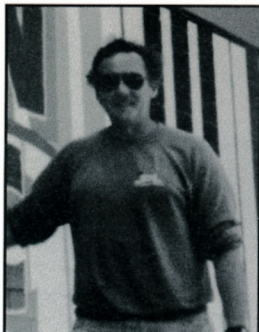


Interview



Corel contest winner and

computer-aided signmaker,

William Mogensen,

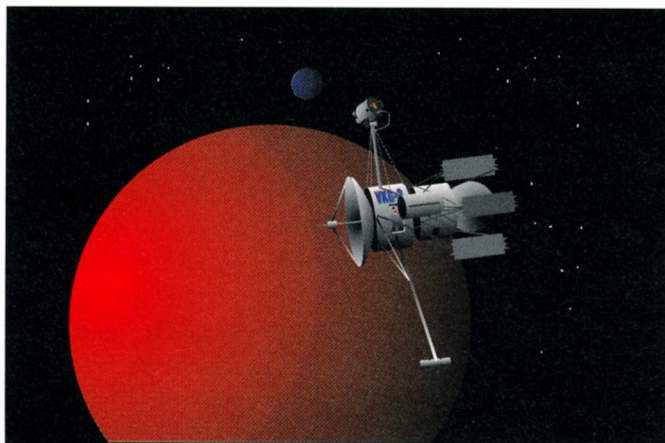
uses CorelDRAW in a BIG way.

When we sought this issue's featured artist, little did we realize we would find the perfect subject right in our own back yard. Merely minutes away from our editorial offices lives Mr. William Mogensen of Mogensen deSIGN.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Bill has spent most of his life in the Southern California area.

A winner in Corel's 1992 International Design Contest with his "Viking III" orbiting satellite, and a monthly winner in the current competition with his "Goose Creek" landmark project,

VIKING III



Bill shares his thoughts on Corel, the state of the art and the world of deSIGN.

Corelation: How did you get involved with art and signmaking?

WM: All through school I had been interested in art and seemed to have a bent for it. Everyone always said, "Oh, you're so talented." So, after a stint in the Air Force from 1968-71, I took some courses at Los Angeles Valley College and Glendale College. I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

Then in 1973 I went to work for Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, using my background from the Air Force to do the same type of work here in communications. I've pretty much been doing that here since.

I worked on a number of projects such as the Voyager project - the one that went to Jupiter and Saturn. I was a mission controller for that. Now I'm a mission controller for the Ulysses project which is a joint NASA/ESA (European Space Agency) project. It sends a little space probe out in a polar orbit around the sun to test for all kinds of crazy scientific things I don't really know anything about. I'm more interested in how the space craft operates - the condition of the visible spacecraft.

Corelation: With all those responsibilities how do you have time for operating a sign business?

WM: Because of the nature of the job here at JPL, which is nights and weekends, I have a lot of free time during the day to operate my signmaking business. They mesh together rather well. Also in my job here I'm involved in presentations and creating training materials, reports and so

forth, so I also use CorelDRAW for that.

Corelation: When did you start doing signs for paying customers?

WM: The sign business got started in 1975. At that time I was a new employee here and there were the yearly cutbacks. I thought that I might get laid off, so I started looking around for some way to supplement my income in case that happened. I decided that I'd try to use my talent in art in some way.

Suddenly, I realized that there are people that actually make signs and commercial art on the sides of buildings and trucks and things. A lot of people just take it for granted, and I did, too. Everywhere you go you see signs. I finally realized that there must be a whole industry involved in the creation of these things. I started looking into it and found out that it was a very lucrative industry and I decided to go for it.

I took a couple of courses at West Valley Occupational Center, out by Pierce College. It's almost like a continuing seminar roundtable because it's taught by industry professionals who are active in the industry and come in to teach night classes. When you go out there you're almost as an apprentice to a journeyman. You find out first hand what the latest techniques are.

