

Cahners

INTERIOR DESIGN

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Mixed Media
The New World Order

Resolution: 4 Architecture designs
the New York offices of Thunder House
in the spirit of the new-media age.

Webside Story



Above: Stepping off the elevator, one enters the anteroom connecting with a pivoting corrugated metal door under one of four skylights. Acrylic panels project a warm glow.

Right: Entry portal seen from receptionist's vantage point at large work table. Gisela Stromeyer, with Resolution: 4, designed and installed the circular curtain wall screening the conference room.

Opposite: Semi-private offices behind low partitions, left, face web designers' amorphous table snaking around support columns.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER MAUSS, ESTO

To JOSEPH TANNEY, co-partner of Resolution: 4 Architecture, online images and new-media campaigns mean more than just pictures on computer screens. He sees the Internet as an entity that does not operate in a vacuum but rather, relates to and interacts with everyday life generally and the workplace specifically. His firm's design of the New York offices of Thunder House, a marketing and communications agency specializing in website strategy/design and owned by McCann-Erickson Worldwide, illustrates the validity of his contentions in the context of the built environment. Indirectly, the corporate connection also accounts for the awarding of the commission since the architects had designed the parent company's premises, seen in the September 1998 issue of *Interior Design*.

Client concerns, as presented by Thunder House director Amanda Richmond, were on the laconic side: Provide for staff expansion going from five to 35 in two years; stick to a ten-week work schedule; and meet a budget of \$135,000. (To slake suspense, work time and dollar targets have been met; occupancy count was ahead of plans within weeks.) Needed space allocations were noted, too, but most everything else was left up to Resolution: 4. The designated site was a 5,000-sq.-ft. loft space on the top (12th) floor of a former warehouse in the city's Chelsea neighborhood.

As invariably happens when old buildings are rehabbed, the floor was gutted clean—almost. One element was spared destruction: a curved bathroom enclosure, which, to Tanney's way of thinking, suggested a shape to be incorporated into the envisaged interiors scheme. Starting, however, with the sequential progression, his team first created an almost ceremonial walk-in point by placing a small ante-area between elevator and entry. Washed with light pouring through overhead glazing (and continuing inward through translucent wall panels), the mini-vestibule connects with a 7-ft.-by-6-ft. pivoting door of corrugated metal as thick as the walls and as wide as each of the four skylights. Inside, set against the north-facing window wall, are private offices for account managers; placed in semi-private enclosures along other legs is the creative staff. Fine exterior views are the prerogative of all; south-facing staffers have the bonus of bountiful daylight flowing to inner regions. →







A buffer zone delineated by office façades (acrylic panels and doors with sidelights to the north; 4-, 5- or 7-ft.-high partitions elsewhere) encircles the communal area, dominated by an amorphous 40-ft.-long Baltic birch table designed by Tanney and his team. This is the web designers' terrain, where staffers, freed from the regimentation of elbow-to-elbow alignment, speak up from the central unit's nooks and protrusions to contribute to the spontaneous give-and-take of idea building. The receptionist holds the table seat closest to the front door and waiting room. As for that planned expansion, both the big table—built on site, thus saving a bundle in construction costs—and the 165-sq.-ft. creative offices allow for added seating without putting the squeeze on anyone. Going from single to shared occupancy, Tanney insists, won't ruffle anyone's ego since conditions would merely go from palatial to pleasurable.

The conference room may well be the project's masterpiece. It is defined by an annular layering of Lycra fabric lengths, slightly overlapping to leave narrow slits between the folds, leaving a broader and arced gap for the proper entry. Gisela Stromeyer designed and installed the weirdly wondrous fantasy construction. Within the unit, the fabric acts as projector screen, showing, as do extant acrylic-panel walls, the warm glow of incandescent lighting cast on translucent materials. In the communal zone, blue sleeves on tubular ceiling lamps create a cast reportedly alluding to light from computer screens.

Project architect Setu Shah and Mike Sweebe participated in the project.

—Monica Geran

Opposite: Back-to-front view of web designers' custom amorphous work table.

Above: Within the conference room, inner side of stretch fabric is used as projection screen. Industrial wood flooring dates to warehouse days.

SEATING: **KNOLL (TASK CHAIRS); EMECO (CONFERENCE).** FILE CABINETS: **OFFICE SPECIALTY.** LIGHTING: **STONCO (CONFERENCE); MERCURY (UP-LIGHTS); LIGHTOLIER (DOWN).** PLASTIC LAMINATES: **NEVAMAR.** ALUMINUM/ACRYLIC WALLS: **KALWALL.** LUMASITE ACRYLIC (DOORS): **AMERICAN ACRYLIC CORP.** CORRUGATED METAL: **MCELROY.** HARDWARE: **SCHLAGE; RIXSON; STANLEY; IVES.** GENERAL CONTRACTOR: **MONUMENTAL.**

