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# Installing Interior Metal Column Covers

By Dzoanna Pavulina

PHOTOS COURTESY MÓZ DESIGNS

Walk into any airport, hotel, hospital, or restaurant, and you will likely find yourself surrounded by structural columns wrapped in sleek metal. Most people do not give them a second thought. But those on the construction side of the equation—installer, contractor, or architect—know those column covers are anything but background noise.

Column covers are not just cosmetic. When properly installed, they contribute to the acoustic, aesthetic, and even functional performance of interior environments. When poorly coordinated, they stick out—literally and visually. Misaligned bases, uneven joints, noisy vibration, or visible fasteners all indicate a rushed install or poor planning.

In high-traffic settings, column covers must withstand significant wear and tear. Columns are leaned on, bumped by carts, splashed during floor cleaning, and subjected to constant foot traffic and temperature fluctuations. That is why choosing the right material—usually stainless steel or aluminum—is only part of the equation. How the columns are installed determines long-term success.

This article explores the nuts and bolts of column cover installation: how to coordinate with structural columns, align with ceiling and flooring systems, integrate lighting, and minimize vibration and noise. It will look at real-world examples from busy public spaces and break down why specific installation methods have become the go-to standards in airports, hospitals, and commercial interiors. Whether planning the first column wrap or troubleshooting one that is not holding up, this guide is designed to help contractors build with intention and precision.

## Getting the details right is key

A column can be wrapped, but contractors must know exactly what they are wrapping—and that is where coordination starts. Structural columns vary widely in shape and tolerance, from round concrete piers to HSS steel, and relying solely on drawings can lead to costly surprises in the field. Successful installations begin with field verification of column dimensions and placement, ideally before fabrication. Elliptical columns are often chosen for aesthetic reasons but can also enclose existing structures, wiring, or plumbing. For these non-standard shapes, segmented or custom-formed cladding may be required. Understanding

these conditions early is key—if the cover does not match the structure underneath, nothing else, from alignment to acoustics, will line up properly.

Getting column covers to align cleanly with surrounding ceiling and floor systems is where good installations become great. Too often, installers are handed covers without context, only to discover the finished ceiling is offset by an inch or the floor slopes slightly for drainage. Misalignment at the top or bottom can create visual tension, trip hazards, or gaps that collect debris. The fix for this is early coordination with other trades, namely ceiling and flooring contractors, and selecting cover systems that allow for field adjustability, such as telescoping tops or custom base trims. In high-visibility interiors, those last few inches at the top and bottom are where attention to detail really shows.

Base details do more than finish the look—they take the brunt of daily wear and tear, especially in environments such as airports and hospitals. The choice of base depends on both performance needs and aesthetic goals. At Logan Airport in Boston, for example, terrazzo base rings were coordinated with the terminal's flooring system to create a seamless, flush transition




that resists damage from rolling luggage and cleaning equipment. McCarran International in Las Vegas took a different approach, integrating stainless steel base trims that align with wall protection systems and withstand frequent impact while maintaining a clean, sanitary finish. Denver International went even further, opting for recessed base details allowing the column covers to appear as if they rise directly from the floor plane—an elegant solution providing adjustability at the base. For example, a recessed base can be scribed in the field to account for slope or finite adjustments needed to finish cleanly. Whether specifying terrazzo, bumper rails, recessed reveals, or stainless steel skirts, the base detail sets the tone for durability, hygiene, and visual continuity.

### Function and aesthetics

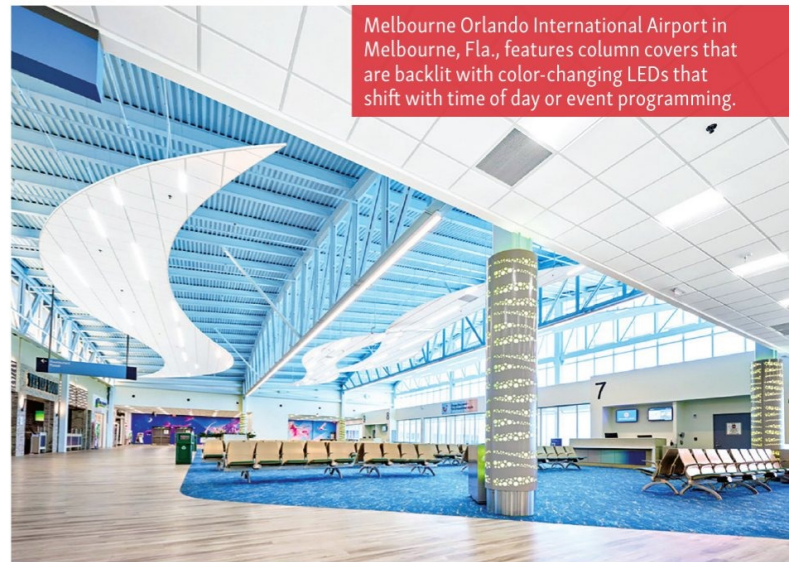
Integrating lighting into column covers can elevate a space from functional to visually dynamic but requires thoughtful planning. Whether it is a subtle glow or a dramatic feature, lighting must be coordinated early to avoid retrofits or exposed wiring. One standout example is Melbourne Orlando International Airport in Melbourne, Fla., where column covers are backlit with color-changing LEDs that shift with time of day or event programming, adding an immersive, high-tech layer to the terminal experience. To pull this off, installers worked closely with electrical teams to conceal drivers and wiring within the column structure. From halo effects to perforated panels with LED backing, well-integrated lighting turns columns into visual anchors without compromising the clean lines architects and designers aim for.

