

## BREWER'S FEAST

DETAILS PUT A HEAD ON THIS PUB

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# BEER CRAFT



Photo by Robert Harris

HANDMADE DETAILS GIVE REVOLUTION BREWING ITS BUZZ

By Lisa Skolnik

A 110-year-old heavy timber warehouse in Logan Square (below left) was transformed into a state-of-the-art brewpub by architects Cheryl Noel and Ravi Ricker of Wrap Architecture (below) and Josh Deth.



Photo by Robert Harris



Photo by Wrap Architecture

**S**TARTING A NEW COMPANY IN THIS DISASTROUS ECONOMY WOULD BE DIFFICULT ENOUGH. But for the entrepreneurs behind a Logan Square brewpub, building every aspect of the business yourself—right down to the actual structure you call home—makes the startup process even trickier.

"I expected it to be challenging and knew I had to be shrewd and extremely creative with the budget," says Josh Deth, creator, founder and managing partner of Revolution Brewing in Logan Square. What he didn't expect was all the good old-fashioned elbow grease it required. "Josh ended up fabricating almost all of the finish details himself," says Cheryl Noel, AIA, co-principal with Ravi Ricker, AIA, of Wrap Architecture in Logan Square.

Deth had a more conventional plan in mind when he called the architects out of the blue in February 2008. He was just putting together a deal to buy a 110-year-old heavy timber warehouse in Logan Square that had once been a printing plant to start Revolution Brewing, and wanted to use them to design and execute the project. They had done a home renovation for him three years earlier.

With 6,000 square feet on each of three levels, the warehouse was large enough, but the structure was loaded with debris and hadn't been touched in decades. "It was in really bad shape and needed to be completely gutted," Noel says.

Deth also had a limited budget. "The building cost about a million dollars, and he hoped to renovate the structure and build it out for \$600,000 to \$700,000. But it needed a full million dollars," Noel says. Much of that would go to creating a state-of-the-art, glassed-in brewery visible from the restaurant. Deth felt strongly about this

detail because "seeing all the action helps people connect with the beer," he says.

The project required so much new infrastructure and equipment that "we basically had no budget for the interior," Noel says, "so we had to be really creative." The details that bring a project to life and give it character and cachet are especially important in a hospitality environment, she notes.

Noel and Ricker did the plans for the structural work to renovate the entire building and eke out a fermentation cellar and finished beer storage in the basement and a brew house, kitchen, dining room and bar on the first floor. The plan left the second story unfinished but fitted with new plumbing and mechanicals until Deth had the funds to finish it. He hoped to build a second bar, private dining room and second kitchen there when budget allowed (and is opening as we go to press, a few years ahead of schedule thanks to the brewery's success).

