

Pierre Tardif

A French-Canadian sign maker turns out window splashes—with a twist

Where: Val-Belair, Quebec, Canada **Age:** 31 **Shop name:** P. Tardif, Inc. **Shop size:** 1800 sq. ft. **Staff:** Pierre and his staff of five **Graphics equipment:** a 433 mhz PC and CorelDraw 4 software

I started my first shop back in 1988 and I was doing all kinds of signs—banners, trucks, everything. But by '95, it was pretty hard to compete here in Quebec. There were just too many computers. I decided to close my shop and sell everything—my computer, my paint, all my screen-printing equipment, everything, and decided to go on the road doing window splashes. So for the next two years, Steven Girard, my buddy, and I worked out of our trucks like Nick Barber (*SignCraft*, January/February 1990). But in Quebec, we have snow and cold weather in the winter—it isn't like Southern California.



Pretty soon we had many good window splash customers, but winter weather and workload began to make it impossible to give our customers the best service. We started looking for another way to do window splashes and decided to run a few tests by lettering on Dupont Tyvek™ [Tekra Corporation, 800-448-3572, www.tekra.com]; and it worked very well.

This became our new way of doing it, and soon we were painting all of our window splashes with acrylic latex paint on Tyvek.

Now we have quite a busy shop. It's partly because Harvey's, a fast-food chain with 370 restaurants in Canada, decided to use our product in all of their stores. We do a promotion for them almost every month, producing 3-by-6-ft. posters in the window-splash style using fluorescent colors. Because of the vol-



ume, we do these Tyvek signs with screen-printing. Last year we used seven master rolls of Tyvek, each roll holding 2200 yards of material. We are the second largest customer for Tyvek in eastern Canada in the graphics industry. It's amazing. I never thought it would grow like this.

We have six sign painters in the shop and we are doing a lot of different stuff. I do some work in the shop and nearly all of the sales work. We have about 135 car dealers that buy our product, the restaurant chain, maybe 50 McDonald's in Quebec and Ontario, about 25 Burger Kings and close to 75 supermarkets.

Because many of our customers order fairly large runs, we had to find ways to streamline production. I now do the layout on the computer, and have found that it helps with production and allows the customer to see their window splash before it's in the window. After finalizing the design on-screen, I print it on acetate and put the transparency on an overhead projector.

We staple our Tyvek to the wall and project our computer-produced layout onto the Tyvek. For our short-run jobs, we paint the lettering on with a roller and outline with a brush. But we have big customers, too, and for them we do runs of close to 400 Tyvek signs. Such large runs require that we screen print. I hand cut screens for these signs.

Until recently, for large-run, screen-printed work, we screened on the black outline, rolled on the fluorescent colors, then reprinted the black outline. The finished product was very nice, but it could take the entire staff two weeks to do this. But lately we have been screen-printing the fluorescent colors, which can be difficult because the paint is translucent and tends to fade. The method we are using is working very well.

We used to install all of our Tyvek window splashes, but as time goes by we are doing



Profile

Pierre on Tyvek posters: We started looking for another way to do window splashes and ran a few tests by lettering on Tyvek. This became our new way of doing it. Last year we used 15,400 yards of Tyvek and became the second largest customer for Tyvek in eastern Canada in the graphics industry.



The crew: (standing, left to right) Steven Girard, Karine Gosselin, Ronald Busque, (sitting, left to right) Pierre Tardif, Michel ThiBault and Jean-Louis Tremblay