

Designer's Notes on Fantasy Castle Library

The Fantasy Castle Library was definitely the most bizarre and challenging assignment I have ever had. We had designed a yacht for this book-collecting client that was under construction when he purchased an estate in Santa Cruz and asked us to convert the living room to a library to house his eighty boxes of books.

But this was not to be any normal library. This was to be a "fantasy castle library with essence of M.C. Escher overtones!"

Escher was, of course, the graphic artist that specialized in transition or "morphing" in his wonderful illusional illustrations that had water flowing up and staircases that had no beginning or end.

By the time the plane was landing back in Seattle, I had worked out the approach to this challenge. The walls were twenty feet high and we had permission to go all the way up as long as we provided access.

The atmosphere would be English. The lower bookcase would consist of a stone-topped credenza flanked by towers with battlements and a connecting bridge of beveled glass-enclosed shelves for the rarest editions. Above, the shelves would "ascend toward the sky." The illusion of distance was subtly created by having the height and thickness of each shelf diminish in scale as they continued upward. Atmospheric perspective was also employed with the loftier shelves becoming progressively hazier and cooler in color.

The fantasy was further developed as the higher books began to lay flat in stacks and gradually "morphed" into terraces and finally to steps leading up to the castle at the very top. The "fantasy castle"—a 3-D model—was dramatically "stage lit" but so subtly that visitors might not notice until they had been in the room for some time.

The best custom furniture builders in the Bay area, who happened to be Industrial Light and Magic alumni with stage design experience, were summoned to execute the work.