

# Greg Scott

New Philadelphia, Ohio

**Shop name:**

GSWorx

**Shop size:** 2400 sq. ft.

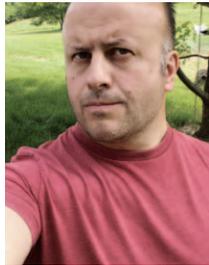
**Age:** 41

**Online:**

[www.gsworx.com](http://www.gsworx.com)

[www.facebook.com/GsWorx](https://www.facebook.com/GsWorx)

**W**hen you think of mall signage, chains and franchises come to mind first: The Gap, Mrs. Fields cookies, Barnes & Noble Books, Starbucks and the list goes on. But there are also privately owned businesses in many shopping malls, and Greg Scott found a niche in creating creative storefront signage for these businesses. We'll let him tell you how.



**How did you end up in the sign business?**

It just sort of turned out that way. I went to the Pittsburgh Art Institute, and I always enjoyed art and illustration. I went to work at a T-shirt shop, where I did a little bit of everything, including some vinyl sign work. That got me into signs, and in 2005 I opened GSWorx.

**Where is New Philadelphia?**

We're a small town near the Akron/Canton area. We're about an hour and a half south of Cleveland, about the same distance west of Columbus, and the same distance from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A fair amount of my

work is for shopping malls in the Columbus area. Most of these stores are individually owned, rather than franchises or chains.

**That's an interesting niche.**

It is. It started when I did some work in a local shopping mall, and the mall manager sent photographs of it to the other malls that were owned by the same company. Everyone seemed to like it because it didn't look like any other mall signs. The work started coming in from states away. Most of the 3-D work that you see on my website is storefront signs in malls. Some of it is backlit with LEDs, but a lot of it is lit externally.

**So you're mostly self-taught when it comes to sign making.**

I guess. When I got started, I didn't spend much time online seeing what other people were doing. Plus, those were the days of dial-up internet connections so your surfing was limited. I did a lot of trial-and error. [Laughing.] Now of course, I get *SignCraft* and I learned what I can from online sources, too. I really enjoy seeing what others are doing, and how they do it.

Back then, though, I just tried to figure out



Gatorfoam, digital print, PVC board and paint. "This entire store was branded off of the logo that I developed," says Greg.



Layered PVC board



3/16-in. aluminum composite material with 2-in. HDU material. Hand carved woodgrain effect and 3D pig. "This one was a lot of fun," says Greg.



Cutout Gatorfoam graphics [www.graphicdisplayusa.com] on PVC board



Hand carved from HDU board

how to do what I needed to do. I would've been ahead to see how others were doing all this! I did a lot of experimenting, and I tend to take risks with things. Usually it turned out well, but sometimes it didn't. [Laughing.] I guess we learn from our mistakes. You can't be afraid to take chances.

**You seem to take that approach in your designs, too—lots of shapes and layers and color.**

I hate to see a plain white rectangle. It just seems that there's so much else you can do. I like to use a shape for the background, and I like to break that shape somehow—to poke something out of it here or there. Sometimes

I like to have something going on in the background, too.

**It all works to give the business a unique look.**

Like I said before, most of these are individually owned retail businesses. I try to help them create a brand, so that they have a look that makes them look bigger than they are. Often they haven't even thought about that. You'd be surprised how often someone makes a commitment to lease space in a shopping mall and open a business, with little thought to the image they want project. The sign is usually the last thing on their to-do list.

The signage is important to the mall



Fish is carved foam coated with Styrospray [www.industrialpolymers.com] on ¼-in. aluminum composite material, finished with 1Shot paints [www.1shot.com]



"This is one of the few signs that I didn't design from scratch," says Greg. "This was a redo of their original logo, freshened up a bit. This is ¾-in. overlaid plywood with 3/16-in. aluminum composite material, finished with Ronan paints and Kapco gold metallic vinyl."

management, too, because it has a huge impact on the look and feel of the mall. They want clean, professionally designed signage throughout. It adds to the appeal of the mall. As a result, they send a lot of the individually owned businesses to me for the signage.

