

Refurbishment of the Trusteeship Council Chamber at the United Nations building in New York

Source: UN rebirth / architecture today 2013-04-30

The Trusteeship Council Chamber at the United Nations building in New York has reopened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon after a major refurbishment.

The Trusteeship chamber – one of three at the UN – was constructed in 1952 and originally funded by the Danish Government, which has also financed its renovation, together with the Realdania fund and the UN itself.

The renovation involved the restoration of ceiling and wall panels, new carpeting, and new services. Its original architect, Finn Juhl, conceived the ceiling to create an impression of greater height in what was actually a low-ceilinged room. "I let the ceiling and wall covering curve around the sections for the press and the delegates," he explained at the time.

"There were not supposed to be any lamps hanging down to interfere with photography and television, so I hit upon designing a three-dimensional ceiling of perforated screens and boxes with lighting and ventilation equipment. The sides of the boxes are painted in six different colours."

"Together with the lower edges of the screens, they form an undulating and freer ceiling design that can create a measure of cheerfulness in a room where so many serious problems have to be debated."

A modified version of Juhl's walnut FJ51 chair has been used, along with new furniture – 3D veneer chairs and curved tables by Danish designers Kasper Salto and Thomas Sigsgaard.

A large teak sculpture by Danish sculptor Henrik Starcke has been restored –

- while a large curtain on the glass wall is weaver Hanne Vedel's recreation of the original, designed and woven by Paula Trock at the Spindegaarden workshop in Askov, Denmark.

Juhl's 11 metal sconces have been restored, and two – presumed lost – rediscovered and reinstalled.