

"Contex advanced digital technology helps restore movie set to former glory"



Summary

iG3 Integrated Graphics used a Contex HD5450 scanner to replicate a 15-year-old movie set at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. The sets, depicting the New York Public Library, had faded badly and needed to be replaced. To achieve the realism necessary, the sets were hand-painted at 1:12 scale and scanned using the HD5450 before digital printing. The job was completed in only eight weeks at half the cost of the original – and the digitized originals can be used again and again.

The challenge

At their widest, the hand-painted sets were 52 inches wide, yet needed to be scanned in sufficient detail so visitors to Universal Studios believed they were standing in New York.

The solution

A Contex HD5450 scanner.

The benefits

Digital files that could be enlarged 12 times while still keeping the detail intact

The results

The movie set was replaced in record time at less than half the cost of the original, while retaining the magical feel of the 'city that never sleeps'.

"The job was completed in only eight weeks at half the cost of the original – and the digitized originals can be used again and again.. It was amazing."

Greg Donais, iG3 Integrated Graphics Vice President and Founder

The New York Public Library movie set at Universal Studios Orlando is a massive, three-panel, two-dimensional façade that reaches 85 feet into the air. Originally built and hand-painted in 1989, 15 years of exposure to the elements left the set in dire need of repair.

The original murals, hand-painted on cotton muslin, were deteriorating from the effects of mold, mildew, sun and rain. As a result, the Universal Creative and Technical Services Team faced a difficult choice – repaint the façade at great cost, tear the structure down, or recreate it using stronger, weather-resistant materials and digital technology. Universal enlisted the help of Adirondack Studios – a scenery, design and custom fabrication company – to replicate the original set.

The challenge: restore a fading movie set using modern technology

Universal's objective was to make the set to look as much like the original buildings – without rebuilding the façade. For Adirondack, this meant recreating original artwork, transferring the images to digital format, and printing with weather-resistant, matte-finished synthetics and UV-resistant inks and emulsions.

It had never been done before. Adirondack turned to Ontario-based iG3 Integrated Graphics, one of the largest grand format digital printing companies in North America, to digitize and print new 'skins' for the façade. "We went into the project not knowing if it could be done," says iG3 Integrated Graphics Vice President and Founder, Greg Donais. "We had no dimensions, no artwork, we didn't know how accurate the laser survey would be, how good the artists' renderings would be, or if all the shadows and lighting would line up."

The solution: paint in miniature, scan, print and install on a grand scale

The solution was a multi-step process that began by shooting digital photographs of the aging structure. "We brought in a laser survey company to survey the contours of the structures and get the actual dimensions," Donais recalls. "Then the artists at Adirondack spent 680 hours creating renderings of the façade to 1:12 scale."

The drawings ranged in size from the smallest, roughly two feet by eight feet, to the largest, the New York Library, which

measured a total of 52 inches wide by 10 feet long. iG3 tried to digitize the renderings using digital photography but couldn't capture the necessary detail. Luckily, Donais had seen the Contex HD5450 scanner at a trade show, and knew it was the answer. The Contex HD5450 wide format color scanner's 54-inch imaging area makes it ideal for full color scanning and copying of very large formats including posters, architectural sketches, maps, and drawings.

The benefits: the entire process took only 8 weeks

Donais turned to The Drafting Clinic, the Canadian Distributor for Contex products, for help. "The original drawings were shipped to us, and we did the scanning here in our office," recalls Peter Boudreau, Application Specialist for The Drafting Clinic. "For two days, two operators fed images into the HD5450 scanner, creating digital files, sizing, and color-correcting 12 artists' renderings. The critical thing with the scanner was that the resolution had to be high enough that iG3 could do a 12 times enlargement and capture the right amount of detail."

The digital files were processed, printed at 12 times enlargement, shipped to Orlando, and installed. iG3's Donais was surprised by the speed: "The entire process took only eight weeks. It was amazing."

The results: a successful restoration for a fraction of the original cost

The sets, which combine three layers of two-dimensional panels to create the impression of a real New York street, were installed in spring 2005. Fifteen years ago it cost nearly \$1 million to hand-paint and install the original murals. Today, they've recreated the artwork, digitized it, optimized it, and printed and installed the new set for less than half that cost. Best of all, next time the set needs a facelift, it will cost substantially less because the miniatures and scanning are complete, the art is on file, and the files are digitally archived and readily accessible.



The movie set was replaced in record time at less than half the cost of the original



"When we ran our samples on the Contex HD5450 scanner, the depth of information was excellent. In fact it was almost too good. We had to go into Adobe Photoshop and manipulate the image to reduce down some of the detail."

Greg Donais, iG3 Integrated Graphics Vice President and Founder

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