



Meisel Photochrome
Corporation
Business Offices
9171 King Arthur
P.O. Box 6067
Dallas, Texas 75281
(214) 637-0170

March 28, 1977

Dr. Eliot Porter
Rt. 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Dr. Porter:

The Professional Photographic Society of America asked me to write an article on the use of the color photograph as a wall decor. Naturally, they wanted the article to be slanted toward the photographer, and the relationship of the color lab with the designer and architect. A draft of the text for my article, "Versatility Sells the Photomural", is enclosed for your review.

Our opportunity to work with you in the production of photomurals for Independent Life was an important event in the development of our Photographic Design Division. We hope you will permit us to reference this project in the article that is scheduled to appear in the July issue of Professional Photographer Magazine. If you have any objection to the content of the article or if there are any inaccuracies please let me know since there is ample time to make revisions.

Please accept my thanks in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dick Davies
Vice President Marketing

DD/dp

Enclosures

VERSATILITY SELLS THE PHOTOMURAL

by Dick Davies
Vice President Marketing
MEISEL PHOTOCHROME CORPORATION

The first big sale of color photographs to the decorator market came as quite a boost to our little spinter group. The Special Projects Department of Meisel had been in operation only a few weeks, and we had just produced a four-color brochure offering a selection of "Great Scapes." The brochure, illustrating selections from nine different photographers, was mailed to 3,000 leading interior designers.

The phone started to ring almost immediately!

A designer in Chicago needed 17 murals for a major corporation in Stanford, Connecticut. He flew to Dallas two weeks later and spent \$10,000 for color prints.

A hospital in Waco, Texas bought a dozen copies of every Great Scape print in the brochure, plus several floral pictures that were not in the brochure - 315 prints in all.

Another hospital administrator in South Carolina ordered two large Great Scapes. A week later he called back and ordered all the rest in 30 X 40 size.

A gambling casino in Reno, Nevada ordered a 6-foot by 19-foot mural - a monochrome of a 200-year-old map of the world.

LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE

All these were good jobs, and as the weeks passed we learned a lot about direct wall application of color prints, custom framing, protective sprays and film coverings. But most important, we learned how to work with a totally new category of clients - the interior designer and architect.

One morning a secretary passed along a note that a designer in Atlanta had called to inquire about our photomurals. The note said Linda Forrester of Alan Ferry Design Group was doing 12 floors of a 40-story building in Florida! As luck would have it, I had planned to be in Atlanta the next week. With prior approval from Dr. Eliot Porter, I showed Linda the beautiful Porter photography reproduced in his books: "Appalachian Wilderness," "Down the Colorado," "In Wildness," and others. Her reaction was predictable. "I could do the entire 12 floors of the building from these books," Linda observed. I told her to start designing.

A week later I went to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Dr. Porter's beautiful home and photographic workshop in the shadow of the Sangre de Cristo mountain

range. He and I selected 150 originals - all 4X5 Ektachrome and Agfachrome, and I headed back to Atlanta.

It was quite an experience to watch a professional designer decorate offices, elevator lobbies, open spaces, hallways, etc., using our color selections to blend with the rest of her "palette." Methodically, Linda would select Porter oranges and blues that would "work with" her blue vinyl wall coverings. Usually she would choose pairs - two color prints that harmonized in color and content. Carefully, she sized the prints to fit the space in which they would hang. As I watched in awe, Linda decorated the walls of 12 floors of the new Independent Life Insurance Building of Jacksonville, Florida - without leaving her office in Atlanta!

We produced 160 color prints for this installation the smallest being 40 X 60 inches. The job totaled almost \$40,000. Dr. Porter's royalty for one-time use of his originals was several thousand dollars.

Many big photomural jobs followed, and we soon recognized the need for qualified professionals within Meisel that could "talk the language" of the design market. We brought into Special Projects (later renamed Photographic Design Division) two professionally trained designers - one a talented

manager, the other perfectly suited to our new "photographic design consultant" position. Soon the staff grew to six. The jobs got even bigger.

