

The Hyatt Regency in Vancouver looks deliberately different from other hotels in the series.

FORGING IDENTITY WITHIN A CHAIN

Typically, the appeal behind a chain of services – whether it be hotels or restaurants – is that the look and feel of the properties

are identical and identifiable no matter if they are located across the street, the country, or the world from each other. This method was

developed so that customers who feel comfortable with a particular brand will seek out the familiar wherever they travel.



Hyatt Regency broke with tradition, however, when it came time to renovate its luxury hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia. Since Hyatt Regency has long enjoyed high brand recognition among consumers, the chain didn't feel it needed to duplicate the same formula for its interiors. The company focused the renovation of its Vancouver property on the beauty of the surrounding Canadian

City, establishing a unique design identity that was

worthy of the Hyatt Regency reputation.

A lot had changed in Vancouver since the hotel was built in 1973. When the Hyatt Regency opened, the area was home to the forest, mining, and fishing industries. Over the last 30 years, this same area has become the hub for leading companies in software development, computer hardware, communications technology, and biotechnology. In addition, the city has always contained a rich, cultural mix of Asian, British, and Western European influences.

It was important to the hotel chain that the renovated Hyatt

Regency celebrate Vancouver's cultural diversity and technology within a framework of references to the resources that had first put the city on the map.

The hotel chain turned to the architectural and design firms of MCM Interiors Ltd. and Coordinated Hotel Interiors Ltd. (CHIL), both located in Vancouver, to imbue the hotel with a design scheme that encapsulated the natural beauty and independent spirit of this grand, multicultural port city.

Completely renovating a 34-floor hotel was going to take a sizable amount of time. For that reason, the project was broken down into sections. Phase One, which was completed in March 2002, was comprised of three levels totaling 50,000 square feet and included the entry, lobby, ballroom, and food service spaces.

References to water, forests, and mountains – Vancouver's primary natural elements – can be found throughout the first three floors. In keeping with the hotel chain's strong desire for a contemporary treatment, these elements were interpreted in an abstract rather than a literal way. Wood, metal, and stone were selected to express technology applied to raw materials, as much as the materials themselves.

The lighting solutions for the first three floors were designed to reinforce the overall design goals of simplifying and enlivening the spaces, bringing in natural light wherever possible, offering a greater sense of spaciousness in circulation areas (particularly the corridors), and providing a more dramatic, more contemporary, and more "Vancouver look" to the areas of the hotel seen most by visitors.

The lobby on the first floor was completely rethought and redone in a contemporary manner. A new



PHOTOGRAPHY: ED WHITE, VANCOUVER, BC

The lobby's former ceiling was lowered in order to install this contemporary waterfall effect on the wall, courtesy of special lighting fixtures, glass, and holographic film.



The reception area is clean and spare in design and contains plenty of downlight illumination for writing/reading tasks. The surrounding cherry wood finish provides guests with a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

quartzite floor and cherry wood finishes on the walls add warmth to the space. However, one of the most noticeable differences was the ceiling height. The former lobby had three stories of open space above. MCM's design lowered the ceiling to two stories and used the space that occupied the lobby's opening on the third floor to install feature lighting fixtures that illuminate an innovative, special-effects "wall" that spans the length down to the main lobby area. This unusual wall suggests a cascading waterfall through the careful placement of glass, light, and holographic film.

The sense of openness and airiness that the new lobby space espouses was achieved in large part through a general simplification of the lobby design, combined with a substantial increase in the amount of natural light available. The design team accomplished this by removing

various light-blocking elements and, where necessary, replacing those elements with transparent equivalents.

The general lighting in the lobby was designed to supplement and complement this increase in natural light. However, a number of specialty lighting fixtures were installed to add drama, interest, and to enhance those elements designed to express the local, Vancouver character and culture.

The ceiling of the two-story lobby boasts a sophisticated contemporary look achieved with curved steel and metal-mesh panels. Instead of the more traditional brass or crystal chandeliers often specified for grand lobbies, this design team opted for three large, shallow-bowl pendant fixtures as a bold, contemporary statement.

The most dramatic element of the main lobby is, of course, the "waterfall" feature that greets visitors upon arrival. The travertine walls of the former lobby were refinished in dark cherry wood in an effort to reflect both the wood-

based economy so important to Vancouver's past and the city's connection to the Asian Pacific region in a cosmopolitan fashion. Set into the cherry wood on the feature wall is a large (30' x 30') showpiece made of cast glass that was crafted locally.

