

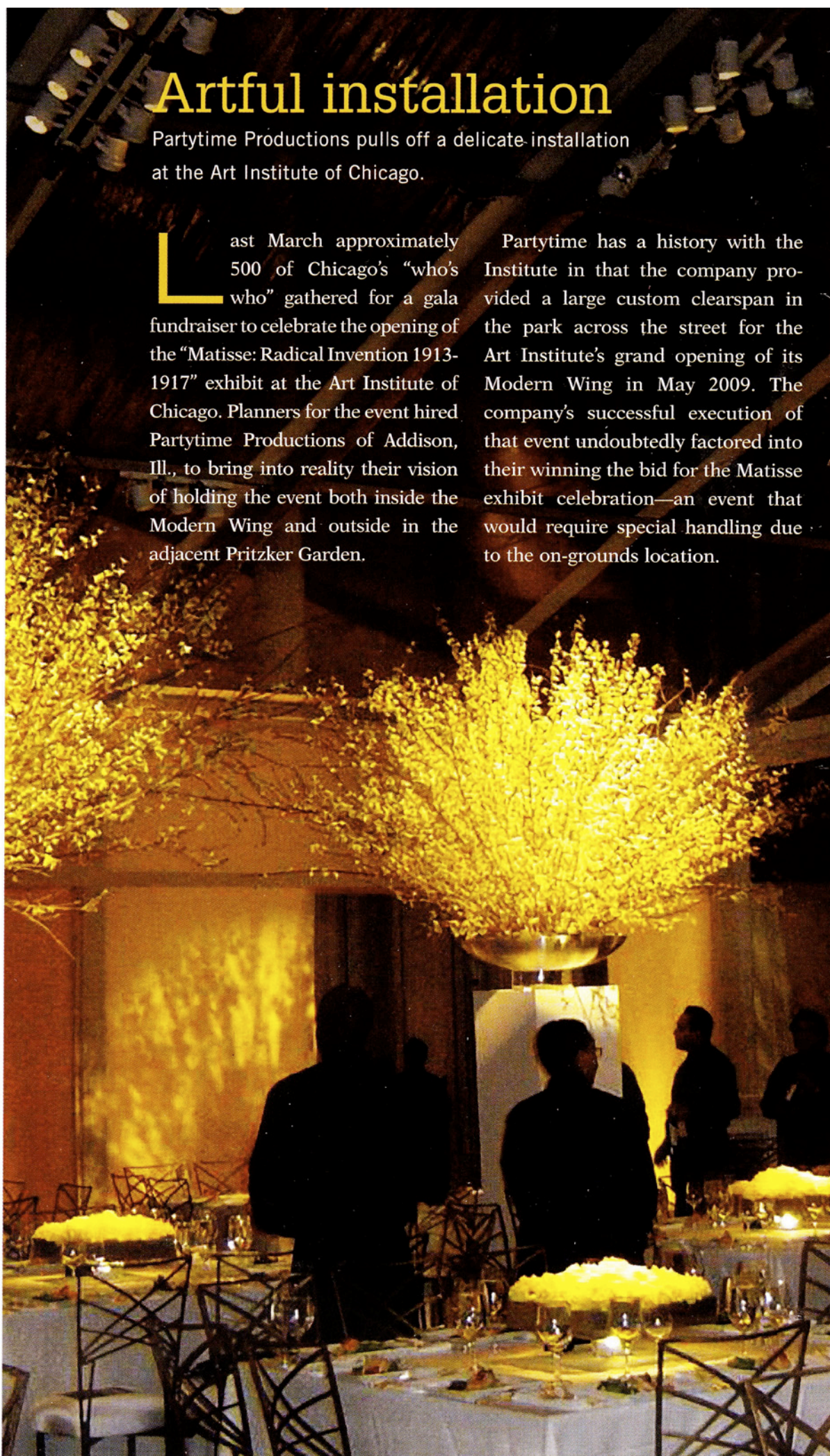
Artful installation

Partytime Productions pulls off a delicate installation at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Last March approximately 500 of Chicago's "who's who" gathered for a gala fundraiser to celebrate the opening of the "Matisse: Radical Invention 1913-1917" exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago. Planners for the event hired Partytime Productions of Addison, Ill., to bring into reality their vision of holding the event both inside the Modern Wing and outside in the adjacent Pritzker Garden.

Partytime has a history with the Institute in that the company provided a large custom clearspan in the park across the street for the Art Institute's grand opening of its Modern Wing in May 2009. The company's successful execution of that event undoubtedly factored into their winning the bid for the Matisse exhibit celebration—an event that would require special handling due to the on-grounds location.

