



A great deal of creative effort was focused on the building exterior, where the brewery's name and slogan were put front and center, to create a striking street presence. **Right:** Limited floor space and fixed layout requirements made a creative approach to customer traffic a must. Rotating stock shelves allow the floor plan to open up, giving brewery workers control over traffic flow.

the value of FUNCTION *over* FORM

Madhouse Brewery infused with new life

WORDS: CHAD TAYLOR
IMAGES: CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA
ARCHITECT: SLINGSHOT ARCHITECTURE

When Madhouse Brewery decided to move its operation from Newton to Des Moines, it did so with the goal of greater customer involvement. That meant that its new home needed to not only be eye-catching, but also had to be built with the customer experience in mind.

"They are a functioning brewery, so they had a system in place, in terms of what was connected to what," said Slingshot Architecture's Dan Drendel, AIA, who headed up the project. "But they were adding a public function, in terms of a tasting room, merchandise sales, and ways to bring the public in. The idea is that a patron will come in for a brewery tour, hang out around the merchandise, go through the back of the facility, then come around to the tasting room, and leave back through the merchandise again. So that flow pattern in that small of a space really dictated the location of things.

"For the most part, the beer is in its own sterile environment," Drendel continues, "so our concern was really just being able to clean up after that process. Our designs were fairly pragmatic, in regards to materials."

For Drendel, the biggest challenge the space presented was accommodating the influx of customers without losing sight of

the fact that the space is, first and foremost, industrial. To drive that point home, Drendel's team focused on a function-over-form approach that kept materials simple and honest, while still ensuring that Madhouse's branded aesthetic carried through.

"It's not a bar," Drendel explains. "We wanted to establish the feeling of 'this is where we make stuff.' So the materials are kind of honest. The steel is clear-sealed, the beer is transported through a plain stainless pipe. The biggest thing was to take a very closed-in space and make it feel open. The exterior's black paint scheme makes the building's original openings feel much bigger. We put big glass windows in so everyone knows where the door is, and changed the character of the building. We wanted to make sure that it felt like a brewery first."

On the exterior, the new paint scheme and wall pattern give the building more of a visual pop that announces the brewery's presence at street level. Adding to that effect is the illuminated signage that proclaims the brewery's slogan: "Crazy Good Beer."

"The roofing membrane on the existing wood soffit had failed, so we knew we had to do some extensive repairs there," Drendel says. "So we turned that into a sign element with clear polycarbonate that lights up at night."

Throughout the process, Drendel wanted to ensure that the patron experience was as pleasant as possible without hindering the beer-making process.

"We really put their brand right out on the street, so everyone would know they were there. Using what was there, making the dimensions have big impact, putting a trellis on the outside. Simple stuff."

