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# New Heights of Customization.

*MTI Baths collaborates with esteemed Atlanta architect John C. Portman, Jr. to create a curvilinear sculpture for Georgia Tech.*

(Sugar Hill, GA. July 6, 2021) There is no doubt MTI Baths knows how to make a beautiful tub and cater to custom requests. As the leading manufacturer of customized bath products they have mastered the engineering and artistry necessary to create bathtubs in every possible silhouette, always going the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction. The employee-owned, Georgia based company thrives on solving problems. Their willingness to step into the unknown led to MTI being a key part of the design team behind an extraordinary new 40' sculpture on the Georgia Tech campus. This unlikely venture began with the inspiration of renowned architect John C. Portman, Jr., FAIA, a man with a vision and a mission to make it come to life. MTI had the resources, a unique material, and the dedication to make Portman's vision come true. This project is a perfect example of what's possible when different technologies come together to overcome challenges.

For MTI it started back in 2015 - As one of Atlanta's most respected architects and a sculptor in his own right, Portman was familiar with MTI's signature SculptureStone® material from his work using it in boutique hotel baths in Atlanta. He loved the feel of the material and knew of its incredible durability and ability to be crafted into any shape while withstanding the elements. Portman's vision was inspired, but he needed help to realize his dream.

## SculptureStone® is a Game Changer

After touring the MTI facility, the CEO of Portman Architects Robert Halverson asked Russell Adams, President and Chief Design Officer of MTI Baths, if they could build a sculpture. As a sculpture artist and visionary architect, Portman wanted to know if MTI could re-create an original sculpture he envisioned and then possibly build it larger. Portman gave Adams his original sculpture which was 15" tall. Using a rubber mold, the MTI team then made an exact replica in-house, which was poured with SculptureStone, then hand finished. The result was impressive, and Portman loved the look and feel of the sculpture. He then upped the ante with a request for a model that was 20-feet tall. Naturally this larger and more complex design seemed intimidating at first glance. But after some consideration, the MTI team determined they would take on the task.

*Russell Adams, President of MTI Baths with the prototype of the Koan sculpture*

Using scanning, 3D printing, molds milled on a CNC machine, steel framing with fiberglass and the exterior consisting of SculptureStone material, MTI presented the proposal to build a 20-foot replica. Mr. Portman agreed on the plan, but then revealed that the 20-foot sculpture they had been brainstorming was NOT the actual sculpture he wanted to build. His envisioned sculpture was actually 40-feet tall with three merging forms that meld and support each other. Entitled Koan, this figure was meant to honor a Buddhist meditation puzzle and symbolize the intertwining of knowledge, research and creativity. It was this figure with which he intended to grace the campus of his alma mater Georgia Tech as part of the institute's Arts@Tech initiative.

## KOAN - A Buddhist Puzzle

The MTI team knew their SculptureStone could be sprayed onto any surface, but they needed help developing a mold for the internal structure on such a large scale. They determined the structure should be made out of carbon fiber with their SculptureStone material on the outside. MTI brought in material vendors who supply resin and composite material to MTI but also supply to other industries such as solar, boating and aerospace.

*The Adrenaline Powerboats facility was the ideal space large enough to build the sculpture.*

Art Gambill, MTI's Director of Product Development, searched manufacturers who work in carbon fiber and located a boat manufacturer who builds super boats out of carbon fiber. MTI and Georgia-based Adrenaline Boats began work on a plan using 3D files.

"We are always looking for new challenges, and creating an enormous sculpture out of our SculptureStone material was by far the most intense request," recalled Gambill. "It was amazing to reach outside of our typical tub-size molds and think in bigger terms. We learned a lot along the way as the project got bigger and bigger, literally, but we always kept close to the original vision to create Mr. Portman's vision of the Koan that would live on for generations to enjoy."

The engineering process took over a year and included input from two of Georgia Tech's top aerospace engineers. A model of the sculpture was even wind tunnel tested in Argentina to ensure it could withstand tornado-force winds. It was determined that only one mold was necessary to create twelve identical parts that would be assembled to create the final three-ring sculpture. The mold would be sprayed with MTI's SculptureStone material and fortified by carbon fiber, with an additional layer of resin-infused foam. Once removed from the mold, the outer SculptureStone surface of the part would be sanded to a soft matte finish.

## Even with Covid Obstacles the Project Advances

The building process lasted another year, with mock-ups and design tweaks along the way, not to mention delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Using the twelve identical parts, the sculpture was assembled into six half-ring pieces, a size that would allow them to be safely driven nearly three hours from the boat shop to the Georgia Tech campus.

