

# Re-creating History

It's all in the details for the designers of these three-dimensional artworks.

Calling themselves “visual storytellers,” StudioEIS artisans craft realistic figures that both replicate history and evoke emotional responses. From astronauts and basketball players to Benjamin Franklin and Rosa Parks, StudioEIS sculpts figures for museums, corporations and hotels.

The studio began in 1976 when sculptor Ivan Schwartz created a three-dimensional figure for a Minnesota museum. This commission became the genesis of the New York firm, co-founded by Ivan and his brother Elliot, an industrial designer and photographer.

Today, StudioEIS produces monochromatic figures, bronze statues and three-dimensional artworks.

## Monochromatic Detail

Schwartz's monochromatic pieces derive from the works of George Segal, who began in the 1960s to create single-color human figures often placed in realistic settings.

“Painting a realistic form in one color evokes a strange feeling,” says Schwartz. “The brain grapples with the need to fill in the desaturated color. Museum designers choose this technique to evoke certain responses.”

StudioEIS's figures begin with research into the people and times to be portrayed. For events which took place after

the invention of photography, researchers study actual photographs.

Earlier periods must be re-created through extensive research into everything from proper deportment to whether people wore corsets; contemporary documents, such as letters and diaries, provide insights into historic figures' girth, demeanor or other pertinent details. StudioEIS then photographs actors portraying the characters in various poses.

“The photographs become the blueprint for constructing the figures,” says Schwartz. “We find models that satisfy very particular kinds of people and make life masks and full body casts.”

StudioEIS's costumers create period clothes for the figures. After the dressed figures are fixed with epoxy resin, Schwartz spray- and hand-paints the bodies and clothes.

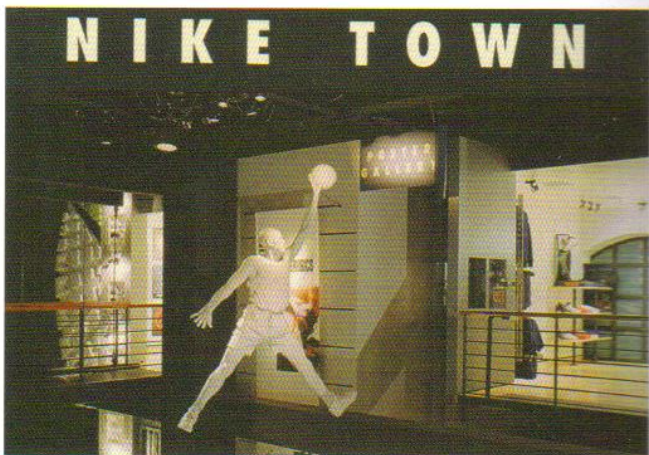
“The quality of the clothing begins to disappear, which is why viewers are surprised that the figures are not sculpted,” says Schwartz. “It's real, but the layers of paint obscure the reality of the substrate. That's part of the goal.”

## Paint Choices

Schwartz uses Benjamin Moore & Co. low luster or satin finishes on his monochromatic figures. StudioEIS



StudioEIS depicted Rosa Parks seated for the 1955 bus ride that helped launch the civil rights movement. Here, she is surrounded by other figures created for the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.



Basketball legend Michael Jordan flies high in Nike's flagship store in Portland. StudioEIS has created figures for other Nike Town locations.

also creates full-color figures for military museums interested in realistic battle scenes. While Schwartz finishes these figures with acrylics, he uses flat latex Benjamin Moore's primer.

Schwartz's latest project is a figure of Benjamin Franklin, created for an exhibit honoring the tercentennial in 2006 of the founding father's birth. Using measurements from the only remaining Franklin garments, StudioEIS has created “a very accurate reproduction of

Franklin as a man,” says Schwartz.

“This an amazing project,” adds Schwartz, who is using Benjamin Moore's Litchfield Gray HC-78 for the monochromatic figure's head and hands. The figure will wear accurate reproductions of the existing clothing, made with fabric woven and dyed in England.

For more information on StudioEIS, visit [www.studioeis.com](http://www.studioeis.com).

— PEGGY ANN BROWN