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Entertainment Memorabilia Live Auction

STAR WARS

A New Hope (1977)

Lot No. 386

Screen-Matched ILM Red Leader X-wing Model Miniature



Treasures from
Film and Television



Los Angeles

June 21 - 24, 2022

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► **Lot No. 386** — Screen-Matched ILM Red Leader X-wing Starfighter Pyrotechnic Model Miniature will be auctioned off on **Day 1, June 21, 2022.**

Auction Begins 8:00am (PDT) Each Day
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386. Screen-Matched ILM Red Leader X-wing Starfighter Pyrotechnic Model Miniature **Star Wars: A New Hope (1977)**

An original screen-matched 'Red Leader' X-wing Starfighter model miniature created by Industrial Light & Magic for George Lucas' Star Wars: A New Hope. Red Leader played heavily in the film's final battle sequence. The character wore a unique gold-colored helmet and his X-wing fighter was marked with a single red stripe on each wing, signifying his call sign as Red One. When Star Wars was released in May 1977 and became an instant phenomenon, two of the elements frequently cited for the film's success were its design aesthetic, and the quality of the visual effects work—both of which are represented in this historic X-wing fighter model.

The X-wing, like much of Star Wars, was born out of a concept from Lucas himself. He imagined the ship as a dragster with a long body and a pilot on the back, and early concept designer Colin Cantwell was credited for adding the X-shaped wings. Cantwell also built the first physical prototype of the craft. From there, visual effects art director Joe Johnston refined the design into the famous ship known today.

For the film's space battle sequences, several 1:24 scale models were needed of each of the core fighters—the X-wing, Y-wing, and T.I.E. fighter. Three basic-grades of models were built: hero models with multiple threaded mounting points and practical lighting elements; high-quality pyro models, designed for effects explosion shots, that were close copies of their hero counterparts but specifically made to look good in explosions on film; and lower-quality pyro models that were built out of the necessity since production needed more attempts than originally planned to capture the ideal shots of exploding ships. Lucas had specific direction for the explosions, and a number of attempts with practical burn mixtures and processes were necessary to achieve that vision. "George wanted the outline of the ship to be on fire, the entire outline of the ship sparking away, and then it would blow. Figuring out how to do that took some time," recalled pyro specialist Joe Viskocil, who was responsible for the explosion shots. The lower-quality pyro models were built quickly and with less detail and looser paintwork than the high-quality pyro models.

While no exact build records from the production have surfaced, the line-up of X-wing models created for the film can be reverse-engineered from production photos. It is understood by enthusiasts to be approximately: 4 hero models, 6 high-quality pyro models, and an unknown-quantity of lower-quality pyro models—likely a similar number to the high-quality models were made.

The hero and pyro models were constructed in two different manners. Hero models were fabricated from more unique elements, such as kit-bashed components, and were built around a metal armature; pyro models were primarily cast components that could be produced faster and had no armatures since they would hang from wires for the explosion shots. There are slight differences in the detailing of hero X-wing models and pyro models; one notable variation is the nose cone, which has an additional vertical panel-line inscribed on the hero model. All of the models were exceptionally detailed and finished to a very high standard, with the paintwork and decals on the high-quality pyro models closely resembling their hero counterparts.

The X-wing fighter model presented here was originally built as the Red Leader (Red One) pyro model, and later in production adapted into a Biggs (Red Three) model by adding additional stripes to the wings and some additional paintwork. Red Leader's pyro shot in the film features an explosion on the back of an engine, but the ship itself remained completely intact (Red Leader then meets his end

by crashing into the Death Star surface, in a shot that was an explosion only, with no ship model.) The shot of the Red Leader's engine explosion is documented in behind-the-scenes footage of the model against bluescreen, which shows this ship model remained intact, unlike other X-wings that were destroyed in full by their pyro explosions. The model was flown on thin wires to achieve the shot. Because the X-wing was intact, it was available to be converted into Red Three for possible additional filming work. Red Three's demise in the film shows a crude low-quality pyro model, and therefore this model only appears in the film as Red Leader, and never as Red Three.

