

Photos by Scott McDonald © Hedrich Blessing Photographers



Art has a place in every corner of the hotel's lobby, from works mounted on the walls to the interactive seating pods spread throughout.

millimeters apart for high-resolution digital video displays.

The “interactive gadgetry” Lohan refers to can be found inside the hotel’s lobby, where LED-lit seating pods surround tables with 50-inch Samsung LCD screens embedded inside.

“Those are cool because you can sit there with your friends, have a discussion and instead of looking down at your little iPhones you can go on the table and interact and everybody can participate,” Lohan says. “Guests can take pictures of themselves and project them on the larger screens, if that’s

what they wish to do.”

These images—and art in general—are a major theme in the InterContinental’s revamped lobby. The art theme pervades every corner of the lobby, from the Henry Moore sculpture—the largest in the world—in the center of the atrium, to the digital art displayed on LED monitors placed around the lobby and elevator banks, to physical works mounted on the walls. The owners debuted the facelift for December’s Art Basel show and hope it becomes a top destination in the show’s future years.

Landscape architect EDSA also contributed

to the project. Bill Stangeland of McGuire Engineers was MEP engineer, and Chuck Anderson of CEA Engineers served as structural engineer.

According to Roszak, the overall project, which was finished in November 2012, can be described in three words: lighting, branding and technology.

“We changed all the lighting, we kind of re-established their brand as being a state-of-the-art hotel and added a lot of interactive technology,” Roszak says. “And it looks pretty fantastic.”

> **Amy McIntosh**

An Artistic Breakthrough

NEW WINDOWS LET SYNAGOGUE’S CHAPEL SHINE

A round, stone-walled chapel in a Chicago synagogue built in the 1950s may have been meant to feel austere and meditative, but with only a single small clerestory window, it came to be known as “the room of doom.”

It had been built that way 60 years ago because the lakefront site of Emanuel Congregation was supposed to get a north extension of Lake Shore Drive to its immediate east—which meant east-facing windows wouldn’t look out at a vast, serene expanse of water but at a big, banal ribbon of

concrete and asphalt. So it got minimal fenestration on its east side.

But six decades later, with Lake Shore Drive still stopping three blocks south of the synagogue, congregants were eager to “appreciate our lakefront site and connect the space within the chapel to the natural beauty out there,” says Maria Segal, principal of Blender Architecture. A member of the congregation along with her husband, Richard Blender, AIA, Segal is part of a committee planning a campaign of improvements to the

congregation’s aging, crowded Edgewater facility. She frequently sat in the chapel, which is 33 feet across and topped with a few small skylights, and pondered how to enliven the dark, cold space.

The answer appeared fortuitously, when the Tawani Foundation, headed by Col. Jennifer Pritzker, called up Rabbi Michael Zedek to offer seven vintage stained-glass windows for use somewhere in the building. The windows, found in the basement of a Rogers Park building that Tawani owned, may have originated in one of the historic synagogues in Lawndale when that neighborhood was largely Jewish; Tawani offered them to Emanuel Congregation because Col. Pritzker’s late father, Robert, had a long friendship with an emeritus rabbi there.

Almost immediately, Zedek and Segal knew where they'd put the windows: in the room that most needed to lighten up. "We could transform this chapel from an internal type of orientation, a place for detachment from the everyday, to a place where we engage ourselves with nature," Zedek says.

Segal felt that an approximate southeast orientation was right for a new opening, both because that would create lovely sightlines out across the neighboring Lane Beach and because due east would interfere with the tradition of positioning the ark on an east wall. But the very nature of the wall that was to be cut open made figuring out where to cut it open problematic. You couldn't see out to gauge the view, and stone ornaments (believed to be mid-century abstractions of Hebrew letters) dotted the southeast exterior wall; preserving their positions was desired, but not required.

Some strategic holes were drilled and in the end the positioning went splendidly. The view line from most seats in the chapel now passes among the seven round stained-glass panels that hang in front of a framing glass window, out across the sandy beach and to the lake and sky beyond.

Depicting seven of the Jewish holidays—a few others may have originally completed the set—the round windows needed some restoration. Their old wood frames were replaced with steel, and then the circles were mounted on vertical steel supports within a red oak window frame. "We wanted the frames in steel to make them light," Segal says, "and the larger frame around them to be wood for warmth and a connection to the room," whose pews and other furnishings are made of white oak.

Segal at first envisioned the seven circles arranged in a meticulous order, but eventually the odd number and the opening's shape led to a more dynamic positioning. Zedek is pleased. "There's a playful presence to them the way they're arranged now," he says, and "that one void that's left suggests the absence of the rest [of the windows]."

The transformation from dark to light is extraordinary and has already made the chapel a preferred place to worship and have meetings and functions, Zedek and Segal both say. It's also setting the stage for further changes to the larger building, "giving people

a feeling for what we want to do to make what's here better," Segal says.

Further plans for the building have yet to be announced, but for now, the stained-glass "bubbles" in the chapel have established a

beachhead of sorts. As Segal notes, "We have a spectacular lakefront site, but before, you wouldn't have known it [when you were] inside. Now, that connection is clear."

> **Dennis Rodkin**



Seen from the neighboring park (top), the chapel's new aperture presents a far warmer image than the solid rock wall had in the past. Cutting open the stone wall (bottom) to create a window and showcase the donated stained glass panels gave the chapel a brighter aspect.

Photos by David Silverman of D Star Photography