CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An amusement park system, comprising:

a ride vehicle (RV) configured to move along an RV path, the ride vehicle having a field of view;

a first figure configured to animate within a scene area;

a first mechanism associated with the first figure, and configured to move the first figure into and out of the scene area;

a second figure configured to exhibit free motion;

a second mechanism associated with the second figure, and configured to move the second figure into and out of the scene area; and

a ride controller configured to:

determine when the field of view of the RV is either directed away from the scene area or obstructed from the scene area, and

responsive to such determination, cause the first mechanism to move the first figure out of the scene area and the second mechanism to move the second figure into the scene area.

2. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein the first mechanism and the second mechanism are configured to operate in conjunction with each other to:

move the first figure out of the scene area, while the second figure is being moved into the scene area; or

move the second figure out of the scene area, while the first figure is being moved into the scene area.

3. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein the first mechanism comprises a base structure configured to:

support the first figure; and

slide or rotate between a first position that places the first figure in the scene area, and a second position that places the first figure out of the scene area.

4. The amusement park system of claim 3, wherein the first mechanism comprises a structure configured to impede visibility of the first figure while the first figure is out of the scene area.

5. The amusement park system of claim 4, wherein the structure is one of a wall or a box.

6. The amusement park system of claim 3, wherein the second mechanism comprises a structure configured to: suspend the second figure at a first location out of the scene area, move the second figure to an inside location of the scene area, and enable the second figure to move to an outside location out of the scene area while exhibiting free motion.

7. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein:

the first mechanism comprises a base structure having a first portion configured to support the first figure and a second portion configured to support the second figure, the second portion further configured to transition its orientation relative to the first portion between a first plane generally common with a plane of the first portion, and a second plane that is not common with the plane of the first portion, and the first mechanism and the second mechanism are configured to rotate between respective first positions that place the first figure in the scene area and the second figure out of the scene area, and respective second positions that place the second figure in the scene area and the first figure out of the scene area.

8. The amusement park system of claim 7, wherein the base structure comprises a wall located between the first figure and the second figure.

9. The amusement park system of claim 7, wherein the second mechanism further comprises structure configured to:

enable the second figure to move from an inside location of the scene area to an outside location out of the scene area when the second portion of the base structure transitions from the first plane to the second plane; and

subsequently move the second figure from the outside location to the inside location.

10. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein the ride controller is configured to determine when the field of view of the RV is either directed away from the scene area or blocked from the scene area based on one or more of: an expiration of a timer from a start of

movement by the RV, an activation of a sensor by the RV at or near the scene area, or an expiration of a timer activated by a detection of the RV at a point along the RV path.

11. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein the first figure is coupled to an animation controller configured to cause the first figure to animate.

12. The amusement park system of claim 11, wherein the ride controller controls the animation controller so that the first figure animates only while the first figure is in the scene area.

13. The amusement park system of claim 1, further comprising a projection system configured to project light onto the second figure while the second figure is in the scene area and at least a portion of time while the second figure moves out of the scene area.

14. The amusement park system of claim 1, wherein the first figure and the second figure have a same appearance.

15. A method of controlling a first figure configured to animate and a second figure configured to exhibit free motion in an amusement park ride, the method comprising: determining when a field of view of a ride vehicle (RV) moving along a RV path of the ride is either directed away from a scene area of the ride or obstructed from the scene area, and responsive to such determination, causing a first mechanism associated with the first figure to move the first figure out of the scene area, and causing a second mechanism associated with the second figure to move the second figure into the scene area.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

subsequent to causing the second mechanism to move the second figure into the scene area, enabling the second figure to move to an outside location out of the scene area while exhibiting free motion.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

subsequent to enabling the second figure to move to an outside location out of the scene area, causing the first mechanism to move the first figure back into the scene area, and causing

the second mechanism to move the second figure from the outside location to a location adjacent the scene area.

18. An amusement park system, comprising: a ride vehicle (RV) configured to move along an RV path, the ride vehicle having a field of view; a first figure configured to animate within a scene area; a first mechanism associated with the first figure, and configured to move the first figure into and out of the scene area; a second figure configured to exhibit free motion; a second mechanism associated with the second figure, and configured to move the second figure into and out of the scene area; and a ride controller configured to: determine when the field of view of the RV is either directed away from the scene area or obstructed from the scene area, and responsive to such determination, cause the second mechanism to move the second figure out of the scene area and the first mechanism to move the first figure into the scene area.

19. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein the first mechanism and the second mechanism are configured to operate in conjunction with each other to: move the first figure into the scene area, while the second figure is being moved out of the scene area; or move the second figure into the scene area, while the first figure is being moved out of the scene area.

20. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein the first mechanism comprises a base structure configured to: support the first figure; and slide or rotate between a first position that places the first figure out of the scene area, and a second position that places the first figure into the scene area.

21. The amusement park system of claim 20, wherein the first mechanism comprises a structure configured to impede visibility of the first figure while the first figure is out of the scene area.

22. The amusement park system of claim 21, wherein the structure is one of a wall or a box.

23. The amusement park system of claim 20, wherein the second mechanism comprises a structure configured to: suspend the second figure at a first location out of the scene area, move the second figure to an inside location of the scene area, and enable the second figure to move to an outside location out of the scene area while exhibiting free motion.

24. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein: the first mechanism comprises a base structure having a first portion configured to support the first figure and a second portion configured to support the second figure, the second portion further configured to transition its orientation relative to the first portion between a first plane generally common with a plane of the first portion, and a second plane that is not common with the plane of the first portion, and the first mechanism and the second mechanism are configured to rotate between respective first positions that place the first figure out the scene area and the second figure in the scene area, and respective second positions that place the second figure out of the scene area and the first figure in the scene area.

25. The amusement park system of claim 24, wherein the base structure comprises a wall located between the first figure and the second figure.

26. The amusement park system of claim 24, wherein the second mechanism further comprises structure configured to: enable the second figure to move from an inside location of the scene area to an outside location out of the scene area when the second portion of the base structure transitions from the first plane to the second plane; and subsequently move the second figure from the outside location to the inside location.

27. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein the ride controller is configured to determine when the field of view of the RV is either directed away from the scene area or blocked from the scene area based on one or more of: an expiration of a timer from a start of movement by the RV, an activation of a sensor by the RV at or near the scene area, or an expiration of a timer activated by a detection of the RV at a point along the RV path.

28. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein the first figure is coupled to an animation controller configured to cause the first figure to animate.

29. The amusement park system of claim 28, wherein the ride controller controls the animation controller so that the first figure animates only while the first figure is in the scene area.

30. The amusement park system of claim 18, further comprising a projection system configured to project light onto the second figure while the second figure is in the scene area and at least a portion of time while the second figure moves out of the scene area.

31. The amusement park system of claim 18, wherein the first figure and the second figure have a same appearance.

32. A method of controlling a first figure configured to animate and a second figure configured to exhibit free motion in an amusement park ride, the method comprising: determining when a field of view of a ride vehicle (RV) moving along a RV path of the ride is either directed away from a scene area of the ride or obstructed from the scene area, and responsive to such determination, causing a first mechanism associated with the first figure to move the first figure into the scene area, and causing a second mechanism associated with the second figure to move the second figure out of the scene area.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising: enabling the second figure to move to an outside location out of the scene area while exhibiting free motion.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising: causing the second mechanism to move the second figure from the outside location to a location adjacent the scene area.