

When Ojon Corporation executives chose to move their corporate office from Oakville to Burlington, Ontario, the objective was to create a striking new home. "The old space was dated looking. It didn't say who we were," says Lance Murphy, executive creative director of the high-end hair-care-product firm.

The renovated two-storey building is quite the opposite. The 12,300-square-foot premises are bold and slick. A two-storey waterfall surrounded by plants in the reception area is the first indication. The new office also features a fanciful salon for product testing, three cutting stations and a wash station and lounge.

Murphy says renovating the building to Ojon's requirements was a bigger challenge than if the company had built a new building, but the tight budget — about \$1.4 million — did not allow them to start from scratch.

The project tested the mettle of the building and design team. Dan LaCaprara, owner of Dunpar Commercial Interiors Inc., says the construction manager's job was to build an "A-class space" out of a "B-class building. It was like making an 85-year-old guy look like he was 45 and in good shape."

Renovations to the 1990s building started in December 2006. The unremarkable interior had dated ceramic-tile flooring, wallpaper and low lay-in tiled ceilings. "The one nice element that worked to our advantage was the double height in the reception area," says Monika Sarkisian, senior designer of the project and principal with interior designer Smith Grimley Harris Design Partners (SGHDP).

A key design objective was to open up the interior to allow more light into the space. That meant knocking out most of the interior walls and many of the ceilings. The new interior features bigger rooms, a number of which are adorned with high-end wood-panel walls and specialty ceiling tiles. The building's exterior remains untouched.

In the old interior, a plant and stone garden — the centrepiece of the main floor — was surrounded by a dark enclosed office space. Now, the garden pit is a platform for a two-storey waterfall, surrounded by a built-in grassy area with wood benches.

One of the building/design team's big challenges was meeting Ojon's schedule — substantial completion in a mere three months. The tight budget was equally demanding.

To meet the deadline, carpet throughout was removed and the existing concrete flooring was simply stained and finished in most areas. New suspended ceilings were used only in key areas such as the front

office and executive offices.

LaCaprara says from the outset, the construction challenge was to devise a means of building the space from fanciful and complex architectural renderings. "The difference between the renderings and the existing interior was huge. They planned a beautiful space, but we questioned if it made practical sense to do this much in this kind of a building."

Construction costs came in at about \$65-\$70 a square foot. Standard finishes would have cost about half that much,



Waiting area.



Lunchroom.

that it was put into a hole in the ground. There was no subfloor."

To rebuild the space on budget, the constructor supported the new seating area tiled in ceramics with metal I-beams over a portion of the opening. The remainder of the original pit was refilled with soil and then landscaped.

Specialized lighting was installed in the test salon. A curtain system separates a stage area — where infomercials will be produced — from the rest of the salon, says LaCaprara.



Salon.



Boardroom.

PHOTOS COURTESY SMITH GRIMLEY HARRIS DESIGN PARTNERS

## Ojon Corporation Offices

by Don Procter

says LaCaprara.

The builder says selecting the right substrates for the job was a task in itself. "Not everybody out there can do that kind of high-end of work. If money's no object, it's not hard to find contractors, but when money is tight, it is not so easy."

Usually comparable high-end renos done by Dunpar are in downtown Toronto. "You don't expect this kind of reno there [Burlington]," says LaCaprara.

One of the striking changes was cladding the reception in maple panels, accented by pendant lighting. A double volume ceiling in the main corridor also went through a major transformation.

LaCaprara says renovations at the waterfall space were significant. Originally, the area had a pit with grass, trees and plants. "The problem was

### LOCATION

935 Sheldon Court  
Burlington, Ontario

### OWNER

Ojon Corporation

### CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Dunpar Commercial Interiors Inc.

### MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANTS

Vaughan Byrnes Engineering Ltd.

### INTERIOR DESIGN

Smith Grimley Harris Design Partners

### GRAPHIC DISPLAY AND ARCHITECTURAL HARDWARE

EurOptimum Display Inc.

### TOTAL AREA

12,300 square feet

### TOTAL COST

\$1.4 million

The building also features seven acrylic graphic poster-size display holders, which are held in place by tensioned cables fixed to the floor and ceiling with architectural hardware. The acrylic display holders were supplied and installed by Toronto-based EurOptimum Display Inc.

EurOptimum's project manager Michael Tripp says the 40-inch wide by 60-inch high "floating displays" allow for a quick and easy display changeover for Ojon. Poster-size displays are simply slipped in and out of the holders. For high visibility, three of the displays were installed near the front entry of the office.

Tripp says originally the contract called for custom display holders but EurOptimum saved Ojon some cash by going with less expensive in-stock panels. "We stock hundreds of panels and we were able to come up with one in stock that fit their needs."

One of the key objectives of Vaughan Byrnes Engineering Ltd., the mechanical/electrical engineering consultant, was to use the existing rooftop HVAC system for the new interior. While the existing interior was properly zoned for heating and cooling, the new layouts posed challenges in reconfiguring that zoning for maximum occupant comfort. Bypass boxes were installed to accommodate each zoned area's requirements. To meet thermostat settings, a bypass box diverts excess hot or cold air into a ceiling plenum and back to one of the rooftop units.

The double-height corridor and reception area posed an HVAC challenge because the areas were not single zoned, says Raymond Cho, in charge of the mechanical design for Vaughan Byrnes Engineering. After a number of "troubleshooting meetings" with contractors in the construction team, the mechanical contractor designed a two-zone system, with the top portion of the vestibule separated from the bottom portion. "It gives us flexibility with how to handle [heating and cooling] loads."

Another HVAC challenge was in the open-concept test salon that features drop ceiling panels. To hide HVAC infrastructure, Vaughan Byrnes designed sidewall-mounted architectural round diffusers near the ceiling.

The design of Ojon's new digs was submitted for ARIDO awards in two categories: workplaces and marketing centres. SGH Design Partners have been notified that it has won in one of those categories. "Being able to submit a project that we think has potential to win an award is great for the design team spirit and the company," says Sarkisian.

Ojon Corporation was acquired by Estée Lauder Co. Inc. in July 2007. ■

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