

# EXHIBITOR SPOTLIGHT



## Give us your 'elevator pitch' about your product/service.

Kern Studios was founded in 1932 as a float building company for New Orleans' Mardi Gras parades. Since then, Kern Studios has expanded across all areas of specialty fabrication and creative theming. We work with clients on a global scale to bring big ideas to life for parades, custom props, outdoor advertising, special events, celebrations, and more. We combine traditional craftsmanship and innovative technology to create unforgettable experiences.

We create concepts that are original and feasible. Our turnkey services begin with in-house concept design and development using 3D models, original sketches, and maquettes. In our 250,000 square foot facility in New Orleans, we combine traditional craftsmanship of our sculptors, painters, welders, and carpenters with cutting-edge technology like our seven-axis Kuka sculpting robot. Our logistics department handles every detail of parade and prop production from transportation, storage, route management, permits, insurance, and police escorts.

## How many employees does your company have?

70 employees

## How has your company grown over the years?

Kern Studios was founded in 1932 as a float building company for New Orleans' Mardi Gras parades. Since then, Kern Studios has expanded across all areas of specialty fabrication and creative theming.

Blaine Kern was an artist. To compensate for his mother's medical bills, Blaine painted a mural in a hospital. The mural caught the eye of a surgeon who was the captain of the Mardi Gras Krewe of Alla. He invited Blaine and his father, Roy to design and build the floats for his Krewe. In 1932, the first mule-drawn float was built on the back of a garbage wagon.

Kern Studios was officially founded in its current form in 1947. Blaine traveled throughout Europe to apprentice under the world's leading float and costume makers. He brought home ideas from Italy, France, and Spain to develop the monumental scale and lavish ornamentation of today's Mardi Gras parades. Blaine became the city's leading parade designer and builder, working with legendary Krewes like Rex and Zulu. Today, Kern Studios builds parades every year for roughly 20 different Krewes.

Kern Studios is now under the third generation of Kern leadership. Blaine's son Barry Kern is the CEO and President of Kern Studios and Mardi Gras World. Barry has taken Kern Studios from a local Mardi Gras float building company to one of the world's premier entertainment production and specialty fabrication companies. Kern Studios recently welcomed the fourth generation of leadership. Fitz Kern, Barry's oldest son, has joined to oversee the company's operations and strategic planning.

The company's resources have increased from father and son duo in a basic garage to a 250,000 square foot facility in New Orleans, that combines traditional craftsmanship of sculptors, painters, welders, and carpenters with cutting-edge technology like our seven-axis Kuka sculpting robot.

## What areas do you serve with your product/service?

Our work can be seen all throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

## What new or improved product/service do you have to offer that IFEA audiences need to know about?

A significant amount of the company's resources has been spent over the last two years on upgrading the quality of raw materials that go into the manufacturing of the end floats, props and scenic environments. We are not only challenging ourselves, but also the industry on what we can make of the quality limits. We want to produce product and legacy that will live for another four generations of Kerns.

## What sets your product/service apart from your competitors?

Our emphasis on embracing technology sets us apart from competitors in that we can supplement our handmade work with more accuracy and efficiency. Our seven-axis Kuka robot, nicknamed "Pixie," is the first of its kind to be used in an entertainment environment. Pixie is programmed with 3D modeling software and cuts into Styrofoam, wood, clay, or stone within 1 millimeter of

accuracy. While Pixie will never replace our artists, integrating technology into our artistic process allows us to consistently produce top of the line work.

## How many festivals and events do you work with on an annual basis?

Over 100.

## What advice would you offer to festivals and events searching for your type of product/service?

Track record and reliability are the most important characteristics for companies that commonly work within stressful timelines.

## What is your customer service philosophy?

We are a company rooted in the unique Mardi Gras culture of New Orleans, Kern Studios is the premier specialty fabrication company for parades, custom 3D props for outdoor advertising, and themed environments. Kern Studios strives to create memorable entertainment experiences that exceed clients' expectations by combining tradition and innovation.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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