



Successfully Mapping History In “Hidden Figures”

The Production Design team for Hidden Figures won the 2017 Art Director’s Guild Award for Best Production Design – Period Film. If you’ve had the chance to see the film, you almost certainly saw Rosco’s contribution to their award-winning production design.

When it came time to create a historically accurate set depicting the Mercury Mission Control Center, Production Designer Wynn Thomas and Art Director Jeremy Woolsey turned to Rosco to help them execute a key element of the set – a backlit status map that displayed the orbital position of the Mercury Capsule.



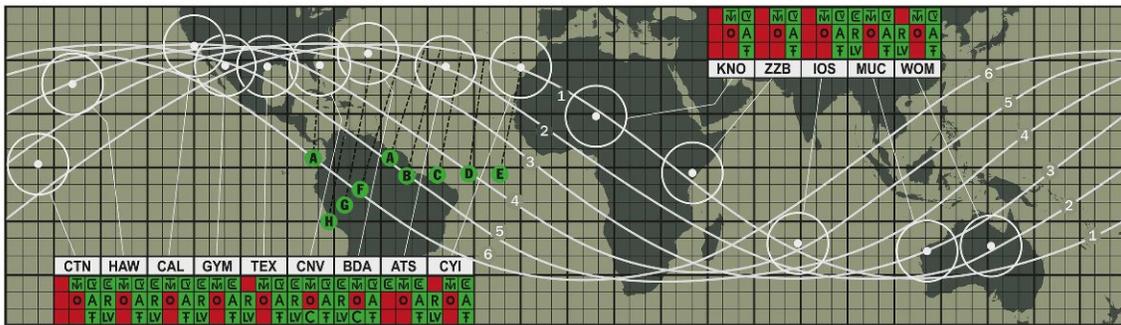
A Photo of the actual Mercury Mission Control Center in 1962 via NASA

The filmmakers paid close attention to replicate the look of the Mercury Mission Control Center. According to an interview in collectSPACE.com, Wynn Thomas explained that they “were very careful to honor the spirit of it. We did not want to get it wrong there.”



The Mercury Mission Control Center set from "Hidden Figures." Photo: 20th Century Fox, via collectSPACE.com

"The whole idea was to try to recreate it as faithfully as we possibly could," Wynn continued about the film's Mission Control Center set. "For me, as a designer, it is always important to start with the truth, with what is real. As a result, there was an extensive amount of research that was done."



The original art file used to create the map backdrop

This research included working directly with NASA. In an interview with Variety magazine, director Theodore Melfi describes how "Wynn also did droves of research with two NASA historians, Dr. Bill Barry and Bert Ulrich, who opened up their archives. They sent us hundreds of pictures."



A scene shot inside the MCC set

After all the research had concluded, the production design team sent Rosco a large-scale map graphic that they'd designed based on the research materials they'd received. The 4'H x 18'L (1.2M H x 5.5M L) map was printed on vinyl and mounted into the MCC set. Because it was a backlit graphic, we printed the image on both sides of the vinyl to keep the backlighting from washing out the image.



Kevin Costner as Al Harrison in front of the backlit status map in "Hidden Figures." Photo: 20th Century Fox

We were not only thrilled to be a part of the film, but to also assist the production design team in making the Hidden Figures Mercury Mission Control Center set as historically accurate as possible. The filmmakers were very happy with the results. "It was an incredibly effective solution," stated Art Director Jeremy Woolsey.

Visit the Custom Backdrops page on the Rosco website for more information about our Academy Award-winning backdrop technology: www.rosco.com.