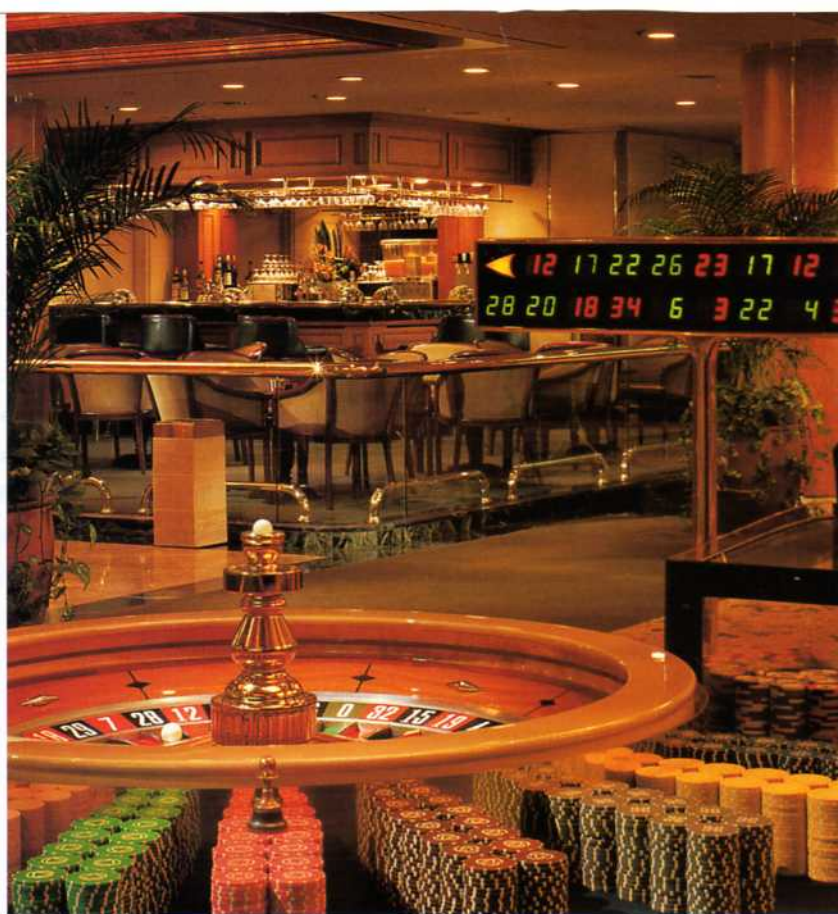


THE FIRST IN A SERIES

WHERE THE MONEY IS WHERE THE JOBS ARE

The interior design industry is in a state of metamorphosis. Many who found plentiful projects by traveling down the traditional profitable paths of the '80s have found themselves at the end of the road as projects in these areas grind to a resounding halt. Chances that the '90s will see the evolution of comparable "boom" areas within the interior design industry are slim at best. Just as other industries have learned to cope with the transformation from the "no guts, no glory" attitude of the '80s to the more conservative climate of the '90s, so too does the architectural and design community remain in flux, feeling its way through this difficult economic atmosphere. ■ Designers West/Designers World is pleased to present a series of special sections that will address two of the most important questions at present: Where is the money? Where are the jobs? In the next few issues, we will focus on several specialty fields within the industry that have continued to see growth and expansion, despite the changing times.



GAMING FACILITIES

Despite Troubled Economic Times, This Industry Continues to Grow

THE GAMING INDUSTRY is one of the few areas that continues to thrive. Although there may never again be a phenomenon like the one started by Bugsy Segal in the barren Nevada desert, gaming facilities are being erected in a surprising number of places, both at home and abroad. Many states have recognized the enormous revenue that can be generated from both the gaming sites and their ancillary services. Indian tribes throughout the country have the authority to allow gaming on their reservations, and gaming boats remain popular along major riverways in Illinois, Iowa, Mississippi, Louisiana and Missouri. The overseas gaming market is also growing, offering numerous design opportunities.

So how does one enter this field? The answer, unfortunately, is "not very easily." Many design firms have been working in this area for years, and thus have a decided advantage. But with the amount of new work being generated, others are



Top and above: The Paradise Beach Hotel/Casino, Pusan, Korea, designed by Harold Thompson and Associates. Photography by Klein & Wilson

beginning to make their marks. We asked several people “in the know” and, although, for obvious reasons, no one was anxious to reveal trade secrets, their responses give some interesting insights into the industry as a whole:

NEW AREAS OF GAMING

Many states have moved to establish limited gaming areas; that is, gambling is legalized in certain zones or townships but remains illegal in the rest of the state. Colorado is one such state. Several zones have been approved as limited stakes gaming areas, and several more asked for voter approval on the November ballot.