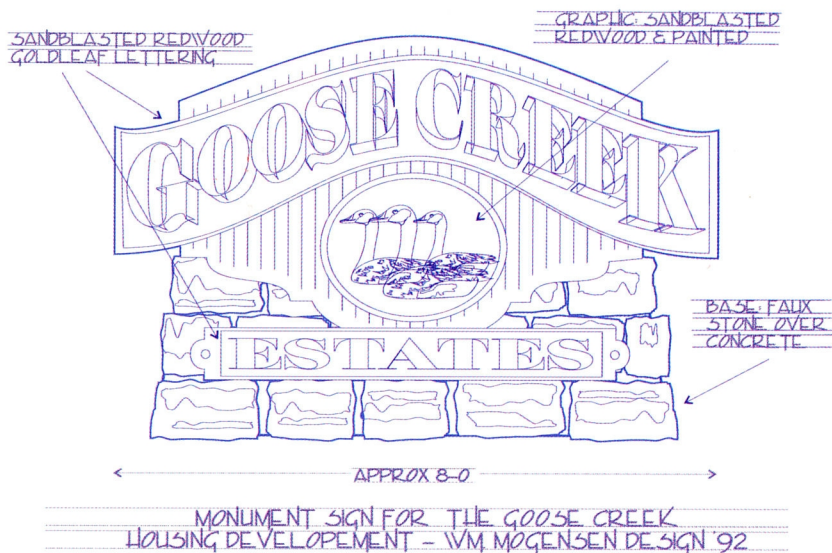
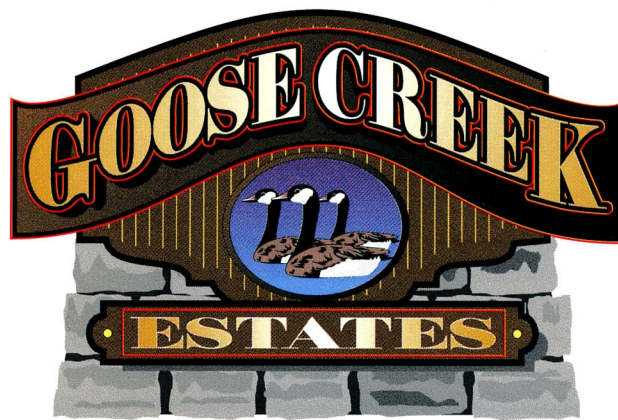
So from '75, '76, '77, I went to West Valley and learned the proper way to use a lettering brush and all this, and became a traditional-type sign person making commercial signs. I started distributing my business cards and flyers—that had always been an interest of mine, anyway (creating flyers and advertising art). I'd done it the traditional

way with Letraset (rub-off lettering sheets), pens and markers and so forth. So naturally, when CorelDRAW came along around 1989, that was something I hadn't even... it was like a total surprise when I found out about this program that would run on a PC. I actually couldn't believe that it could do all these things right there on your desk.

Corelation: Were you already computer literate when you learned about CorelDRAW?

WM: I bought a PC around '85 or so and had used it for word processing and accounting and I had tried a few of the early PC illustration programs; Paintbrush and so forth, and a couple of pretty crude programs — Fantasy and Fancy Font. They weren't really page layout programs. I was using them to set a line of type that I'd output on a dot matrix printer. Then I'd take it to the copier machine and copy it onto transparency. I'd project the layout at the size I needed it, onto the surface to be painted—the side of a van, a paper pattern or a 4 x 8 sheet of plywood. I used the reduction / enlargement capabilities of the copier machine to get the type. Of course the output was pretty rough and would give me nothing more than the basics of the letter forms to paint from.

In contrast to these crude programs, when I saw how easy it was to take CorelDRAW, with its vector fonts and all this crazy stuff, and be able to scale it to any size you want and put it on the screen and add all kinds of graphic elements — also to see it in color and be able to experiment with all kinds of different colors — well, I was just blown away!



So I threw away the old PC - well, actually I still have it, but I had to run out and buy a platform that would work with Windows and CorelDRAW.

Corelation: Which version of CorelDRAW did you start out with?

WM: I think it was 1.1.

Corelation: So you've been there from the beginning.

WM: Pretty much

Corelation: How did CorelDRAW get to be so popular with sign painters?

WM: For the same reason it's so popular with everyone else. It's very versatile and it's very easy to use. It can be whatever you want it to be. It can be real simple for really fast sketches. Or it can get

very, very complicated and intense like Bill Frymire's illustration last year of that iguana. It covered so much ground that it's hard to believe. I've been using it for four years and I still can't believe the kind of stuff that you can do with it.

Corelation: Tell us about your first winning entry, "Viking III."

WM: That particular drawing was more of a study to see how I could shade things using Corel.

Corelation: On the printout of your current contender, the Goose Creek project, there's an architectural blueprint under the rendering. Was that done in CorelDRAW as well? We're also curious about the lettering. Did you create that font?

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



Proposed wall sign for 3501 Ventura Bl., Universal City, Ca.



WM: That's one of the fonts included on the Corel CD-ROM (Envision). The entire page was done in Corel.

Corelation: What are some of the challenges in creating large-scale work on a desktop system?

WM: I'm going to write about that in the article for the ACAD Conference magazine. The main challenge is not to go overboard and to know when it's done!

One of the definitions of an artist is knowing when you're done. It's way too easy in CorelDRAW—relating this to the sign business

and creating actual full-size signs that are going to be on the side of a building — it's real easy to create something that's almost impossible to create with paint or vinyl. Or if you can do it, your customer's not going to pay for it because it wouldn't be economically feasible. So you have to keep in mind the end result and the production nightmare you might be causing. You have to know your limitations on what you can do as a final output.