*MTI's quality craftmanship and innovative material create works of art.*

It was time to put the sculpture together, and excitement was high as the project neared the finish line. "My role was to support the fabrication and completion of the Koan statue on the Georgia Tech campus using John Portman's design, advanced composite materials and our very own MTI SculptureStone product for the look and feel that Mr. Portman desired," said Kevin Hyde, Engineer and Vice President of Manufacturing at MTI Baths. "The process of working with team members from MTI, Georgia Tech Engineering, John Portman and Adrenaline Boats was an incredible experience that required innovative solutions from all parties to develop the right construction and installation techniques for a one-of-a-kind piece of art that will sit on the Georgia Tech campus for years to come."

*The final sculpture lit up. A grand display for all to enjoy.*

## Art of Design - Logic Of Engineering

The completed six half-rings were delivered to the campus in stages and carefully assembled by hand, then hand-finished to a soft matte. The third ring was the most difficult and had previously only been connected in CAD simulations, but all were firmly secured.

The final step would be applying a protective coating to the entire structure. MTI connected with another high-tech company to find a ceramic coating used on high-end boats, exotic cars, trains and even planes. This coating was applied to keep the sculpture clean, protect it from the elements and aid the removal of potential graffiti. At long last, this labor of determination and ingenuity was complete.

> ***We could not have created KOAN without MTI from the beginning to the end. They are outstanding at what they do and if they commit, they deliver.***
>
> - Stanley (Mickey) Steinberg, senior advisor to John Portman

At the center of the Koan project is Stanley (Mickey) Steinberg, PE - a longtime associate and trusted collaborator, Portman Companies. Throughout the entire project he figures out how to implement Portman's original vision - a pioneering effort - with mutual respect for all involved. He worked directly with the entire team at MTI to ensure that Portman's vision was realized. Steinberg currently serves as a senior advisor to the chairman of the Portman Companies in Atlanta and is a private consultant for construction, real estate development and business operations matters. He formerly served as chairman and CEO of Sony Retail Entertainment where he was responsible for the development and operation of location-based retail entertainment centers, movie theater chains and Sony retail stores. Prior to joining Sony, Mr. Steinberg served as Executive Vice President and COO of Walt Disney Imagineering where he managed the development of Disney Theme Parks in Los Angeles, Orlando, Tokyo and Paris.

*John C. Portman, Jr., FAIA, Sculptor - one of the most recognized architects of the second half of the 20th Century.*

Sadly Mr. Portman passed away before he could see the sculpture that he envisioned installed at his alma mater. Koan sits on a granite base on the northeast corner of Tech Green, just steps from Clough Commons, Van Leer and the College of Design at Georgia Tech. As Russell Adams reflects on MTI's journey that was part of this project, he is grateful for the experience – both the challenges and the successes.

"John Portman was a visionary architect with a true passion for art. We were humbled when he fell in love with the look and feel of our SculptureStone material and asked us to make this project happen for him. Our collaboration was one built on perseverance and always pushing to figure out how to get this enormous sculpture built without sacrificing Mr. Portman's design intent," says MTI President Russell Adams. "Koan is his final and largest sculpture, and we hope it will inspire Georgia Tech students and faculty for many years."

> ***We are incredibly proud and honored to have this landmark sculpture on display in our hometown of Atlanta as homage to an incredible architect and as a symbol of what happens when knowledge and creativity meet.***
>
> - MTI Baths President Russell Adams

Koan is the final piece of creativity of John Portman (1948-2020) - his last design project - and so it seems fitting that it's on display at Georgia Tech right in the middle of campus inspiring students many who are studying engineering to think in new directions. A wonderful conclusion to an amazing career.

**About MTI Baths.**

Since 1988, MTI Baths has earned a reputation for award-winning design, personalized customization and artisan quality. MTI luxury tubs, shower bases, sinks, counter-sinks, vanity sinks and genuine teak accessories are all handcrafted in the USA. For information on MTI's extensive selection of design and customization options call 800-783-8827 or visit mtibaths.com.

We invite you to visit the KOAN ENTIRE SHOWPIECE at https://youtu.be/skYlpZ_kqsg.

## The MTI Team:

Russell Adams, President and Chief Design Officer, MTI Baths

Art Gambill, Director of Product Development, MTI Baths

Kevin Hyde, Engineer and Vice President of Manufacturing, MTI Baths

Mike Layton, Owner, Adrenaline Powerboats International

## The "Dream+Design+Create" Team:

Breedlove Land Planning

Georgia Tech Research Institute

Georgia Tech School of Aerospace Engineering

JCP Sculptures

KSi/Structural Engineering

McManus Transport Services

MTI Baths, Inc.

North Atlanta Customs & Coating Concepts

Portman Architects

Spencer Bristol

Superior Rigging

**For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact:**


| **MTI Baths Contact:** | **PR Agency Contact:** |
| --- | --- |
| Michael Kornowa | Linda Jennings |
| p: 770.271.8228 | p: 941.351.1005 |
| m: 678.427.9941 | m: 941.374.4342 |
| MKornowa@mtibaths.com | Linda@jenningsandcompany.com |


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