



STRICTLY COMMERCIAL

By Mark J. Adamany

Shooting Star

Mark Adamany expands the definition of a mural.

I often say that there's nothing more important than repeat business — you never know when a job may yield long-term work. Thus, I address *every* job with the intent to enticing the client to come back.

Such was the case with Prairie du Chien, WI-based Star Cinemas. Four years ago, the company hired me to paint more than 3,000 sq. ft. of "Moroccan-style" murals for its Wisconsin Dells location.

In the summer of 2002, Star Cinemas told me they would be erecting a 16-screen complex in Council Bluffs, IA, a rapidly growing city on the banks of the Missouri River, and wanted me to create a mural for it.

To complement Council Bluffs' new convention center and casinos, the cinema needed to be a landmark. As a fan of extravagant Las Vegas murals, I relished the chance to create on a grand scale.

Having received the exterior rendering, I needed two seconds to conjure a theme. The plans outlined a 60-ft.-diameter dome, which spurred the idea of an Egyptian temple. The support columns lining the dome's perimeter created the flavor of the Temple of Amen-Re in Karnak, Egypt. I decided to push the envelope with elements that hinted at various movie genres.



Mark Adamany, of Adamany Art & Design (Rockford, IL), painted dazzling murals for a newly erected Star Cinemas in Council Bluffs, IA.

Researching

I devoted a month to researching ancient Egyptian civilizations and movie history. I developed the layout using PhotoShop® on my Mac G4. I also produced a conceptual sketch of the entire lobby; a sketch often helps me impress clients.

This was my largest single contract to date: 1,500 sq. ft. of soffit, 1,200 sq. ft. of columns, and a primary graphic encompassing more than 3,000 sq. ft. The approximately 6,000 sq. ft. of space to decorate

was more than double the size of the Wisconsin Dells project.

After discussing the job with Star, they let me paint 250 linear feet of soffit space in advance. Peacock Studios' (Brighton, CO), Bill Hueg, among others, helped me choose materials and methods.

Hiring hands

Next, I had to find help for the studio. I estimated we had two months before we would begin work on location.



Sabo Painting and Decorating (Belvedere, IL) installs 15, 6-ft. tall, canvas pieces with hieroglyphics and Egyptian symbols. Adamany pounced the patterns and decorated them using interior, flat-acrylic enamels.



Using a palm sander, Mark scuffed up the pieces before applying "cracks and chips" with a fitch.

All photos by Mark Adamany and Mike Whyte

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A close-up of Mark creating a crack. He promises "little surprises" that viewers will discover after observing his work multiple times.



Mark uses a $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. brush to paint border accents. When he saw the theater lobby's layout, visions of recreating an ancient Egyptian temple immediately came to mind.

After a thorough local search for artists, I hired three artists: Janet Bender, Nadja Schutt and Denise Charckon. They worked hard and were very excited to be part of such a big job.

After cutting the first pieces of canvas to the specified size, I learned that, although they were pre-primed, shrinkage was inevitable.

Two pieces shriveled $\frac{3}{4}$ in. laterally; because the hieroglyphics were supposed to be in precise locations,

there wasn't any margin for error. Many designs spanned more than a single piece, so I ensured that no single piece was too large. I developed a formula that allowed a trim line on the remaining pieces.

Hitting the canvas

We created 15, 6-ft.-tall, cut canvas pieces that ranged in length from 10 to 30 ft.; all are 6 ft. tall. I created a faux-finish process to replicate the appearance of aged sandstone. I

rolled on a medium-colored base, then used sea sponges and 4-in. brushes. All told, we applied four colors and eight stages. Using a spray bottle, I misted the canvas between each color; this kept the paint moist, blendable and translucent. Misting creates a similar effect to applying a glaze.

Using a transparency projector, I transferred my hieroglyphs. I'd produced the transparencies on a 1-in. to 1-ft. scale. After laying pencil out-

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Mark created a faux-finish using a medium, sandstone base that he applied with 4-in. brushes and sea sponges. Between each application, he misted it with a spray bottle, creating further "decay."

lines, I devised a color palette to help my apprentices. Their primary job was block filling, which kept them busy for more than a month. After they'd completed filling, I detailed, rendered and "aged" one piece at a time. To age them, I used a palm sander and a small fitch.

