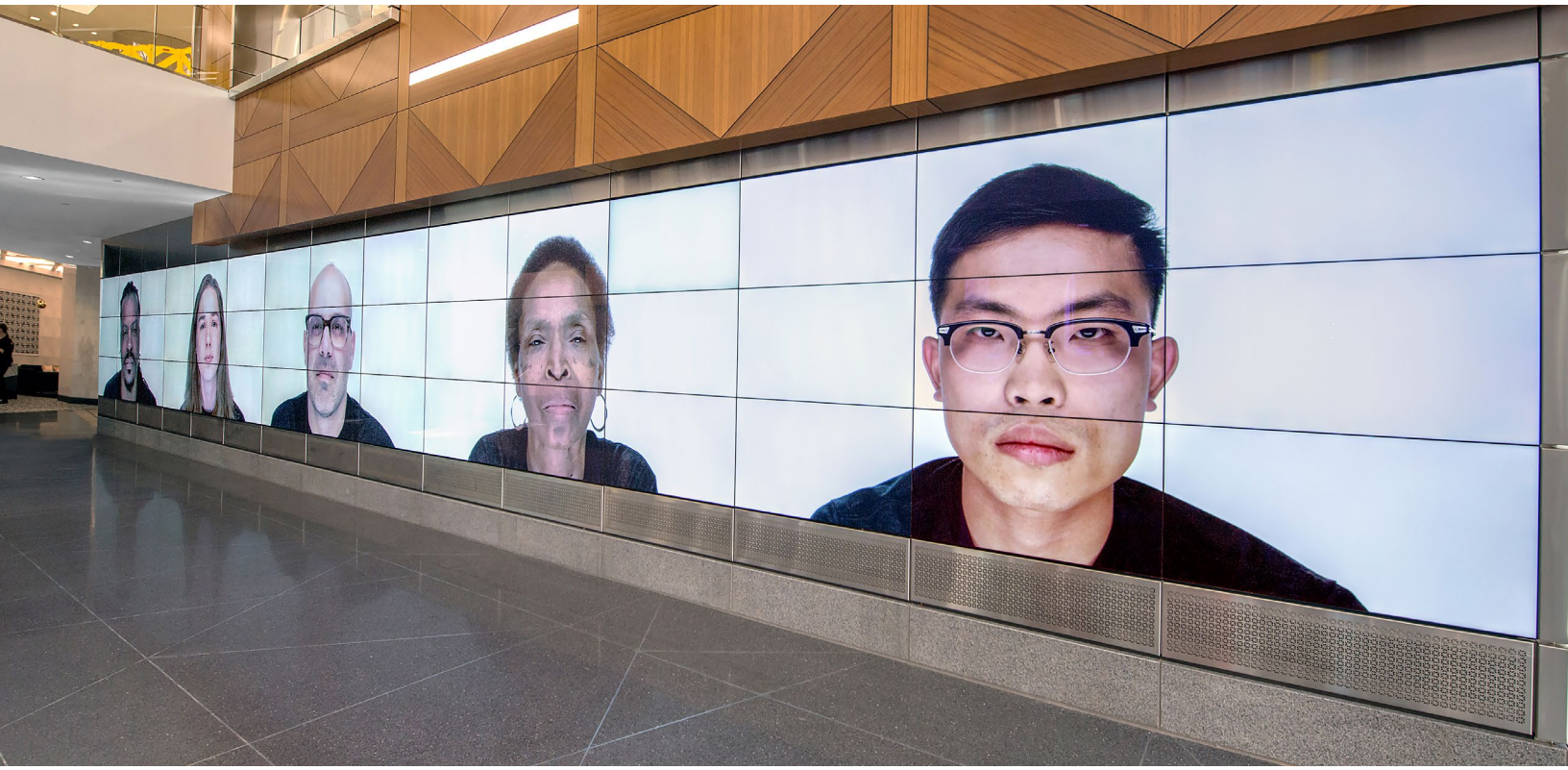
PLANAR | Installation Profile



Product
Clarity Matrix
LCD Video Wall System

Location
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Industry
Architecture & Design

