

Application Profile: ACRYLITE® AR OP3 acrylic sheet

Traveling Exhibit Relies on Evonik Cyro ACRYLITE® to Help Preserve Vietnam War History and Honor Veterans

Curators Develop Innovative Method to Protect Graffiti-Inscribed Bunks from Elements that can Potentially Damage Exhibit

The *General Nelson M. Walker* survived the Vietnam War, but when Art and Lee Beltrone created the national traveling exhibit, *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* featuring pieces of the troopship, they realized delicate artifacts from the vessel could be destroyed while on display. To preserve the focal point of the exhibit – bunk canvases filled with graffiti messages of love, patriotism, honor and anxiety written by soldiers, – the curators are utilizing Evonik Cyro's ACRYLITE® AR OP3 acrylic sheet. This clear protective covering enables visitors to see the priceless pieces while eliminating the risk of the artifacts becoming damaged.



The exhibit's co-curators realized that the exhibit's popularity among large crowds of visitors could jeopardize the condition of the wall-hung canvas bunks. They were in need of a solution that would protect the canvases, but would also allow people to vividly see the compositions written by the soldiers. Once they evaluated ACRYLITE®, they knew it would meet all their requirements.

“ACRYLITE® acrylic sheet was the perfect solution because it protects the canvas from harmful UV light as well as from exhibit traffic without sacrificing the ability to see each and every detail of the graffiti,” said Lee Beltrone. “The acrylic also adds dimension to the wall displays and calls attention to the canvases.”



ACRYLITE® AR OP3 sheet was selected to protect the artifacts because of its excellent UV filtering characteristics. It filters out approximately 98% of the UV light, protecting the bunk canvases from potential damage, such as becoming brittle, fading, or turning yellow.

ACRYLITE® AR OP3 sheet is also resistant to scratching and chemicals, which are important factors because visitors will come in contact with the sheet while they are viewing the display. Art and Lee can easily clean the sheet with common household cleaners without worrying about harming the surface. Since the exhibit will be traveling across the country, the extreme durability and light weight characteristics of the ACRYLITE® AR OP3 sheet are also beneficial to prevent marring over the years and to help cut shipping cost.

A New Chapter in an Amazing Story

The addition of ACRYLITE® to the exhibit is the latest chapter to a very successful and heartwarming story. Until 1997, the *General Nelson M. Walker* was a forgotten P-2 class troopship in Virginia’s “Ghost Fleet.” Art Beltrone first visited the *General Nelson M. Walker* in 1997 while advising on the film, “The Thin Red Line.” When Art and his wife Lee learned that the ship was being made available for scrap, they decided to save as many artifacts as possible.



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The two established the Vietnam Graffiti Project – a non-profit 501(c)(3) Virginia-based organization – to preserve historic artifacts they found aboard the troopship. Many items were given to museums, including the Smithsonian, Library of Congress and national military museums, as well as state and local historical societies. With the hundreds of remaining artifacts, Art and Lee created the national touring exhibit to honor Vietnam War Veterans.

The focal point of the exhibit is a complete eight-person berthing unit removed from the troopship, outfitted with bright, orange-colored life vests, as well as the original bedding and bunk canvases. Art and Lee change the canvases based on where the exhibit is on display, in order to show graffiti by soldiers who lived in the respective area.



“The graffiti offers a glimpse into the lives of these young soldiers during their journey to Vietnam,” said Art Beltrone.

Other personal items left by soldiers and Marines that are included in the exhibit are rosaries, books, and playing cards. Issues of the ship's newspaper, safety objects and cleaning supplies are also part of the display. Personal stories of soldiers and Marines who made the voyage on the Walker can be heard at audio stations.

The exhibit now has two traveling units – one for each coast. Since the exhibit opened at the Navy Memorial in Washington D.C., it has appeared across the country in museums and historical societies, such as Nauticus, the Virginia Historical Society, Washington State History Museum, Santa Barbara Maritime Museum and Los Angeles

Maritime Museum. It is currently on display at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Holmdel.

To learn more about ACRYLITE® AR OP3 sheet, visit www.acrylite.net. For more information on the exhibit and where it will be appearing, visit <http://www.vietnamgraffiti.com/>.

Evonik Cyro LLC

Evonik Cyro LLC is an Evonik Degussa Corporation group company. Headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, Evonik Cyro is a leading manufacturer of acrylic sheet and molding compounds, and bulk and performance monomers. Cyro manufactures and markets its acrylic sheet products under the ACRYLITE® trade name in the Americas. These same products are manufactured and marketed under the PLEXIGLAS® trade name on the European, Asian, African and Australian continents.

Evonik Industries

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