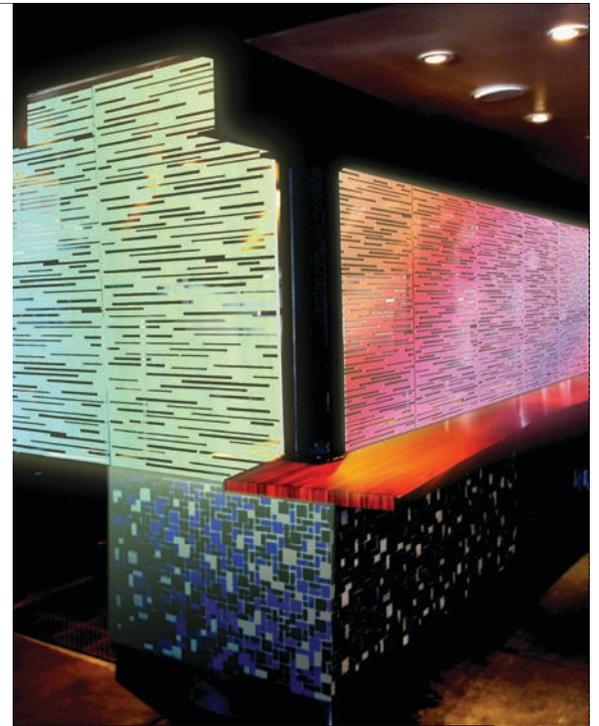


above: The lightweight aluminum panels feature durable design and construction that allow for simplified logistics and quick installation.

right: Another custom design features back lit panels that hide the kitchen area when a diner by day becomes a night time hot spot.

left and far left: The product's inception occurred on a multi-family project with budget challenges; the precision-machine industrial grade sheet metal acts as an economical stand-in to create the illusion of pricey woven wood.



RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT:

by Megan Mazzocco, associate editor

Laser-Cut Legend

The last time you saw something laser cut and flat-packed, it probably came from IKEA. However, the deceptively delicate-looking product that also exhibits these attributes is an extremely lovely, yet durable handrail plus in-fill two-in-one product from NC2.

With precision metal fabricator Airtronics, NC2 transforms sheet metal into affordable works of art.

Dubbed Bok Modern, the sheet metal handrail products have several practical features: They are easily fabricated using laser-cutting methods that precision metal manufacturers can fabricate with existing equipment. The installation has been simplified, as the in-fill panels require no welding or grinding in production. Furthermore, they are 100% recyclable and require no posts or external brackets for installation; instead, the "brackets" are incorporated into the folded panel. Finally, the aeronautic-grade aluminum railings and panels are light and can be flat-packed for simple transport with a low-carbon footprint.

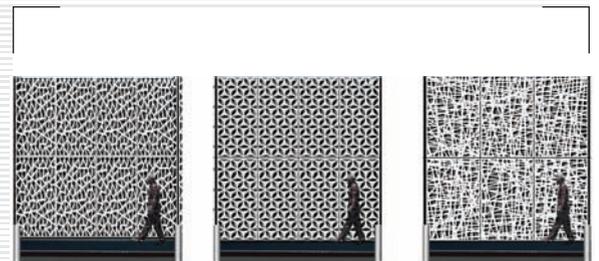
Bok Modern's inception is a brilliant example of austere times calling for creativity and proves the case for the genius of materiality. Devastated by the elimination of one essential exterior design element—woven wood balconies—on an otherwise unadorned, low-budget multifamily project, the architects and partners at NC2, Russ Naylor and Heddie Chu, took charge of their situation. "We were freaked out about welded pipe railing," recalls Naylor. With sheet metal typically used in industrial applications such as air ducts, networking equipment at server farms and consumer electronics, the duo designed a practical and affordable stand-in for the

pricey handrails they had originally specified. "Materials should be honest and have double duty," says Naylor.

To execute their plan, the duo approached several metal fabricators, but only Airtronics, a precision sheet metal manufacturing job shop in San Jose, Calif., could fabricate their vision. "They produce nice, tight, clean designs," says Naylor. NC2 and the building owners were extremely impressed with the lead time and cost estimate, and immediately moved forward with the unproven plan to fabricate the decorative railing panels from sheet metal. They were delighted when their plans and signature design finally came to fruition precisely executed—and under budget to boot.

Since that first multifamily project, NC2 has expanded its Bok Modern metal panel product applications to include backlit interior and exterior facade panels that give affordable facelifts to commercial applications such as the local Holiday Inn or the Lotus Casino, which until then was a "hideous looking tilt-up concrete application," says Naylor. Now the precision-cut steel creates visual interest with its intricate patterns during daytime hours. After dark, panels are backlit with LEDs to artfully brand the space and set the mood of the gaming environment. Colorful Kynar coatings protect the metal and offer a color option during daytime hours.

Although the building boom has waned, the demand for the Bok Modern product is high, as codes for railings and infill panels, safety legislation and universal designs require retrofit and renovations for existing structures in this area. NC2 has opened its first showroom in San Francisco and invites architects and designers to come by and 'kick the tires'—or in this case, 'handle' the railings. And if you do, some luck for such ingenious inventions may rub off on you, as the first name of the Bok Modern product means 'good fortune' in Korean. Visit www.bokmodern.com or Circle 522



NC2 devised three panel design options for the Lotus Casino makeover: iceray, lotus and birds nest.



Bok Modern laser cut sheet metal is an affordable option for exterior and interior renovations. Shown here, the architects created a rendering of the improvement using one of the pattern options that suits the scale, look and feel of the buildings' architecture. At night, the patterns come alive backlit with color-changing LEDs to create a brand and call attention to the site.