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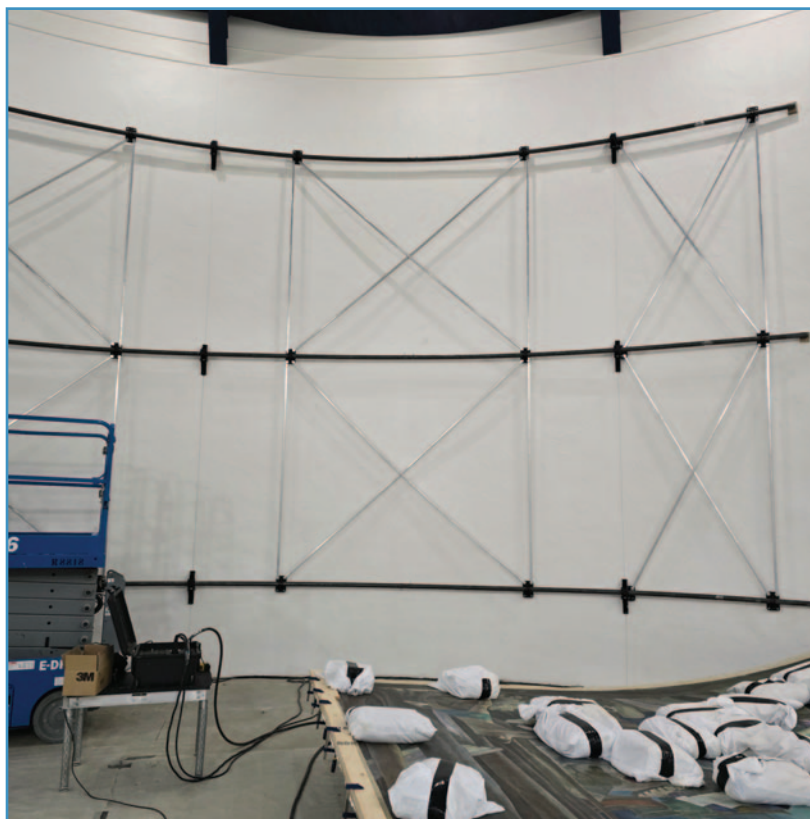
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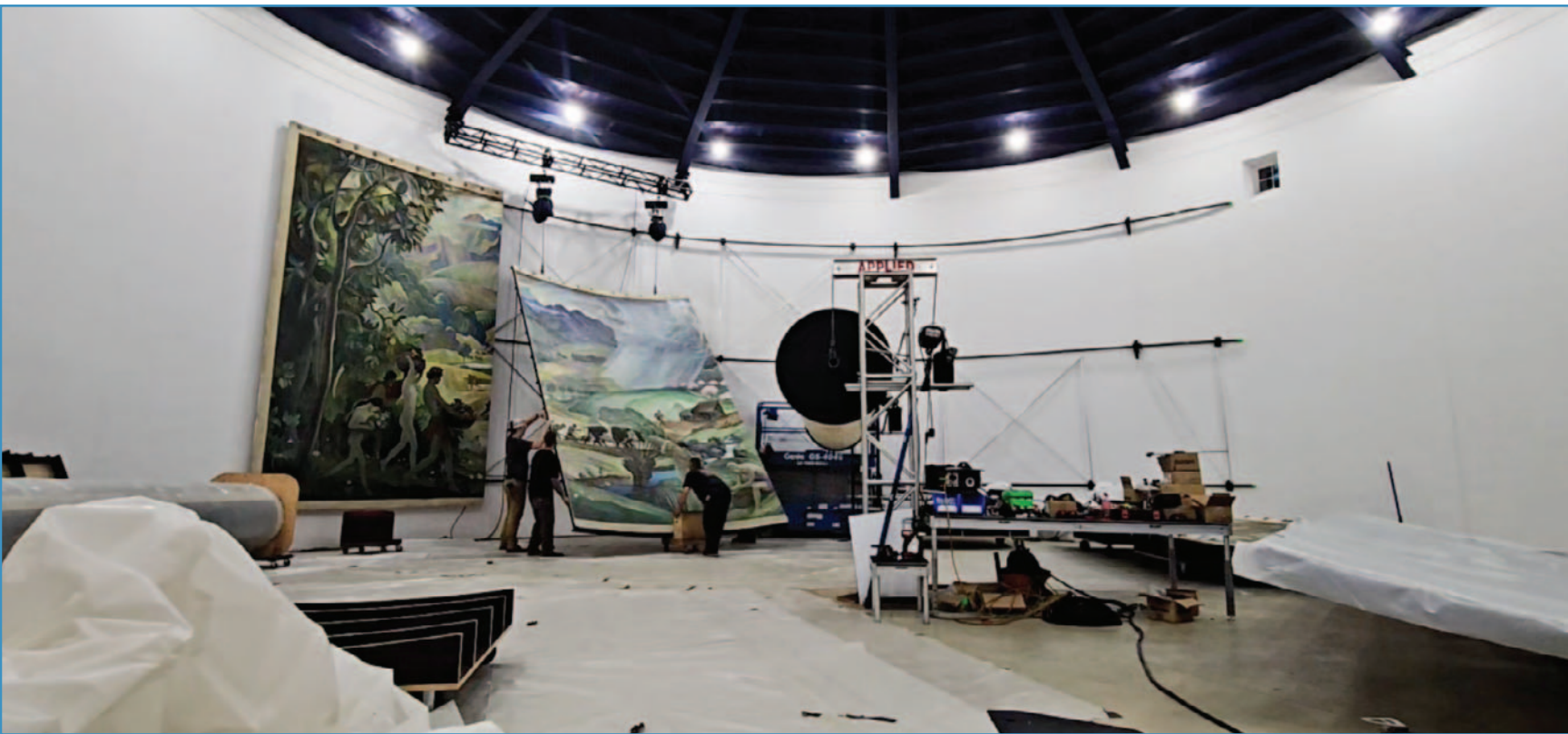
Reid Brakeley and Steve Szczerba carrying a mural canvas panel.

