

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

**RECORD
INTERIORS
2014**



RECORD KITCHEN & BATH

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- 133 INVISIBLE KITCHEN

From a clever overhaul of an institutional lavatory to an impossibly minimalist kitchen, these commercial and residential projects use palette and scale to defy the ordinary.



ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Royal Ontario Museum Toronto

Architect Superkül

A **WORLD-CLASS** institution, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto houses an extensive collection of cultural artifacts and natural history curios, from decorative objects to dinosaur bones. But earlier this year, the ROM relinquished one of its fossils: the museum's most heavily trafficked washroom suite. The pair of nondescript 1970s lavatories, situated in the ground floor's Currelly Gallery, was replete with tan tiles and mustardy laminate countertops until local firm Superkül tackled its excavation. In the rooms' stead emerged upscale facilities that can stand up to the wear and tear of the more than 1 million guests who visit the museum each year.

"These are the washrooms for a historic hall where they host weddings, galas, and political events, but they get all these kids and school groups during the day," explains Superkül principal Meg Graham. "They're spaces that need to transition easily from day to night, that need to be bulletproof but also a bit glamorous."

Just beyond a stone archway in the gallery, and on the same site as the old suite, a wall clad in black solid surfacing marks the entry

vestibule for the refreshed facilities. Superkül subtly paid homage to the original building's palette here: new bluish-gray terrazzo floors that continue into the washrooms meet the museum corridor's existing brown terrazzo, separated elegantly by a thin bronze strip. Located around the corner at either side of the black wall, glass entry doors—one for men, the other for women—are layered with translucent film. "In a museum, there are lots of doors and places you can't get into. We wanted some kind of transparency so people knew it was a public space," says Graham. Graphic cutouts in the film were made at a toddler's-eye level, indicating men, women, a baby-changing station, and accessibility, as well as offering glimpses that help prevent collisions. "It's such a high-traffic washroom, so this gives a visual cue to people behind the door without having a privacy issue."

Shimmery water-evoking mosaic tiles pick up the terrazzo's hues and line the walls inside the restroom vestibule and in the washrooms, save for mirror paneling above the sinks. Brushed stainless-steel ceiling-height toilet stalls stop just 6 inches shy of the floor to allow for swift mopping and cleanup. Along the same lines, wall-mounted plumbing fixtures contribute to the ease of maintenance by leaving the floor clear.

The main attraction in each washroom is the sinuous sink trough. Thermoformed of 1-inch-thick white solid surfacing, the ribbonlike

FLUID FORMS Undulating sink troughs composed of white solid surfacing are striking new additions to the updated washrooms at the Royal Ontario Museum. In the women's room, the surfacing also wraps a diaper disposal unit and changing station.



FACE LIFT

A snapshot of the original bathrooms (right) reveals dated laminate counters and a tan-brown palette. Cutouts in translucent film on the glass entry doors (center) act as wayfinding markers; their placement at child's-eye level helps maintain privacy. The combination of translucent glass, ample LED lighting, and iridescent mosaic tiles (bottom right) creates a glow at the washroom entrances. Bronze strips in the terrazzo flooring repeat a curving motif from the entry to inside the washrooms.



fixture is an eye-catching sculptural piece and an ingenious way of creating a unified bi-level sink for adult and child use. The children's trough rises 21 inches from the floor and holds one drain for its two faucets, while the adult-height trough, which features two drains serving four faucets, rises 27 inches—a height that meets Ontario's barrier-free accessibility requirements. Both sinks are fronted with 6-inch-high lips that safeguard against spillage, splashing, and pooling. And the faucets, which are actually taps and hand dryers combined into a single unit, further keep water in the sink troughs and off the floor. To hold personal items, a parallel shelf above the sink juts 10 inches from the wall.

Aesthetics aside, there is a symbolic gesture at work here. The sinks' curves, complemented by bronze arcs and circles in the floor, as well as disc-shaped ceiling lights, suggest the timelessness of the ROM, which turned 100 this year. Graham elaborates: "The circle is an intellectually pure, complete curve, symbolic of wholeness and eternity." *Sheila Kim*

credits

ARCHITECT: Superkül

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Boszko & Verity

SIZE: 1,050 square feet

COST: \$700,000

COMPLETION DATE: February 2014

SOURCES

DOORS: Alumicor

DOOR OPERATOR: Besam

TILES: Mutina (large format), Vetrolite (mosaic)

SINK, COUNTER, WALL SURFACING: Corian

FAUCETS/HAND DRYERS: Dyson

TOILET PARTITIONS: Hadrian Manufacturing

TOILETS: Toto

LIGHT FIXTURES: 3G (recessed), Ametrrix (cove), Zaneen (circular ceiling)

BABY CHANGING TABLE: Koala Kare

TERRAZZO: York Marble

CUSTOM METALWORK: MCM 2001

