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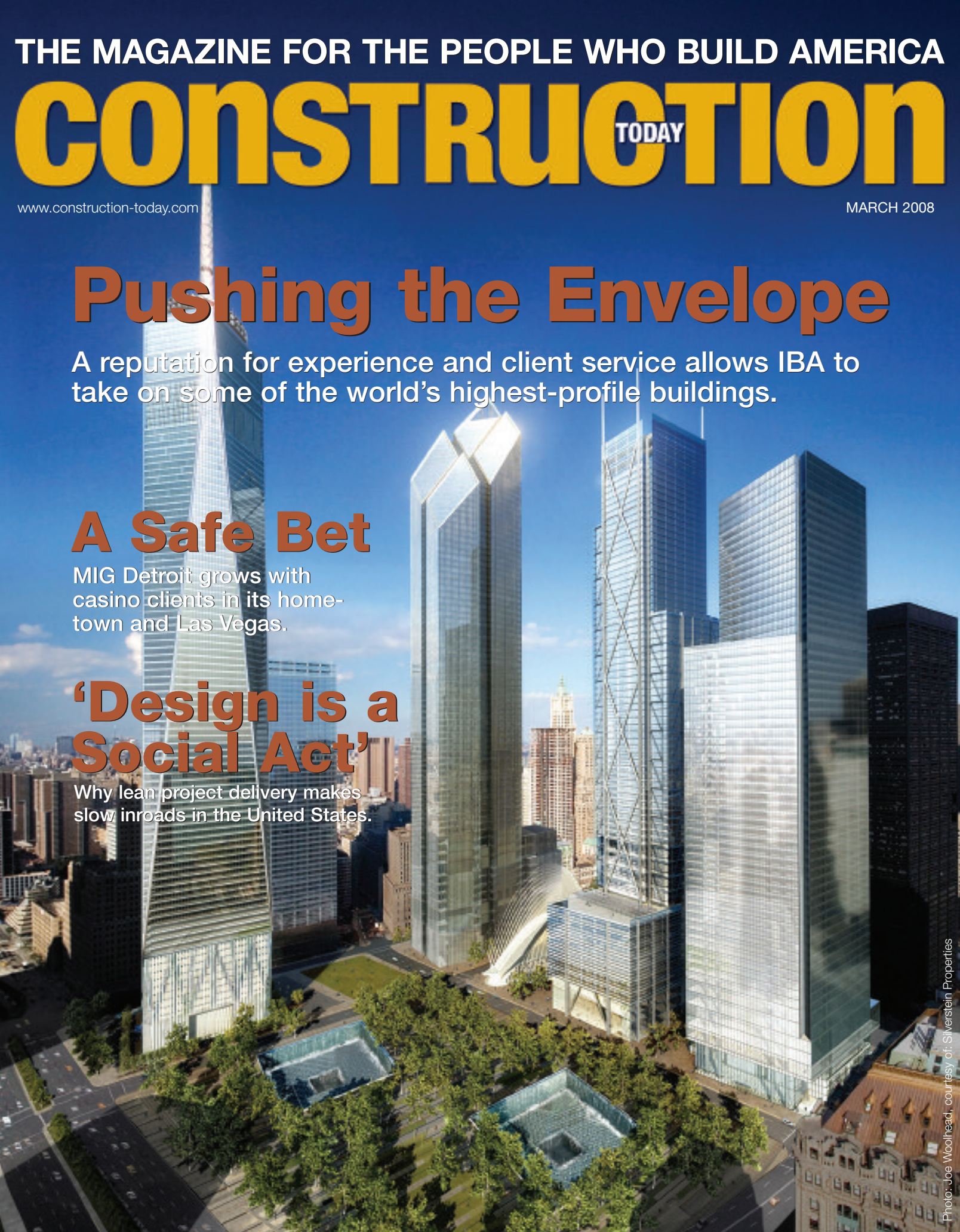


Photo: Joe Woolhead, courtesy of Silverstein Properties

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

IBA's reputation for experience and strong client service has enabled the firm to work on some of the highest-profile buildings.

By Hanna Aronovich

New York City-based Israel Berger & Associates, LLC (IBA) is pushing the envelope on building facades, President Israel Berger explains. Founded in 1994, IBA is a consulting and inspection group that specializes in building envelope technologies on high-profile projects, such as the World Trade Center redevelopment in New York and the MGM City Center in Las Vegas.