Fabricating a structure and devising a lighting system for N.C. Wyeth's largest mural

Over the past 24 years, New Castle, Delaware-based Staging Dimensions has quietly played a role in many unusual and distinctive projects—providing custom-fabricated structures for standout projects including the Hot Wheels Double Loop Dare, scenic staging for Papal visits to Philadelphia and Washington, DC, a dual-hydraulic mechatronic logo structure for the Philadelphia Wings Lacrosse Team and the custom 100'-tall take-off and landing ramps for the Hot Wheels Fearless at the 500 world record jump. One of the com-



The custom-fabricated pipe grid system installed at Point Lookout Farm. Mural panels were aired out with sandbags to adhere to the surface panel.



The Staging Dimensions installation team uses a chain motor system to hang a glued mural panel.

pany's most unusual challenges involved providing crucial support for an ambitious work by a beloved American artist.

In 1932, N.C. Wyeth was commissioned to paint *Apotheosis of the Family* for the Delaware-based Wilmington Savings Fund Society. At 60' long and 19' high, the mural is the largest artwork ever created by him. Nearly a century later and following several relocations, it has a new permanent home at Jamie Wyeth's Point Lookout Farm outside Wilmington. The farm is an artist's sanctuary where Wyeth, who is N.C.'s grandson, and his wife once lived and worked. Now a home for retired racehorses, it also features a specially designed round barn that houses *Apotheosis of the Family*.

According to the *New York Times*, "After periodic restorations, most recently in 1998, the painting was pried off the wall and damagingly rolled up ten years later when the



A mural panel with fabricated pipe grid structure.



Above and opposite: Multiple lighting color temperatures accommodate viewing of the mural during different times of the day and night.

bank was sold for conversion into apartments.

"The mural went to the Delaware Historical Society, which couldn't place it. It was then bequeathed to the Wyeth Foundation for conservation, with Jamie, now 79, committing about \$1 million for its reinstallation in a new round barn on his 250-acre Brandywine farm."

Displaying and preserving the historic artwork inside the barn required innovative solutions. Jamie Wyeth reached out to Scott Humphrey, CEO of Light Action, Staging Dimensions, The Pine Box Studios, and Applied Electronics, in search of innovative lighting solutions for the mural. But when Humphrey assessed the overall project, he recognized a much larger challenge: mounting a support structure to showcase the historic mural.

Staging Dimensions specializes in staging systems and complex, custom fabrication projects. For this

installation, the company had to engineer an entirely new mounting frame system—one that would not only safely frame the mural but also adapt to the barn's circular configuration.

"The uniqueness of the project is what made it so exciting to design," says Steve Szczerba, design engineer and product developer at Staging Dimensions. "Our team took great care in making sure every detail was taken into consideration to ensure the final product was exactly what the mural required. Obviously, the artwork itself is what is on display for everyone to see, but the passion on our part is what will stay behind it forever."

After engineering and fabrication were completed, a five-person team from Staging Dimensions traveled to Point Lookout Farm for the installation, working closely with mural conservators Kristin deGhetaldi and Brian Baade. The husband-and-wife

team are veterans of prestigious restoration projects at institutions such as the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Justin Phillips, shop manager at Staging Dimensions for 17 years, was on-site to help lead the installation process. Despite his extensive experience in complex design and installation, the responsibility of handling such a priceless piece of art wasn't taken lightly. "I dreaded working on this painting," Phillips admits. "I was nervous."

That nervousness turned into meticulous craftsmanship as Phillips and the team of Szczerba, Reid Brakeley, Dan Phillips, and Christian Monohan installed the curved pipe grid system on the barn walls, from which the rib frame would hang. As the Staging Dimensions team installed the pipe grid, deGhetaldi, Baade, and their crew meticulously glued the mural panels to the acrylic



surface of each of the five curved frames, ranging in size from 9' long by 18' 6-1/2" high to 14' 9-3/4" long by 18' 6-1/2" high. After a 24-hour cure time, the team hung the first of five panels using a chain motor system to raise the frame and hold it in place while it was mounted on the pipe grid system. This process was repeated over seven days, and the final section was hung on Tuesday, July 30.

Once the fabrication was completed, Light Action was tasked with illuminating the mural. After a demonstration of multiple fixture options at The Pine Box, Jamie Wyeth selected the Elation KL Profile FC compact zooming ellipsoidal. A total of eight fixtures with integrated shutters are used to provide a soft focus for a seamless blend. Each was set to 50° within four zones, with two fixtures overlaid on each zone for the widest and most even

beam spread. Color temperatures include 6,500K, 5,000K, 3,200K, 2,400K, and a special UV effect. The multiple color temperatures were used to accommodate viewing of the mural during different times of the day and night.

After seven days of intricate installation, the mural was privately unveiled to Brandywine Museum donors on July 30. Jamie Wyeth, who credits his grandfather as his greatest early artistic influence, has now ensured that *Apotheosis of the Family* is permanently preserved for future generations. The public will have the opportunity to view the mural in person during special guided tours offered by the Brandywine Museum of Art beginning in late 2025. 🌐



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