

Headline: **Robert Bateman Mural - A Play by play.....**

Author:

Subtitle:

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Written by Volker Beckmann

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The work on the Bateman Mural on Highland Towers has started this week, but last night Charles Johnston, C5 Artworks of Winnipeg, used some bold, amazing and ingenious techniques to get the 10 storey high wolf image on the wall. And only Mychaylo Prustupa from CBC and myself got to see it, so I thought I share the experience...

All week Charlie has been preparing the north wall. It's 84 x 62 ft in size or about 5000 sq ft of wall to paint.

He's washed it, primed it and put down a base coat of high industrial paint. People in town can already see a blending of colour from the top to the bottom as the backdrop to the mural. Charlie is working from an 85 ft. "stick boom" that allows him to stand on a platform at the end of a boom which can telescope to the top of Highland Towers. It has huge wheels so it can be driven. Scary stuff to do!

Last night was the tricky part... to project the wolf image directly onto the wall so that he can outline it exactly in order to fill in the many details of the Bateman sketch over the next 6 weeks.

Charlie cleared a path in the adjacent lot to park a lift in the middle of the forest that held his laptop computer and a powerful digital projector. He had to trim some trees previously to get the lift to the right spot. Then he raised the boom so the projector was 40 ft off the ground in line with the wall.

The computer was housed in a plastic tub from Canadian Tire so it would not get wet. One side was cut open to project the image onto the wall. When he turned the projector on at about 1am in pitch black conditions, the whole wall lit up and the wolf shone onto the wall - 10 stories high! It was awesome sight. It seemed like Gotham City was calling Batman with their bat searchlight, but with a wolf image instead. Of course the image was crooked at first and somewhat askew. Now came the tricky part...

Charlie used the other 85 ft boom unit which was located in the parking lot. He stood on the platform with his harness secured to the railing. He can control the platform in any direction with the controls at hand. He raised the boom and extended it over the fence and high over the tree tops to the adjacent lot where the first lift was located. When he had them both side by side in the air, he CLIMBED from one platform to the other to adjust the projector, so that the wolf image was in perfect proportion and dead centre on the wall.

Think of aligning your slide projector to the screen so it totally fits, except you are 5 floors off the ground and it's 50 times larger! Once the first lift was aligned, he crawled back to the other platform (40 ft off the ground!). The wolf image was now dead centre on the side of the building. The effect was striking! It took him about an hour and a half to get it right.

He then swung the 85 boom and its platform (he's standing on it!) back from the tree tops over the fence towards the building. Yet the unit was too far from the wall, so he DROVE the machine closer. Get this... he is driving all the while standing on a platform controlling it from about 8 floors up. It was a sight to behold!

Once his platform was up against the wall, he began to outline the eyes and features of the wolf's face. At that point it began to drizzle. The rain had held off for the first few hours. Charlie was hoping it would hold off longer. He would need about 6 hours to outline the image on the wall in the dark. If the rain would make him stop, it would be extremely difficult to come again on the next evening, set the projector and boom in place and it align it

EXACTLY where he left off.

I left around 2:45 am and he was still up there working. This morning I saw it was a heavy rain, and I knew he could not have finished. Charlie told me that at 5am today it started to pour and washed all his work off the wall! He will have to do it again. Possibly tonight. And if that wasn't bad enough... his boom truck ran out of diesel fuel! The engine stopped while he was up high.

Of course, these things are supposed to have back up electrical units that would lower the platform under these circumstances. It did not work! So now he is stranded in the wee hours of the morning with the best view in town! Fortunately he had his cell phone and called the local rental company manager. Got him out of bed to come down to the site with a drum of diesel to get him down! Good thing Charlie has a good sense of humour. All in the life of a world class mural artist.

Today there is more rain in the forecast. Getting the image on is now critical to further progress. Each day Charlie is delayed adds up to a huge cost when you are renting equipment at \$30,000+ a month!

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