



## To Protect and Display - National Air & Space Museum

**Product Spotlight:**

Gerber Sabre 408

**NASM  
Washington, D.C.**

You don't have to spend very long in the National Air & Space Museum's "How Things Fly" gallery to see the rigors that museum displays are subjected to.

The Museum's child-friendly, fully interactive exhibits bear the brunt of limitless youthful energy that surges throughout the Museum each day. If a button can be pushed, it gets pushed - often and hard. If a lever can be pulled, kids will grab on, put both feet on the wall, and pull for dear life.

The Museum's exhibits and displays all have one objective: durability and protection. The exhibit staff begins work with the designers at the outset. "The designers are constantly talking to the production people in terms of the structural or budgetary feasibility of a given design, whether it's a case or a major gallery, and we pride ourselves on having a good relationship with them," says designer Stephen Estrada.



For designing, the Museum has a production unit with an office and small shop for maintenance work, where most construction is done and the staff uses everything from basic wood and metal-working tools and silk screening equipment, to computer graphics machines and a highly sophisticated, computerized router (Gerber Sabre™ 408). The latter allows the team to create large format, three-dimensional displays and precisely cut plexiglass shapes. "Actually, there's nothing the router won't do", says fabrication supervisor Jim Murphy. "Right now we're cutting out four-foot wide images to decorate the construction walls being put up as windows are replaced. Later we'll be cutting out large plexiglass letters. The carbide bit makes a smooth cut that requires very little sanding. Best of all, you can just program it and go off to work on another project."

That speed and efficiency, says graphics supervisor Eugene Jones, is key because the shop is constantly striving to do more with less - that is, improve production and quality without straining the Museum's budget. "The progression from silk screening to using computers such as the router and our graphics programs to generate beautiful art, has been a great transition to watch", says Jones, who joined NASM in 1981, right after graduating from the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C. "Computers have helped us create wonderful galleries using very little money."