Excellence in Construction Quality Award

AWCI’s 2001 Excellence in Construction Quality Award honors those AWCI contractor, supplier and manufacturer member companies that have contributed to an outstanding project. It salutes the project as a whole, but also rewards AWCI members for working together. The more AWCI member companies involved in a project, the more points awarded to the project. Points also are awarded for the project’s degree of difficulty.

For the first time, this year’s award was divided into two categories: The first is for where the AWCI contractor’s contract is more than $1 million, and the second is for a contract of less than $1 million.

The winning project is The Desert Passage in Las Vegas, Nev., which involved one and a half miles of intricate facades depicting historically accurate architecture in seven elaborately themed reality environments. It included more than 2,000 sheets of working construction drawings developed by the KHS&S engineering team, which served as the architectural record . . . and more than 800 samples of materials, textures and colors produced for architectural approval.

The Desert Passage—the spectacular addition to the new Alladin Resort and Casino—is home to 130 retailers and 14 restaurants. Desert Passage immerses visitors in the wonderment of traveling along the world’s ancient spice trade routes, meandering through ancient villages and exploring the riches of Morocco, North Africa and Spain.

In the category where the AWCI subcontractor’s contract was more than $1 million, AWCI Industry Awards Committee Chairman Mark Nabity (left) presented the 2001 Excellence in Construction Quality Award to Philip Cherne (center) and Jeff Miller of KHS&S Contractors, Anaheim, Calif.

It unites diverse architectural styles, innovative construction techniques, and artistic craftsmanship in a structural phenomenon that is capturing the imagination (and the wallets) of shoppers who thought they had seen it all in Las Vegas.

The project’s historically accurate representation called upon the assistance of architectural historians and regional culturalists.

Desert Passage boasts the highest sky ceiling in Las Vegas—a 225,000 square foot multi-curved ceiling rising 82 feet above the floor. All together, it has more than 350,000 square feet of themed facades, 75,000 square feet of rockwork, with four elaborate water features, some incorporating wind, rain and fog. And one-of-a-kind shapes, such as the Corkscrew Tower, that called for equally innovative construction engineering.

All of this was accomplished within a 10-month construction schedule that took 417,097 man hours and more than 6 million cubic feet of multi-level scaffolding so that crews could work simultaneously on various parts of the project.

The following AWCI member suppliers and manufacturers contributed to this project:

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Top: Desert Passage has the highest sky ceiling in Las Vegas—a 225,000 square foot multi-curved ceiling rising 82 feet above the floor.

Left: Desert Passage's historically accurate representation required assistance from architectural historians and regional culturists.
Oakland, Calif., supplied it.

Western Metal Lath of Riverside, Calif., manufactured the metal studs that were used on this winning project.

In a clean sweep of the quality category, KHS&S Contractors of Tampa, Fla., also won for being the AWCI member contractor on the project that won the quality prize in the category where the contract was less than $1 million.

The winning project in that category is Florida’s Orange County Regional History Center.

The AWCI manufacturer members who were rewarded for their role are Unimast Inc. of Schiller Park, Ill., which manufactured the metal studs, and USG Building Systems, Chicago, which manufactured the shaftwall, veneer plaster and wallboard used on the Orange County Regional History Center.

Originally constructed in 1927, this once-fine neo-classic revival style courthouse had fallen into extensive disrepair. Its recent renaissance as a historic museum called for a finite restoration of its original architecture.

One of the major challenges was finding new materials to recreate the old, then blend them seamlessly by hand into existing walls and ceilings.

KHS&S crews had to fill gaping 2- and 3-foot holes in the original Indiana limestone plaster while maintaining the integrity of the historical period. To help accomplish this, the company artfully combined old-world-style plaster craftsmen with innovative retooling.

In the process, a specially designed jig was created that would allow craftsmen to make an exact tracing of the outline of the existing moldings. Adding to the many challenges, a construction fire was caused by another subcontractor on the job.

This setback required that the first bay and most of the second bay of the building’s main courtroom be reinstalled. Yet the Orange County Regional History Center opened on schedule.

As a result of the restoration’s superb authenticity, the building has been placed on the National Register.

Omega Products International, Inc., headquartered in Orange, Calif., manufactured the DEFS and stucco finishes that were used on The Desert Passage.

Pabco Gypsum, Newark, Calif, manufactured the wallboard that was used on this winning project, and Pacific Supply,