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(Above) A mostly finished hallway on the eighth floor of The Langham, a 316-room luxury hotel opening in July at 330 North Wabash.

## A kinder, gentler Mies van der Rohe

[Langham architect tends to grandfather's work](#)

**By Steven Dahlman**

**10-Apr-13** – While helping his grandfather, pioneer of modern architecture **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**, design IBM Plaza in the late 1960s, **Dirk Lohan** could hardly imagine he would be back four decades later to redesign the lobby.

With others working on a 316-room luxury hotel on floors 2-13, Lohan has spent the past two years rebuilding the hotel's ground floor lobby. It will be the first thing hotel guests see when they enter from Wabash Avenue. Now known as 330 North Wabash and soon to be renamed AMA Plaza, the 52-story building will still have a lobby for its office tenants on the north side of the building.

"We never thought that it would become a hotel," said Lohan. But one of the advantages of turning the massive office building into a hotel is that the rooms are at least 15 feet wide, a few feet bigger than most hotel rooms.



“It’s funny to be involved in a project that you worked on as a younger architect,” said Lohan (left) at a media event on Tuesday to introduce The Langham hotel. “Life sort of catches up with you once in a while and you get involved in the same project again to reposition it, sort of like what we ourselves need to do, reposition ourselves once in awhile.”

Now in his 70s, Lohan is a founding partner of Lohan Anderson, a Chicago architecture firm that designed McDonald’s corporate campus in Oak Brook, additions to Shedd Aquarium, and 353 North Clark in River North.



Installed above the entrance on the east side of the building will be a shiny, gold-colored bronze canopy (depicted in above rendering) that will “float” beneath an existing canopy. Lohan is comfortable with making such changes to his grandfather’s building “as long as it is carefully, sensitively, and respectfully done.”

IBM Plaza was Mies van der Rohe’s last major office building. It opened in 1972, a few years after he had died. An official Chicago landmark, there are restrictions on what they can do to the building but Langham managers says they are on schedule toward a mid-July opening of their luxury hotel.

What would Mies think? “I think he would have maybe chuckled a little bit,” Lohan speculates, “but I also feel that he would have accepted it because it’s not visible to the outside,” referring to work on upper floors being done behind tinted windows.

Lohan's mother was Mies van der Rohe's daughter. Born in Germany, Lohan arrived in Chicago in 1957 to study architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology. He started working for his grandfather in 1962.

Even with his own notable career, Lohan is still introduced as the grandson of Mies van der Rohe, something of a mixed blessing as he carves an architectural style of his own. "One thing that I've tried to do...is to create very pristine structural modern contemporary architecture but make it warmer than Mies did. Give it more feeling. It seems to have worked for me."

According to Lohan, his firm is currently working on hotels in India and South America and facilities at Argonne National Laboratory west of Chicago.



(Above) Work on Tuesday afternoon in the southwest corner of The Langham. The hotel will serve afternoon tea and offer luxury suites, a spa with Chinese medicinal treatments, wedding venue, swimming pool, and a 90-seat lounge on "floor 12C," or what could also be described as the 13th floor. A 30-foot-long video display on the second floor will be visible from Wabash Avenue. There will be sculptures on the plaza. The hotel's art collection will include an eight-and-a-half-foot tall sculpture by a European artist of a person's head.

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