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Modernity Banks on History

The Massey Tower Sales Centre & Model Suite breathes contemporary flair into a historic Toronto landmark.

By Carly Hagedon, Assistant Editor

In 1987, the Canadian Bank of Commerce Building on the main thoroughfare, Yonge Street in Toronto, was boarded and virtually forgotten. Its Corinthian columns and Greek revival façade sat lifeless for years until MOD Developments Inc. (Toronto) decided to repurpose the aged, abandoned bank.

Today, this 1905 historical landmark is preparing to anchor the soon-to-be Massey Tower, a 60-story luxury condominium project in its preconstruction phase; and is home to the Massey Tower Sales Centre & Model Suite, which houses a sample suite that prospective residents can view, along with other amenity options.

Named after the city's beloved (and historic) Massey Hall performing arts theater, Massey Tower's newly completed sales center features intermittent bursts of bright red reminiscent of theater curtains and dark, striking chandeliers against a clean, contemporary interior.

And though the interior is faultlessly cohesive, it wasn't a simple task to meld historic and modern motifs. Anna Simone, principal of Cecconi Simone Inc. (Toronto), worked for roughly two years to complete the design of the sales center, which will eventually be remodeled into the condominiums' lobby.

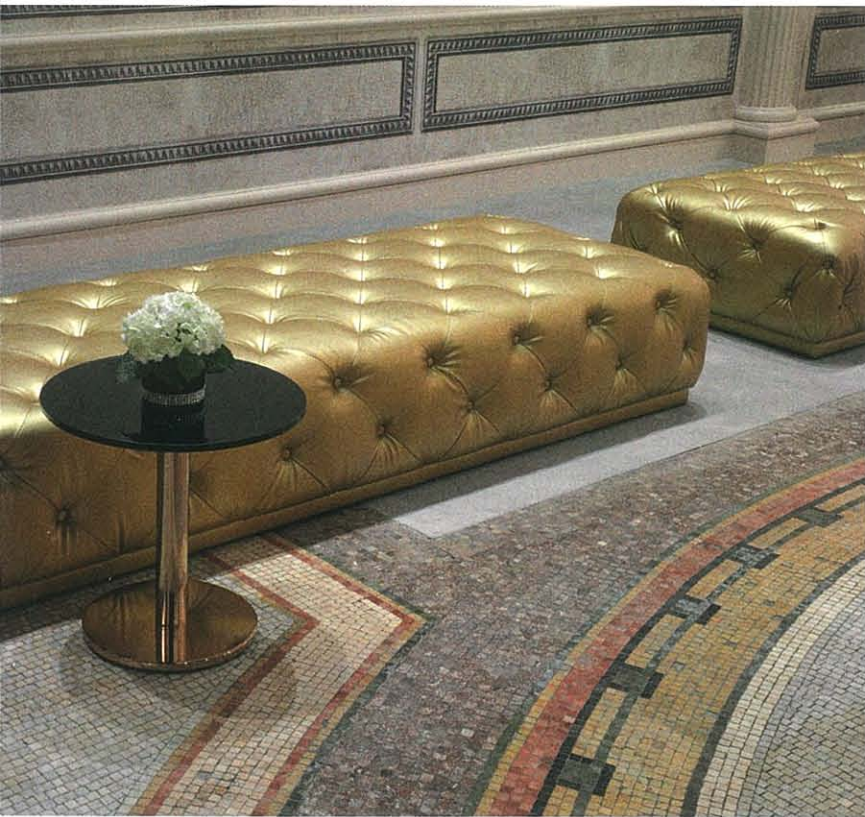
Left The Massey Tower Sales Centre & Model Suite exemplifies a cohesive blend of modern and historical motifs, through the mixing of both new and original interior components and decor.

BEN RAHN/A-FRAME INC., TORONTO

Right Replicated to an exact sixteenth of an inch, the model suite provides potential buyers with a preview of the living spaces in the soon-to-be finished units.

Opposite page Referencing period-style lighting, striking, modern black chandeliers add a decadent, sophisticated vibe and are balanced against highly detailed digital *trompe-l'œil* molding on the back wall.

Below Contemporary gold seating accentuates the intricacy of the building's original mosaic floors, which were uncovered accidentally during renovation.



One of the most time-consuming challenges Simone and the rest of the design and consulting teams encountered included restoring the building's historical molding. Remnants of previous millwork in the space were to remain untouched, while adding new molding to the older segments proved to be an in-depth process.

Instead of "picking out" molding from a design book or catalogue, the team underwent intensive research. Simone explains: "It took us significantly more time to ensure that we respected the proportions and profiles so one wouldn't know where the historical component ended and the new began."

Saving both time and money, the molding was restored using a digital variation of *trompe-l'œil* (French for "deceive the eye"), an art technique that creates an optical illusion. Reproduced digitally on thick vinyl, the printed moldings were then applied like wallpaper.

"The process is custom ... we had to ensure that the colors were correct and that the three-dimensional component was actually strong enough to pop out and appear like molding," Simone says. "We [employed] new technology, but [considered] the way things were done hundreds of years ago."

Other surprises appeared along the way: One day, as the design teams began discussing possibilities for flooring, the client became suddenly curious about what lay under the remainder of the previous flooring, now black and downtrodden. Boldly, the client began scraping the floor, revealing an intricate mosaic that had been hidden for years under dust and dirt. Though the floor wasn't discovered early in the design process, Simone's team began considering it a focal point and rearranged elements of their design to showcase the discovery.

"What's lovely is having a developer that didn't ignore [the mosaic] but said, 'It will cost us more money, but we will take the time, restore it and make it work.' That is rare," Simone says. "We had that as



our springboard ... it set the tone for us and from there we just complemented it in different ways."

In the end, Simone's hope is that the space makes an impression on those who pass through it.

"I hope people ... feel like they've been transported and they're seeing things for the first time," she says. "I hope it has a voice and a personality that speaks to you. That is very, very critical." ▀

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Toronto

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