### Designing and building signs for inside a mall is a bit of a unique market.

If you walk through the mall, you'll see that almost all of those signs would last forever outside. They're built as if they were going out in the elements. That's not the case, so it seems kind of pointless to build big aluminum structures and things like that. It's overkill. I'd rather save some money on material costs and put it into creating a cool design.

For example, I sometimes use Gatorfoam [www.graphicdisplayusa.com] for letters and graphics. It's a great material. It has rigid faces over a foam core. It's very structural and very stable without having a lot of weight. It's easy to work with and very affordable.

### Do you have a commercial location?

I do, but my shop is about 200 feet from my home. I guess technically I'm a home-based business, but it looks very commercial. It's just far enough away to be "where I go to work," but it's great to work close to home like that.

The shop is a two-story commercial building. I've been in business for 10 years and I don't have a sign up on it yet. [Laughing.] I've been working on one when I get free time—it's sort of a big, ridiculous Dr. Seuss-y thing. It's been in the making for a while.

I have the basic sign-making equipment in the shop. I do a lot of things by hand—a lot of cutouts and some hand-carved elements.

### Do you work alone or do you have help?

I work by myself. I did the design and the fabrication on virtually all the work you see on my website.

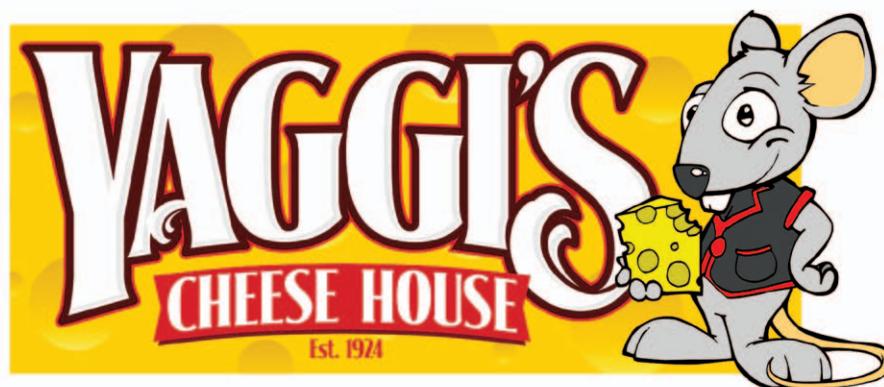
I've never really wanted to take on employees, because it adds another dimension to your business. You're making a commitment to keep them busy, as well as yourself, and that worries me. I have no problem working overtime, and there have been several times when I've been up 48 hours straight just to get jobs done. That being said, I've had several huge projects where I enlisted to help of some friends, too, so that I wasn't in the shop 24/7.

### What other work do you do along with the mall projects?

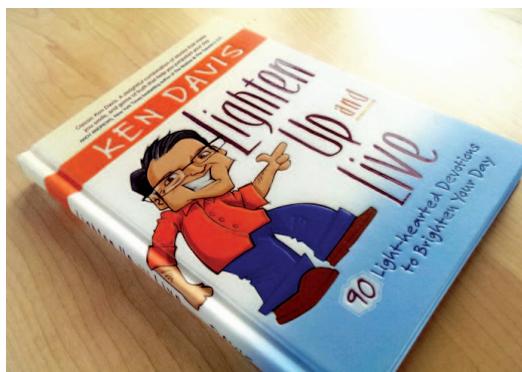
Any type of signs, vehicles, HDU and sculpture. I'm always amazed at what comes through the door. I've recently been doing a lot



HDU and Abacadabra Magic Sculpting epoxy [www.abracadabrasigns.com]



"The owners approached me about doing a new road sign for them and I ended up rebranding their company," says Greg. "I created this custom drawn mouse and logo. I used the Signmaker font by Dave Correll [www.letterheadfonts.com] for the text."



Here's one of the books Greg has illustrated.



