

Building a Cathedral Façade

BY JEFF AND CHRIS DAVIS



We have been doing a haunted graveyard display in our Home Haunt for almost 10 years. Each year we try to add more and more to it. As we got more detailed with our display we have become increasingly focused on our theme. Several years ago we built a bunch of Monster Mud Monk-like figures that line our driveway. During our planning for 2006 we talked about why Monks would

was a church nearby. At HAuNTcon that year we attended a seminar offered by Bad Boys Scenic Design of Terror on the Fox fame. They demonstrated how entire scenes built out of foam could be carved and painted to look like weathered stone.

The decision was made to build a façade onto our garage building that would look like an evil old cathedral, and we started sketching out a design. We knew that the only way we would be able to afford to do something on this large of a scale was if we could construct it as if it were a theater set. The façade was going to be viewed from a distance and no one was

going to be able to walk near it, so we could use this light construction.

To be sure this was something we could afford to build in one summer with a small crew started working out the details by constructing a scale model of our design cut out of foam core board. We cut out small rectangle pieces that represented each

4x8 panel and then cut the windows and arches out of

each piece. We then glued the whole thing together, and after a couple of minor changes we had a workable design.

After building the scale model it was easy to figure out that we were going to need 25 4x8 sheets of foam to build the entire thing. We normally use 2" foam for the tombstones and monuments in the grave area, but at over \$20 a sheet this would get expensive. So we decided on 1" foam instead which cut the cost in half.

Using a common "soft" theatrical flat building technique, the frames of the panels were constructed using 1x3 lumber laid flat. Half inch thick plywood gusset plates held the 1x3s together with 1 inch staples from a pneumatic staple gun. The panels with windows or doorways in them were framed with these architectural features left open.

The 1" foam was glued to the frame [with Polyurethane Construction Adhesive and then secured in place with 1 1/2" screws and special 1-3/4" diameter white plastic washers from Demand Products, Inc. Once the foam was attached, excess foam in the doorways and window openings were drawn and then cut out.

Standing the panels up in place we connected them





together with 5" squares of half inch plywood at the top and bottom of each panel. Once the panels were all up, a thin plywood rectangle was used as a template to draw the stone grout pattern on the panels. For the second floor we used a smaller template to create a forced perspective that makes the façade look taller than it really is, (an old Walt Disney trick).

Once the pattern was drawn on all of the panels, we disassembled the façade and each piece was individually painted and detailed.



Each of the plastic washers was covered in foam shavings secured with a little rubber cement. After painting they couldn't be detected.

Headers and sills were cut out of the scrap pieces to go around the doors and windows. Grout lines were cut into the foam using a Dremel tool with a polishing bit. Then each stone was textured using a scouring pad and then a heat gun for the final touch. We had to work with care because of the thinness of the foam. The foam headers and window trim were textured

using the same method and then glued to the panels using a polyurethane construction adhesive.

All of the panels were sprayed with a base coat of flat black exterior latex paint and each stone was then hand painted. The grout lines were painted first with a grey/white color and then the entire panel is painted using separate coats of different shades of grey exterior latex paint. The paint was applied using a sea sponge roller which we found to be much faster than hand painted with a sea sponge. The paint is rolled on in random directions so no roller patterns are created.

Since we didn't want to waste a lot of time figuring out how to setup the Cathedral

in October we decided to give it a trial run a month earlier. We constructed a simple 2x4 frame attached directly to the garage that all the panels would hang on. This created simple scaffolding if you were someone with no fear of heights and monkey-like abilities to secure the panels.

The bottom panels were attached first. Then molding pieces were set in place at the top of each of the lower panels. Then the upper panels were attached. Additional stone pieces were placed at the top of the upper panels and then the peaks were put



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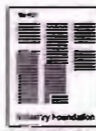


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into place. After it was all setup we took it down and stored it until our setup in October.

There were a lot of details that were created throughout the building process to add to the look of the Cathedral.

The skull at the top peak was carved out of pink foam. We traced a skull onto the foam using a tracing projector and then cut it out. We then carved out the detail and textured it. Once complete we painted it and glued it to one half of the top panels that form the peak so it overlapped onto the other half when the peaks were assembled.

The Cathedral doors were carved out of pink foam and textured to look like wood using techniques also learned from the Bad Boys Seminar. We glued strips of black corrugated plastic on the doors for the metal bands and used wooden decorative accents for the oversized rivets. The door handles were fabricated out of rigid foam skulls connected with a one inch diameter dowel. The dowels were glued to the skulls which were then glued to diamond shaped pieces of masonite. After painting and distressing, the handles were glued to the doors.

Skulls were cast in cast rigid foam and attached to foam pieces for use as corner trim and keystones at the tops of the doors and windows.

The stained glass windows were designed using Adobe Illustrator and then given to a sign printer who printed large stickers that were attached to sheets of clear Plexiglas.

For the 3 foot round windows we used the same skull art that we used for the foam skull on the peak. We drew in lines to represent lead joints and then scanned the image into illustrator where we filled in the colors for the glass. The Angel of Death stained glass were two foot by three foot windows inspired from an image we found on the internet. The art was hand traced, scanned and colored. The art for the second window was flipped to produce two mirror images.

We were able to use scrap pieces of Plexiglas that the sign company had and they gave us a great deal on printing the stickers. The completed windows were attached to the panels from the back using wood screws through pre-drilled holes in the Plexiglas. Spot lights mounted below the windows back lit the simulated stained glass which looked very impressive when it was completed.

The design also called for a broken window in the center of the façade so our flying crank ghost we hang in the upper window of the garage would be seen.

The sign company made another sticker of stained glass and put it on clear corrugated plastic. We cut it out to look broken and screwed it to the back of the window panel.

With our monks set up in the driveway and everything properly lit, the Cathedral



façade turned out better than we expected.

Jeff and Chris Davis are the creators of The Davis Graveyard. A popular yard haunt in the Portland, Oregon area. The Haunt was recently recognized for their efforts as 2nd place winners in the Yard Haunt category at the HauntX awards. You can find out more information at www.davisgraveyard.com or you can contact Jeff or Chris at hosts@davisgraveyard.com.



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The screenshot shows a reservation system interface. At the top, it displays a calendar for September and October. Below the calendar is a table of reserved tickets with columns for time slots and the number of tickets reserved. To the right of the table are buttons for ticket types: Adult, VIP, Thursday, Group, and Halse Combo All. Below the table is a 'Sales Order' section with a list of items and their costs. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Exit', 'Home', 'Clear Order', and 'Check Out', along with a 'Total Due' of 174.

| Reserved | 8:00 | 10:00 | Reserved |
|----------|------|-------|----------|
| 0 | 8:00 | 10:00 | 0 |
| 0 | 8:15 | 10:15 | 0 |
| 0 | 8:30 | 10:30 | 0 |
| 0 | 8:45 | 10:45 | 0 |
| 0 | 9:00 | 11:00 | 0 |
| 0 | 9:15 | 11:15 | 0 |
| 0 | 9:30 | 11:30 | 0 |
| 0 | 9:45 | 11:45 | 0 |

Sales Order

| Item | Qty | Cost |
|---------------------------------|-----|------|
| SW-VIP (October 27th-11:00PM) | 2 | 74 |
| SW-Adult (October 26th-11:00PM) | 4 | 100 |

Total Due: 174

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