Mounting the beast

My 6,000-sq.-ft. tableau didn't hit home until I arrived in July to start the job. The dome — bare except

for white primer — was intimidating. At least I had a night to rest before beginning what would be the job of a lifetime.

I decided to freehand the broken line that defined the crumbling edge of the dome's "architecture" and "doorway." The dome was shaped like an ellipse, rather than a true sphere, making the perspective difficult. Once I'd pounced the patterns for the *trompe l'oeil* architecture, I used an airless



Beginning with jet black, Mark created a gradual fade of four shades of blue as he crafted the nighttime sky with an airless sprayer.

sprayer to apply the base; then, I back-rolled the spray base. At this point, I used plastic sheeting to mask off broken lines.

Using the airless system, I spent three nights laying out blue blends for the sky-filled windows and the dome's "outer space" area. Starting with black at the top, I worked my way down through four shades of blue using the sprayer.

Using a projector, I transferred the moon, ship and bi-plane. I wor-

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Mark works in shades of yellow and orange to create the moon and cosmos.

ried about possible distortion, because the ship was more than 18 ft. tall, and the plane was more than 17 ft. long. However, no distortion was evident at ground level.

The hang of it

Star hired Sabo Painting & Decorating (Belvedere, IL), to hang the canvas. When we hung the stacked canvas pieces over the 80-ft. concession soffit, we needed a day to hang one 20-ft.-long piece because

of the wall's curvature and the canvas' tendency to contract.

After four failed installation attempts, I decided to cut the second piece in the center and install two sections from the outer edges in. I filled the 2-in. gap with spackle, and I touched it up with paint.

Back to painting

My dome design's sheer size and detail required grueling work; it included the ship, planes, satellite



Mark devoted 13 hours to create the stars in the sky by literally drumming on the ceiling. To make himself more comfortable, he created a gurney with a padded headrest.

and stars. I devoted one 13-hour day to painting the nighttime "sky." With one brush in each hand, I played drums on the ceiling to create the white dots. To comfortably recline, I created a makeshift gurney with a padded headrest.

Due to construction delays, the six columns hadn't been installed and weren't ready to paint. They represented 1,200 sq. ft.; no small task. I began sketching, patterns, block fills and detailing myself.

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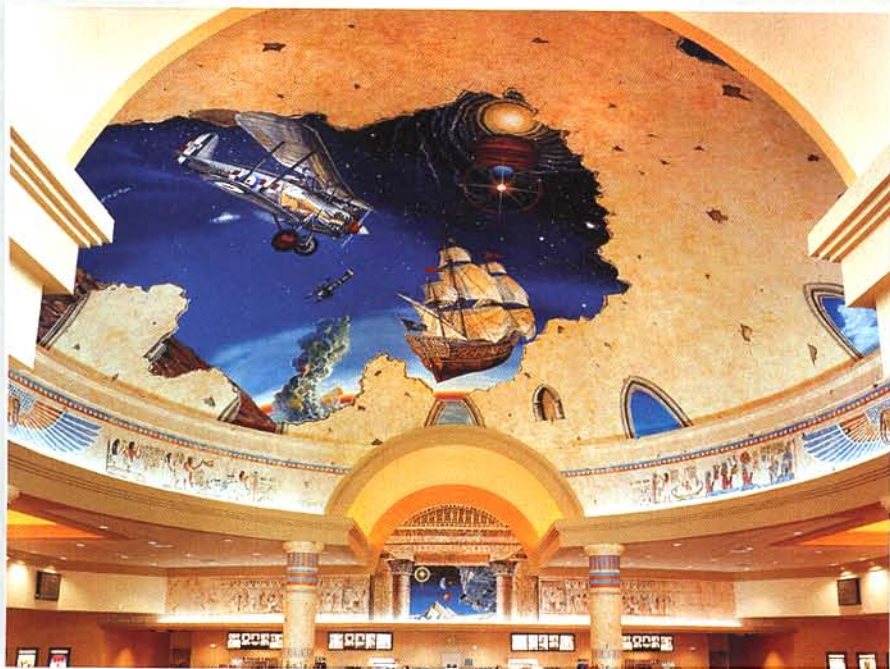
In the following colors: **RAYGBW** Patent Pending

Donnie Walters of Blair Sign Co. (Gretna, NE) and Bryce Ryder, Star's painting contractor, helped lay patterns and block-fill the columns. I finished the dome and, then, helped them finish the columns.