The Red Leader (Red One) origins of the model are confirmed by a screen-match to the pyro shot in the film where specific detailed markings on the model match up exactly. In comparing the pyro Red Leader model to the hero Red Leader model, several specific details make it clear that it is the Red Leader pyro model on screen. Two production photos showing different sides of the pyro Red Leader model show exact matches to numerous details with this specific X-wing model, confirming it is the original Red Leader pyro model. This X-wing also matches exactly to a workshop photo in its Red Three configuration taken at ILM by crew member Chris Casady. The red stripes, unique airbrush exhaust patterns, and blast-hit marks all align with exact precision to the model today, leaving no question that this is the same model seen in the photograph. Careful examination of the red stripes on the wings reveals that two of the three stripe markings have a different quality than the first, because they were applied at a different time.

The significance of this Star Wars relic is enormous—genuine Star Wars models are amongst the rarest of artifacts from the films, and this is believed to be the only intact X-wing model from the original Star Wars that exists in a private collection. No other high-quality pyro models are known to have survived filming, and the hero models that survived are in the collection of George Lucas. The model is screen-matched to a memorable shot in the film and photo-matched to multiple behind-the-scenes production shots, providing unquestionable authenticity. The X-wing fighter is an integral element of the Star Wars saga and is recognized the world over.

Included with the lot is an authentic giclee print showing this model in the ILM workshop photograph taken by Chris Casady, rotoscope and animation design animator on the film, during his time on the film in early 1977. The period image shows the model in great detail and is signed by photographer Casady.

The X-wing fighter model is preserved extremely well and remains in excellent condition. The light-weight rigid foam remains solid, and the original unrestored paintwork is in excellent condition, with only subtle flaking in small areas. One of the laser cannons exhibits slight warpage, and one of the scratch-built laser cannon tip assemblies is loose. The pyro X-wing was intended to mount on a C-stand with a hole in the back of the fuselage, or to be hung from wires during filming. There are several small holes in the top of the fuselage related to hanging the model on wires. A custom-made aluminum stand that supports the model through the fuselage is included with the piece, as is a wooden transport crate. Dimensions: 22" x 18" x 8" (56 cm x 46 cm x 20 cm)

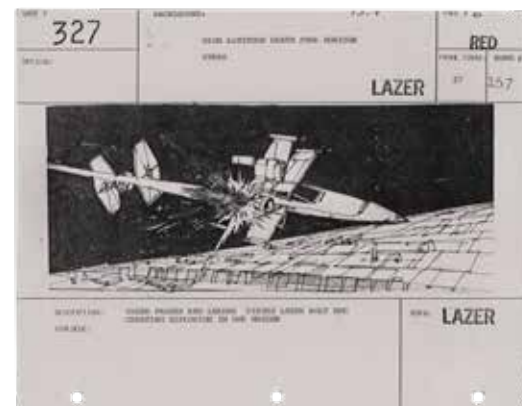
Special shipping required; see notice in the Buyer's Guide.

