



TAA Quickly Building a Global Reputation

■ Theming and Animatronics Industries (TAA) of Madrid, Spain (www.taaindustries.com), is certainly building a long resume in a short amount of time. Since the founding of TAA in 2005 by Udo Weisenburger, currently the company's president, the firm has distinguished itself and is now being retained by some of the attractions industry's most respected companies.

Case in point: TAA was brought in for all of the theming (except for in-tank work) on Merlin Entertainments' new Sea Life aquarium, which opened in Phoenix, Arizona, earlier this year. It was TAA's eighth project for Merlin in just four years, and the Spanish company was the only non-U.S.-based firm involved.

"I think we were chosen based on Merlin's good experiences with us and our work at the Sea Life center in Porto, Portugal," Weisenburger says. "I believe two elements that make us unique are that we work with a lot of passion and we have our own manufac-

turing facility [in Romania], so we can deliver the top quality for very affordable prices."

At Sea Life in Phoenix, TAA built a re-creation of an underwater shipwreck, complete with creaking wood floors. The company used cement to make lifelike color corals to create a reef ambiance, created an ocean cave complete with sculpted fossils of prehistoric sea creatures, and produced the "Temple of Seahorses." The latter features stone-carved walls lined with images of the life of seahorses. In fact, TAA adorned the walls of the entire center with marine-themed graphics.

Other notable TAA projects include the attraction called "Nightmare" at Tusenfryds park in Norway, "Pirates Skull Bay" at Heide Park in Soltau, Germany, and the polar bear enclosure at Marineland in Antibes, France. TAA incorporated advanced animatronics on a couple of these projects, and Weisenburger says the company has done animatronic dragons, dinosaurs, and humans.

The company also does work for smaller venues like FECs. It created most of the theming for the 32,000-

square-foot Lego Discovery Centre in Duisburg, Germany, which opened in 2008, including the cement and coated styroopor works, wallpaper, paintings, artificial plants and trees, and woodworks, as well as the mechanics and pneumatics for various scenes and the lighting effects. One of these scenes is the "Lego Factory Tour," where guests are shown how Lego bricks are made on a factory line featuring pneumatic and light effects created by TAA; it was asked to produce the same thing for the Lego Discovery Center in Chicago.

With widespread recognition in Europe and a firm foothold in the United States TAA is now looking to establish itself in Asian markets and participated in IAAPA's Asian Attractions Expo this year for the first time, Weisenburger says..

The fact that TAA does extensive work with animatronics, pneumatics, and even story development seems to signal it is much more than just a theming company. "Definitely," affirms Weisenburger. "We do the design, the storyboards, everything. We don't want to be thought of as just a theming company." ■