

Empire State Building – Ceiling Mural Restoration Backgrounder

As a tribute to the opportunity and spirit of the Machine Age that made construction of the Empire State Building possible, the building's main lobby originally featured an ornate ceiling mural.

Featuring aluminum leaf and 23-karat gold applied to canvas, the mural is an Art Deco representation of a celestial sky with sunbursts and stars that reflect light with a warm glow, drawing the eye upward to the ceiling. The ceiling remained the focal point of the lobby until the 1960s, when it was painted over and covered with an acrylic-panel dropped ceiling, and florescent light fixtures were installed to modernize the building's architectural aesthetic.

As part of the Empire State Building's more than \$550 million capital improvements program, a team of artists and historians from world-renowned Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP and EverGreene Architectural Arts, Inc., worked collaboratively to restore the original 1930s ceiling. EverGreene has worked on other major historic landmarks such as New York's Grand Central Terminal, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, and Chicago's Civic Opera House.

Guided by historic photographs, on-site forensic analysis, existing architectural elements and even decades-old dirt patterns, the restoration team employed an intensive, 26-step process to recreate the Art Deco mural using the same techniques as the original artists from Rambusch Studios. The installation is accented by the installation of state-of-the-art lighting to recreate the original lighting intensity of the lobby. The full replication, including research, design, execution and installation took approximately two years to complete at EverGreene's New York studio and was finally installed at the Empire State Building in 2009.

"Over two years have gone into recreating the historic Empire State Building lobby ceiling, making it the focal point of the world-famous Empire State Building once again," said Jeffrey Greene, President of EverGreene Architectural Arts, Inc. "This is truly one of the most exciting and significant projects EverGreene has been a part of."

Fast Facts

- All of the materials used on the replicated ceiling mimic the original materials used to create the lobby ceiling in 1931.
- The mural used over 15,000 square feet of canvas, and is a complex layout of over 75 pieces of canvas fitted together.
- 115,000 sheets of aluminum leaf were used on the finished ceiling mural.
- Over 20,000 man-hours have gone into the replication of the ESB ceiling.
- The mural used 1,300 square feet of 23-karat gold leaf and 14,000 square feet of aluminum.
- There are 16 layers of paint, glazes and leaf used in the ceiling mural.
- The recreation process involved 28 steps from beginning to completion.