Estimate. \$500,000 - 1,000,000



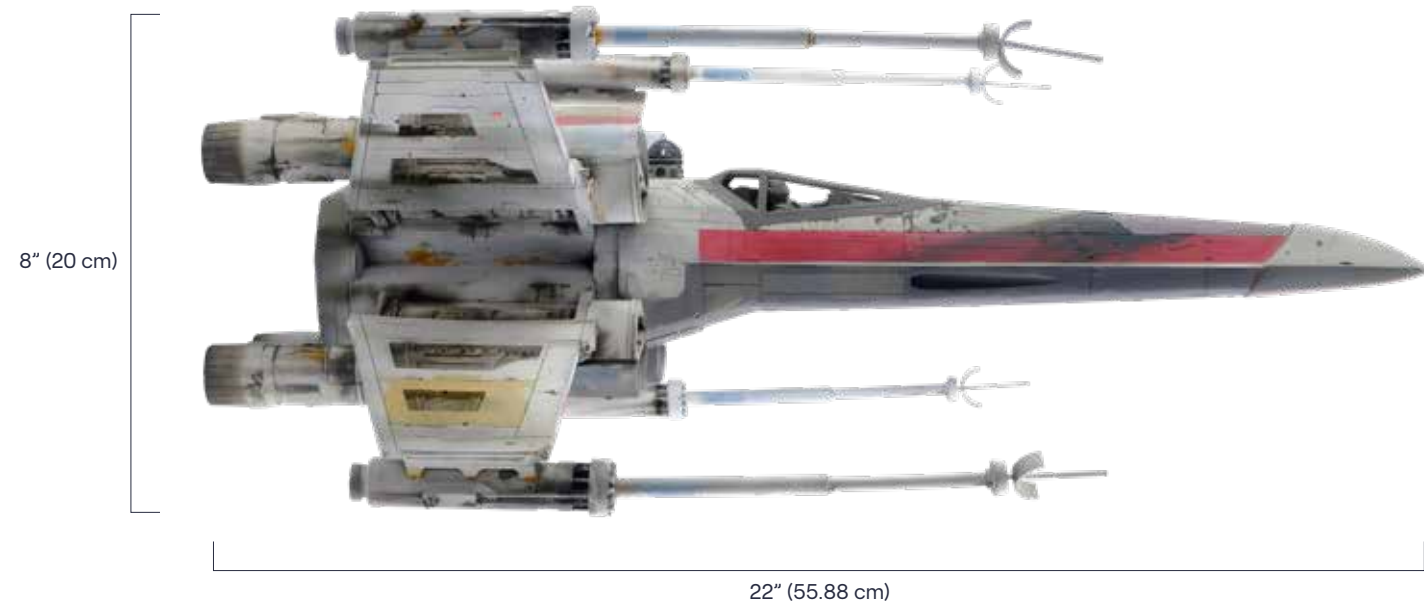
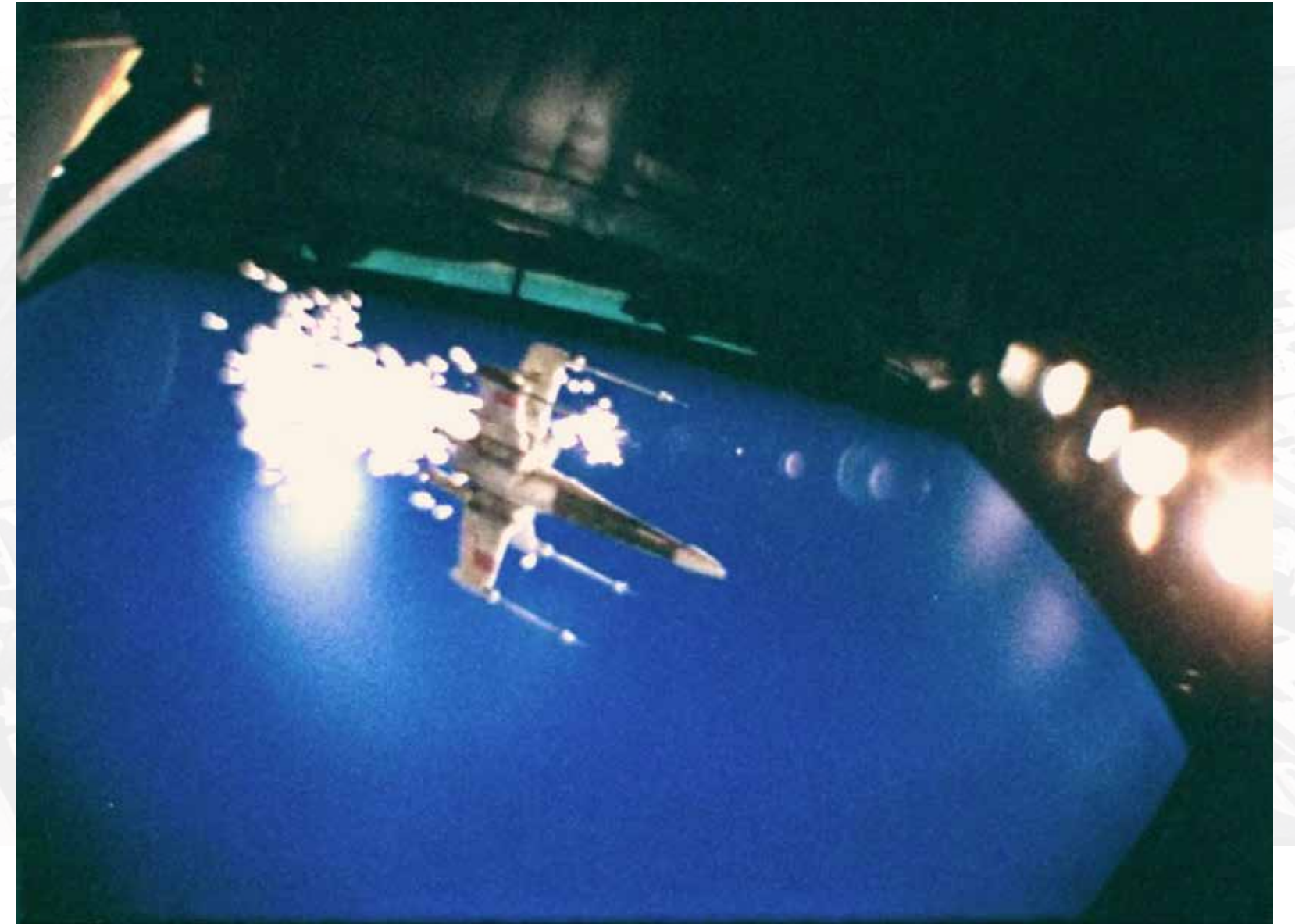
The Red Leader pyro model appears in the film in production shot #327, in which Red Leader is hit by a laser, setting off an explosion on one engine. The model was filmed with a pyro charge detonating behind the engine to generate sparks and was enhanced with a rotoscope-animated glow on the engine.