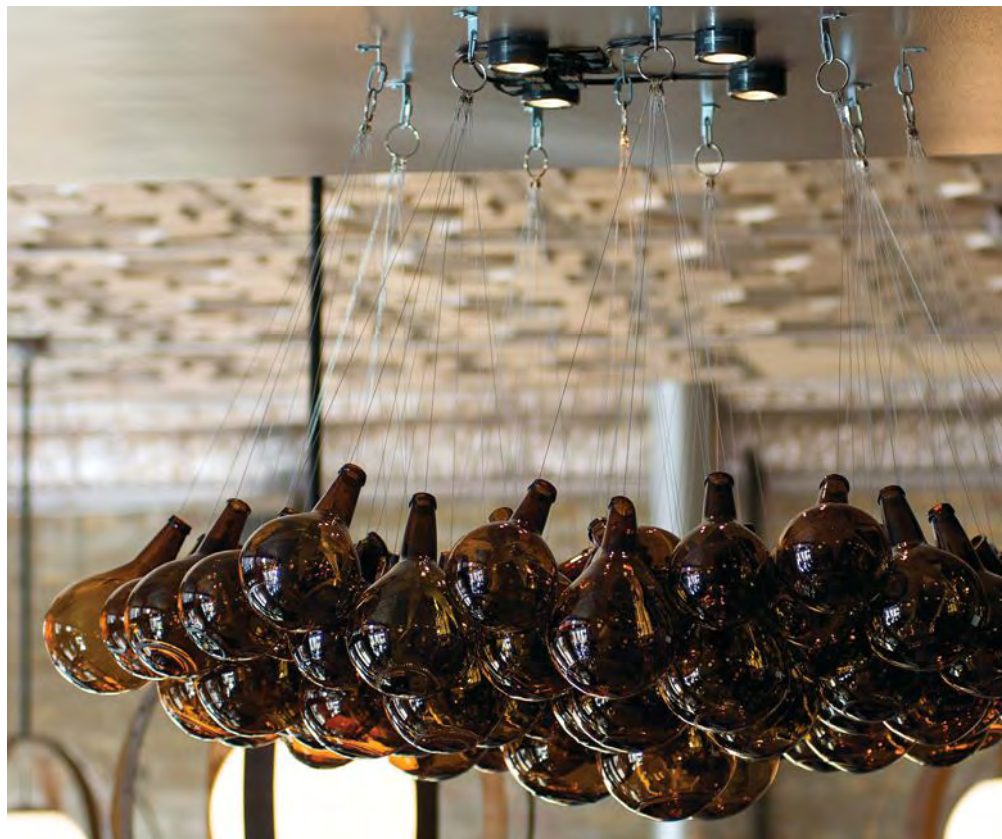
And when it came to adding the final layer—namely the finishes, lighting and furnishings—the team was exceptionally creative, coming up with inventive solutions that have helped make Revolution Brewing as exciting in the visual sense as its acclaimed artisanal beers are gastronomically. Much of the structure's original but decrepit pressed tin ceiling was falling down, "so we scavenged every bit that we could, moved it to the front of the first floor and refinished it," Ricker says. There it makes a stylish and historically appropriate crown for the restaurant and bar, which blends the old and newly created in its décor. But the most intriguing details were more surprisingly homespun. Here are the highlights: >

### 99 Bottles of Beer Chandelier:

Deth wanted the style of the brewpub to match its substance, which inspired Noel, a glass blower by trade, to develop a show-stopping chandelier. Through trial and error, she hit on the idea of blowing beer bottles into globes—not an easy endeavor since they're made out of mold glass and aren't very flexible.

"You can blow them, but they return to their original shape very quickly and are quite brittle," she explains. She finally found a shape that worked and used 99 blown beer bottles to make the fixture, which Ricker actually assembled with a hanging system he designed and fabricated. He cut 300 pieces of aluminum into little diamonds, and then threaded them together with fishing leader in groups of three.

Clusters of nine bottles were attached to a steel ring and hung individually from the ceiling in 11 masses to create the entire installation.