As with the canvases, I used my palm sander to weather the columns' artwork, before painting in cracks and chips. I clearcoated 8 ft. at each column's base with low-luster acrylic to prevent damage.

Light on the subject

An oft-overlooked, but important, aspect of my art is illumination. Lighting a 60-ft.-diameter dome, plus more than 200 ft. of soffit, is no easy task. Star Cinema hired my longtime friend and associate, Glenn Avery, owner of Avery Sign Co. (Rockford, IL). All told, he used 600 ft. of neon tubing, 400 ft. of Avery A8 white, reflective vinyl and 10, 15,060V transformers.



With the help of Glenn Avery, owner of Avery Sign Co. (Rockford, IL), the sign was complete. Glenn used Avery A8 white, reflective vinyl, Voltarc tubing and France transformers to create a luminescent backdrop.

To accomplish the job, he used three rows of neon tubing around the dome and two rows under the concession soffit. To span the more than 30 ft. from the edge to the center, Avery used reflective vinyl to amplify the neon and create a dra-

matic effect, particularly after dark.

We finished the job two days before opening. The night before the theater's unveiling, I experienced the thrill of 3,000 people viewing my work. This made my seven months of work that much sweeter. ■



More on Mark

Mark J. Adamany, owner of Adamany Art & Design (Rockford, IL) for the past 10 years, has been a professional artist for more than 15 years. He became a gallery artist but chose to "paint bigger," and began producing large-format murals.

When he's off the road, he enjoys time at home with his wife, Jackie, and their four children: Jordan, Natalie, Nadia and Johnny.

Equipment and Materials

Brushes: Pro Art China bristle brushes and chip brushes, available at hardware and crafts stores; Purdy angle and flat brushes (1½ to 4 in.), from Purdy Corp. (Portland, OR), (503) 286-8217.

Canvas: Fredrix-style, 72-in.-wide, 7-oz. canvas rolls, from Dick Blick Art Supply (Galesburg, IL), (800) 447-8192.

Lift: Haulotte 43-ft. articulating boom lift, rented from Wiese Equipment Rentals and Sales (Omaha, NE), (402) 333-6655.

Lighting: 15,060V transformers, from France, a Scott Fetzer Co., (Fairview, TN), (615) 799-0551; white 8500 15mm tubing, from Voltarc (Waterbury, CT), (203) 578-4600.

Paint: C2 interior, flat-acrylic enamels, from the Coatings Alliance (Buffalo), (716) 853-5776; Muralo Vogue Deep Color interior, flat, vinyl acrylics, from Muralo Paint Co. (Oak Park, IL), (800) 631-3440; Sikkens cetol low-luster, interior clearcoat, from Akzo Nobel Coatings (Chicago), (312) 544-7000.

Pouncing: Han-See pounce pads, from Han See Corp., available from Hancy Mfg. Co. (Montague, CA), (530) 459-1028, or Dick Blick Art Supply; General's charcoal powder, from General Pencil Co. (Jersey City, NJ), (201) 653-5351.

Sprayer: Graco 495-ST airless sprayer, from Graco Inc. (Minneapolis), (612) 623-6000.

Vinyl: Avery A8 white reflective vinyl, from Avery Graphics (Painesville, OH), (800) 231-4654.

Miscellaneous: Permanent markers; 48-in.-wide butcher paper; ¼-in. sheet sander, green painter's tape; heavy-duty wallpaper paste, plastic sheeting; masking paper; transparency projector and white chalk.