The Red Leader pyro model is clearly identifiable on screen by the black burn mark on the top of the fuselage, and is distinguished from the hero Red Leader model by several differences in detailing, including the pyro's nose-cone, which is smooth and lacks the vertical panel-line of the hero nose-cone.





Behind the scenes documentary footage shows an explosion with sparks trailing behind the X-wing as the model travels on wires. It is clear that the model remains intact despite the effect, unlike many other models used for pyro shots. As the explosion had minimal impact to the X-wing, the crew re-dressed it for possible additional use as Red Three.





An ILM production photo of model maker David Jones working with the Red Leader (also known as Red One, as indicated by a single thin red stripe visible on the lower wing) pyro model shows details of the underside. While the model was later re-dressed as Red Three (three thin red stripes on each wing), decals and weathering on the fuselage, wings, and inside the engines match specifically to the model as it appears today; additional grey color was added to the underside of the fuselage when it was updated from Red One to Red Three.



This production photo shows the Red Leader pyro model set up on a stand in front of bluescreen as model maker Lorne Petersen stands by. Visible in the photo are numerous small details and paint marks that match to its appearance today, despite the additional paintwork that was applied when the ship was converted from Red One to Red Three.





The Red Leader pyro model (fourth from the front) and the Red Leader hero model (second from the front) are seen displayed amongst a line-up of X-wings in this ILM workshop image.

