



***Mirror Mirror* Mural: The Fairest of Them All**

Sometimes, fairy tales do come to life. All it takes is a little magic—and the artistry of passionate creatives from all four corners of the globe. Sprinkle in roughly 100,000 tiles, a potpourri of blues and greens, 340 emails, and dozens of phone calls, and you have the alchemic makings for one of the most spectacular mosaic murals ever seen on film.

When Relativity Media's *Mirror Mirror* began production in 2011, Supervising Art Director Isabelle Guay was tasked with finding a company capable of producing a 15' 8-½" wide and 19' 9" high mural for the Great Hall—in record time. Requiring impeccable precision, this grand backdrop for Evil Queen Julia Roberts's throne would blend seamlessly into a curved wall with a dome overhead. "It had to match perfectly; otherwise, it wouldn't have worked," says Guay.

With her architectural background, Guay knew they would need a team whose skills bridged art and science, form and function. They needed artists who could realize Director Tarsem Singh's vision for an art nouveau meets art deco style while simultaneously being able to resolve the complex engineering problems posed by the space itself.

After several failed attempts to pinpoint a vendor that could meet the project's logistical,

budgetary, and time constraints, the art production team turned to Hakatai Enterprises. “Even the company in Mexico wasn’t going to be fast enough,” says Guay. “We worked very hard with a company in Montreal to try and make this work, but it was absolutely impossible.”

Budget was also a concern. “Hakatai came back with a possibility of doing it in time—and they came up with a very good price,” Guay says. “There was no way we could’ve made it happen here and with that budget.”

Based in Ashland, Oregon, Hakatai Enterprises has been importing and distributing glass tiles since its founding in 1997. Founder/President Marshall Malden’s relationship with Hakatai’s Chinese partner stretches back to 1987.

“Our team in China is a talented group of designers and mosaic artists with a well-established reputation for supplying world-class custom murals and surface coverings,” says Malden. Hakatai staff make regular trips to China, ensuring the exceptional quality of the working conditions and fastidious environmental standards of the plant.

At first, Guay was nervous about the distance. Communication would be crucial since she could not visit the designers in person. “We’re used to walking the sets and the mill where the artists are working,” she says. “It was a little bit scary in the beginning, but then we thought, ‘We should try it!’”

Hakatai made the cross-cultural collaboration seamless. “We were able to communicate with them beautifully,” says Guay. The production team, Hakatai, and the mosaicists were in constant contact as they finalized the design and selected the perfect combination of colors and tiles to implement their vision.

Guay recalls, “They sent us some mosaic samples to do the coloration of the mural. They started by photographing the glass pieces, and we’d say, ‘This looks good, this has too much iridescence, or this has too much sparkle.’ So we started to play a little bit back and forth.”

Guided by the line drawings of artist Yellena James and the images gathered by Art Researcher Zoe Byrne, Guay and Art Director Jean Pierre Paquet worked closely with their illustrators and set designer to perfect the mural’s look. Supervising Art Department Coordinator Helene Lamarre also weighed in as the Montreal team finalized the design in collaboration with Hakatai’s Ashland staff and the mosaicists in China.

Once the design was approved, the Montreal artists began painting lines on the set where the tiles would go while the 20 China designers assembled the mosaic. Guay’s crew selected two sections from the mural, and the Hakatai team created samples for the crew to review in advance.

Because of the dome above the throne, the production process was particularly challenging. Hakatai Project Coordinator Adam Shigemoto explains, “They had to divide the top piece into very small splits/triangles. The architect worked closely with the factory to make sure everything was going to work.”

Prior to shipping, the China artists emailed images of the mosaic for approval. The glass tiles “were perfectly labeled and easy to put up,” Guay says. After muralist Paul Gervais spent two days assembling the mosaic on the set, the Montreal team felt a thrill as the mural was revealed. She remembers, “It was a very beautiful moment. It was the cherry on top of the sundae, the masterpiece at the end.”

Guay is still struck by the magnificent results. “It was absolutely perfect. It was very, very beautiful,” she says. “We were very happy with it.”

“If the customer’s happy, I’m happy,” says Malden. “Just satisfying customers and having them tell us, ‘Gosh we really love this’ makes all of us happy.”

Taking only six weeks from production to delivery, the *Mirror Mirror* mural is just one example of the outstanding quality, speed, economy, and attention customers can expect from Hakatai. “We are with our customer from step one to completion,” says Hakatai Operations Manager Christina White. “Whatever you want, we’ll make it happen.”

While the *Mirror Mirror* mosaic represents the complex end of the spectrum, Hakatai has also created modest mosaics for people’s kitchens, bathrooms, and entryways. From the 1½' x 3' shower tile of a belted kingfisher to the 13' 7" x 53' 9" Chicano Legacy 40 Años mural installed at UCSD last year, Hakatai can handle projects of any scope or size. The staff are extremely creative about working within people’s budgets, and the mosaicists can produce a work of art from a simple photograph. “Customers can put it on the proverbial sketch on the napkin,” says Malden, “or they can give us a final CAD drawing.”

Unlike many competitors, Hakatai stocks a huge array of tiles in-house, so US customers enjoy fast turnarounds and can select from a rich variety of tiles and colors. Hakatai’s pieces decorate hotels, restaurants, retail stores, casinos, spas, and homes nationwide, and their client list includes big hitters such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Lulu Lemon Athletica, White Castle, Panda Restaurant Group, Tween Brands, and Spoon Me Frozen Yogurt. Their work has been featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* and various trade publications as well as on DIY Network, HGTV, and TBS.

“It was really, really nice working with them,” says Guay. “I would do it again and refer them many times.”

Because of the nature of filming, sumptuous sets are often demolished as soon as filming

is completed, but the *Mirror Mirror* crew couldn't bear the thought of destroying the exquisite mural. They stored it in a warehouse and tried to find a home for it. Eventually, a winter snowstorm forced their hand. "I didn't go, I didn't want to see it," Guay recalls. "I kept a few little samples in my house, so I have a piece of it."

Yet there's something about the built-in ephemerality of a set that makes you appreciate its beauty all the more deeply, like a Christo installation or a shooting star. The physical object crumbles into dust, but the soul remains indelibly etched into the film. Guay reflects bittersweetly, "It's not going to last forever, so you like it even more."

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