

February 2008 / \$6.95

Properties





Strategy in Motion

Parker Hannifin showcases engineering innovation at newly expanded headquarters

By Mark Watt | Photos courtesy of TRG Studios

From a humble beginning as a one-man operation 90 years ago to its current position as a global motion and control technology company with \$11 billion in revenues, Parker Hannifin Corporation has always thrived on creating innovative solutions to problems and turning conceptual ideas into reality. So when it came time to design an exhibit area in a recently opened three-story wing addition at the company's Mayfield Heights world headquarters, it's not surprising that the firm latched onto a bold idea presented by local graphic design firm Karen Skunta & Company.

What began as a 1,960-square-foot space, to be designed with informative and visually interesting displays telling the story of the company's past, present and future, evolved into an expansive, experiential four-part environment to educate and inspire guests.

"Honestly, some of the ideas I presented [to Parker] were pretty risky and bold to suggest at the time," Karen Skunta says.

In the fall of 2005, Ron Reed of architectural firm Westlake Reed Leskosky,

which was in the process of designing the 97,000-square-foot North Wing addition at Parker's headquarters, invited Skunta to join the project team for a singular purpose: design an exhibit area limited to a common area on the new wing's first floor. After several meetings between Parker and the design team, Skunta asked Reed if she could put together a design brief – a narrative outline of her ideas and the intentions behind them – to present to Parker. Reed gave her the green light.

"The trouble that I recognized was that, because of the location of the new common area in relation to the main entry, a visitor would not be able to access the new space unless he or she was escorted by Parker personnel," Skunta says. "I got a little daring, I suppose, and I created a new goal for them."

Her proposed plan was to engage visitors with a memorable and educational experience that would begin before they even walked through the front doors. In the entrance plaza, she imagined



COMING AROUND A cantilevered arc, glass canopy (left) has been added to the original entrance at Parker's headquarters. Inside the entrance lobby (right), the company's global presence is represented by a series of five suspended, illustrated scrims.

a water feature where motion-control sensors would send laminar streams of water up and over a walkway whenever anyone passed by. This was inspired by research which uncovered that Parker was responsible for the system technology that allows the Bellagio fountains in Las Vegas to dance.

"The concept was to allude to Parker's role as a leader of motion control technology in a unforgettable way," Skunta says. Parker focuses on eight technologies that service the motion control marketplace, including aerospace, automation, climate and industrial controls, filtration, fluid connectors, seals, hydraulics and instrumentation. Even with 900,000 products, 1,200 markets and 125 divisions, nearly all of its engineering efforts are based upon controlling liquid or gas to create motion. So the fountain would become a simplified way to subtly introduce Parker's field of work.

Visitors would then enter a remodeled main lobby, where a short video on a four-screen multimedia display would connect the dots between the fountain streams outside to aerospace and a myriad of other industries utilizing Parker technology.

An adjacent, existing exhibit space would be remodeled as well with a state-of-the-art theater and a timeline display covering the company's history

and numerous other features to better educate visitors.

Finally, the space in the new wing – the original target space for her work – would feature innovation and the spirit behind where Parker is going in the future.

"My hope for all of this," she says, "was for a visitor to be able to walk out the front door after one visit and be able to say to someone else, 'Hey, did you know

that this Cleveland company is a global leader in motion and control technology, anything from airplanes to construction vehicles to NASA spacecraft usually incorporates Parker technology?'"

With her design brief in hand, Skunta visited Parker and presented her proposed plan in March 2006.

"It was risky on my part because the ideas weren't limited to the 1,960-square-foot space in the new addition, as



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BY THE NUMBERS In the remodeled Theater Area, three columns are used to display thousands of Parker's U.S. patents.

originally planned," Skunta continues. "Then again, I figured the worst thing that could happen was for them to say 'no.' "

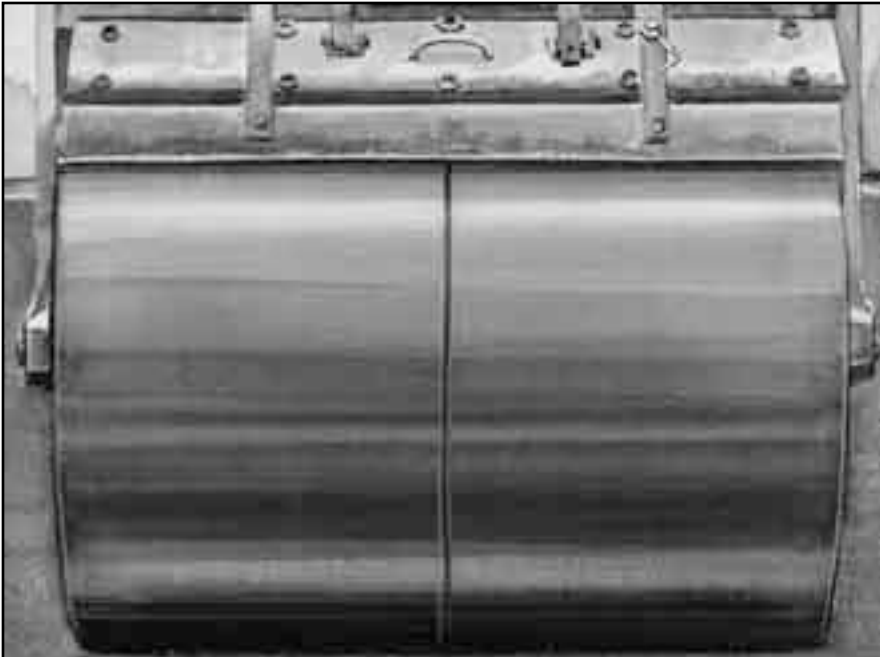
But Parker said, "Yes."

