

# BRICK AND TILE LAYERS MAKE A MASTERPIECE IN BEVERLY HILLS

BY ROBERT BUSCEMI

Members of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 4 are finishing the new, \$200 million Waldorf Astoria Hotel at Wilshire and Santa Monica boulevards in anticipation of a June 1 opening.

The Beverly Hills address will be the international luxury brand's first completely new build on the West Coast, offering 170 high-end accommodations starting at over \$800 a night. Suites with private garden terraces will rent for thousands more. Each unit will offer floor-to-ceiling windows and private balconies.

With such a reputation and price tag, the details and the execution have to be stand-outs. That's where BAC 4 comes in, bringing an artistic design to life.

Local 4 representative Pete Gerber said his local has rarely seen a more impressive commission, and described the challenge of rounding the narrow edge of the wedge-shaped structure with curved stone that goes up the building's entire height. "It's very challenging. You've got a lot of intricate patterns and cuts to be made. And the whole exterior of the building is stone and glass."

Fellow representative Danny Garcia agreed. "It's not every day you see this kind of tile, marble and masonry on a single project. And with this many man hours? It's beautiful. We're very impressed with our crews, and a lot of our apprentices are getting excellent experience here. So it's both been great for the economy and great for our local."

Gerber said the BAC Trades are most active in two waves on a new build. "Our Bricklayers will arrive early to set the struc-



"Punk Rock" Tony Hernandez, left, a marble mason, and Quirino Robles, marble finisher, set a brass inlay into Saint Laurent black marble, below, in the Presidential Suite.

ture and walls, and then toward the end our finish Trades will come in to do marble and tile. So we sort of bookend the whole thing. And we're maybe 85 percent done with the entire project right now, so there are quite a few of our people here."

Patrons will enter a three-story lobby decorated with crystal chandeliers and murals of California landscapes. They'll wander in Art Deco-inspired splendor toward full spa services, shops and eateries. They can swim in the outdoor pool 12 floors up, and ballrooms and conference space will abound.

## A Stone Worker's Paradise

When the "Building Trades News" team toured the opulent new hotel in March, crews described a stone worker's paradise full of artful design, bas reliefs and carvings, top-quality materials and cutting-edge technological systems. Gerber said that subcontractors Cleveland Marble, Columbia Stone and AGI, or American Granite, are in lock-



step with Local 4 in their dedication to top craftsmanship.

Foreman Art Ince said his crew's training puts them in good shape. "My part of the package is the exterior, and that's all limestone. This new system is called Eclad. It's all open-joint. There's no caulking. It's a good system and nice material, and this is a high visibility location, so we're happy to be here. My crew are hardworking guys, and

they're doing a good job."

Rodney Rocha, a journeyman with Local 4 for 15 years and now with Local 3 for the past year and a half, said the job requires workers trained to keep pace. "You're looking at the future of marble setting right here. This is a newer system that's supposed to revolutionize our industry. It's all aluminum tracks now. All clips. First you've got to make sure you're level, and then you're okay. We're all union here, so we all get along and we're all happy. But it keeps you on your toes. You have to know what you're doing."

Workers in the 12th floor Presidential Suite described what they said were two of the grandest pieces they'd ever installed.

The first was a flower-pattern brass inlay into Saint Laurent marble in the floor at the suite's entrance. "It's very scratchable, so you have to be careful," said "Punk Rock" Tony Hernandez, a marble mason who worked alongside marble finisher Quirino Robles from a graphic representation of the pattern taped to the wall. "It's very challenging, detailed work."

The second was a showstopping gold-on-black mosaic of leaves adorning the shower wall.

"We're all proud of the work that's gone into this place," Gerber said. "It's really going to stand out."



"The marble is very scratchable, so you have to be careful," Hernandez says.



Local 4 installed the building's exterior limestone using the Eclad system.

Photos by  
**KENNETH JOHANSSON**

SEE BAC LOCAL 4 PAGE 14

# BAC LOCAL 4

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13



**Jaime Cerda, 53,  
Foreman**

“Today we’re working on this front entry to the lobby. Everything here is top quality: stone, marble, brass inlays between the joints. You don’t really see joints that are this tight anymore. That takes a lot of skill. The veins in the stone are all book-matched from one panel to the next. There’s a nice fireplace in there, and they’re doing great work up in the Presidential Suite today. The whole project is a real showcase for us. I’m really proud of our guys. Working union, the benefits, the pension, the pay and everything, you can’t beat it. I’ve known some of these guys for 30 years. They’re good friends now. You can’t buy that. I’ve been with the local for 33 years.”



The hotel’s pool deck opens to the sky at the top of the building.



“We’re all proud of the work that’s gone into this place,” says BAC Local 4 representative Pete Gerber, upper left, with members in front of a tile mosaic wall in the Presidential Suite; see detail below right.



**Jose Alcantara, 32,  
Apprentice**

“I just started my apprenticeship in August, and I love it. This is my second work site. I was at UCLA for about three weeks before, at a hospital. I’ve been at this site for four months now. I’ve had some classwork and have more coming up in April. My father-in-law and brother-in-law are in the Trades too. I’m learning a lot. I’m looking forward to more.”



Donny Cuellar.



Frankie Martinez at the pool.



**Sergio Castellanos, 34,  
Apprentice**

“This is only my third month. A buddy told me about this Trade, and I’m glad I did it, because I’m having a really good time learning all this stuff. And I feel somewhat important building this hotel. I’ve had opportunities to work with guys who’ve got 30 or 40 years

under their belts. I like this Trade. I’m glad I found it. The work’s interesting and keeps me wanting to come back, because I learn something new every day. They put me as a helper the second week here, which is pretty good because my setter’s pretty smart and goes out of his way to teach me. So as we get further along, when he travels I can travel with him. So I’m building relationships too.”



"My crew are hard-working guys," says foreman Art Ince.



Guy Jameson, left, and Diego Anquiano.



**Nick Campagna, 48, Foreman**

"We have over 20 guys out here today. I myself was first Local 18, now Local 4. I'm a journeyman tile setter foreman, and I've been in the Trade since '94. My crews are working in the rooms themselves, and we have a number of different specialists coming in for different tasks. It's exciting. All their work complements each other. It's like a jewelry box. I'm proud to work with them, and to work for AGI. Right now we're doing all the final touches. It's a great job. Union is the way to go—I'm really proud to be a union member. And let me add that I couldn't have done this job without my right-hand man Martin Mareno, a Local 4 marble mason. He helped run this job."



Nick Campagna, third from right, and his crew from AGI.



A bathroom in a standard room, starting at \$800 a night.



Beginning the day with exterior work.



**Humberto Solorio, 27, Apprentice**

"I started on this job in November, and I journey out in two years. A lot is new to me here, so it's constant learning. It's fun. It's exciting. I like doing big jobs, doing good work, leaving your imprint behind and leaving something that's done correctly. And I'm definitely treated with respect. That's a big part of being union. That's why I joined. I want to make sure my work is respected."



Filemon Salazar was responsible for the brilliant black-and-gold work shown on p. 14.