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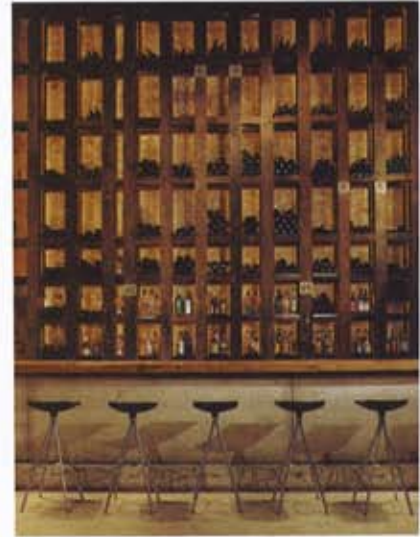
inspiring commercial design solutions march 2005

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The Boiler House by Mackay | Wong
Cool Stuff
MoMA Design and Book Store by
Gluckman Mayner Architects
Laminates
Immersive Design



The main floor bar area (right and opposite) is characterized by reclaimed fir wood salvaged from the 19th Century building. Mod accents like concrete floors, mosaic tiles, and touches of cobalt blue modernize the space.



hot house

The Boiler House, an adaptive re-use project in Toronto by local firm Mackay | Wong, is proof that revamping can be respectful of the past

By Sofia Galadza
Photography by David Whittaker

Toronto has witnessed much revitalization over the last decade, and one of the finest examples can be seen in the Distillery District. This pocket of limestone buildings dating back to the 1830s in the city's east end was home to the Gooderham & Worts Distillery, which operated until 1990. Through the 1990s, it was the top film location in Canada. And in December 2001, Cityscape Holdings, a commercial and residential development company focusing on historic properties, purchased the 13-acre, 44-building property. Their plan: To create a pedestrian-only village dedicated to arts, culture, and entertainment.

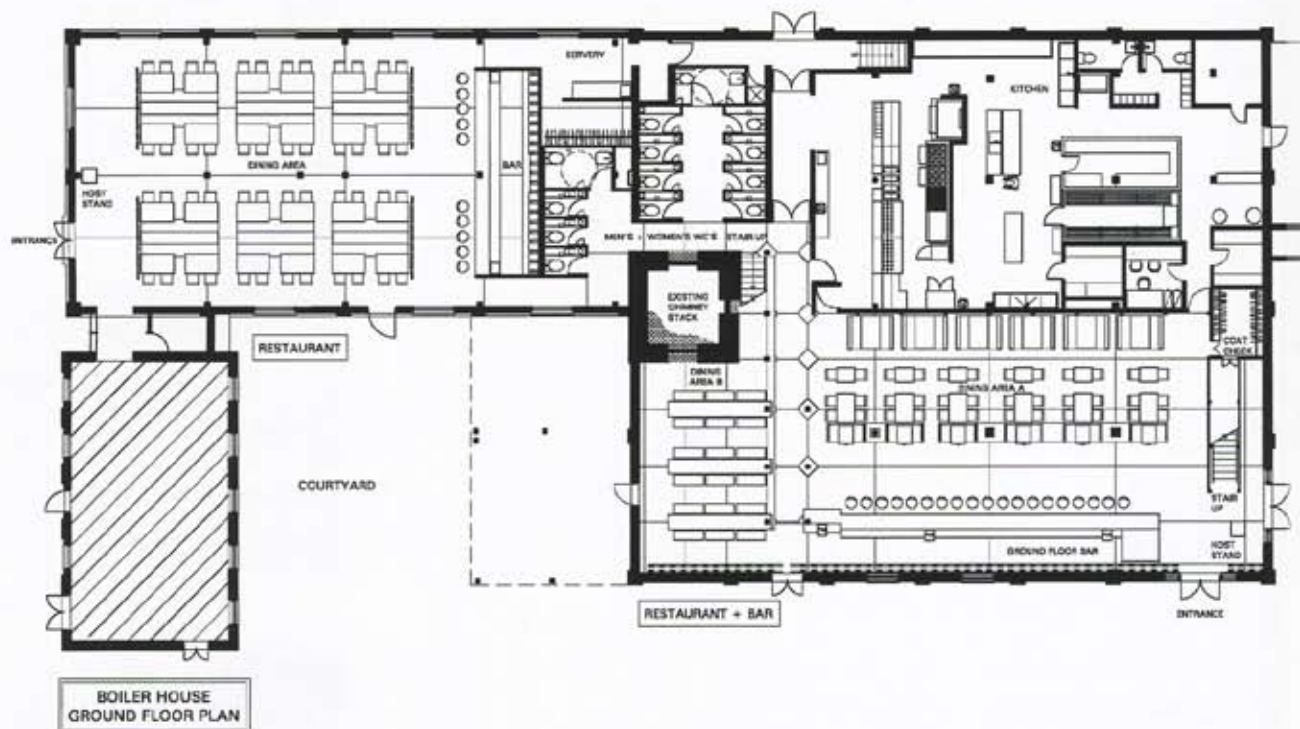
"Every one of our tenants had to be special and unique—something that would draw people and get them talking," says John Berman, a partner at Cityscape. The Boiler House, one of several restaurants in the district, is doing just that. Berman, who is also part owner of the restaurant, enlisted local firm Mackay | Wong Strategic Design. Cityscape had prior experience working with them. Most recently, Ron Wong and Gordon Mackay designed sales centers for the developer's residential properties. "They are easy to work with and talented," Berman says. Moreover, "they understand hip clientele."