The firm works with property owners, architects and construction managers, and provides its services at all stages of construction – from conception to completion. IBA's capabilities include all aspects of design, fabrication and testing of curtain wall, window, roofing and waterproofing assemblies. In addition, IBA conducts investigations and evaluations of building envelopes on existing structures. For example, IBA performed extensive investigative and insurance settlement repair work in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The relationship IBA develops with its clients begins with meetings between the firm and the owner/architect design team. The parties evaluate logistics, constructability, practicality and economics of the the building enve-

Israel Berger & Associates, LLC

www.ibany.com

Headquarters: New York City

Employees: 65

Specialty: Building envelope technologies

Israel Berger, president: "Our involvement doesn't end when the building is delivered."



One Bryant Park is one of the many buildings in New York City for which IBA has served as a consultant.



“ WE WERE INVOLVED IN THE FIRST AND LARGEST OFFICE BUILDING IN NEW YORK CITY TO RECEIVE LEED GOLD CERTIFICATION – 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER. ”

– MARC WEISSBACH

Photo: Joe Woolhead, courtesy of: Silverstein Properties

lope systems being proposed. Subsequent to the design selection, IBA reviews the contract drawings and specifications, and establishes testing and performance criteria.

The firm helps prepare a list of proposed contractors and then participates in the bid meetings to ensure the work scope is appropriately included in all proposals. Next, the firm assists in the shop-drawing and submittal review process. In certain instances, IBA may recommend mock-up testing. This involves building a portion of a proposed exterior wall system one- or two-bays wide by approximately two-stories tall that includes all elements of a design. In some instances, dynamic and blast testing is performed to ensure compliance with security criteria.

The mock-up is put through a regimen of testing – including seismic, wind load and water infiltration – at a testing lab. Based upon all meetings and testing, the contractor will then submit a revised set of drawings. IBA then gets involved in shop monitoring and visiting manufacturers' plants. A large part of IBA's role is

to perform site monitoring to ensure quality control and code compliance is maintained. The firm also offers failure analysis and investigation.

Construction Today spoke with President Berger and Vice President Marc Weissbach to learn more about IBA's services and projects.

Construction Today: Where does IBA perform most of its work?

Marc Weissbach: The demand for our services is worldwide, but there tends to be a focus in areas where there are tall, complex and expensive buildings. The New York metro area is certainly our largest region, but we are concentrated in several urban markets. For example, we have a lot of projects in Las Vegas and South America. As more parts of the world build taller, more complicated buildings, we are expanding along with that.

CT: Are most of your jobs high rises?

MW: Actually, our portfolio varies tremendously. Four or five years ago, we had a high percentage of our work in condos and residential buildings. But, in the last two or three years, our work in office buildings, institutional buildings and

sports arenas has really picked up.

So, it runs the gamut, based on cyclical construction trends.

CT: What other trends are impacting the business?

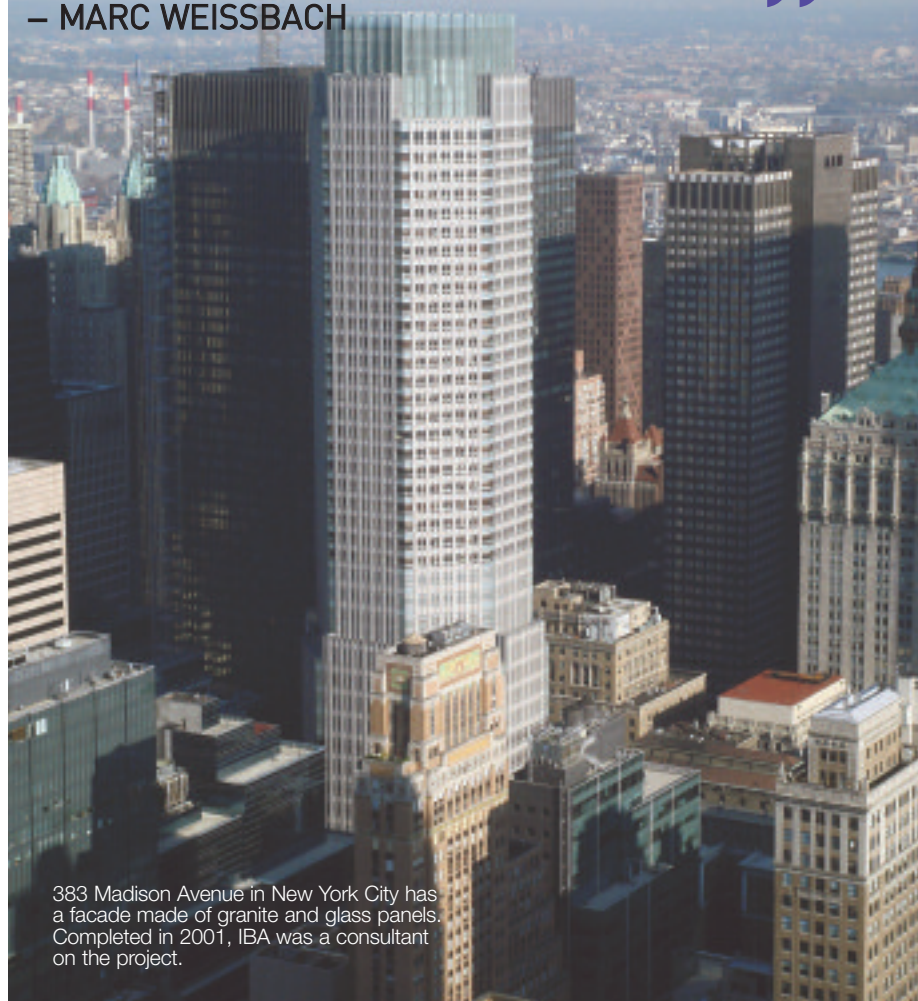
Israel Berger: Architects are pushing the envelope on building envelopes. For example, in the '70s and '80s, the curtain wall was the curtain wall – you could predict what it would be like. It was very standardized. But, in the last five or 10 years, the world-renowned architects have taken a more daring view of what buildings could look like – with curtain wall designs that did not exist before. Many of the curtain walls we work on are custom-designed, and the stakes are very high.

