

Forced Perspective By Brandon Seidl

Throughout Bill Tracy's many imaginative worlds, riders were always destined to encounter at least one corridor where forced perspective would come in to play. In most cases, forced perspective hallways were used to inhabit large areas of "dead space" or to throw in a break from traditional Tracy stunts such as the Knit Wit, Hell's Kitchen, or Sawmill.

The forced perspective hallways, if executed well, were often very effective and required little-to-no maintenance, except for minor paint touch-ups or panel repositioning. Unlike a stunt that would require a molded figure, pneumatic unit and annual maintenance, the hallways were cheap to create and took care of themselves, assuming riders would not vandalize the property.

Trimper's Haunted House employees three such hallways, all of which are very effective thanks to the tilted ramps which force the cars to lean to the left or right causing the riders physical bodies to shift.

Tracy's trademark of including illogical sequencing in his rides is what makes them so memorable, and being that a crooked mine shaft hallway leads riders to the second floor of the ride is no surprise. The Mine Shaft's perspective gives riders the impression that they will ride the corridor into the depths of hell thanks to the brilliant artistry on the door, which carries on the effect into infinity. Likewise, the crooked timber hallway in the second room, where wood grain is painted onto the panels in flamboyant, fluorescent colors, will undoubtedly turn you inside out as you peer into the green light at the end of the tunnel. An identical forced perspective hallway could be seen in Wildwood's Whacky Shack before it was demolished.

Another forced perspective hallway in the Haunted House is at Bat Hill, where one may suspect the room is indeed shrinking on them! The wall panels start out quite tall, but shrink in height as they proceed back to the door. This hallway, along with the Flying Bat stunt overhead, makes for a very interesting transition to the Mine Shaft inside the ride.

Similarly, Tracy fooled many other patrons at countless other attractions, like at Phantasmagoria, where circles were painted on a series of doors to throw rider's senses off. In addition, this ride offered a Crooked Mine Shaft, and Psychodelic Hallway to force customers into a state of mental collapse. Unfortunately, this attraction was demolished in 2007, but these classic skewed additions will forever live on!

Although forced perspective hallways are being phased out in "modern" dark rides, Tracy's imaginative optical illusions will always be remembered as classical and innovative techniques of the initial dark ride era.