While column covers are often chosen for their sleek appearance, they can become unexpected sources of noise if not detailed properly. That is why many high-performance interiors include acoustic dampening behind or within the column wraps. Installing neoprene isolators or adding sound-deadening pads between the metal skin and the structural column helps absorb vibration and eliminate the “drum effect” that can occur with hollow metal wraps. This small detail can make a noticeable difference in overall acoustic comfort in transportation hubs like airports and train stations, where crowd noise is already high. It is not just about quieting the column—it is about maintaining the calm and clarity of the entire interior environment.

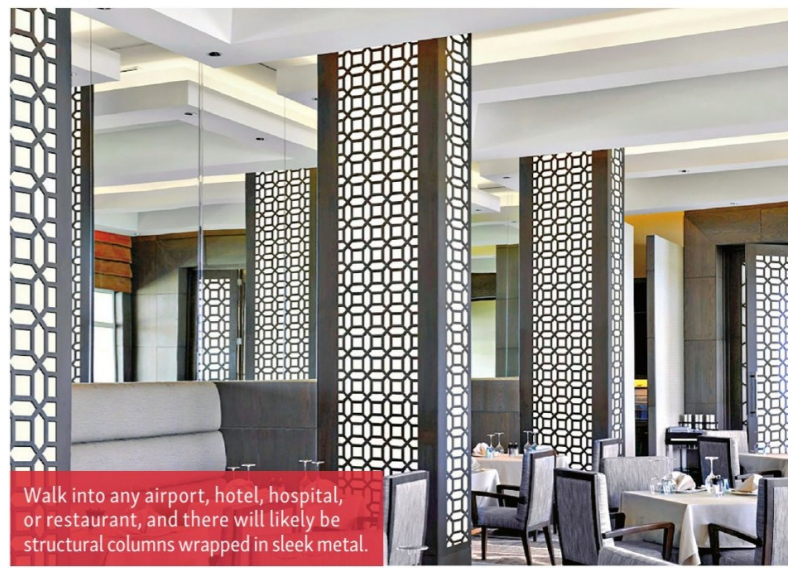
### Conclusion

Column covers may not be the most glamorous part of a build, but they're often one of the most visible—and most heavily used—elements in public interiors. Getting them right requires more than just good materials; it takes precise coordination, clear communication across trades, and attention to acoustic, structural, and aesthetic details. From seamless terrazzo bases at Logan to color-shifting LED columns in Melbourne and Orlando, the most successful installations are the ones that anticipate real-world use and stand up to it. When well-planned and properly installed, column covers don't just disappear—they quietly elevate the entire space. 

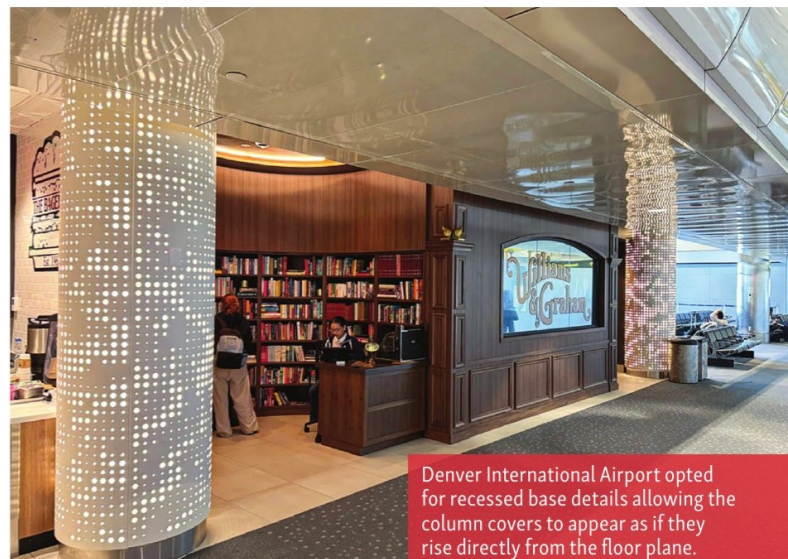
*Dzoanna Pavulina is a product designer at Móz Designs, and the creative force behind several of the company's most celebrated material and product launches. An Industrial Design graduate from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, she has introduced multiple award-winning designs that have redefined the aesthetic and potential of architectural metal.*



Melbourne Orlando International Airport in Melbourne, Fla., features column covers that are backlit with color-changing LEDs that shift with time of day or event programming.



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