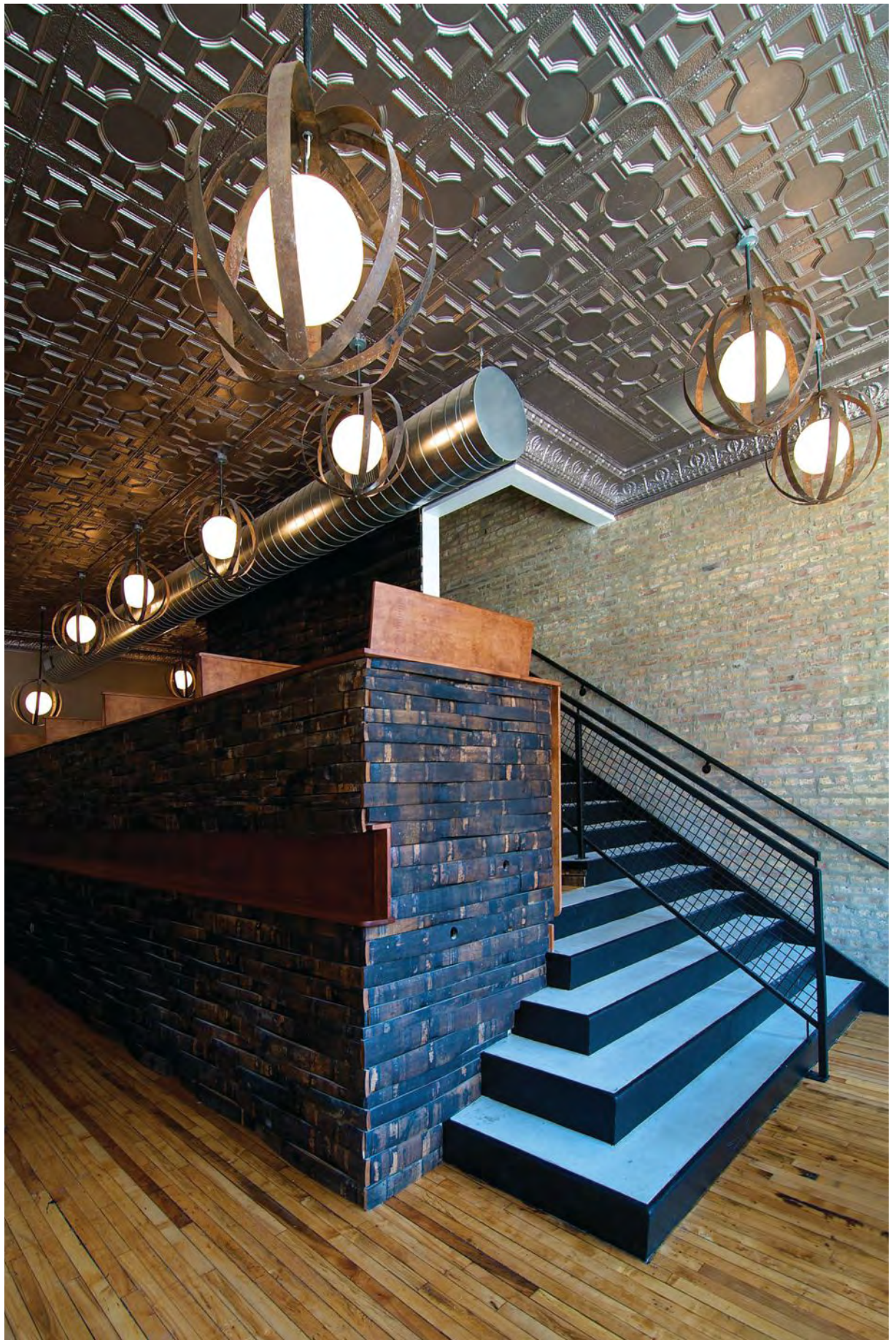
### Bourbon Barrel Walls:

(Seen on page 36) Deth used to work at Goose Island Brewery and knew that there would be used bourbon barrels to spare since their use is limited in the brewing process. They're also made out of high-grade, slow growth, quarter-sawn charred American white oak.

"We got 60 of them donated, and Josh wanted to use them for planters in front of the brewery," Noel says. "But we thought that made the place feel like a country kitchen instead of an urban brewery with an industrial edge. So we took a few apart to figure out what we could use them for and realized they would look really interesting as a wall treatment." They were staggered to create a woven pattern, screwed on to a plywood backing and sealed with Tung oil, which is applied yearly.

**Barrel Hoop Pendants:**

After using the barrel staves, the rusty steel hoops were castoffs, piling up and begging for reuse. But classic globe lights Deth bought at Ikea and Evergreen Oak Electric inspired him to bolt three hoops together into a sphere and float them over each globe. To do so, he had to drill holes in the hoops at 180-degree angles and bolt them together on one end and use plumbing pipe to make extensions to encase the pendant's suspension cords and thread them through the other end.



