



TRADE SHOW POETRY

A well-versed columnist shares his trade show tales, including encounters with blue ribbon baker Marjorie Johnson.



STALL SUCCESS

Checking out some restaurant restrooms whose design actually adds to the overall dining experience.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

When construction closed its kitchen, Birchwood Cafe popped up at Verdant Tea—and the pairing brought out the best in both.

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Best in Bathroom

A visit to these Twin Cities restaurants proves there's more to a restroom than a pretty faucet

By Joey Hamburger

A GOOD RESTROOM CAN TRULY be a work of art. Some have style but lose their allure with a lack of upkeep. Bars or clubs sometimes have restrooms befitting a nuclear explosion but for reasons unknown are quite suited to their environment. There is no singular key to success for a great restroom, but here are a few examples of what I've seen from the best restrooms in the Twin Cities.

Before I share this list please keep in mind these examples are from my personal reviews. With water bottle in hand I walked from place to place and asked to see their restrooms. When I was told they were for customers only, I replied I was not going to use them, but merely review them.

I started by brainstorming places I had been before and taking suggestions from my barista at the Urban Bean, a coffee shop in Uptown. It just so happened I was in a coffee shop containing a hidden gem of restroom design.

Urban Bean's restroom is painted black with one wall covered entirely in different black-and-white cartoon drawings. Similar to bathroom graffiti, these drawings remind you to have a good day while expressing previous bathroom personalities, but with a more dignified sense of artistic integrity.

Then I noticed the shadows on the wall. They were shadows of skulls from steers of the Wild West. These shadows were coming from a chandelier on the ceiling constructed with transparent amber skulls. Inside a clean, intricately designed, single-person bathroom, I think I can say the day started on a high note.



Newspapers are fitting wallpaper in the restrooms of The Newsroom in downtown Minneapolis.

Detailed design is what separates restroom from restroom. This can be seen in accessories and décor establishing tone or by different messages like one on the floor at Ike's downtown reminding you to "P-Nice."

I found another great design in downtown Minneapolis at The Newsroom. This restroom had wallpaper made of old newspaper clippings with famous headlines from the past century to keep in line with the restaurant theme. This bathroom also had three personal sinks that were divided by an open triangle of mirrors, which gives you a front, left and right glimpse of yourself.

Ornate mirrors are an essential feature

of a restaurant restroom. There is nothing better than heading back to your table assured that you look great. Not to mention full-length-mirror-great, which is exactly what I found at Coup d'etat, which opened in Uptown in January. This beautifully designed restroom, in a beautifully designed space, had a large full-length mirror next to its exit to see how your suit fits from shoe to hem to belt to coat. There's also a massive mirror covering the entire wall behind the communal sink.

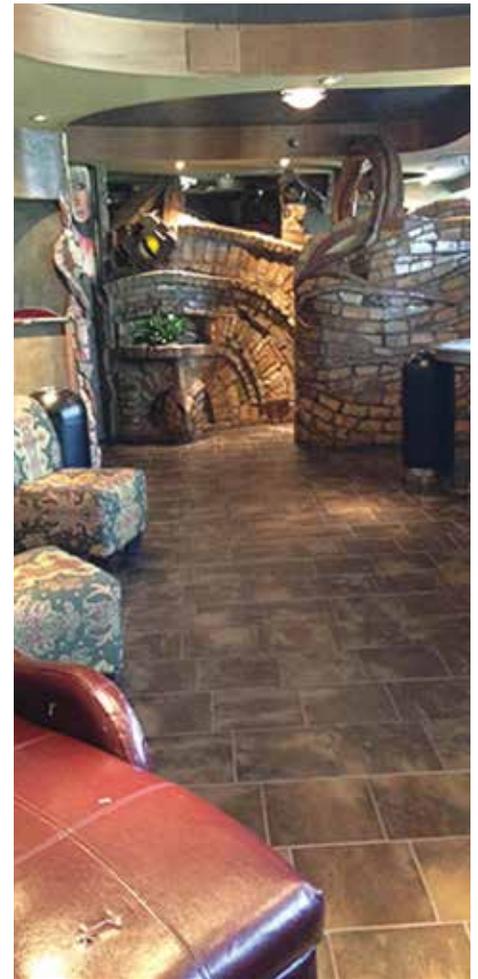
This communal sink is another popular fixture at some of the best restrooms in the Twin Cities. These large hand-washing stations are not in the toilet facilities themselves but just outside. This seems

like a modern aesthetic-only approach at first glance, but with further contemplation the communal sink is a brilliant idea in terms of hygiene. We all know one of the worst things is having to touch that doorknob after washing your hands.

The Varsity Theater and Loring Pasta Bar in Dinkytown are also home to communal sinks. Owner Jason McLean designed these restrooms—a symbiosis of Alice in Wonderland and The Hobbit, with shower nozzle sinks amid a gnome sanctuary. The restrooms are so fancifully designed that using them during a concert or while at Loring's Sunday brunch can be one of the best parts of the experience. It is safe to

say these two neighbors have the best restrooms in the Twin Cities.

Restroom design can range anywhere from unique mirrors to waterfall sinks to wash cloths instead of paper towels. These seemingly minor details can influence the total restroom—and restaurant—experience. Despite the initial tongue-in-cheek nature of my research, it's worth noting restaurants with exceptional restrooms often double as hot dining spots in the Twin Cities. These notable designs mentioned will start with five-star reviews when Help hits the app markets. This will happen right after I learn how to actually design an app. [FSN](#)



A view of the restroom seating at the Varsity Theater.



Shower nozzle sinks placed amid the gnome sanctuary that is the restroom at the Varsity Theater.