Partytime Productions designed and installed this heated, clear top clearspan for The Art Institute of Chicago's Matisse exhibit opening. Bill Heffernan of William Heffernan Designs, Chicago, provided the decor. Photo courtesy of Partytime Productions.



Concerns regarding the columns supporting the courtyard roof, a *very* valuable piece of art hanging in the vicinity and the landscaped garden presented logistical challenges for the installation. "We were instructed not to get too close to the building on either side and not to touch any of the existing white columns [with the installation]," says Jim Gallagher, president of Partytime Productions. "We were able to get a scale plan from the Art Institute and then our CAD designer was able to drop in the [virtual] tenting off our CAD."

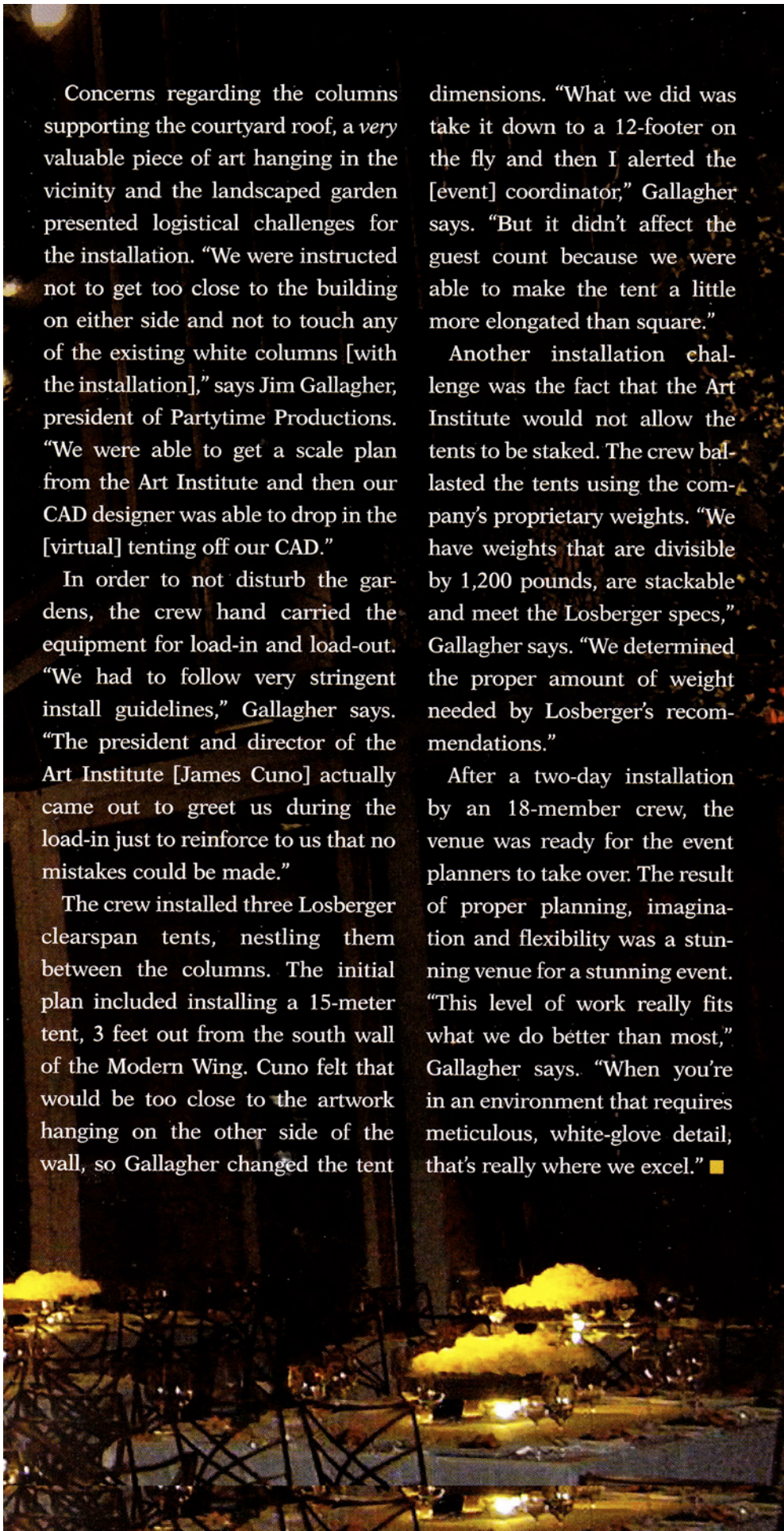
In order to not disturb the gardens, the crew hand carried the equipment for load-in and load-out. "We had to follow very stringent install guidelines," Gallagher says. "The president and director of the Art Institute [James Cuno] actually came out to greet us during the load-in just to reinforce to us that no mistakes could be made."