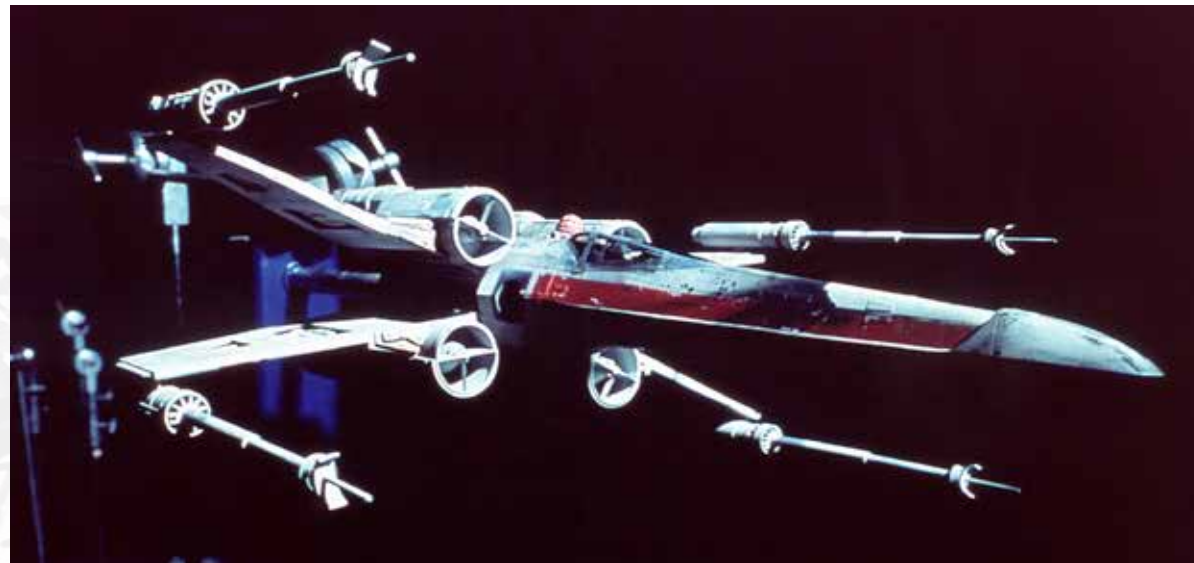


A shot of effects supervisor John Dykstra next to the table of displayed models was frequently used in early publicity materials.



Several variations of photos were taken of an ILM table covered in models, including 7 X-wings, 3 Y-wings, and 1 T.I.E. fighter. In this image, model makers pose with their work including Paul Huston, Jon Erland, David Jones, Steve Gawley, Dave Beasley, and Lorne Petersen. Joe Johnston, visual effects art director, sits at left—Johnston painted many of the models for the film himself. Not pictured is lead model maker Grant McCune, who also contributed heavily to the ship models.





