

# arts & entertainment

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A Style  
holiday guide  
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## BEST OF 2009

# Glorious year for Chicago architecture

It was a glorious but surreal year. Some of the last projects of the great, early 21st century building boom opened, creating an image of frenzied activity even as the recession threw scores of architects out of work.

The best endeavors recovered key aspects of Chicago's past and endowed the city and its suburbs with future landmarks.



**Blair Kamin**  
CITYSCAPES

**Modern Wing:** The Art Institute of Chicago's new building, by Italian architect Renzo Piano, graced Millennium Park's south flank with a refined modernist temple and provided serene galleries for the museum's collection of modern and contemporary art.

**Aqua:** This hotel and residential tower, by Chicago architect Jeanne Gang, brought undulating balconies and a spectacular sculptural presence to a skyline long characterized by repetitive right angles.

**Serta International Center:** Chicago architect Andrew Metter of Epstein made poetry from prosaic function in this elegant headquarters for the mattress-makers.

Located in Hoffman Estates, Serta appears to float lightly above the land.

**Burnham Plan Centennial:** The dazzling but nonfunctional pavilions in Millennium Park by Zaha Hadid and Ben van Berkel were just part of the story.

The region celebrated the 100th anniversary



The Trump Hotel & Tower has a luminous facade. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE PHOTO

ry of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's "Plan of Chicago" in grand style, with everything from panel sessions to new open-space plans.

**Chicago Riverwalk:** The new chunk of riverwalk, stretching east from State Street, marked a significant step forward in the city's drive to create a waterfront amenity comparable to the lakefront. Chicago architect Carol Ross Barney and her associate John Fried designed it.



The new Modern Wing graces the Art Institute. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Serta International headquarters in Hoffman Estates. PHOTO BY ANDREW METTER

**Charles H. Shaw Technology and Learning Center:** Led by Farr Associates' Jonathan Boyer, this conversion of an old Sears, Roebuck & Co. power plant into a charter high school retained the plant's grit and helped it save power with an ecology-conscious design.

**A Pritzker for Zumthor:** It was good to see architecture's top prize, awarded by Chicago's billionaire Pritzker family, go to Swiss architect Peter Zumthor instead of a "starch-

itect."

As the Pritzker jury put it, Zumthor's spare buildings reaffirm "architecture's indispensable place in a fragile world."

**Trump International Hotel & Tower's luminous face:** Sometimes part of a project deserves recognition even if the whole doesn't. So it is with the Trump skyscraper, which disappointed with its toothpick spire and riverfront bulk but delighted with its exterior of reflective, silver-blue glass.

Thanks to architect Adrian Smith and his former firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the glass brings the skyline an ever-changing luminosity.

**Shedding light on Gropius:** Preservationist Graham Balkany unearthed documents that revealed with fresh clarity the role that Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius played in planning and designing the former Michael Reese Hospital campus.

His research may help save one Gropius-associated building at Reese and could land the campus on the National Register of Historic Places. Unfortunately, that recognition won't stop the city from tearing down all but two Reese buildings to make way for a residential complex.

**Fond farewells:** Richard Moe, the longtime leader of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, announced that he would retire next year. ... After 48 years in business, longtime proprietors Wilbert and Marilyn Hasbrouck closed Chicago's great architectural bookstore, the Prairie Avenue Bookshop.

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