INTERIORS TO MATCH OUR PHOTOMURALS

Pennzoil in Houston, working with Margo Grant of Gensler and Associates, ordered 16 murals - each nine feet high and 20 feet wide. The significance of this important installation was that the designers, architect and owner all agreed that the art program (the photographic murals and smaller wall prints) would be a part of the general contractor's specifications. Rather than the art program being funded out of "left-over" monies, the color enlargements for Pennzoil national headquarters actually became a part of the design of the building. A huge color mural was installed on ^{each of} 16 floors ⁱⁿ of the new Pennzoil building to greet visitors as they step out of the elevator. Carpets, wall coverings, everything was coordinated to match the color mural. Orange wing walls accent a golden sunset over the Gulf of Mexico with an offshore oil rig silhouetted in black. Deep blue carpet on another floor blends perfectly with an underwater scene.

In the Alan Ferry job, the designer had selected color murals to match an interior. Now an interior was being selected to match the photo-mural!

Most of the Pennzoil murals were scenes carefully selected by the designer and owner to illustrate the natural resources of Pennzoil. Prominent Houston photographer, C. Bryan Jones, was commissioned by Pennzoil to do the photography (and most of the originals were done on 8 X 10 Ektachrome).

PHOTO-ART TO TELL A STORY

Another job that involved creative talent on the part of the photographer, was a photographic art program for the First National Bank of Harlingen, Texas. Even before the foundation of the new bank was poured, the decision had been made to use photomurals and prints as the art program. The bank selected Dallas photographer Bank Langmore to photographically record the "four seasons of the Valley". Langmore took a full year, and made half a dozen trips to the deep South Texas area, to photograph the four agricultural seasons, and to capture the changing mood of the Padre Island seacoast. From 5,000 slides the bank's committee selected 30 images to tell the story of the Valley. Meisel made a half-dozen big murals 6 X 9 feet in size, and the rest were 27 X 40 and 40 X 60 inches. Photographer Langmore was treated like a celebrity at the grand opening, and his photo art was an instant hit with the thousands who visited the new bank.

WHY THE BIG DEMAND FOR PHOTOMURALS?

Many people on the fringes of the design field believe that the photograph is enjoying great popularity with the professional designer because it is still a relatively new concept. When the newness wears off, its demand will drop, they say.

Our experience tells us differently. The color photograph has two important factors working in its favor: versatility and acceptability.

The practicing professional designer is absolutely enchanted with this product that has virtually no physical limitations. The color print can be as large as the imagination (we're working on a mural sixty feet long for an oil company). It can be mounted on canvas, ~~masonite, plywood~~^{hardboard}, or directly to a wall like fine wallpaper. The wall can be convex, concave or round, we don't care. (A church in Minnesota recently ordered eight huge portraits on 57-inch circles of plywood). We tell the designer not to worry if his original transparency does not match the carpet, or walls or drapes. We will simply shift the color in printing to perfectly match his color sample.

But the real test of versatility is personal taste. Can the product be appealing to people in all parts of the country, all economic levels? From board room to basement? We say it can, because with the custom photomurals,

there is an almost endless choice of subject matter available. We discovered just how vast this source is when we conducted a "Scenic America" photo contest a few months ago. We had thousands of entries - from every state - competing for the first prize, a \$2,000 Minolta camera outfit. Many of the entries went into our Masters Library from which designers can select scenic photos to fit almost any application. (I should point out here that Meisel does not employ photographers, nor do we select photographers for photo assignments. Every photomural that we sell results in a direct royalty payment or some form of compensation to a professional photographer).

Earlier we said the photographic enlargement has two things going for it ... its versatility and its acceptability. By acceptability we mean there is very little about a professional quality color enlargement of scenic beauty to dislike. Designers have found that abstracts, such as the super graphics often stir strong unfavorable emotions. Not so with the color print. It has universal acceptance. Some viewers may be indifferent toward a photomural, but you can't "hate" a Colorado snow scene or an Arizona sunset.

Patients at Scott and White Hospital were delighted with the colorful additions of "Great Scapes" photographs to their rooms. Employees who filled 12 floors of the new Independent Life Building became "almost possessive" about

their nearby Eliot Porter enlargement. A bank in Oklahoma that hung both photomurals, and a water-color collection of original art, found the photographs to be much more popular with visitors. There is one final statistic to prove the acceptability of the color photograph: Although we offer an unconditional guarantee on all photomurals and prints, we have not had a single return in two and a half years. No question about it, the photographic image has taken its place as an important element in interior design.

And the buyer loves it!