

\$100 An Hour Making Exclusive 3-D Foto-Figures

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\$100 An Hour Making Exclusive 3-D Foto-Figures

This is a creative business in which you can turn your spare time into big money, and all you really need to get started is a few materials and your existing work shop. If you don't have a workshop, a corner of your basement or garage will give all the space you need.

You could have paid \$14,990 for a course and setup in this business. That's what one company has advertised in Entrepreneur magazine. Why would you want to pay such a high price when this brief report will show you virtually everything you will need to know

WHAT ARE 3-D PHOTO FIGURES?

You may have seen them on display or sold under different names such as photo sculptures, photo statues or self-standing figurines, but the principle is the same. Basically, they are photographs that have been cut and mounted onto an acrylic background, then fastened to a base. And, they sell like hot cakes to those who want something unique and different -especially when it is a likeness of themselves, a relative, their home, or favorite pet.

INVESTMENT NEEDED

If you'll be starting from scratch, your total investment should not exceed \$200... and it should be considerably less if you already have a home workshop in your basement.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

These are the basic tools you'll need:

- Variable speed scroll saw
- Belt sander (or sand paper)
- Drill & drill bits
- Scissors
- Goggles
- Spray adhesive
- Hand Vacuum
- Work table (or picnic bench)

HOW MUCH MONEY CAN YOU MAKE?

If you have just a few spare hours available each week, you should be able to make a nice part time income, a few hundred dollars or more once you get rolling in this business. Here's a breakdown of approximate costs and selling prices for the various size photo figures:

Size	Approximate Cost Cost to Make	Approximate Selling Price
3x5	\$1.40	\$10.00
5x7	\$1.90	\$14 to \$18
8x10	\$3.95	\$20 to \$25
16x20	\$5.00	\$30 to \$35

Now, figure in your labor and the time necessary to make such figure which will be about 15 minutes when you complete a few practices jobs and become accustomed to working with this material.

Using the largest size as an example, if you had an assignment for jut 4 figures and you completed each in 15 minutes, this gives you a gross of \$120 FOR an hour's work. Now subtract your production cost of \$5 each or \$20 for the four figures, and you still come up with \$100.

Naturally, all jobs won't be for the larger size, but you could (if you really wanted to) specialize, only in the size to make the biggest net profits. You might do better, however, if you will provide all sizes to attract the most customers.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT - AND PROFITS

Although this is relatively easy work, a certain amount of practice will be needed to become proficient. Just how much practice you will need depends on how skillful you are in working with your hands. If you already have a workshop in which you have done creative work, you will probably master 3-D Figures in just a few minutes after getting a "feel" for the acrylic materials. Otherwise, it might take an hour or two before you begin feeling comfortable at this job.

HOW AND WHERE TO BUY YOUR ACRYLICS

Check your local Yellow Pages under Plastics. Acrylic is generally sold in 4x8 foot sheets, such as wall paneling, but ask if they will cut yours into smaller 2 x 4 foot sizes, which will make the material easier to handle when you begin cutting and gluing.

Be sure to check several sources because prices can often vary greatly among suppliers. You shouldn't have to pay more than \$100 for a 4 x 8 foot, quarter inch sheet. In fact, ask if they have scrap pieces available that you can buy. If so, this could save you a lot of money.

YOU'RE NOW READY TO MAKE 3-D FIGURE

Make sure your shop or working area is well lighted and ventilated. If you don't already have a scroll saw and have to

buy one, select one with a fast speed because the faster the speed, the smoother the cut. Always use a sharp blade in your saw - a fine blade for cutting small details, a wider blade for larger area cuts. CAUTION: If the blade isn't sharp, it tends to melt the acrylic.

Take one of your practice photos and begin cutting out the primary subject for your figure. The primary subject is what you want to highlight, such as a head and shoulders figure of a person, an entire group of people, a car, house, pet, etc. All background areas will be eliminated.

DO NOT cut close to the subject, but allow about an inch all around making sure your scissors are sharp right to the points.