Engineering a new environment

"We have always been a conservative company," says Richard Kanzleiter, Parker's vice president of operations support. "But with this entire project [from Karen Skunta's work to the entire three-story addition], there was an effort to do something a little different here. Management didn't want to get crazy or ostentatious, but we wanted to get a little more modern, fancier. We are a high tech company after all."

The new design and construction at Parker headquarters – including the 97,000-square-foot North Wing and Skunta's remodeling efforts – is in part a reflection of a recent change in the company's decision-making process and corporate culture strategy called "Winovation." Created in 2004, the slogan became a company-wide mantra to keep a focus on disciplined product development "based on the voice of the customer," according to Craig Maxwell, the company's vice president of corporate technology and innovation.

Essentially, introducing the Winovation strategy was an effort to bridge gaps that had grown between the various divisions at Parker over time and encourage collaboration between these engineering experts. With 57,000 employees worldwide, many Parker



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groups had arguably been operating in their own bubbles, according to Kanzleiter.

"People here always used to say, 'if Parker only knew what Parker knows, we would be dangerous,'" Kanzleiter says. "That's because we have been developed into eight business groups and they've pretty much been segregated. But now with this Winovation strategy, for instance, the Aerospace guys can hook up with the guys in Pneumatics and Filtration and Refrigeration. We want these guys to collaborate with each other. Who knows what they'll come up with?"

To encourage this interaction between the engineering groups, Parker began considering a physical space where

this type of collaboration could thrive. Steady growth of the company had also led to a shortage of office space overall. So Parker sought a solution for its combined space needs by enlisting Westlake Reed Leskosky, the architectural firm that had originally designed its L-shaped Mayfield Heights headquarters in 1997.

This led to the construction of the new North Wing, which provides expanded office space on the top two floors, a new third-floor boardroom, a 150-seat auditorium, an area devoted to the company's Winovation engineers and the primary exhibit space designed by Skunta.

Of steel-frame construction with an exterior composed of precast concrete, metal panel systems and generous

amounts of glass, the addition was built under the direction of Robert McCoy, of construction management firm AMEC. As project manager, McCoy, along with superintendent Ralph Repp – both now principals of Choice Repps Construction Advisors – reprised a role they played in the construction of Parker headquarters in '97 (then working as project manager and superintendent with Morse Diesel International).

"Part of what Parker did in regrouping the team they had before was getting around issues they might have had in building a relationship with a new project team," McCoy says. "Coming into this project, we knew from our previous experience what Parker's expectations were."

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IMITATING MOVEMENT In the Innovation Area, a variety of features are designed to create a sense of motion, including a wave-like, tiled ceiling and a series of multimedia display walls arranged in a pinwheel formation. The touch screen interactive modules in this area were developed by Blue Robot.

Even with the advantages inherent to bringing the original team back together, constructing the new wing did present some challenges. For instance, while the addition was intended to match the existing wings in some aspects, such as offices of the same size and shape, it was also designed to feature ample amounts of glass on exterior surfaces. This led to modifications to portions of the original building as part of a secondary phase after the addition was completed in March 2007. (This secondary phase also included landscaping and the interior fit-out for Skunta's exhibit spaces.)

"Precast [on the exterior of the original building] was literally unbolted and removed and glass was swapped in to match the new wing," Kanzleiter says. "We also added a cantilevered arc, glass canopy at the entrance that is a nice, unique, modern design that helps to achieve continuity between the original building and the addition."

The exploded view

Inside the new facility are four main features that attract attention. First is the

third-floor boardroom, which includes high ceilings, a server hidden behind a sliding wooden wall and a unique, channel-glass window wall system imported from German specialty glass manufacturer Bendheim, which overlooks the entrance plaza outside.

Second is the wedge-shaped, amphitheater-style auditorium on the first floor. State-of-the-art technology in this space includes automated video cameras

"The idea in these spaces was: let's exhibit what we do, where we came from and where we are going to our employees, visitors, vendors and customers."

**James Cartwright
Parker Hannifin Corp.**

that, for instance, are able to pinpoint an audience member asking a question during a video conference and then project his or her image on a screen at the front of the room.

