

Justin Poole *Justin Poole Sculpture*

This canine-loving artist makes a living making mannequins in his Cincinnati studio. His creations appear in some of the top manufacturers' collections.



Justin Poole on...

His style: "Nothing ever fits me. So I've been having things made when I can afford it. When I can't, I make due with hilariously ill-fitting 'value' from Target."

His foray to the small screen: "While I was doing a job for Patina-V, Mike Rowe from the show 'Dirty Jobs,' came to the factory and filmed an episode on mannequin making."

His taste in music: "I've lost friends over some of the music that I like. It's amazing how shameful one can feel from the simple act of listening to what he likes. That must be why they made headphones."

What was your first job?

Skippers Sea Food Restaurant in Green Port, N.Y. I did food prep. I learned a lot about having a clean and organized work space.

How did you get introduced to sculpting?

When I started college, I began taking as many fine arts courses as I could. I figured if I could master sculpting the human body, I would have the deepest understanding of form.

Why mannequins?

In graduate school at Indiana University, I put all of my energy toward classical and figurative sculpture. Mannequin designers are among the few people who really appreciate the aesthetic of elegant, anatomically correct bodies.

What types of bodies are your customers asking for these days?

Bodies that are more athletic, well-defined and full of movement. The essence of the current trend is dance. I'm happy because that's what I like to make and it seems to be my niche.

Which mannequin presentation has stopped you in your tracks recently?

I saw a stunning Hans Boодt ad with a single female figure, floor-length dress, striped blazer and old aviation goggles on her head. The photographer used light and shadow in the spirit of a Rembrandt painting.

"If I weren't sculpting mannequins, I would be..."

a pastry chef.

What item in your studio inspires you when you're working?

I have a hound and a boxer that wrestle at my feet. The shapes they contort their bodies into are mesmerizing. Sometimes they even knock me over.

What type of art is hanging on your walls?

Thousands of decadent body shots from fashion magazines that I use for reference.

Name one book you've never been able to finish.

I've gotten stuck on books about musical theory. That subject fascinates me, but so far I've found it difficult.

What one-time fashion statement have you made that you'll never want to see or think of again?

Grunge. While it worked for a handful of rockers on MTV, it left the rest of us mistaken for homeless refugees.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

"Get out of the arts."

The worst?

"Get out of the arts." ▀