"We wanted people to appreciate the grandeur of the space, and for it to have a modern edge to it," says Berman. Addressing those needs, as well as those of the discerning thirtysomething market, the Boiler House's target customer, was tricky in this case. One of the design goals for all of the Distillery District venues was to respect the heritage of the site. Designers

and tenants were encouraged to use materials—namely, the fir wood—found in the buildings. How, then, did Mackay | Wong manage to create a happening vibe in an old setting? By making it "clean, raw, and respectful," says principal and partner Ron Wong.

By respectful, Wong means communicating the building's history. Still, the objective was not to make it seem nostalgic. "The shape and dimension of the building had so much going for it already," says Wong of the 10,000-sq.-ft. space, citing features like the mezzanine and cavernous ceiling. Perhaps the most stunning feature is the way in which they reclaimed the wood found on the premises to build a 24-ft.-tall wine wall, as well as tables and bar top. "The real gem of this place was reclaiming the old wood," says Wong. Moreover, salvaged steel and exposed brick helped the design team create a contemporary aesthetic. A simple palette that includes concrete floors accented with cobalt blue paint add to the overall polished-yet-relaxed feel.

The physical layout is equally simple. The design team planned the space to accommodate those having drinks, as well as diners. Two bar areas, on both ground and mezzanine levels, make waiting for a table comfortable. The main floor bar is separated from the dining room with freestanding booths. Another mezzanine is a stage for jazz bands, which perform nightly and have helped the Boiler House, according to Toronto.com, become the city's best venue for jazz.



BOILER HOUSE
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



In the dining area (left), sleek banquettes are juxtaposed with tabletops made of reclaimed wood.

There were several challenges with this project, the most obvious being the fact that the team was working with an historic building. The owners wanted to make certain that the woodworking was done appropriately, at the Boiler House and throughout the complex. In turn, they opened a millwork shop on the premises and trained an on-site construction team to work with the salvaged wood. The upside of reusing the materials, adds Wong, was that the cost for completing the project was realistic.

The Boiler House, like the entire Distillery District, is a chic, not-at-all-kitschy interpretation of an historic landmark. It attracts repeat customers, but has garnered buzz in international travel magazines. This is certainly due, in part, to Mackay Wong's work. "People absolutely love the design," says Berman. It's adaptive reuse at its best: making the old new, but decidedly respectful of the old. ■



A row of blue booths is balanced by a larger grouping of basic wooden tables (above). The result is contemporary and comfortable. The mezzanine-level bar (right) also features new among the old, with design features like the suspended ceiling above the bar, and punchy green seating.



who

Project: The Boiler House Complex. *Client:* Cityscape Developments. *Architect:* ERA Architects. *Interior designer, lighting designer:* Mackay | Wong Strategic Design, Eagar & Co. Design. *Structural engineer:* Read Jones Christoffersen. *Kitchen consultant:* Russell Food Equipment. *General contractor:* Patrick Ellard. *Furniture dealer:* Kiosk, Fluid Living, 4 on the Floor. *Photographer:* David Whittaker.

what

Flooring: Metro Concrete Floors. *Lighting fixtures:* Sistemalux. *Banquette/built-in seating:* Barry's Vehicle Upholstery. *Upholstery:* L.K. Trading International.

where

Location: Toronto, ON. *No. of floors:* 2. *Total floor area:* 10,000 sq. ft.