

# ONE BRYANT PARK LOBBY

## Banking on Green Design

On a recent tour of the Bank of America Tower, Serge Appel, an associate partner at Cook + Fox Architects and the project manager for the tower design, stands in the lobby and gestures through a cable stayed curtain wall at Bryant Park across Sixth Avenue. He tells the story of how, during the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1854, which took place on the future site of the park, Elisha Otis publically tested his first elevator safety break, cutting its rope from 50-feet up and ushering in the skyscraper age as a result.

Appel says the building, also known as One Bryant Park, was designed as a monument to that history. The intertwining of skyscraper and nature led to this building, an homage that begins in its dramatic lobby—one built on a foundation of ornamental metal. “The whole building turns towards the park, from the torque of the building to the details of the lobby,” Appel says. “It’s not just about creating an environmental symbol, but also creating a literal connection to the environment.” The challenge, then, is how to take a highly designed, rigorously engineered man-made building, one of the most technological ever conceived, and make it look not only natural but of nature. In this case, ornamental metal that the design team affectionately describes as “blackened” stainless steel forms the roots that bind the lobby to its surroundings.

The steel appears handcrafted, the result of a complex, proprietary acid treatment process by Stuart Dean that oxidizes a normally unoxidizable Type 304 stainless steel with a No. 4 directional hair-

line finish. The final product has the sheen of obsidian and the depth of ebony. Like other closely controlled materials—Jerusalem stone and caramel-colored leather—blackened stainless steel is used carefully to denote a transition from cooler stainless steel and painted aluminum, in the lobby’s most public areas, to the warmer, richer finishes of its core. The tight editing provides both unity and simplicity to this technically advanced space. “We tried to really minimize the palette in the building, to keep it from being too busy,” Appel says.

The most prominent stainless steel application is at the elevator banks, where it rings the entrance to each of the nearly two-dozen elevators arrayed in five banks: two on the ground floor for general tenants and three a floor up, in the Sky Lobby, which is exclusively reserved for Bank of America employees. At the mouth of each bank is a larger blackened steel entryway, though all bow before the massive 40-foot-high and 16-foot-wide archway intended as an exclusive north entrance for a second-tier tenant.

The panels range in size up to 7 feet by 4 feet and are made out of 16ga bent steel reinforcement clad in 14ga blackened stainless panels. Typical installation joints are simple butt joints. There are no joints at the intersections of vertical and horizontal profiles, which are shop welded and ground smooth until invisible, at which point the hairline finish is applied.

The elevator banks and secondary lobby also feature the blackened stainless steel in the form of ¼-inch-thick frames that border the leather wall





**Previous page** Blackened stainless steel, created with a unique acid treatment process, covers key card machines in the bank's lobby.  
**This page** Blackened steel marks the entrance to each of four elevator banks.  
**Facing** Blackened steel frames leather wall panels inside each elevator bank.



Previous spread and facing: © Blyana Dimitrova; this page: © Cook + Fox



panels. Secured to concrete masonry units, the dark steel setting highlights the sumptuousness of the leather and furthers the natural look of the space.

The blackened stainless is also used as the cover plates for the security desks and key card machines that Appel acknowledges as a sad reality of modern office buildings, especially one named the Bank of America Tower. "We didn't want the security desks to look like a barricade," Appel says. "We wanted it to be one cohesive design element." A testament to Cook + Fox's attention to detail, the firm convinced the manufacturer of the key card readers to custom fabricate the covers using the blackened steel. Installed flush with the security desks the readers

achieve the cohesion Appel desired, transforming a security barrier into something more natural and unimposing.

To further soften the security desks, lights are installed on the underside of the table, which is topped with leather to be warmer to the touch. The softly downcast illumination reflects off the steel, revealing a pearlescence that radiates throughout the space as the natural and artificial lights shift and change throughout the day. After all, if so much detail can go into the treatment of a single piece of metal, just imagine what lies in store throughout the rest of the building. **M**



**Facing** The uniformity of steel details creates the first impression of the building's sleek office environments.  
**Above** Illuminated blackened steel softens the look of the security desk.

**The intertwining of skyscraper and nature led to this building, an homage that begins in its dramatic lobby, one built on a foundation of ornamental metal.**

This spread: © Blyana Dimitrova

#### **ONE BRYANT PARK LOBBY**

Location: **1 Bryant Park, New York, NY**  
 Owner/Developer: **Bank of America at One Bryant Park, LLC, a joint venture between The Durst Organization and Bank of America, New York, NY**  
 Architect: **Cook + Fox Architects LLP, New York, NY**  
 Executive Architect: **Adamson Associates Architects, New York, NY**  
 Structural Engineer: **Severud Associates, New York, NY**  
 Mechanical Engineer: **Jaros, Baum & Bolles, New York, NY**  
 Construction Manager: **Tishman Construction Corp., New York, NY**  
 Exterior Wall Consultant: **Israel Berger & Associates, Inc., New York, NY**  
 Structural Steel Fabricator: **Owen Steel Company, Inc., Columbia, SC**  
 Structural Steel Erector: **Cornell & Company, Woodbury, NJ**  
 Miscellaneous Iron Fabricator: **A-Val Architectural Metal Corp., Mount Vernon, NY**  
 Miscellaneous Iron Erector: **Empire City Iron Works, Long Island City, NY**  
 Architectural Metal Fabricator and Erector: **Melto Metal Products, Freeport, NY**  
 Ornamental Metal Fabricators and Erectors: **Allied Bronze, New York, NY**  
**Tower Installation, LLC, Windsor, CT**  
 Curtain Wall Fabricator: **Permasteelisa Cladding Technologies, Ltd., Windsor, CT**  
 Curtain Wall Erector: **Tower Installation, LLC, Windsor, CT**  
 Metal Deck Erector: **Cornell & Company, Woodbury, NJ**

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