The crew installed three Losberger clearspan tents, nestling them between the columns. The initial plan included installing a 15-meter tent, 3 feet out from the south wall of the Modern Wing. Cuno felt that would be too close to the artwork hanging on the other side of the wall, so Gallagher changed the tent

dimensions. "What we did was take it down to a 12-footer on the fly and then I alerted the [event] coordinator," Gallagher says. "But it didn't affect the guest count because we were able to make the tent a little more elongated than square."

Another installation challenge was the fact that the Art Institute would not allow the tents to be staked. The crew ballasted the tents using the company's proprietary weights. "We have weights that are divisible by 1,200 pounds, are stackable and meet the Losberger specs," Gallagher says. "We determined the proper amount of weight needed by Losberger's recommendations."

After a two-day installation by an 18-member crew, the venue was ready for the event planners to take over. The result of proper planning, imagination and flexibility was a stunning venue for a stunning event. "This level of work really fits what we do better than most," Gallagher says. "When you're in an environment that requires meticulous, white-glove detail, that's really where we excel." ■





Mirage chairs have a ghostly beauty that blends with any decor. Photo courtesy of Legacy Seating.

One of the most important considerations when purchasing new chairs is the material. Chairs are available in plastic, wood, resin or metal, and each type has its own cost and benefit. Plastic is easy to clean and can get wet, but is the most informal and thus is not suitable for all events. Wooden chairs have a natural feel and look that is popular with clients, but care must be taken to ensure that the chairs are made with high-grade lumber to guarantee strength and durability. Resin can be made to look like wood, can get wet and is easy to clean, but it can sometimes separate from its inner metal rods. Metal comes in a variety of shapes, but is heavier and can be expensive.

To fold or not to fold

Folding chairs and stacking chairs are both good choices for events, depending on budget and purpose. "Stacking and folding chairs simply have different purposes and looks," says Brenda Maynard, vice president and general manager of Event Rentals Unlimited in Marietta, Ga. "We have to fulfill the clients' needs and requests while considering their budget and the look they are trying to accomplish. Folding chairs are perfect for a more casual event while the Chiavari and Chameleon® chairs create a formal, sophisticated look. Our clear Mirage® chairs are an amazing choice for events with specialty lighting. Bar and bat mitzvahs often request our acrylic lit furniture to create a unique, glowing event."

From an inventory management standpoint, Yonce prefers folding chairs for their ease of use, storage and cleaning. To facilitate quick cleaning, his company purchased a folding-chair cleaning machine—an employee rolls the chairs in and the machine does the work.

Form and function

Chiavari chairs, available from many manufacturers, feature carved backs molded to look like bamboo. They come in a variety of colors and can be made of wood, resin or metal, and have detachable cushions that can be ordered in any color. The chairs should be stored and transported in their individual chair covers to protect each chair and cushion from dust and damage.

The Chameleon Chair Collection, Torrance, Calif., offers a choice between eight different chair styles that come in a variety of colors. There is an unlimited color selection for the four-inch cushions and a variety of fabrics and patterns for back wraps and chair skirts that enhance the decorating scheme. These chairs come with a custom storage and transportation dolly system that holds 36 chairs and cushions, keeping them dust-free and compact when not in use.

