PAINTING YOUR SCULPTURE

The fiberglass sculpture you are preparing to embellish with your vision is a collaboration of many souls and we at CFW want to express our gratitude and congratulations to you for giving life to what was once just an idea.

Fiberglass is a plastic, unsaturated polyester resin, catalyzed with MEK Peroxide and laminated with glass fiber inside mold cavities to give you the solid form in front of you. In some cases parts are cast as solid resin with specialty fillers for strength or parts can be made of epoxy or urethane resins and high density foams. Your particular sculpture is most likely a combination of some or all of these casting options.

Once a part is cast it is thoroughly scrubbed down to remove all release agents used to insure the casting does not bond to the mold surface. Surfaces are burnished with various grade sanding media and prepared for the primer coat of paint. **THE PIECE YOU HAVE HAS BEEN PREPARED AND PRIMERED WITH SHERWIN WILLIAMS OPEX PRIMER SURFACER P61 W1.**

At CFW we traditionally use a nitrocellulose lacquer primer for the primer coat on all our castings. Specifically: Sherwin Williams OPEX Primer Surfacer P61 W1. It is universal in that a great variety of top coatings can be applied to its surface. For the purposes of the artistic applications you are involved with, we recommend high quality EXTERIOR acrylic and acrylic latex paints for the application. There are a great number of brands available. As an art professional you may wish to use your favorite. As with all paint products it is vital to read all application instructions and do test areas for the system prior to full application. It is advisable to sand the primer coat lightly with a 400 grit paper before painting to help the bonding and will smooth and clean the surface prior to the next paint application.

What is ultimately critical beyond the application of the artwork is the EXTERIOR grade clear coat sealer that will protect the art from the elements. The clear coat must be compatible with the color coat application. Your paint supplier will have recommendations for the clear coat based on the system you choose to use for your color coat. Read and follow all application instructions and maintenance requirements for a long lasting presentation. Always do a test area to gauge results.
At CFW we like DTM acrylic industrial paints, artist’s acrylics such as Golden Acrylic Paints, and Liquitex Acrylic paints. High quality EXTERIOR acrylic latex paints will perform well also.

Exterior clear coat possibilities over the water based acrylics that we use here at CFW:

Old Masters Gloss or Satin exterior spar urethane
http://www.myoldmasters.com/resources/oldmasters_sparurethane_tech_data.pdf
PPG product Break-Through which is a water born acrylic finish
http://www.flints.co.uk/pdffiles/breakthrough_gloss_pds.pdf

Varathane brand spar urethane water based exterior clear satin or gloss is available at Menards and has been the best price value. It is a RustOleum product.

EXTERIOR grade enamels paint systems are also perfectly acceptable and durable. Follow manufacturer’s usage instructions.

Many Public Art exhibits will contract a local auto body painting business to clear coat all the finished artwork with an automotive grade clear coat. This will generally be a commercial urethane product. Consult your auto body paint professional for more information.

In the event you wish to add physical items like glass tile it is recommended that the area for the adhesive to bond to be sanded thoroughly down to the fiberglass gel coat. Solvent based adhesives may break down the primer coat and cause adhesion problems so the advice is to bond with adhesives directly to the fiberglass surface with the primer removed.

Items can be screwed into the fiberglass also but should be utilized with a glue or adhesive or sealant applied to the hole prior to setting the screw. Pilot holes need to be drilled slightly smaller than the screw to be used. Drill slowly and allow the drill bit to do the work or you risk shattering the fiberglass in the area of the hole. When driving the screw only use as much pressure as is needed to make the screw snug. Holes and screws should be sealed with epoxy or paintable putty/caulk as you go to insure no moisture can get through.

In the event that you have questions that are not answered here, please do not hesitate to contact CFW to find any answers you are looking for.

Chicago Fiberglass Works, Inc.
1300 S Kostner Ave.
Chicago, IL 60623
773 762 4000

Best option for questions is to e-mail Paul Albarran
These are recommendations of products and techniques that have worked for our professionals here at our facility. As we have no control over the application of any product or the conditions under which they are applied CFW can not guarantee any results or be held liable for failure of any products used to decorate a fiberglass sculpture. It is highly recommended to consult the instructions and technical support that accompany the purchase of any paint product.

02/11/2012 revised