

MODEL Businessman



Charles Kendrick crafts small-scale representations of big-time projects. Don't bother calling: He's already too busy.

ASK CHARLES KENDRICK HOW HE MACHINES A 1/64TH-SCALE golf cart from a single piece of material, or renders the texture of a model building so realistic it even shows the minute, real flaws inescapable in large-scale construction, and he just smiles like the Cheshire Cat.

"I do it very well," he says.

For a man who so loves sharing his passions of design, art, and construction, and, whose biggest thrill is the unveiling of one of his masterpieces before an audience, getting answers on the *how* of what he does is like asking a Southern lady her age—you feel a little embarrassed, and he deflects it with deft poise.

The models that Charles Kendrick & Company craft—"build" is far too small a word—are the magic totems that open investors' wallets and ink the stamps of zoning boards. Before clients or critics see multimillion-dollar skyscrapers erected or the last available stretch of beach get developed, the money men and the civic bodies want to see those architectural renderings come alive. That's where Kendrick's work comes in.

"It takes it from the 'maybe' world to the 'real' world in a way no other representation can," he says. "When there's a lot on the line—as there is in the top projects—you have to bring an idea into reality in a way that

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PORTRAIT BY KEVIN HUNTER MARPLE
MODEL IMAGES PROVIDED BY CHARLES AND SUSIE KENDRICK

UP SCALE: Charles and Susie Kendrick are a husband-and-wife team that works well together (opposite), as Charles focuses on details of a model of Fellowship Church in Grapevine (this page).



» THE TAKEAWAY

- 1 People connect with a project better and easier when there's a physical representation of it.
- 2 When work is precise, flaws are more noticeable.
- 3 Luck helps you get paid to do what your passion is.

people can connect. A model on the level we do it draws people in.

"Everyone in development has seen thousands of renderings and elevations. This," he adds, motioning to a model of a beach high-rise on the Florida panhandle so compelling a viewer can imagine the very sand that somehow makes its way to the balconies of the top floors, "this creates something magical between the viewer and the model. It's something that you can feel and touch and put yourself in. This is what makes or breaks deals."

"People can walk around the model and it really invokes interaction," says Andrew Flanigan, design manager for architecture firm Jonathan Bailey Associates. "It makes a huge difference in winning contracts. Not only do we give the model to the client, they end up using it for marketing purposes as well."

Kendrick has been leaving models in his wake since growing up in Arkadelphia, Ark. The son of an Army veteran who married a West Berliner, he had early access to highly detailed sculptural models only available in Europe at the time, which stood in stark contrast to what he could find on American toy store shelves. So he did what any obsessive boy would do before the Internet—he made his own models. He built everything from train sets to a replica of his hometown, down to the last detail. He studied architecture at Louisiana Tech where a professor and a group of students were commissioned to build a replica of Shreveport—from scratch. It wasn't hard to tell where his calling was. In the early 1980s, he moved to Dallas and worked for a number of architecture firms, primarily building models. He was inspired by master model maker David Gibson, and during the down cycles in the commercial real estate market here, he found work in other places—San Francisco, where he met his wife, and even Bali, where in addition to his modeling work he was commissioned by the Balinese royal family to produce a videography of the disappearing Balinese culture.

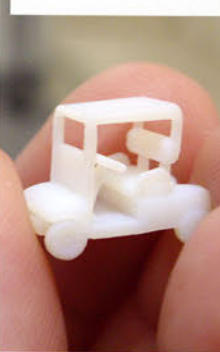
So what deals have the Kendrick models made, or are they making now? T.D. Jake's Potters House, for one. Over in Laguna Beach, Calif., there's the Montage, an opulent destination hotel and spa, where the décor and architecture blend seamlessly with the artistic heritage and the raw, rocky seascape. (Kendrick got to live there on the beach for months while doing his research—rough life.) There's the Beau Rivage, a spanning MGM casino hotel in Biloxi, Mississippi.

And of course, there's that little local undertaking: the Trinity River Corridor project. For that one, still in its earliest stages, he's producing a living reproduction of the corridor from the Hampton Road Bridge to the junction of 175 and South Lamar, including the surrounding commercial developments downtown and in Oak Cliff. Every building, water feature, bridge, tree, and proposed parkway will be rendered at a scale of one inch to 150 feet. The Trinity model is in its most basic stage as of mid-May—scaled satellite maps mark the boundaries, and just five of the buildings on downtown's skyline are vertical—one is fittingly enough a perfect little reproduction of the Bank of America tower, the tallest in Dallas.

These days, because he usually only works one major project at a time—making anywhere from \$200 all the way up to \$900,000 per project—Kendrick spends his mornings photographing every building along the 20 miles the model will cover. Mid-morning to afternoon is spent practicing his secret techniques for rendering reality from epoxy and plastics and machine-tool programming. His wife Susie, who has an art degree from the California College of Arts, details the parks, water features, and the Great Trinity Forest. Evenings again find him depicting the streets and buildings and features. His photo files alone would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to future historians, if not contemporary developers.

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—CHARLES KENDRICK



On a sunny spring Tuesday morning he shows a guest around his expansive studio, one of the last going south on Oak Lawn in the warehouse district just before the road hits the levy. It's immaculately well-organized and primarily a two-person shop, though he hires top model contractors on a project-by-project basis. The studio's contents are as diverse as you'd expect from someone who boasts of stealing techniques and technologies from every imaginable industry. After all, it's a never-ending battle to keep his centuries-old craft alive and relevant in this age of CGI, ersatz holography, and three-dimensional computer renderings. Here and there are CNC machine centers he's coaxed performances out of that have stumped professional machinists. Over in a corner is a dentist-inspired precision water tool for clearing between slates in a pool lounge chair smaller than a pinky nail. Trays of various miniature flora await assembly, each arranged by species and accompanied by encyclopedia printouts of the characteristics of the different plant types. The latest Mac- and PC-design stations line the main room, working in tandem. Jeweler's tools, surgical instruments, lighting equipment, and an array of paint sets that would confound the boys at Testors all await Kendrick's hands or Susie's, the master model landscaper. Indonesian music plays on an iTunes playlist in surround sound.

"Oh, we spend 16-hour days in here sometimes. This isn't our work. It's our passion, and we recognize how very lucky we are to get to do something we love so much," Charles says.

A photo album—his own work and another of his passions—documents his best models. They are shot on film, not retouched or computer-enhanced. "I supply the models, God supplies the sky," Kendrick likes to say.

Kendrick's ability to adapt new technologies to his craft is at once a blessing and a curse. In addition to his having to be an architect, an artist, a machinist, a programmer, and a photographer, he has to be a little bit of a psychologist and a little bit of an illusionist. Every new model is that much more realistic, and he knows that therefore every evolution makes any flaws stand out all the more. To the mind of the viewer, such a flaw is as noticeable as a boom mike dropping into frame in the middle of a movie scene. Instantly, the illusion can be erased.

"I really enjoyed this," Kendrick says of his first interview for any publication. But his joy is overshadowed by anxiety. The kid has been kept away from his toys for too long. Besides, "that Bank of America Tower model needs to be glued together." **D**



A SAMPLE OF CHARLES KENDRICK & COMPANY'S MODELS (clockwise from top left): Emerald Beach Resort in Panama City Beach, Fla.; clubhouse of the Tom Fazio Golf Course at Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Miss.; a hotel and resort in Shanghai, China; The Potter's House in Dallas.