Blackhawk, Colorado, is the site of the Colorado Central Station Casino currently being built. The Victor Huff Partnership and Development/Design Consortium, Inc., both Denver-based companies, are serving as interior designer and architect, respectively. With a water tower establishing the tone of the site, the theme of the casino is a turn-of-the-century railroad station with 57,000 square feet on four floors featuring 1,100 slot machines, 16 blackjack tables and 8 poker tables.

D. Lynn Clever, C.P.M., NEWH, of the Victor Huff Partnership, commented, “Just as every other segment of the interior design industry has its own criteria, so too does the gaming industry. Based on local regulations, the extent of each gaming space can only represent a certain percentage of the overall square footage of the property. Maximizing locations for gaming devices and providing security for tables and patrons are unique considerations. Additionally, the selection of flooring and other materials is accomplished while paying particular attention to the cost of replacement downtime. Furniture appropriateness and wearability take on new definitions in gaming facilities. Space-planning requirements are a completely unique animal. Every decision is based on the maximum return of machines and devices—every other feature comes second.

“Gaming appeals to a particular market segment, and the interior design of each facility must reflect this. For example, areas with historic backgrounds will reflect this in the overall atmosphere and building requirements. The entertainment value is what we look for in our designs. In Colorado, the audience wants to be entertained but not overwhelmed.”

William T. Parkhill, AIA, of Development/Design Consortium (DDC), added, “One single element in gaming facilities makes them different from other, more ‘commonplace’ interior projects—the slot machines. They dominate interior sights and sounds, and this must be integrated into the design concept. We handle them in two ways: juxtaposing the modern devices against traditional elements, and integrating the ‘techno’ look of the machines with more glitzy interiors.

“DDC became involved in the design of Colorado gaming facilities through a series of local and national hospitality relationships developed since the company was established seven years ago. We have completed two projects for developer Chris Hemmeter, are currently finishing up the Colorado Central Station Casino, the state’s largest, and we have five others on the boards.”

Colorado ski resorts and gaming facilities have thus far not been paired up in the tradition of the Lake Tahoe area. Gaming has been approved only in areas such as mining towns that need new viable income sources to survive. Parkhill

The Network of Executive Women in Hospitality/Los Angeles Chapter featured a panel of experts in the gaming industry at its September meeting. The panel discussed design and purchasing for gaming resorts—present and future. Here’s what each panelist had to say:

Charles Silverman, President, Yates-Silverman, Inc.

“Yates-Silverman has been designing and furnishing casinos and gaming interiors for 31 years. Three years ago, I told a group at a design seminar that the hospitality industry, in my opinion, was going to take a bath—and we collectively took a bath. Many of us are still in the tub. Fortunately for Yates-Silverman, we have gotten out of the bath and back in the industry.

“The gaming industry has come back, and come

back fairly strong. Three years ago, when the industry was involved in properties like the Mirage, the Excalibur and the like, we thought we had reached the zenith. Actually, we discovered that the surface has only been scratched in designing for the gaming and entertainment client. Four new projects under construction in Las Vegas are the most exciting we have seen: 5,000 guest rooms and a theme park for MGM; 3,000-plus rooms for a fantasy Treasure Island; a 2,500-room Pyramid called the Luxor; and a 500-foot observation tower for Vegas World.

“This is fun . . . this is business . . . this is profit. This is everything you want. This is the gaming industry today.

“The design and architectural side of the gaming industry has moved into completely new areas. We are now into the buzzword ‘inter-active.’ We are bringing the patron—the customer, player, tourist—into the design and making him a part of the facility. Borrowing a note from the theme park industry, we have become fantasy makers, not just designers. Casino hotels are becoming complete entertainment experiences. We have roller coasters, we have inter-active theater, we have white tigers.

“Yates-Silverman is currently working on projects in 26 locations throughout the United States. This is a big industry and it’s getting bigger. I think there is a lot of opportunity here. But designers must not forget the most important single factor of the gaming industry—the gaming itself. All of the other things involved in casino facilities today are just reasons to get the customer into casino ‘A’ instead of casino ‘B.’

“How do you get involved? There are a limited number of design firms active in this field. Do you have a product to sell them? There are