Application
Digital Art

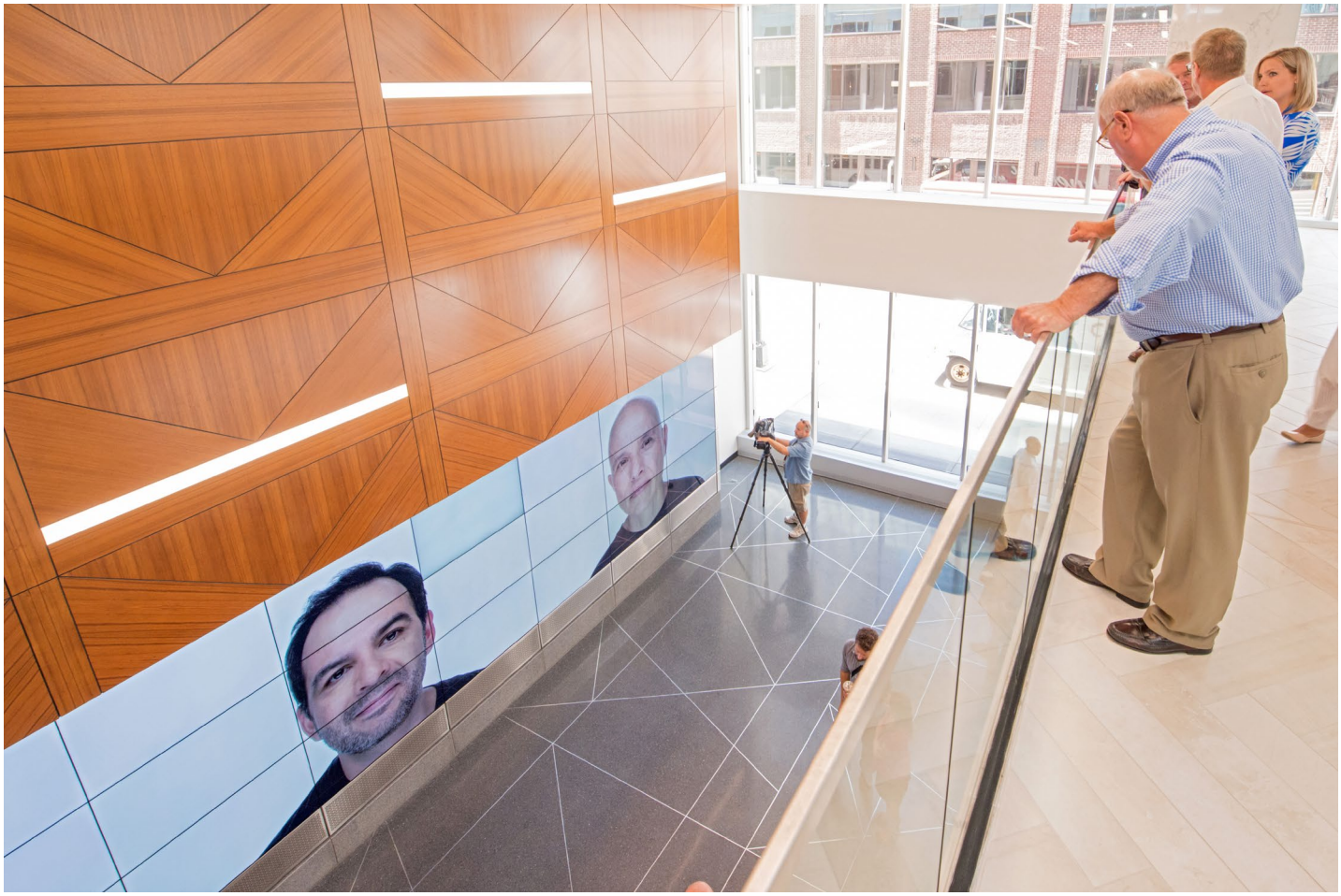
Partner
Spye

EXPANSIVE DIGITAL ART CANVAS FEATURING PLANAR DISPLAY TECHNOLOGY INSPIRES 'CREATIVE PLACEMAKING' AT RENOVATED BAKER CENTER

The Baker Center

Located in downtown Minneapolis, the Baker Center is a four-building commercial office and retail complex that covers an entire city block, with each building connected to the Minneapolis Skyway System. For several years, a long-term tenant occupied the majority of the property's lease space. But when that tenant announced an imminent departure for a new corporate campus, the Center's property management group, Transwestern, faced a major vacancy.

This prompted Transwestern to conduct a highest and best-use study on behalf of the property's ownership to determine the most optimal path forward. "After exploring several scenarios, including apartment and condo conversions as well as a complete tear down and redevelopment, we found that the best return on investment was to renovate the property and reintroduce it back to the marketplace as multi-tenant office space," said Hans Okerstrom, general manager of the Baker Center and director of property management for the Minneapolis office of Transwestern.



"We see tremendous potential for developing programs to feature digital artwork and really celebrate the creative talent we have here locally."

— Hans Okerstrom,
General manager of the Baker Center and Director of Property Management for the Minneapolis Office of Transwestern

Committing to this direction, Transwestern partnered with RSP Architects and spent more than a year planning a $25 million renovation that aimed to transform the commercial complex. The focal point of the renovation targeted the prominently located 733 Building, where the planned design features included a 12-story glass curtain wall, a skyway lobby extension, a new street-level entrance with two-story atrium and a state-of-the-art video wall.