Thirdly is the innovation/technology space where Parker's Winovation

engineers can brainstorm with international company divisions and partners, utilizing videoconferencing and a virtual whiteboard system within an oblong shaped glass-walled space on the first floor, internally known as the Corporate Think Tank.

Lastly is the cluster of exhibit areas designed by Skunta and fabricated and installed by Visual Marketing of Chicago.

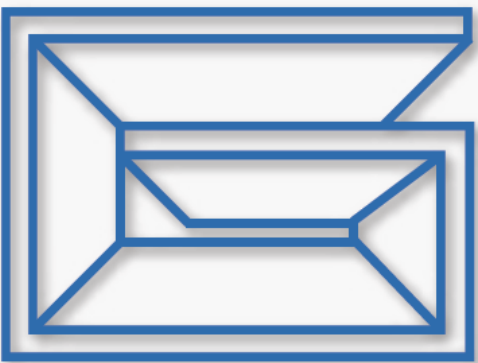
"The idea in these spaces was: let's exhibit what we do, where we came from and where we are going to our employees, visitors, vendors and customers," says James Cartwright, corporate communications manager for Parker.

In the Innovation Area, located within the new wing, a variety of features are designed to create a sense of motion, including a wave-like, tiled ceiling; a column-shaped, 360-degree DynaScan video display; and a series of multimedia display walls arranged in a pinwheel formation.

One small area, with desk-style seating and a SmartBoard, serves as an "Inspiration Lounge," where employ-



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THE BIG IDEA Parker's new Inspiration Lounge serves as a getaway environment where employees and/or guests can meet and brainstorm.

ees and/or guests can have brief brainstorming sessions in an open environment with a floor design that incorporates engineering doodles by Parker employees.

The Inspiration Lounge is separated from the rest of the room by three floor-to-ceiling panels with constantly changing lights that symbolize the thousands of Parker distributor locations worldwide. This specialty lighting, along with all the exhibit area lighting, was designed and installed by Bright Focus Sales of Cleveland.

Also in the space are a pair of translucent, multi-panel art pieces, created by UK-based artist Nick Veasey, which depict X-ray images of a Boeing airplane and an earth mover, representing two significant markets employing Parker technology and systems: aerospace and heavy equipment.

Back in the remodeled portions of the original building, the entrance lobby



now includes the new four-screen multimedia display; custom-molded, art glass panels illustrating the story of the founding Parker family; wall-mounted displays framing three video screens; and five hanging scrims designed with images of a globe to convey Parker's worldly reach.

The former exhibit area has been redesigned with a state-of-the-art Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound theater, outfitted by Audio Visual Innovations of Cleveland. Visitors can view a three-minute video, produced by Glazen Creative Studios of Cleveland, showcas-

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Photo by Ken Koych

CONFERRING CAPABILITIES Adjacent to the Innovation Area is a new amphitheater-style auditorium with state-of-the-art videoconferencing features.

ing Parker's effect on the lives of people worldwide.

"This brief introduction to the company presents its depth supported by high-definition video and an original soundscape," Skunta says.

The circular theater room is wrapped in a tiled weave of Japanese balsa wood.

Close by, thousands of U.S. patents filed by the company are highlighted on a series of three display columns that appear to project through the room's ceiling. Also in the space is a 30-foot-long, wall-mounted timeline display emphasizing key people, products and events in the company's 90-year history.

"The new spaces were never meant to be linear," Skunta says. "There is no implied sequence for experiencing the exhibits. Instead, it's designed so that visitors – and even employees – can pick up bits of information about Parker here and there at their own leisure."

The last portion of the project – the water feature – has been designed and implemented by Kathy Jankowski of Knight & Stolar landscape architects

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of Cleveland. A 50-foot pool with dramatic, art glass sculptural fins (designed, fabricated and installed by SWON Design of Montreal) is still under construction. Multi-colored lighting, laminar stream fountains and other water features will be debuting this spring, Skunta says.

Recently installed is a bronze statue of Patrick S. Parker, who successfully led the company for 37 years after following in the footsteps of mother Helen and father/company founder Arthur Parker. The sculpture, by Cleveland sculptor David Deming, is situated near a pond just southwest of the facility.

Committed to Cleveland

With the new wing completed and occupied, Kanzleiter says Parker employees are enjoying the new space.

"The new building truly gives us the capability of bringing engineers together to work on great new ideas," he says.

Skunta says she is pleased with how the project turned out and credits Choice Repps' team and Visual Marketing for vital help in transmitting her ideas into

reality with their knowledge of the building, assistance in constructability issues and exceptional execution.

She adds that she is honored to have contributed to better telling the Parker story to the company's visitors and even its employees.

"While working on this project, it was a joy to discover what a tremendous legacy this company has," Skunta says. "It was wonderful to learn more about a company that is so successful and one that has shown a vested interest in staying in Northeast Ohio." **P**



Photo by Scott Pease

WINDOWS ON THE WING Large amounts of glass are used on the exterior of the addition, including a unique window wall system imported from German manufacturer Bendheim.

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