Hero Red Leader Model, 1977 Production Photo



Hero Red Leader Model, 1977 Production Photo



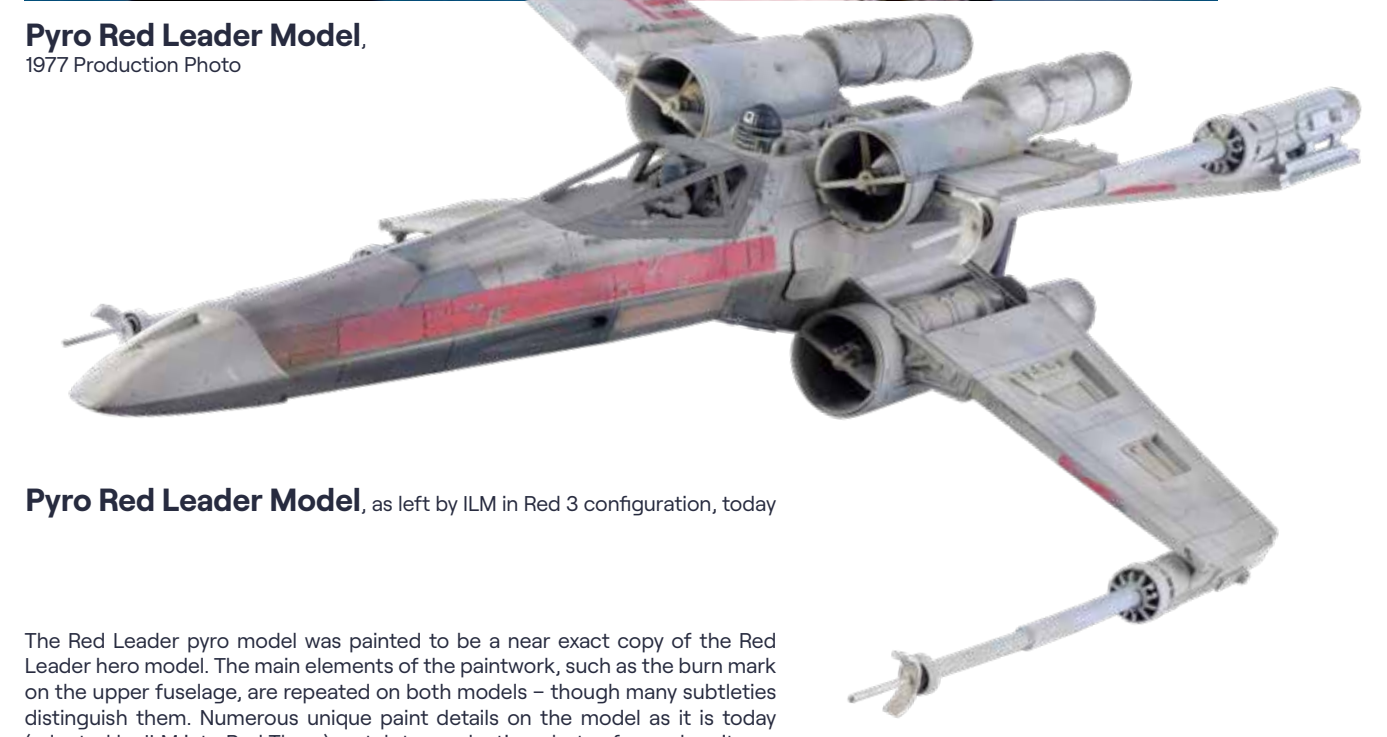