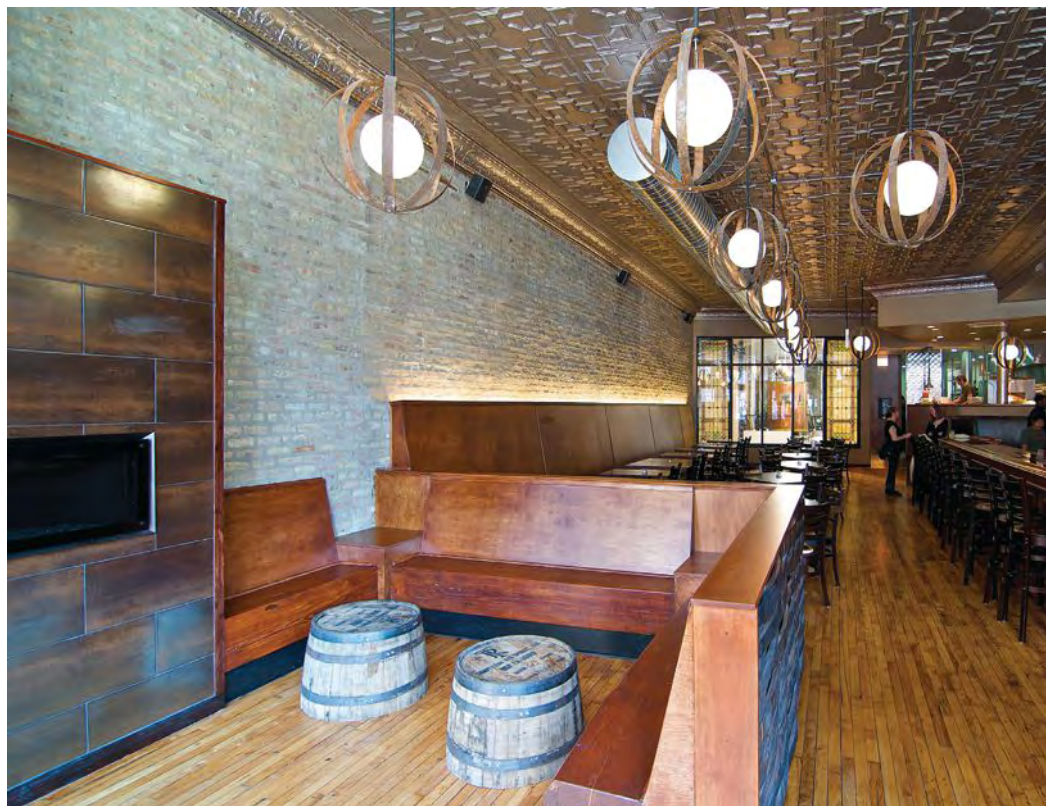


### Beer taps:

Deth had dreamed of opening a brewery for 14 years, and developed a logo (a fist emblazoned with a brewer's star) more than a decade ago with the help of noted beer label designer Randy Mosher. The logo is reflected on fist-shaped columns that support the upper bar, which were made by millworker Aaron Heineman using a CNC machine. Deth thought of applying the same tactic to the beer taps, and used different varieties of wood to reflect the type of beer on tap. They made about 60 taps in all, and some were also painted.

### Recycled Beam Benches:

To site the brew house, with its accompanying fermentation tanks, where it could be seen on the first floor, all the equipment had to be built in the basement and reinforced with a thick concrete slab and much more steel because of weight (the brew house, which contains the main equipment, is eight tons, and the eight tanks range from four to eight tons each depending on size). So about 400 square feet of the first floor was removed and glassed to let guests see the equipment below. The old timber planks from that portion of the floor were recycled into benches for the booths." Josh planed them and resealed them himself," says Noel.





**Hand Cut Signage:**

A major sign could have cost major bucks, so Deth, who learned to weld when he worked at Goose Island Brewery, decided to make the signage himself. Mosher had already developed the logo and type, so Deth adapted it into large letters and a fist with the help of Noel and Ricker, who printed them out as templates on two- by three-foot sheets. "It gave me a great excuse to buy a plasma cutter," Deth quips. He had to use a welder to attach the several pieces of steel that were required to make the giant fist.

 DESIGN <sup>2011</sup> NIGHT

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*Interior Architecture Award*

*Regional & Urban Design Award*

*Unbuilt Award*

*And the 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award to Ben Weese, FAIA*

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