The size and shape of your acrylic backing will of course depend on the size of the subject. You'll want to pre-cut a section of acrylic that will accommodate your photo. A good adhesive for this is a photo mount spray glue, available at most photo stores. Before you glue the photo to the plastic, blow away any remaining dust or plastic chips from the surface or they will show through the picture.

To mount your photo, first spray your acrylic, then lay one edge of your photo down and gradually bring it down to the other edge. You only have one shot at this step, so sure you're practicing on your own photos before attempting to work for someone else.

Keep your glue away from fire and flame, and allow plenty of ventilation to protect yourself from fumes. You can use a rubber roller to smooth out the photo and eliminate air bubbles. The glue will dry completely in about 15 minutes.

Now you're ready to make final cut around that border you had originally left on. Lay the picture down, face up, and begin cutting... moving the acrylic into blade. To make cuts in the middle of a photo, such as between arms and legs, drill a hole where you want to cut... then insert the blade in the drilled hole and cut out the portion you want removed.

NEXT, INSTALL THE BASE

The base is what will make your figure stand upright and it can be either a rectangle shape or cut free form - whichever will make the picture look best. Be sure to sand all edges before gluing the base. Super glue will probably be your best choice for this.

When your figure is finished, examine it carefully to make sure you have made all the right cuts in the right places, that all edges have been sanded smooth, and that it stands straight on the base. Now, put the finished figure into a plastic bag for protection, or have small boxes ready.

At this point it would be a good idea to have small labels printed with your name and address to put on the bottom (or

back) of each figure. When someone picks it up, they will see who made it and this can produce a lot of extra business for you.

Don't be afraid to experiment (on your own photos, of course) to create new and different ideas that will be saleable. For example, acrylic comes in a variety of colors, so you can standardize on black or white... or experiment with your color for the backing and another for the base; or, you might want to arrange your figures on layers of different size and color backings. Let your imagination guide you.

SETTING UP YOUR BUSINESS

We've just covered the creative end of 3-D photo figures, but now we must find an outlet for them, first establishing a business. You'll need official stationery for this, so decide what you will call your business, or just use your own name; John's 3-D Figures or something like that. Any local quick print shop can print your name and address on letterheads and envelopes, and it would be a good idea to also include business cards as well as Statements and Order Forms.

MARKETING YOUR CREATIONS

Check your local photo shops to find out if they offer such a product to their customers. If not, you have virgin territory. If they do, see if you can beat the prices they pay and sell for. Show them a few of your samples and offer to work with them on a 50/50 arrangement. You do all the work, they make sales to their own customers. If you have 5 or more shops working with you this way, the business should keep you pretty busy.

Of course, if you would prefer not to share your profits, you might want to sell directly to the public. To do this, run small ads in your local newspapers, something like this:

YOUR FAVORITE PHOTOS COME TO LIFE

Beautiful Lifelike 3-D Figures. Skillfully crafted and mounted on durable, colorful acrylic. Show off your prize possessions or those you love on these free-standing 3-D Photo Figures. A perfect gift for Birthdays, Anniversaries, Christmas and other holidays. A cherished lifetime gift for as little as \$9.95.
Phone _____ (Your name & address)

You can enhance the above ad by including a small picture of one of your 3-D photo figures, or several samples, to show what they look like for those who don't know.

SELL BY MAIL

These 3-D Photo Figures make an ideal mail order item, so you might want to establish your own mail order business. To do this properly, however, you should keep your ad small (to reduce the

cost) and ask readers to write for information

To those who write, send a friendly letter and circular/brochure illustrating your sample figures. Include an order form including your size and prices for the various figures. Naturally, you will have to ask potential customers to send you the photo they want mounted, with full assurance that it will be beautifully created into a 3-D Photo Figure that they will be proud to display or give as a gift.

Using the pricing example on Page 1 of this report, you can determine the price for your customers based on your cost, size of the finished product, and the length of time it requires to complete.

However you decide to sell your creations, you can quickly build this into a very profitable part time (or full time) business in which you can make \$100 or more per hour. Even if you work only 10 hours a week, \$1000 weekly isn't to be scoffed at.