

High Temperature Filler from **Alvin** Plays Integral Part in Restoration Project

Feature article by *Finishers' Management* magazine, January 2003

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In 1999, Universal Powder Coat, formerly of Portsmouth, NH, began a restoration project of four cast-iron lions that had graced the front of The Library Restaurant for more than a century. The life-size lions -- which were subjected to countless children riders, foul weather and blazing sunshine -- were beginning to crack and show their age.

The lions were removed by crane and shipped to Universal's facility where they were sandblasted to remove their old coatings. Next came the hardest part of the restoration: patching the lions' dents and scratches, and reinforcing their nine-piece bodies before powder coating. Universal needed to use a high-temperature filler material that would stand up to multiple powder coating bake cycles but would still be cost-effective. After ruling out welding or soldering for fear the lions would crack, they turned to a product called Hi-Temp Lab-metal, manufactured by Alvin Products, Lawrence, Mass.

Welders and metal fabricators have filled dents and smoothed over welds with the ready-to-use compound since the company's founding in 1950, but it has only recently emerged as a high-temperature, cosmetic product for the powder coating industry. There are two products rated for different temperature levels: Lab-metal withstands temperatures up to 350 degrees F (or one-time exposures up to 425 degrees F); Hi-Temp Lab-metal can hold up under temperatures up to 1,000 degrees F. The products can provide quick cosmetic repairs for powder coaters, metal fabricators,



metal furniture manufacturers, OEMs, auto restorers, auto body shops, machine shops, foundries, and plumbing and heating professionals. Both are used to fill, seal, patch and smooth dents, cracks, pinholes, and welded seams. Lab-metal and Hi-Temp Lab-metal replace body fillers and caulks that cannot withstand extreme heat.

"Now that the industry is switching from liquid to powder coating of metal parts, the product has proven to be a time and money-saving dent filler for industry professionals," said Dennis Aikman, president of Alvin Products. "Fabricators now use Lab-metal to fill



Application tip: Lab-solvent is used to thin Lab-metal and Hi-Temp Lab-metal; to clean the application surface; and to extend the shelf life of the repair putties.

dents and seal seams in metal surfaces prior to sending the metal parts to the powder coater," explains Aikman. "Repairing parts with this product represents a substantial cost-savings compared to welding or replacing damaged metal parts (previously scrapped prior to powder coating)."

Brian Talley, owner of Columbia Coatings, Columbia, Tenn., also uses the products and sees them as valuable cost-savers and problem-solvers. "We recommend Lab-metal or Hi-Temp Lab-metal to all of our customers because, at some point, they come across parts or components that need visual repairing," said Talley. The products allow his customers to repair the flaws themselves, instead of having to find a fabrication company



Hi-Temp Lab-metal was used to fill cracks and seal seams on four antique cast iron statues. The repaired statues were then powder coated with a gold-colored powder.

to fix minor problems with parts. It also allows them to save on the cost of welding in areas that may simply need smoothing.

According to Talley, Columbia Coatings' customers have used Lab-metal in numerous applications to fix visual problems, but they have also used the spreadable filler as a design tool. "It works great for building and shaping custom designs in metal for those customers who want a radical look to their parts. By expanding your services and doing as much as you can for your customers in a cost-effective way, you're able to work smarter, not harder, at keeping them," Talley said.

After the lions were patched with the Hi-Temp Lab-metal, they were powder coated with multiple coats of gold and clear powders. With much fanfare, they were returned to their home in Portsmouth, just as they left: by truck and crane. They were then re-bolted into the granite blocks, ready to stand for another 100 years.

For more information on Lab-metal or Hi-Temp Lab-metal, please contact the manufacturer:



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