Gatorfoam and PVC board



Daily Grind is made from layered and carved HDU board and aluminum composite material. "The building is formerly a very old bakery with a hodgepodge of eclectic memorabilia," says Greg. "Picture your grandma's kitchen. We wanted to emulate that look and feel in their logo. It's finished with flat auto paint, off white greys and whites."



Roughs for the *Daily Grind Cafe* project

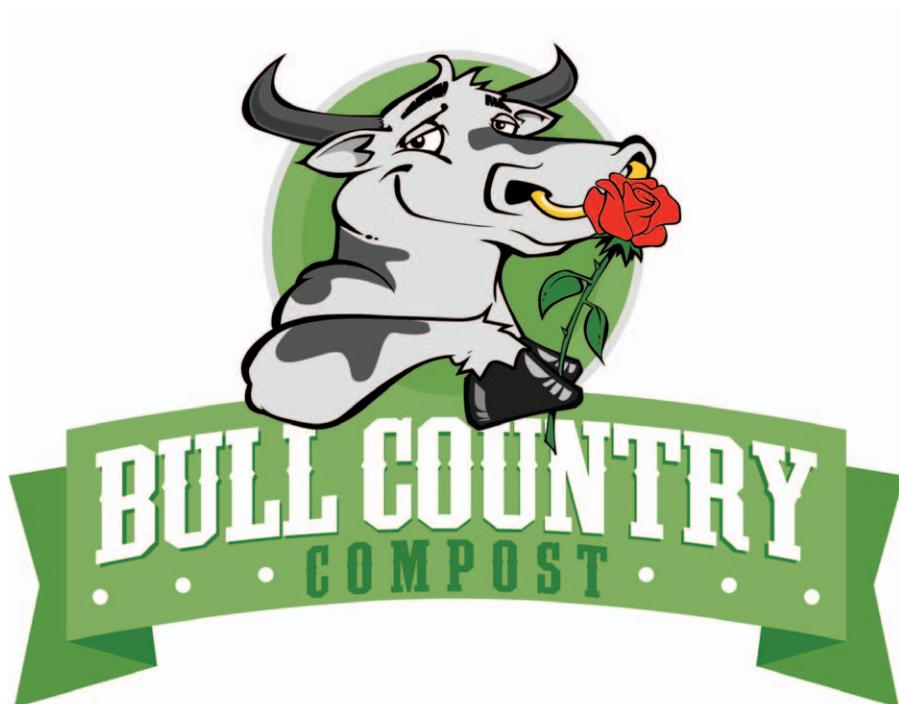
of work for the oil and gas industry. It's boring, informational signs. Not too exciting but it certainly pays the bills.

I do illustration work as well. A lot of it is for fun, but I've also illustrated five books for major publishers. You can even find them on Amazon. I do other illustration projects as they come along. Location isn't an issue for this work. Just this past week, I've picked up two illustration projects for a companies in New York and Canada.

Signs are a good mix for me, because I like both the design and the creation. I also try and push the illustration work in the design process because it gives my customers an advantage over their competition. My clients have a custom icon or mascot created specifically for their business and most of their competition has picked their logo on a stock illustration website. Also, a business can't truly own their logo if they don't own the full rights to the clipart. There's nothing stopping a business from putting up a sign across the street with the exact same clipart.

I could probably be more successful if I had a better location and a bunch of employees, but I'm not sure I'd like that lifestyle. It seems like a lot more headaches. I like the way business is working now, so I don't see a big need to change it.

I get to do a fair number of creative projects, which keeps things fun, and I can compete with the bigger shops. Plus, my family is a 200-foot commute, and that's usually a good thing most of the time. \*ring\*ring\* "Dad, come kill this spider!" 



"It's so easy to brainstorm when your goal is to sell crap," says Greg. "Unfortunately, most of the ideas were shot down, but everyone was happy with our final result. This logo gets printed on thousands of bags."



The smoke swirls for the *Daily Grind* sign were carved from HDU board.



A small coffee shop sign made from HDU board.