

All-In Signage

Signage for the Las Vegas Poker Dome carried an unbelievable deadline.



Jack Dubois

"What doesn't kill us makes us stronger."

— Friedrich Nietzsche

There are hundreds of Las Vegas sign stories — this is one of them.

Late in March 2006, Phil Flaherty, a consultant with Las Vegas' downtown Neonopolis (see ST, *October 2002, page 104*), who was familiar with Ad Art Sign Co.'s storied Las Vegas history, called David Esajian of our Las Vegas branch office. The Fox Sports Network's popular MANSIONPOKER.NET Poker Dome Challenge show had agreed to benevolently invade the Neonopolis-area complex, adding yet another piece to downtown revitalization.

Of course, this wasn't entirely altruistic — the trade-off would be a commitment from Neonopolis to theme and glamorize the location into something worthy of a center-stage, television extravaganza. To infuse a sense of immediacy (and subsequent panic), this turnaround was to occur in a month — design, permits, manufacturing, installation ... everything!

Enter Ad Art, along with Showpartner's (Altamonte Springs, FL)

The main entry sign needed to have a dome-like theme and a Vegas look, and appeal to a television audience.

Chris Runnells, who was contracted to handle the actual staging design and direct the exterior and interior look. (Showpartners is a lighting and production company.) The gauntlet had been thrown, and Ad Art picked it up. At the time, I thought we were nuts!

A little background. Mansionpoker.net's Poker Dome Challenge is a high-tech, high-stakes, interactive poker venue televised weekly on the Fox Sports Network. Tournament players are limousined in with indulgent fanfare to compete for a million-dollar pot.

As Phil described it, we needed to infuse the location with an impacting sense of "arrival." Quickly. We had our deadline, but nothing yet to offer but solemn promises to meet it. In more than 30 years of designing everything from the Strip's Mirage to Fremont Street's La Bayou, I'd never been involved with such a timeline.

To begin with, the building itself, with its terminally curved walls and unconventional features, made any sign proposal highly

conditional. David (the at-risk salesman), Ad Art President Bob Kierejczyk and I took numerous photos of all areas to be signed, obtained a full set of the original architect's prints and sat down with Chris (who at least had his auditorium "vision") to discuss the signing progression.

Areas included the rotunda wall over the pedestrian walkway (from which the poker participants would be arriving) and the open hallway leading into a long, enclosed tunnel to the auditorium entrance. They wanted a sign embodiment of a dome, specifically a Poker Dome, and all related imagery. Entrances had been promoted to gateways.

That first week in April, we pounded out rough concepts and faxed them to Chris for feedback. I addressed both the "bridge entrance," as it came to be known, and what would become a high-impact, marquee-style, entrance canopy leading to the auditorium. Signage along the way included odds and ends of wall décor, transparency light boxes (displaying the