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MUSEUMS

Stone wall brings back a lost art

How often does one see a curtain wall structure clad with pieces of stone that project as much as 2 ft, weigh as much as 2 tons and include a hand-carved corbel that looks like a 3½-ft-tall monkey? Rarely, if ever, agree those involved in building the extension to the landmark Jewish Museum in New York City.

"I don't think we'll see another job like this," says Louis Katsos, executive vice president of the project construction manager, Tishman Construction Corp. of New York, New York City.

The goal of the project is to match the original limestone cladding on the French Renaissance-style building, designed in 1908 by Cass Gilbert. The new section of exterior wall, though only 50 ft wide and 80 ft tall not counting a mansard roof, is replete with octagonal turrets, a semicircular frieze and a 14 x 10-ft, 1-ft-thick dormer. It represents "a lost art," says David Teitelbaum, president of Cathedral Stoneworks, New York City, which has a nearly \$1-million contract to supply, fabricate and engineer the stone.

To study the existing stone, Cathedral Stoneworks used a camera that visualizes objects onto a computer, says Teitelbaum. Some 25 stone masons from 13 countries finished the carvings in the year allotted.

The new work was complicated because the addition is steel-framed with concrete block walls. In the original load-bearing masonry-wall building, cladding is built into brickwork up to 2 ft thick, says Hugh F. Kluesner, presi-

dent of Kluesner Engineering Inc., Bedford, Ind., which engineered the stone-to-frame connections.

Project architect Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, Hamden, Conn., called for the same wall appearance as the original, including the 2-ft stone projections. But the stone is engaged only 3 to 4 in., says Kluesner.

Consequently, there are 50 types of stone supports and connections—non-rusting stainless steel angles and plates—to transfer the weight back to columns and beams. "It's very irregular," says Katsos.

Stone had to be "precisely cut and precisely erected" because of the narrow ¼-in. joints, adds Kluesner.

The installation, by Pansini Stone Setting Inc., New York City, "went faster than expected," says Katsos. The stonework, set for an early spring finish, is running two months ahead of schedule. The 29,000-sq-ft addition and a modernization throughout the museum are set to be completed by October. ■



Monkey carving joins the other limestone ornaments decorating an addition to the Jewish Museum, an 84-year-old landmark in Manhattan designed by architect Cass Gilbert.

