

Another Sign Challenge project

The Sign Police concept provides the inspiration

By Dan Sawatzky



David Butler's design, included in David's Butler Gold vector art collection [www.davidbutler.com], was the inspiration for my Sign Challenge piece. I thought David's design was brilliant and fun when I first saw it and still do!

More than two decades ago I was fortunate enough to be at a gathering of passionate sign makers from around the world. The group was called Letterheads. These brothers and sisters of the brush gathered to exchange ideas and techniques (and also have some great fun!).

Out in the parking lot one of the vehicles sported a decal on the door. It identified the car as SIGN POLICE. I learned that the car was owned by my good friend Cosmic Ray from Winnipeg. The logo had been designed by another good friend, David Butler, from Indiana.

The story was that they "ticketed" badly designed signs in their travels. It was all a spoof, of course, and done in good fun, but everyone knew how they truly felt about badly designed signs they saw.

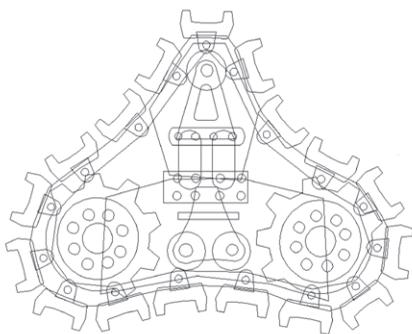
That logo by David inspired my 2016 Sign

Challenge piece. Poor design still abounds, and sometimes it is so prevalent that a simple ticket would not be nearly enough. The SIGN POLICE SWAT TEAM needs to be called in to take care of things.

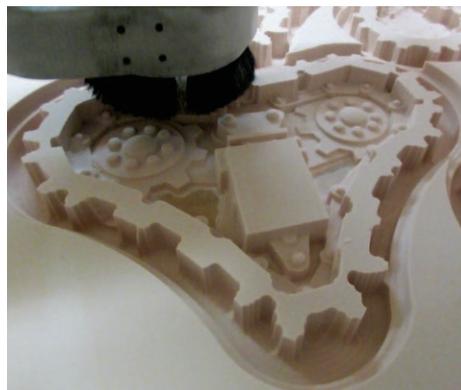
If you look closely at the pictures of the tank, you will see fragments of a sign board under the right track of the vehicle. The tank commander's satisfied smile sums things up nicely. **SC**



Dan Sawatzky's shop, Sawatzky's Imagination Corporation, is in Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada. Dan shares his experience in his Sign Magic Workshops on 3-D sign making, and his Sculpting Workshop. Visit www.imaginationcorporation.com or call 604-823-2216.



When the idea for the piece popped into my head I didn't need a concept drawing because the idea was perfectly clear. I was excited to just begin. I started with the track of the tank, designed in EnRoute routing software.



As fast as the designs were completed I sent them off to the MultiCam router to cut the tracks from 1.5-in.-thick, 30-lb. Precision Board. The pieces were roughed out with a 3/8-in. bit and then a final pass with a 1/8-in. ball nose bit.



They were done half at a time to be glued back to back. The inside pieces had rectangular blocks to allow them to be glued to the chassis. Once the pieces were assembled, they were cleaned up a little with a handheld die grinder.



Then came the fun part, for it was time to sculpt the base. My granddaughter Phoebe gave me a hand with the sculpting. A 5/8-in. steel rod was inserted through the center to make sure the piece survived the trip to the ISA show in Orlando.



I had a blast sculpting the detail into the piece with a very cartoonish and over-the-top style. A V-4 HEMI engine sits backwards in the chassis. Rivets, my favorite detail, also abound. Abracadabra Sculpting epoxy was the medium of choice.



I wanted the tank to appear to be well used and so a generous layer of grime was worked in. The tank commander seems to be very satisfied "enforcing the Sign Police law."



The rear of the tank abounds with even more detail than the front. The HEMI engine sports some wild plumbing and wiring. It begs a sound track! Our driver is obviously more intent on enforcing the law than maintaining his vehicle. But then again it is built like a tank!



The contest rules call for the display piece to be shipped in a box not more than two-ft. wide by two-ft. deep. With the display piece perched on top it could measure no more than six feet tall. To create as much space as possible inside the walls of the box needed to be thin. Plasma cut steel was just the solution. Our MultiCam CNC plasma cutter made that task easy and quick.

The metal box and stand were carefully painted bright yellow and then aged dramatically using a sander, hammer, and scratching tool. As I distressed the paint I thought about how the table would wear through hard use over many years.

The dimensional Sign Police badge was set behind a cutout in the box using spacers. The badge was painted using copper metallic as a base with gold lettering. I then added a dark glaze which was wiped away to enhance the lettering and decorative elements.

The finished box and sculptural piece work together to create a fun, story-telling display. I can hardly wait to see it lined up with all of the other entrants at the ISA show in Orlando!