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Speeds and Feeds

A 3D laser scanner that is accurate to 1/100th of an inch and a 3 axis CNC mill capable of sculpting an 8 inch thick 4'x 8' block of material are not the typical tools you find in an art studio. But then this is no ordinary art studio. It's Blue Genie Art Industries of Austin Texas and they are the fabricators of the model that was used to cast this 12 foot high bronze replica of the coveted Aggie ring that now adorns the entry of the newly refurbished Alumni Center at Texas A&M University in College Station Texas.

Blue Genie/ Aggie Ring







Building the model

Each element of the highly symbolic ring was reproduced in great detail by the artisans of Blue Genie. Using a digital model supplied by ring maker Balfour, they were able to "scale up" the rendering to the massive dimensions of the project, maintaining all of the fine detail of an actual ring. With the help of VisualMILL Software, "toolpaths" were created for their milling machine to follow. Using 8lb Precision Board Plus (PBLT-8), sections of the ring were milled with every intricate detail of this Aggie icon. The sections were then assembled and bonded to a custom eight foot diameter steel-fabricated armature to create the model.







The castina

According to Kevin Collins, one of Blue Genie's Principles, "This was a challenging project for Blue Genie, requiring the right combination of artistry, technology and materials. Using PBLT-8 Precision Board Plus was an integral and sound decision in holding the details of the class ring, and a great choice for CNC milling, sanding and finishing to a mold ready surface for the bronze foundry process."

The project was then turned over to Deep in the Art Foundry of Bastrop, Texas to take the molds and perform the bronze casting and fabrication of the 6500lb replica of Aggie pride. According to Clint Howard, Deep in the Art's President, "compared to other big projects we've done, this is technically the most challenging piece when it comes to surface finish". Although the ring was cast in sections and then welded together, all the effort put into grinding and polishing makes it appear that the giant ring was cast as one solid piece. After all, the larger than life example had to live up to the symbols of integrity, achievement, power and valor, which are just a few of the many traits the ring has come to represent to Aggie alumni.

As an inspirational gesture, a time capsule was fabricated into the bezel of the ring, which will be opened by alumni in 50 years. For more on the Haynes Ring project and the Aggie tradition, see the video A Ring for All Aggies.





On display

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