

"Rotunda"

**Matte Painting from "Beauty and the Beast"
by Syd Dutton, Illusion Arts, Inc.**

Original in oils on glass, image 60" X 38" (approximate)

We created many matte painting shots for "Beauty and the Beast", often to extend the studio sets to a size and scope impossible to build in reality.

The Rotunda shot used a minimal set of an arched doorway (similar to the two others doorways above the blacked-in area) and a bit of dressed stage floor. We shot the live action with a VistaVision camera turned on its side, so the long side of the frame was vertical (VistaVision is a film format in which each frame is the size of a 35mm slide, twice the normal size of a full movie frame.)

We masked off the unwanted parts of the set (most of the frame) with black card set in front of the camera. Then we filmed Vincent's walk through the set. In the blacked-out areas, the film remained unexposed. Back at Illusion Arts, after a series of tests on a second roll of film, we double-exposed the finished painting into the unexposed area. (This is the classic "original negative" matte technique.)

We scratched away the painted torch flames to reveal the clear glass and made several back-light exposures through a moving grid to create the illusion of fire. The effect of flickering light on the walls came from additional exposures of a separate piece of overlay artwork, painted on a large celluloid sheet. Finally the film was processed.

We copied the completed VistaVision image to normal 35mm film on an optical printer. The printer lens moved from the top of the double-size frame to the bottom, creating the illusion a camera tilt.

Until Linda Hamilton became pregnant and called a halt to the practice, much of "Beauty and the Beast" was filmed in a smokey atmosphere, so the matte painting shots had to match. We filmed the live action in little or no smoke, then added diffusion on the final composite. The paintings had to be very graphic to "read" through the fog filters; they looked best when painted in an impressionistic, simplified style. This was good news for us, since the show's tight schedules would not have permitted a high degree of finish in any case!



2001



Bill Leigh 2001