Pyro Red Leader Model, 1977 Screenshot



Pyro Red Leader Model,
1977 Production Photo

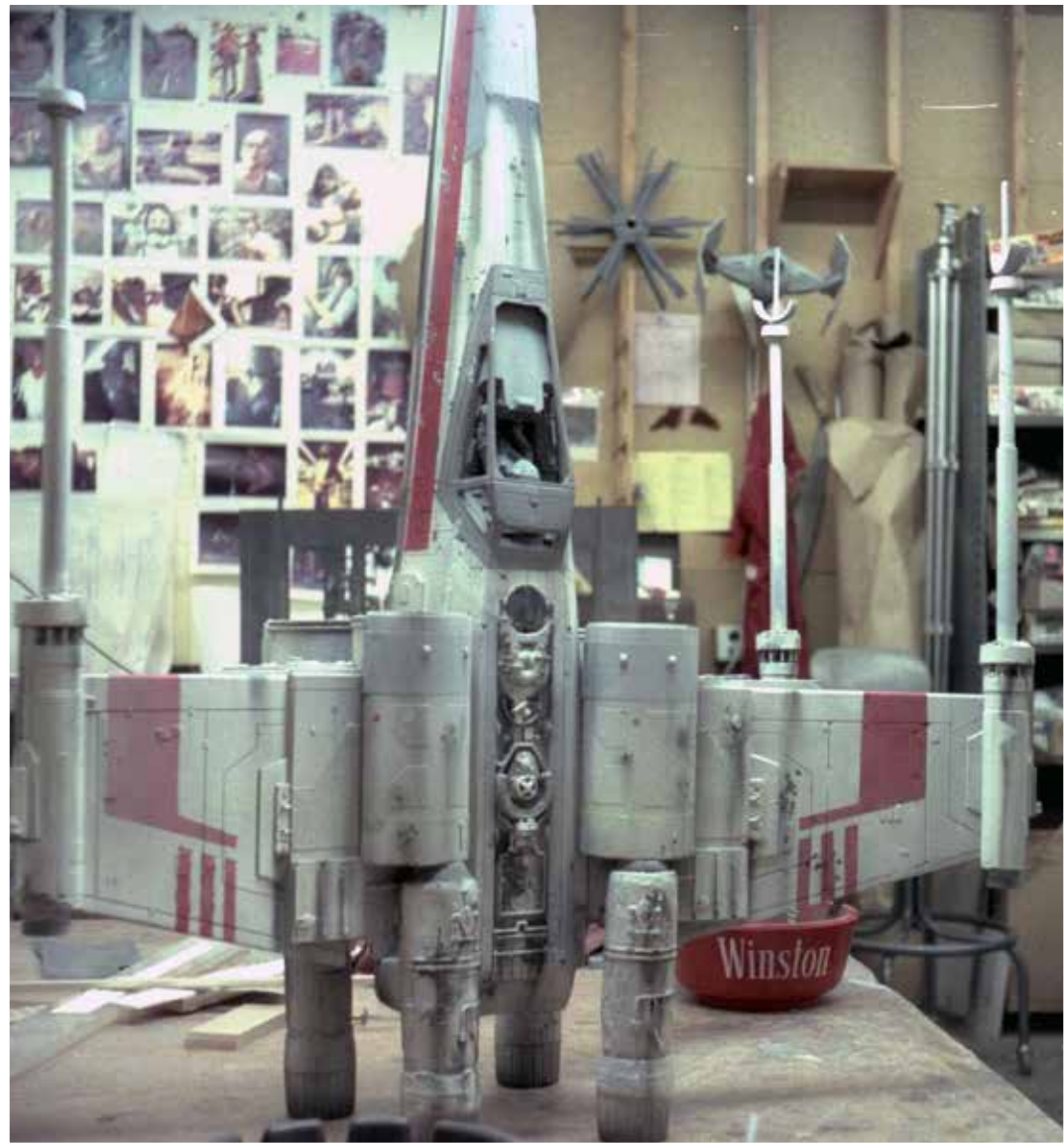
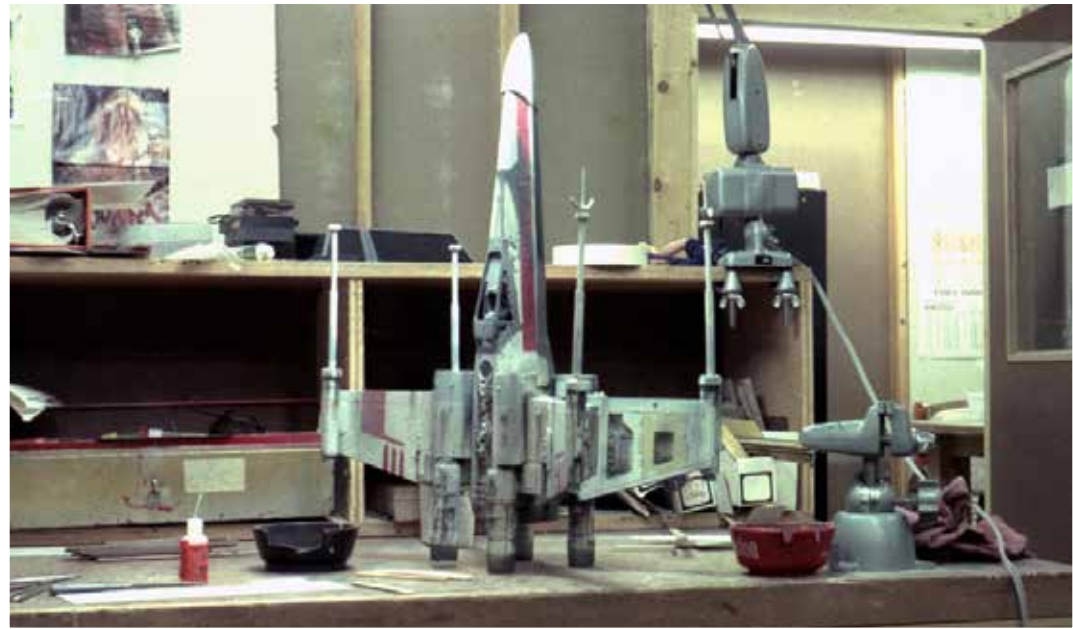


