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## Aqua Towers Over Competition as 2009 Skyscraper of the Year

Second place went to O-14 in Dubai, while The Met in Bangkok took home third.

NICHOLAS TAMARIN -- INTERIOR DESIGN, 3/5/2010



Architect Jeanne Gang's stunning new Aqua high rise in Chicago has won the 2009 Skyscraper of the Year Award, an honor presented annually for the past decade by building-website Emporis to skyscrapers at least 100 meters (or 328 feet) tall. The 81-story residential and hotel tower beat out 304 other contenders, all completed last year, including stiff competition from Reiser + Umemoto Architecture's O-14 in Dubai and WOHA Architects's The Met in Bangkok, which claimed second and third place, respectively.

Located in a large development on Lake Michigan, the Aqua features undulating balconies interspersed with flat glassy planes, resulting in a façade that resembles a rippling curtain that changes dramatically depending on one's perspective.

Studio Gang Architects principal Gang modeled the structure on the Great Lakes region's striated limestone formation. To create the effect, each balcony's perimeter had to vary slightly from the one below, requiring

the contractors, James McHugh Construction Co., to employ a flexible mold in coordination with a GPS system.

Reaching 819.34 feet into the sky, Aqua may only rank 40th in the tally of tallest building in the United States, but the project is groundbreaking in other ways. Not only is it Gang's first skyscraper project, but the structure is also the third-tallest building in the world designed by a woman, as well as the largest project ever awarded to an architecture firm headed by a woman.

Gang will receive her award at a presentation ceremony in her hometown of Chicago later this year.

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