The piece consists of a bold vertical stripe of brilliant blue glass flanked by panels of corrugated clear glass backed with holographic film. The glass-art feature is washed with light from above. Behind the blue stripe are 80 randomly "firing" LED lamps set into a metal panel covered with holographic film. The combined effect of the film and the lamps creates a shimmer, resembling a waterfall, which looks different when viewed from various angles.

The lobby's reception area is defined by indirect ceiling fixtures as well as down lighting and spot lighting, including small spotlights on cast glass set into the reception counters.

Second floor

Previously, the atrium space on the



A mix of lighting techniques draws attention to the bar area's contemporary, architectural elements.

second floor overlooking the main lobby was contained by a railing and decorated with planters. To bring aesthetic excitement to the space, MCM Interiors replaced these accoutrements with a new railing system comprised of wood, glass, and stainless steel. The design team replaced the existing concrete canopy at this level with an exterior canopy of glass and metal and a new clear glass curtain wall. The increased use of glass allows more light to enter the lobby from above, contributing to the lobby's overall airier feeling.

The second floor of the Hyatt contains a much-loved restaurant (Fish and Co.) with views of the busy city streets, including a 100-year-old cathedral. The design team left this section alone, adding only a lively, custom-designed carpet. The rest of the second floor atrium, however, provided an



opportunity: The MCM Interiors team felt that the space was underutilized and relatively neglected – best of all, they could visualize a new restaurant/bar in this area that would provide a less-formal dining atmosphere than Fish and Co.

Dubbed the Mosaic Bar and Grille, the newly created

contemporary restaurant/bar is a nice counter-balance to Fish and Co. The design team installed custom-designed furniture, carpeting, and millwork that continues the clean, contemporary design scheme established in the lobby. The lighting here is a mixture of techniques: a combination of soft, indirect ceiling



Above: An under-utilized section of the second-floor atrium allowed the design team to install a comfortable seating area for informal snacking; at night, ceiling fixtures provide ambient light.

Right: The Mosaic restaurant boasts dining with a view. In daytime, illumination is enhanced with natural daylight. At night, a cozier ambiance is achieved with pendant bowl fixtures.

lighting, micro spot lighting, uplighting on columns, wall-washing effects, and sconces set into the cherry wood-clad columns. Plus there is lighting under the bar countertop, on the display wall behind the bar, and a cold cathode light above the bar.

The second floor also contains two major meeting rooms, plus a third room created by relocating office areas which were redeveloped in keeping with the general design themes. Custom chandeliers were specified to suggest ocean waves, achieved by overlapping eight curved translucent white panels.

Third floor

On the third floor of the hotel is one



of Vancouver's largest ballrooms. Besides seating 1,000 people in the main ballroom, the area contains several smaller meeting rooms. Again, it was the infill over the lobby that provided this valuable pre-function space, which can also be closed off to offer "break-out" space for events.

Previously, the grand ballroom

was divisible into three large rooms. After some re-configuration, the design team was able to source divider units (which can be easily stored) in order to create six function spaces. Along with replacing the wall coverings, a new carpet with a custom design depicting raindrops on water was installed. The custom carpeting (in



Above: The lighting plan for the Regency ballroom is designed for user flexibility. The room can now be divided into six separate meeting areas with a contemporary chandelier illuminating each section.

Right: Warm wood tones on the walls and indirect lighting contribute to the cozy feeling of the Windsor private boardroom.

wave patterns that continue the water theme) continues into the corridors of the third floor.

Lighting plays a key role on the third floor. In the Regency Ballroom, indirect ceiling fixtures within the coffers divide the ceiling into equal areas – allowing the room to be divided into the six separate meeting areas, instead of three previously. Contemporary chandeliers above each area – accomplished by many small lights and crystal drops set upon three large metal rings – decoratively add to the ambient lighting. Tying into the theme, a collection of spherical pendants hanging at different heights in a circular pattern are installed above the elevator. The corridor lighting on



the third floor consists of indirect ceiling fixtures and built-in wall lighting that has succeeded in making the corridors seem much more spacious than before.

Phase Two of the hotel renovation, also designed by MCM, is currently underway. This phase will include renovations to the fourth floor, as well as the 34th floor meeting salons, upper-floor

corridors, and the remaining public spaces. (The guest rooms were renovated in 1999.)

The "Vancouverizing" of the hotel, as the design team referred to it, has been a tremendous success. Former guests, who remember the previous design, are astounded to see the transformation. More than a few guests have proclaimed, "I thought it was a new hotel."