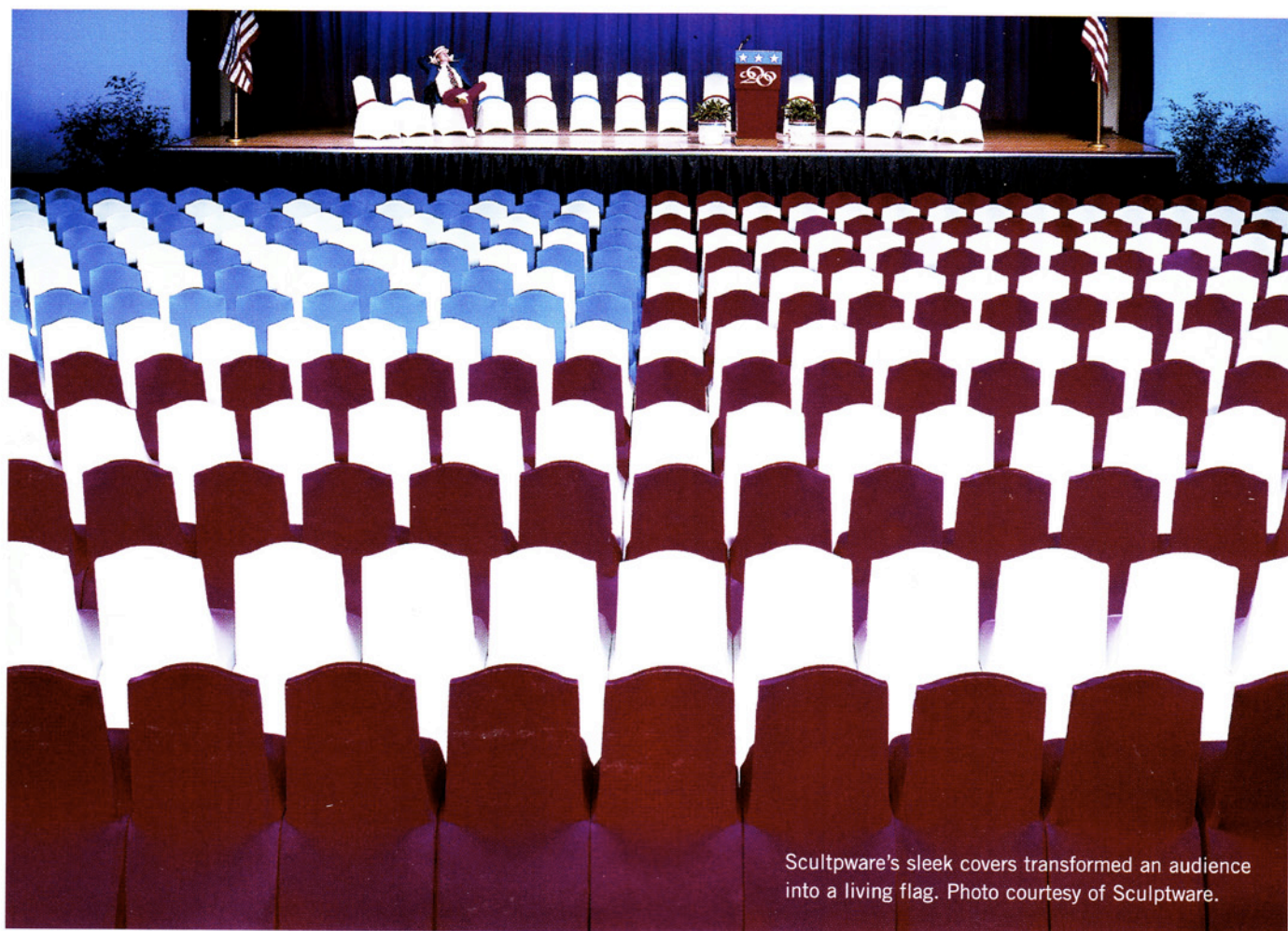
Mirage Chairs, manufactured by Legacy Seating Inc., Mundelein, Ill., are made of clear, unbreakable polycarbonate and can hold more than 400 pounds. Their near-invisible presence makes them an understandable choice for seating to keep the event space feeling airy and bright.



Covers add formality and individuality to the most popular reception seating arrangement. Photo courtesy of A to Z Event Essentials.

Extended life span

Keeping chairs and inventory clean is a time-consuming challenge. It is best to clean chairs after each rental, and a visual inspection of each chair should be performed when there is no time to clean them. Folding chairs can simply go through a cleaning machine, but stackable chairs must be cleaned by hand. The resin chairs, Chiavari chairs and Chameleon chairs can be wiped down with water. Maynard recommends cleaning Mirage chairs by first wiping them down with a wet chamois cloth and then drying them with a second chamois cloth.



Sculptware's sleek covers transformed an audience into a living flag. Photo courtesy of Sculptware.

The way a chair is stored affects its life span, and the chair type will determine the best storage option. "Keeping the chairs clean and stored properly ensures that they are in perfect shape for each event and allows us to inspect each chair for safety between each use while also reducing the chances of damage when not in use," Maynard says. "Our resin and plastic chairs are palletized and shrink-wrapped to keep the dust off. Our Chiavari chairs are wrapped in their individual covers and stacked seven high. Chameleon chairs come with a specially made cart for storage. They are placed in their covers and put into the cart, which piles all their cushions separately from the frames."

Care is of the utmost importance because chairs provide Maynard's company with its best return on investment.

"They are our top rental item, so it just makes sense to own them," she says. "Before purchasing a new style, get samples and ask your frequent customers if they would rent it and, if so, which color would they prefer. Stay in tune with your customers and you will satisfy them—and your bottom line—every time." ■

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