Embracing an artistic-led approach

After recognizing thoughtful consideration was needed for designing an impactful media wall solution, audio visual designer and integrator, Spye, was retained to manage all aspects of the media wall project. Then, to gain a better perspective for what a video wall could be and how it could be best utilized, the planning team—which included Okerstrom, David Serrano of RSP Architects, and Spye President, Paul Krumrich—toured high-end media wall installations in New York City, including the video display at the Frank Gehry designed IAC building.



"Right away, we realized that a video wall at the Baker Center needed to be much more than just a media advertising billboard," Okerstrom said. "Instead, we wanted an installation that could be utilized as a digital art canvas—a dramatic visual display dedicated to video artwork that would enrich the lobby environment and provide outreach to the public."

According to Krumrich, this refined approach is akin to the evolving practice of 'creative placemaking,' which leverages arts, culture and creativity to serve a community's interest while building character and quality of place. "This strategy could engage passersby and help give the space an identity and a sense of interest," he said.

To meet this refined objective, Krumrich and the Spye team designed a 60-foot-long, 7-foot high video wall in a 15x3 configuration of the Clarity® Matrix® LCD Video Wall System (LX55HDU) from Planar. The Clarity Matrix video wall features Full HD resolution, LED backlighting and a 3.7mm bezel gap for outstanding tiled visual performance. A total of 45 Clarity Matrix 55-inch displays were utilized to build the vast media canvas, which is protected by Planar® ERO™ (Extended Ruggedness and Optics™) technology—providing an optically-bonded glass front for increased ruggedness and optical performance.

Because of the direction taken with the video wall, it was obvious that content was going to play a very significant role. Spye, which has an internal creative division, developed a handful of concepts that were presented to Transwestern as part of the initial project proposal. "We won this business because we were able to demonstrate the content side of the installation," Krumrich said. "We also referenced other successful Planar installations incorporating a similar focus. Their performance history helped convey that this was going to be a low-risk implementation."

Spye received the greenlight to produce one of their video art concepts to show when the new video wall was unveiled. "Faces" is a video portraiture that highlights the cultural diversity of Minneapolis and features up-close footage of residents representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

"Planar display performance history helped convey that this was going to be a low-risk implementation."

— Paul Krumrich, *President, Spye*





"The producers used a range of stimuli such as music, graphics, humor and stories to elicit different reactions from the participants, which was filmed with a 4.5K camera at 120 frames per second," Krumrich said.

Planar video wall display technology proved to be an asset in terms of supporting the intended effect of the digital artwork. "When the video portraiture was shown on the video wall, the clarity of the display allowed for the intimate sense of the people's personalities to come through," Krumrich said.

Since dedicating the new media wall to video art, further content opportunities have begun to emerge through promising collaborations with Minneapolis's art community. "Treating the media wall as a public art canvas has been very beneficial in terms of forging connections with the city's art institutes and galleries," Okerstrom said. "We see tremendous potential for developing programs to feature digital artwork and really celebrate the creative talent we have here locally."

Harmonious integration

Based on the ground floor layout of the 733 building, with retail space on the other side of the video wall, the unique design of the Clarity Matrix architecture proved to be a major benefit in terms of the integration.

"Thanks to the front service access and the way that power supplies are distributed, we were able to retain square footage on the retail floor plan behind the wall," Krumrich said. "That was huge as we didn't have to design a chaseway or some kind of rear access panel, which would have taken away from that space. The heat generation is conveniently off-loaded to a rack room with an active HVAC system."

The aesthetical design of the Clarity Matrix is also well suited to the refurbished lobby environment. "It's a very attractive-looking installation," Okerstrom said. "We've got architectural woodwork that surrounds the video wall and the clean lines of the display really enhances that design."

A potential source of revenue

An area of opportunity that was discovered during the investigative phase of the project was the prospect of leveraging the video wall for utilizing the lobby area as an event space. "We saw examples in New York where contemporary venues featuring video displays are rented out for events such as fashion shows or bar mitzvahs," Krumrich said. "The ability to really customize the digital canvas to specific needs makes it potentially attractive for this use."



"It was a discovered opportunity to learn that we could possibly generate revenue by turning the lobby entry into a unique event space for after hours, nights or weekends," Okerstrom said.

Inspiring success

Following completion of the overall renovation and the reintroduction of the Baker Center to the market, Okerstrom said the project has been extremely well received in the community, with lots of interest from prospective tenants. "To put it simply, our phones are ringing off the hook," he said. "The Baker Center is a very popular option for companies that are looking to expand or relocate to downtown Minneapolis. We certainly believe that the media wall and the other lobby enhancements are key to this success."

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