

People Who Make Glass Signs

Designing with glass

—over 5,000 square feet of it to be exact—can be quite a challenging feat. Nonetheless, one sign company rose to the challenge and recently completed a renovation project using all glass.

Jones Sign Company of Green Bay, Wisconsin, worked for a total of ten months on a remodeling project for the Short Hills Mall in Short Hills, New Jersey. Their endeavors involved creating signage and specialty architectural accents of one-and-a-half-inch laminated glass.

A major highlight of the project was the center court's thirty-foot-tall illuminated glass pylon. This monolith is illuminated from the bottom with the light dissipating as it goes up. Its graphics were sandblasted right into the glass.

The company also built a plate glass *étagère* [a piece of furniture with open shelves for ornaments] for Macy's departments store's court, also utilizing nearly 5,000 square feet of glass.

And the really adventurous part of this project? It turns out that during the entire remodeling time, the mall was still open for business. The company actually had to work at night when the mall was closed. "We could not start work until 9 p.m. each night and had to be out with all equipment gone and cleaned up by 8 a.m. the next morning," says John Mortensen, president of Jones Sign.

Mortensen's company has been in business since 1910 and currently employs nearly one hundred employees. Specializing in "one-stop" services, the business's corporate office and 72,000 square foot manufacturing facility is located in Green Bay, Wisconsin. (And yes, like all local Cheeseheads, they proudly support the Green Bay Packers!)

Upon first look, the glass pylons and signage the company fabricated and installed are really dazzling. In fact, it is amazing how the project was dreamed up.

"The look was actually created by the mall architect," says Mortensen. "We took his idea and developed it into a workable plan, which we ran by a certified engineer who changed many of the thicknesses and spacings before stamping his approval on it.

"The overall goal of the project was to modernize and enhance the interior courts of the mall, which were about thirty-years old. The mall is very, very upscale, and everything had to reflect that look."

As you might imagine, a project of this

magnitude involved many hands in the kettle. "We were actually the final trade to work," says Mortensen. "Our work had to be coordinated with electricians, tile workers, and the general contractor."

When asked to describe some highlights of the design and installation process, Mortensen says, "Using glass as a structural material was a real challenge. For the shelving *étagère*, we had to laminate two sheets of 3/4-inch glass together to achieve the shelf holders and to be structurally sound.

"The back of the unit was of one-and-a-half-inch plate glass. The sheets were six-by-twelve feet and presented a real challenge to handle. We used a special suction cup device rigged to a forklift and a lot of manpower—six people most nights."

The company soon learned that glass is extremely difficult to work with. "One-and-a-half-inch glass is strong in a lot of ways, but if the edge is rubbed, it

starts to vibrate and will break into a million pieces within a few minutes," says Mortensen. "All you can do at that point is stand there and get a glass pellet shower. Because it was safety glass, the pieces weren't sharp. We would definitely work with this material again, but our price would reflect what we learned."

So far, reaction to the mall project has been extremely positive. In fact, their success has prepared them for their current project, taking place this very moment at the 1.5 million-square-foot Coastal Grand Mall in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Jones Sign is doing all the interior and exterior signage, as well as the specialty metal fabrication for the mall. Judging from the results in New Jersey, this one should be a beauty as well. ☐

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