Pyro Red Leader Model, as left by ILM in Red 3 configuration, today



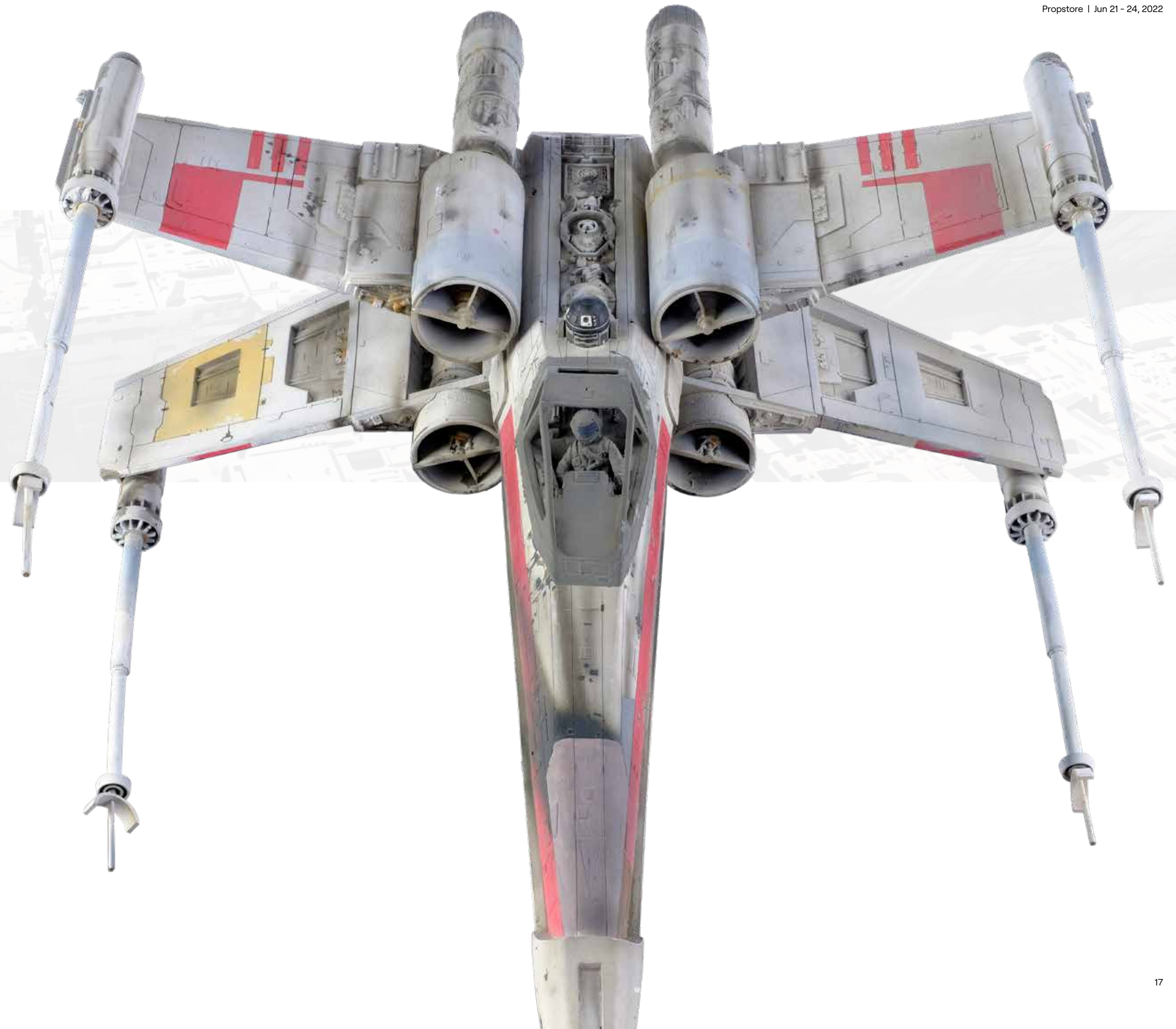
Pyro Red Leader Model, as left by ILM in Red 3 configuration, today

The Red Leader pyro model was painted to be a near exact copy of the Red Leader hero model. The main elements of the paintwork, such as the burn mark on the upper fuselage, are repeated on both models – though many subtleties distinguish them. Numerous unique paint details on the model as it is today (adapted by ILM into Red Three) match to production photos from when it was originally dressed as Red Leader.



These photos taken in 1977 by ILM rotoscope artist Chris Casady document the model during production after it was adapted to Red Three. All details in these photos match exactly to the model as it is today, 45 years later. Giclee prints of the two 1977 photos, signed by photographer Casady, are included with the lot.





This is believed to be the only intact X-wing model from the original Star Wars that resides in a private collection. Model miniatures are among the rarest of artifacts from the Star Wars films. No other high quality pyro X-wings are known to have survived the visual effects shoot, and the hero models that survived are in the collection of George Lucas. The conversion of the X-wing from Red Leader to Red Three exemplifies the filmmaking process and it is fortunate that the piece was documented as both ships during ILM's production, more than 45 years ago. The Red Leader pyro X-wing model is a truly incredible artifact from one of the most influential films in the history of cinema.

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