There are things like the proper typefaces to use. If you're going to put something on the side of a building you would probably use a display typeface rather than a body text typeface. You'd probably want to embolden it a little bit, too, to make it stand out. If you're going to do letters that are 12 feet tall, it wouldn't do to have a weak typeface. Primarily you have to be concerned with where your final output is going to end up. You have to create something that you can actually do and you have to keep in mind who's going to see it and at what distance. You want to stick to pretty basic colors for the most part - simple shapes and not much involved detail.

Another good thing about the program is that while you should keep in mind the things I just talked about, you can also embellish those ideas for smaller-scale output. You can use the same logo that you designed for the sign for your customer's business cards, letterhead, T-shirt designs, coffee mugs, whatever they want. Once you've got this design in your computer, you can use it for anything.

Corelation: You mentioned your apprenticeship at the West Valley Occupational Center, can you of-

fer any other pointers for a Corel user wishing to get started in the sign industry?

WM: That's very important. I'm going to stress that in the ACAD Conference article, too, that Corel is a tool and you have to know how to use the tool. It's fine for anyone that's interested in drawing and illustration to get in there and play with it. But to use the tool to its best effect you need to have a good basis in graphic design and illustration. The outcome is only going to be as good as the person operating the program.

It's important to get an education if you want to go into any area where you're going to use the output in a professional way. You need to know what you're doing. Corel is going to help you. It's going to make perfect letters and perfect shapes for you, but you have to know how to put the letters and shapes together.

Corelation: Other than CorelDRAW and a standard computer system, what sort of additional software and hardware is needed for your line of work?

WM: Well, in order to output at a large scale, it really has to be done on a plotter. Originally these were made for drafting to make large blueprints. Now, when a sign person talks about a plotter, they mean a vinyl cutting plotter which is similar to the drafting plotter. You use it as a drafting plotter as well, when you put in a pen to plot on paper to make the output of the sign created in CorelDRAW.

When you need letters to be put on the side of a building and they need to be six feet tall, how are you going to do that in full size? You need something that

will take the file that you created in CorelDRAW and convert it so that the plotter can scale it to the right size and then plot it at true size. There's a piece of software that I use that's made by Thermazone called CADlink. There's also SignLab, ProCut, WinPlot — there's about a half a dozen programs out now that will act as an interface between CorelDRAW and the plotters.

They convert the Corel EPS files to the proper format to drive the plotters. And they also allow you to take the image that's created in CorelDRAW and scale it up to whatever size you need. I think CADlink will allow up to 20,000% which could be 60 to 100-foot tall letters.

The program also allows you to tile output. I've done letters six-feet tall on my plotter. My plotter will only take material that's 36 inches wide. So the CADlink lets you scale it up, tile the output and plot out the full-sized letters. You have to take the long ribbons of paper and tape them together.

We stock a full line of self-adhesive vinyls. My plotter will cut the letters out. It saves me a lot of time and money to be able to do this myself. There are service bureaus that will take your files and cut the vinyl for you. I don't know of any that use Corel files. I know there are some out there, but I don't use them.

Corelation: What plotter do you use?

WM: I use an Ioline SignPro 3700. There are a number of them out there: Roland, GraphTec, Vytex, Houston Instruments.

Corelation: How did the "Goose Creek Estates" project come about?

WM: That was just another study. I was working on some designs for another project. That's supposed to be a sandblasted redwood sign for a housing project. It's just a concept drawing. The original was not used for what it was intended, but I liked it, so I embellished it and entered it in the contest.

Corelation: The keyboard treatment of the Goodman Music sign was certainly novel, how did that come about?

WM: That was at the suggestion of the owner. He wanted to do something unique to that building so that it would stand out among all the other buildings on Cahuenga Boulevard.

Corelation: What would you like to see in future hardware and software products that would make your job easier?

WM: I'd like to be able to do directly from CorelDRAW what I have to use another piece of software for. I'd like to be able to have an interface to my plotter and be able to scale the output up and down — well, up! Faster computers, better graphics cards, lower prices, the normal things.

Corelation: You'll be leading the Large Output Roundtable discussion at the June ACAD Corel-DRAW Conference in Glendale, California. What issues do you hope to raise with the industry panel?

WM: In addition to moderating the panel of industry reps, I plan to give a general talk about computer aided signmaking — which has its own acronym in the industry, CAS — and how Corel fits into the CAS picture. We'll then talk a little bit about design considerations when designing for

large output — things to watch out for, things to avoid. I'll also be giving the very briefest general overview of how Corel interfaces to large output devices. I will probably do a couple of demos with some photographs of completed works and use screen shots to take a job from start to finish. There'll be actual Corel files and some screen shots of intermediate stages. I'll also bring some samples of what the computer-cut vinyl looks like in its various stages of use — raw and uncut to the finished product ready to apply.

Corelation: Well, it looks like you've got plenty of work ahead to prepare for the ACAD Conference. Thanks for your thoughts and insights for our readers.

I guess this would be a good time to SIGN off...



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