The Chazen Museum of Art
Case Study
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The Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recently celebrated 41 years with the opening of a $43 million, 81,000 square-foot addition. A marvel of architecture and design, the addition more than doubled previous gallery capacity, increased public access to collections and added space for events. Many of these events will be hosted in a new lobby, designed to increase visibility and visual appeal, with a large, two-story glass volume that opens onto a courtyard near major campus walkways.

One of the key components of the dramatic lobby design is a custom-engineered Ceilencio® ceiling system with Claro® panels from Decoustics®, a division of CertainTeed Ceilings. Ceilencio gave Boston design architect Machado and Silvetti Associates complete freedom to create a beautiful 3,600 square-foot geometric ceiling design, featuring diamond-shaped panels that measure 11 feet x 8 feet. An integrated acoustical ceiling panel system with endless possibilities, Ceilencio offered a custom-engineered grid, ceiling panels and butterfly clips designed and manufactured to meet the specific demands of the challenging design, as well as the color the architect needed to complement the surrounding structure.

“We needed ceiling panels in a specific shape and a much larger size than most manufacturers offer,” said Stephanie Randazzo-Dwyer, an associate with Machado and Silvetti Associates. “Another important goal was finding ceiling panels available with a finish that would match the off-white color of the glass fiber-reinforced concrete panels on the exterior of the building to allow a seamless transition between these two areas. I think we were somewhat pushing the limits with our ceiling design, but Decoustics did an excellent job meeting our needs.”

The Claro ceiling panels not only provided the color and texture the design team wanted, but also addressed its main acoustical concern — controlling ambient noise in a large space with high ceilings, stone floors and metal walls. With high daily foot traffic and the museum’s desire to host events with live music, acoustical control was a high priority. With an acoustically transparent coating possessing superb sound-absorbing properties (NRC 0.90), Claro again proved to be an ideal match.

Ceilencio consists of a proprietary concealed extruded aluminum grid and panels with a clear vapor retarder backing. The grid is easy to install and 100-percent downward accessible via a unique torsion spring mechanism, which permits individual panels to

Location: Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Application: Decoustics® Ceilencio Custom Ceiling System installed in the 3,600 square-foot lobby area of the museum’s recent 81,000 square-foot expansion

Managing Architect: Continuum Architects + Planners, S.C., Milwaukee

Design Architect: Machado and Silvetti Associates, Boston


Decoustics® Ceilencio® Custom Ceiling System Provides Beautiful Geometric Design and Excellent Acoustics for Art Museum Addition at University of Wisconsin
be “hinged” down — or completely removed, if necessary — for convenient access to mechanical and electrical services. The grid is suspended using hanger wires, rods and similar suspension components.

The general contractor on the project, J.H. Findorff & Son, based in Madison, WI, subcontracted the ceiling installation work to prominent Madison ceilings contractor Austad & Sons Inc. Working with a crew of three at an average pace of 200 square feet installed per day, the contractor used electric scissor lifts to access the 22-foot heights needed for the ceiling system installation. The project proved to be a challenging installation.

“The lobby has a frameless window system, with a T-shaped piece of glass coming off of it,” said Steinar Austad, president of Austad & Sons. “We had to measure every piece of glass and notch our ceiling panels to make sure they would fit around the glass. The ceiling also had a 4-inch return duct that went into a cast concrete panel on the exterior. Paying close attention to the return and layout was very critical. If one measurement was off, it would have thrown everything off. And, every border panel going around the entire project was a custom panel, so we had to be precise.”

Throughout the project, the contractor received technical support from Decoustics representatives, which ensured a smooth installation. The crew completed the job in about 20 days to excellent reviews.

“Decoustics offers really good tech support, and we got a lot of help from the people there,” Austad said. “I was impressed with how everything turned out; it worked really well for us. The Decoustics ceiling really sets off the lobby and makes it look great.”

The customer was equally pleased with final product, aesthetically and acoustically.

“Machado & Silvetti did an absolutely superb job with their design,” says Russell Panczenko, director of the Chazen Museum of Art. “The lobby looks wonderful and has excellent acoustics. We had four days of grand opening events with live music and about 8,000 people coming through in four days, and we even had musicians complimenting us on the acoustics of the space. It’s a big two-story space, and if musicians are satisfied with the acoustics of that space, that says a lot to me.”
You can Be Certain™ that Decoustics will free you to bring your one-of-a-kind ceiling design to life. Its dramatic custom forms are engineered with exceptional precision to make even your most elaborate vision a possibility. And as part of CertainTeed Ceilings, we offer the expertise to help you ensure every space achieves ideal Environmental Acoustics™ for a healthier indoor environment. Our solutions promote wellbeing and productivity in any setting so every person can achieve their greatest potential. Through deep industry knowledge, continual innovation and sustainable efforts, we empower you to provide a sounder environment in any setting.