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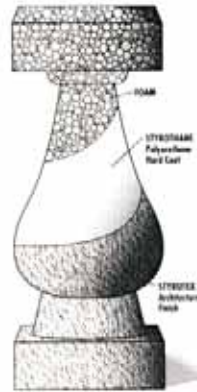
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- THE LOWDOWN ON TRUSS
- FIRE SAFETY FOR THE EXHIBIT BUILDER
- GOING UP, NOT OUT, SOLVES PROBLEMS

BRINGING ANCIENT EGYPT TO LIFE

by John Henningsen
Marketing Director
Futura Coatings
Hazelwood, MO



As the sun sets on the Nile River delta, thousands of slaves labor on another huge temple to glorify yet another God-king. It's a project that will take thousands of workers, stone cutters and sculptors 20+ years to complete. Keep in mind, in the year 5000 BC, this labor intensive, massive architectural artistry and technology was state-of-the-art.

Luckily though, Creative Arts Unlimited, Inc., Pinellas Park, FL, using today's technology, creates the look of Ancient Egyptian architecture in a fraction of the time using lightweight foams over metal framing and Futura Coatings' Styrothane®, a spray-applied, fast-set polyurethane which provides a plastic-like hard shell. Slave labor is, of course, completely unnecessary.

The recently unveiled *Splendor of Ancient Egypt* exhibit at the Florida International Museum, St. Petersburg, is a perfect example of what modern urethane materials and technology in the hands of skilled fabricators can produce -- a truly exceptional and unique themed exhibit.

Unveiled as the second in a series of special exhibits, *Splendor of Ancient Egypt* features a collection of 175 exquisite antiquities which presents a panoramic view of ancient Egyptian civilization over a 4,500 year period of pharaonic history. The exhibit features works of art depicting the historical, religious and artistic aspects of Egypt's elite -- from the close of the pre-dynastic period to the end of the Roman Empire. Among the pieces are statues and reliefs in limestone, four mummy cases (including one

from Pharaoh Tutmoses I), gold jewelry and an 18' long papyrus scroll of the Book of the Dead. All these pieces are on loan from the Roemer-Und Pelizaeus Museum in Hildesheim, Germany.

When planning began for this exhibit, Curator Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi and Exhibit Director James E. Broughton worked together with Gallery Designer Jonathan Toppe (Harvard, Jolly, Cleese & Toppe, St. Petersburg).



Toppe was responsible for the lavish architectural accents in the recent *Treasures of the Czars* exhibit. However, an entirely different set of architectural and fabrication challenges faced the designer. To recreate temples, tombs and causeways of various dynastic periods for the 12 galleries, Toppe needed a company with artists just as skilled as those of thousands of years ago and state-of-the-art materials. His choice was Creative Arts Unlimited.

According to Chuck Stanmore, CEO of Creative Arts, "The architects and designers had fewer than four months to plan and open the exhibit. We worked closely with Toppe to fast-track the design and fabrication of each element." With the help of a good crew and Futura's fast-set polyurethane hard coats, Creative Arts finished the job ahead of schedule.

Unlike the Ancient Egyptians, Creative Arts chose to use expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam -- a material that's considerably lighter than limestone and easier to manipulate and move from place to place. Once the foam was cut and carved into columns and relief panels, it was sprayed with Futura's Styrothane. This is a two-component polyurethane which dries to the touch within seconds of being sprayed. In other words, Creative Arts could spray all the architectural elements for the exhibit in just two days.

According to Toppe, "We're excited about the idea of working with foam because of its low cost, extreme lightweight and ease of shaping by hand or with computer-driven cutting machines."

Imagine for a moment, the two dozen massive foam/Styrothane columns in the re-creation of the famous Hypostyle Hall of the Karnak Temple being made from traditional sandstone. Needless to say, the floor of the museum would never be able to support the weight of the stone. But even using a material like wood or fiberglass would make transporting the exhibit to its next destination a daunting task -- even if they had thousands of slaves to assist.

Creating lightweight foam pieces fits the criteria exactly, since the exhibits would have to be eventually dismantled, crated up and shipped to the next city.

Futura's Styrothane works as a problem solver for exhibit builders. This extremely durable protective coating protects the fragile foam. Now practically any specialty architectural or entertainment application, from columns to cornices to relief wall panels, can be created. And, when a cementitious or textured top coat like Futura's Styrotex® is used, the normally smooth polyurethane coating will take on the look and feel of sandstone or concrete. This is just another example of the diversity a polyurethane process offers to exhibit fabricators.

Since Creative Arts used the fire rated version of Styrothane, the elements complied with the fire and building codes. Best of all, the hard coating system over the foam means the pieces will resist the daily abuse faced by any exhibit or museum piece: The curious hands of the public. Plus, the polyurethane coating handles the occasional collision with strollers, wheelchairs or metal purse buckles in its stride.

Using Styrothane, Creative Arts was able to produce architecture that reflected the Egyptian's powerful view of life and death. According to Toppe, "Making an impression was the goal in capturing the character of each room." Creative Arts succeeded by having the best artisans, both in-house and a consulting Egyptologist, as well as using the advanced computer technology and highest quality fabrication materials.

Rod Jarboe, president of Futura Coatings, commented, "Creative Arts, like many other fabricators around the world, have embraced the benefits of computer aided design and fabrication. This exhibit proves that the possibilities offered to exhibit and display designers are limitless. If Ancient Egypt can be brought to life, imagine what else is waiting to be produced using foam and hard coating fabrication."

"Futura's fast set polyurethane systems allow exhibit fabricators to do more work faster when compared to traditional wood, steel or fiberglass materials," commented Jeff Raglani, division manager for Futura. This means projects with tight turnaround times can be easily met. Moreover, since the Styrothane coating adds almost no extra weight to the EPS foam, structural and transportation concerns regarding weight are eliminated. □

All photos courtesy of George Cott

