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ON FRIDAY
A LOOK BACK AT
2016 IN ARTS AND
ENTERTAINMENT

ARTS



Jim Hodges' installation "With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)" rings the recently remodeled rooftop of the Contemporary Austin's Jones Center. RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Museum modified

Contemporary's downtown museum gets new look, spaces.

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin
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With a flourish, the Contemporary Austin ratcheted up to a new level recently.

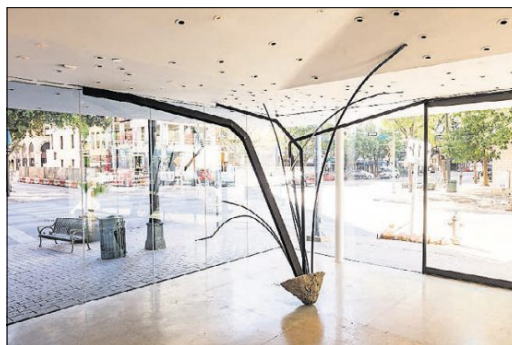
A \$3 million renovation smartly retooled the museum's downtown Jones Center, a project that included the unveiling of a major outdoor installation that now graces the building's rooftop at Congress Avenue and Seventh Street.

Now, 7-foot-tall letters rim the Jones Center's updated rooftop and read "With Liberty and Justice for All."

In daylight, the iridescent, mirrored surfaces of the sans serif letters oscillate with color, shifting between shades of blue, purple, orange and pink. At night, the letters are lit from within with LEDs.

The sculpture — called "With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)" — is by Jim Hodges, a New York-based artist born in 1957 in Spokane, Wash.

Perched above Congress Avenue — a thoroughfare dubbed



Monika Sosnowska's sculpture "Frieze" is in the lobby of the Contemporary Austin's Jones Center on Congress Avenue.

CONTRIBUTED BY BRIAN FITZSIMMONS

the "Main Street of Texas" — and just a few blocks from the Texas Capitol, the phrase from the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance carries undeniable potency.

Yet Hodges deploys language on a conceptual and symbolic level. Hence "With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)" is not a directive so much as it is an invitation to think deeply about the ideas behind America's democratic experiment.

"The building is literally sup-

porting this aspirational line we all grew up saying. (The sculpture's title) suggests that the idea behind that line is something to always be worked on," Hodges told the noted journalist Dan Rather in a live interview at the sculpture's opening two weeks ago.

"Art is the perfect vehicle to deliver all of us to a sense of shared humanity. And the art institutions themselves (are) the most important and most vital places in a community."

The Hodges installation is but a part of the renovation to the architecturally distinctive Jones Center. Most dramatic is a new 21-foot-high canopy added to the rooftop, where the museum stages film screenings and other events. The canopy offers shade and rain protection, augmented by weatherproof curtains on a track that rings the rooftop.

The 21,000-square-foot Jones Center underwent a \$6 million renovation in 2010, a sleek and sophisticated transformation designed by LTL Architects of New York. The museum again turned to LTL's Paul Lewis to design the recent renovation.

Inside, the museum's first floor was opened up, offices were relocated to the Contemporary's Laguna Gloria location, and about 2,000 square feet of flexible gallery space was created. In total, the Jones Center now has 7,000 square feet of exhibit space — a volume that allows the museum to host a new level of traveling exhibitions and organize larger shows.

Less visible are significant upgrades to the Jones Center's humidity and temperature controls so that they now meet strin-

Museum continued on D8

D8 AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2016



The letters on the Jones Center rooftop deck flash with iridescent color by day and are lit at night. RICARDO B. BRAZZELLI/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



Monika Sosnowska's massive painted steel sculpture "Façade" is on display in the Jones Center's upstairs gallery. The sculpture was commissioned specifically for Contemporary Austin's exhibit. CONTRIBUTED BY BRIAN FITZSIMMONS



Making full use of the newly expanded first-floor gallery at the Jones Center, Monika Sosnowska's "Antechamber" is a labyrinth of angled, zigzagging walls, covered with floral hand-block-printed wallpaper. CONTRIBUTED BY BRIAN FITZSIMMONS

Museum

continued from D1

gent museum industry specifications. And a heavy-capacity electric lift between the lower and upper floors allows the museum to move larger works of art.

The letters of Hodges' installation were among the first artworks to make use of the new lift. So were monumental steel sculptures by Polish artist Monika Sosnowska, whose exhibit "Habitat" is the first to fill the newly expanded galleries.

Based in Warsaw, Sosnowska finds inspiration in the urban structures left over from Poland's oppressive communist era — the Brutalist architecture of the 1960s and 1970s characterized by a very stark economy of material.

In Sosnowska's hands, though, mighty forms of steel and concrete seem to will. Long lengths of sturdy rebar crumple into an enormous tangle dotted with concrete plugs. A steel staircase seems to melt, twisted on its side as it lies limp on the gallery floor. (It also makes a nice complement to "The Stairs," Sosnowska's sculpture that's on the ground of the museum's Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria.)

In the newly expanded first floor, Sosnowska created "Antechamber," a labyrinth of angled, zigzagging walls, covered on one side with fussy floral hand-block-printed wallpaper on the other side left raw and unfinished, with steel studs and Sheetrock exposed. The walls form triangular passageways that dead-end and several odd triangular rooms, each of which holds a single sculpture.

Sosnowska's work is a poetic response to a formidable architecture style, offering an immersive faux built environment that both charms and confuses.

The museum funded its \$3 million renovation with a \$1.3 million grant from the Moody Foundation, a bridge loan and private art donations, opting not to launch a public campaign.

The remodeled Jones Center and new acquisitions are just one part of the Contemporary's continuing ascendant trajectory — a trajectory that's included several major developments just this year.

In March, the museum



Terry Allen's "Road Angel" is a full-size bronze cast of a 1953 Chevrolet coupe, the latest acquisition to the Contemporary Austin's Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria. JEANNE CLAIRE VAN RYZIN/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

LAGUNA GLORIA GROWTH

Along with the Contemporary's Jones Center renovation, the museum also celebrated the newest permanent addition to the growing sculpture collection at the Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria.

Terry Allen's "Road Angel" is a bronze cast of a 1953 Chevrolet coupe, a nostalgic valentine to America's love affair with the car.

The quintessential mid-century automobile — its right front wheel missing — rests seemingly haphazardly in the trees off the path on the museum's lower grounds, as if the car's careened off the road.

Allen, who came of

driving age in the 1950s in Lubbock, is an artistic storyteller. He also has a side career as a singer-songwriter.

Listen closely to "Road Angel" As if the car's radio is on, there's an ongoing audio loop with vintage radio broadcasts, road songs and writers spinning tales or singing songs about life behind the wheel (or in the backseat). Collaborators on the audio include musicians Delbert McClinton, Rodney Crowell, Lloyd Maines, Steve Earle, Shawn Colvin (singing a cover of Bruce Springsteen's "Racing in the Streets") and Joe and Sharon Ely.

Said Allen in interview

earlier this year: "The sense of hurtling through great black empty space ... late at night on a dead straight line of asphalt with headlights shining ... driving a car as fast as it would go ... and listening to the Wolfman on the radio turned up as loud as it would go ... is probably where every freedom I most value first began."

"Road Angel" is on permanent display at the Contemporary Austin's Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria, 3809 W. 35th St. Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, 3809 W. 35th St. \$3-\$5 (Tuesdays free; younger than 18 free). 512-458-8191, thecontemporaryaustin.org

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The rooftop at the Contemporary Austin's Jones Center on Congress Avenue features a new canopy and weatherproof curtains. RICARDO B. BRAZZELLI/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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