CT: Is LEED coming into play at all?

IB: We're wary of the danger of the term "sustainability" because it sounds cliché, but the truth is, it's affecting the design of curtain walls. There is no choice but to consider the impact of the energy a building uses. Right now, energy efficiency standards for curtain walls are not consistent, but I expect this will change in the near future.

Already, we're seeing suppliers develop

“THE NEW YORK METRO AREA IS CERTAINLY OUR LARGEST REGION, BUT WE ARE CONCENTRATED IN SEVERAL URBAN MARKETS.”
– MARC WEISSBACH



383 Madison Avenue in New York City has a facade made of granite and glass panels. Completed in 2001, IBA was a consultant on the project.

systems to better improve thermal performance on curtain walls.

MW: More of our clients, particularly developers, are self-imposing strict criteria for environmentally sound projects, even when it's not required. Many are demanding LEED certifications – they're going for gold and platinum ratings because they want that distinction. In fact, we were involved in the first and largest office building in New York City to receive LEED Gold certification: 7 World Trade Center.

CT: Can you go into some more detail about the types of relationships you foster with clients?

MW: A large majority of our work – more than 70 or 80 percent – comes from repeat clients. We've built a lot of relationships over the years, many dating back to

the '80s. We're consultants to the developers and owners, helping them identify the best sources for materials and secure the best contractors. Part of our strategy is to remain independent, so we decline direct work from facade vendors. We want the client and the contractor to view us as impartial – making recommendations in the best interest of the project. On a high-rise building, the curtain wall alone is measured in the tens of millions with several projects having enclosure systems valued at greater than \$100 million, so that impartiality is important.

CT: What have been some of the most notable projects you've worked on?

IB: We were involved in the IAC/InterActiveCorp. headquarters in New York, which was designed by architect Frank Gehry. It's newly built, occu-

pled now, and just a magnificent building. The nine-story tower has a sculpted glass façade, which is really unique and extremely challenging to develop. There was nothing straight on the exterior wall, so the façade was constructed with cold-bent glass sheets to conform to the curved shape of the building. The team did a marvelous job designing it.

MW: In addition to 7 WTC, we are active on the World Trade Center redevelopment; we are working with the Port Authority on the Freedom Tower. The curtain wall is in the testing phase now, and construction will begin next year. We are also working with Silverstein Properties on Towers 2, 3 and 4.

IB: We take pride that we've worked with some of the most world-renowned architects – Frank Gehry, Lord Norman Foster and Jean Nouvel, a French architect who we worked with on the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

CT: What's in the works?

MW: In addition to our New York office, we have satellite offices in Las Vegas and Miami, and one forming in South America.

IB: South America is interesting because several economies are booming – Brazil, Chile, Argentina, for example. We were brought into these markets because of our reputation. We've been selective about our expansion and where we set up satellite offices. Expansion is part of our long-term plan, but we aim to grow through referrals and our connections.

MW: In the third quarter of 2006, we partnered with Keystone Capital, an investment firm based in Chicago. We began to think about corporate sustainability and what should come next for us. With Keystone, we have gained the financial strength and corporate sophistication to continue our growth organically. Now, we're at a point where we can consider acquisitions or other strategic alliances.

Many firms we work with are becoming international powerhouses, and we need to adapt as well in order to remain competitive and preserve our intimate involvement with our clients. With Keystone, we can think in broader terms and set our sights on opportunistic growth. ■