:** Yeah. So what are some qualities you think that make that such a successful team? Or that makes a successful team in general?

**Bradley:** We all love what we do. And the projects that we take on are projects that we want to work on. Because we're, you know, a lot of what we do is for the adult screen, where we have a lot more creative freedom with what we do. Because when you're working for like Disney, you know, I've worked for Disney a few times, and like, there it's like, it has to be this, this, this, and like, oh, you can't have, or you can't use this shade of red, or it has to be specific.

**Me:** That's so specific.

**Bradley:** Yeah, you have to get everything approved, and it has to go through like 30 different people to get approved for, you know, it actually plays with, you know, this other place. We wanted a tree monster so we made a tree monster.

**Me:** So what is your favorite project you've worked on?

**Bradley:** That would have to be the Scythe Horse.

**Me:** It was so cool. Why?

**Bradley:** Like we built a whole aluminum frame and a backpack for that.

**Me:** Okay.



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*“ And I was just like, well, I made that. He's like, what? And I'm like, I made that. Then, you know, through the video, that's me coming out there to grab it. And he's like, holy shit. I'm like, yeah, you just got me on your video.”*

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**Bradley:** And just seeing it on stage the night that we premiered it and everything was like a huge moment.

**Me:** Can you talk more about that moment?

**Bradley:** It was like, you know, I was backstage when we helped them out and then the crowd just started cheering. And like, even being backstage, I'm like, that's amazing. They love this thing.

And a really weird thing happened when I went to the store a couple weeks after that. And the guy at the register was like, do you like heavy metal music? And I was like, yeah. He's like, well, I just went to this Mastodon show. And he shows me a video of the Scythe Squatch. And I was just like, well, I made that. He's like, what? And I'm like, I made that. Then, you know, through the video, that's me coming out there to grab it. And he's like, holy shit. I'm like, yeah, you just got me on your video.

**Me:** That's awesome. That's so cool.

**Bradley:** It was a really weird moment. Watching people enjoy the things that I've made is really great.

**Me:** Yeah, that feels great.

**Bradley:** It always does.

**Me:** So that does lead me to- What impact do you think your art makes on those who get to see it? And what kind of impact do you want it to make? Is it doing what you want?

**Bradley:** I just want people to have a fun time. You know, if they can learn something from it, that's even better. I mean, I do want everybody to be able to enjoy it

