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STUDIOS ARCHITECTURE ANIMATES AN OPEN OFFICE WITH LIGHT AND COLOR, PUNCHED UP BY LARGE-SCALE ART AND ELECTRONIC GRAPHICS.

By Suzanne Stephens

Architect: Studios Architecture—Todd DeGarmo, AIA, principal in charge; Tom Krizmanic, AIA, design principal; Brian Tolman, senior designer and senior project architect; Mike Krochmaluk, project architect for typical floors and training center; Geoff Deold, project architect for broadcast spaces; Brooke Luckock, Sohith Perera, designers

Client: Bloomberg LP—Paul Darrah, director of global real estate and design

Consultants: Cosentini Associates (m/e/p); Johnson Schwinghammer (lighting); Shen Milsom & Wilke (acoustical); CS Technology, Scharff Weisberg (IT)

Size: 611,545 square feet (occupied); 81,900 square feet (for expansion)

Cost: Withheld

Completion date: 2005

Sources

Glass: PPG (Starfire); Abrisa (Luxar); Schott (Amiran); Depp Glass (color laminated); McGrory Glass; Galaxy Glass

Acoustical ceilings: USG; Ceilings Plus; Baswa-Phon

Plastic laminate: Dupont Corian; Abet Laminati; Nevamar; Wilsonart

Stone flooring: Stone Source (Basaltina)

Carpeting: Interface

For more information on this project, go to Building Types Study at www.archrecord.com.

The spacious Bloomberg headquarters in New York, designed by Studios Architecture, jolts the first-time visitor like a swig of Red Bull. The bold and vibrant mix of the light-filled, open interiors, punched up with electronic graphics, large-scale art, vivid colors, and stylish furniture are, needless to say, not typical of the corporate office genre. The headquarters, which forms the anchor space in a mixed-use office, residential, and retail structure designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects (formerly Cesar Pelli & Associates), extends vertically and horizontally over an entire city block. The basic parti is unusual: Rafael Pelli carved out a large, open, horse-shoe-shaped court in the middle of the block to accommodate entrances for offices, apartments, and a restaurant. A three-story bridge, used by Bloomberg, projects over the courtyard to link the 10-story office block on the east with a 54-story office and apartment tower on the west.

Program

In 1999, Bloomberg, the global financial communication and professional services company founded by Michael Bloomberg (now mayor of New York City), decided to consolidate its Manhattan-based headquarters. The departments for broadcasting, research and development, and the sales of Bloomberg services (including terminals and software) had been dispersed in four different buildings.



The company signed a 20-year lease for 700,000 square feet (including 200,000 square feet for expansion) for its 3,700 employees.

The in-house design team, headed by Paul Darrah, an architect who is the director of global real estate and design, enlisted Studios Architecture, led by Todd DeGarmo, AIA, and Tom Krizmanic, AIA, to ensure the adherence to certain precepts of the Bloomberg ethos. To begin with, the design was to promote a literal transparency throughout offices, conference rooms, and circulation areas. "There is no front of the house and back of house," says Darrah. Needless to say, no one gets a private office, not even the C.E.O. (although he has his own dichroic glass-paneled conference room).

Since Bloomberg also believes

in the "paperless office," it asked Studios to design modular desks with a minimum of storage space, equipped with the company's monitors. Quick floor-to-floor accessibility via open stairs and escalators was also deemed essential. (With a training center below ground, and offices spread vertically, elevators are still part of the program.)

Solution

A "wintergarden," or large reception area, on the sixth floor occupies the glazed bridge linking broadcasting studios on the east block to sales and administration departments on the west. Rafael Pelli, of Pelli Clarke Pelli, designed the double-height space with a steel radial-truss structure supporting a skylight that follows the arc of the courtyard. From this

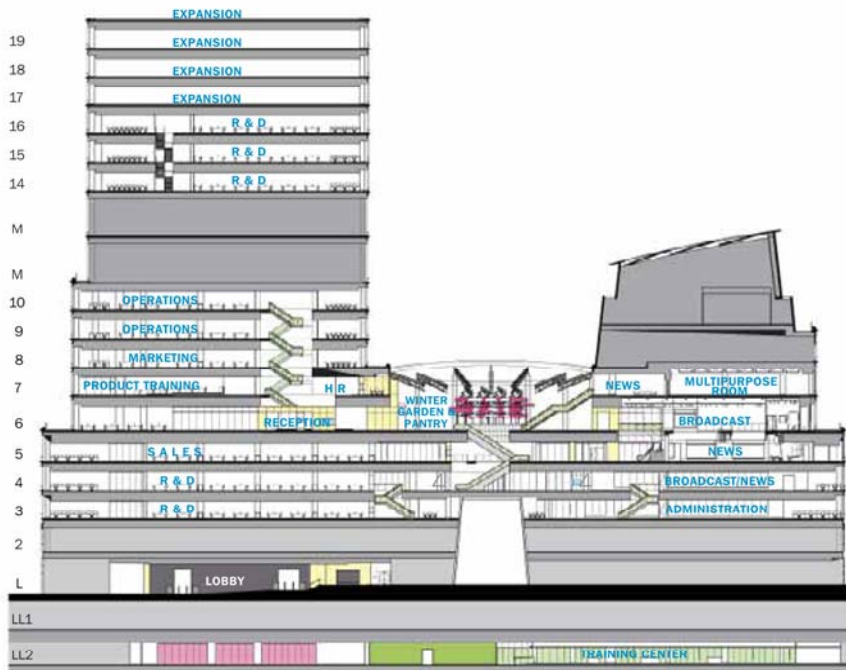


Studios Architecture executed offices for Bloomberg in a mixed-use, steel-and-concrete-framed spec building (opposite) designed by architects Pelli Clarke Pelli. The latter firm carved out a midblock interior court for entrances to offices and apartments (above). Bloomberg's open-riser stairs, such as one on the third floor (right), look like artworks, owing to the stainless-steel stringers with treads backlit by fluorescent tubes in red gel sleeves.





SIXTH FLOOR



SECTION A-A

1. Elevators
2. Reception
3. Offices
4. Meeting area
5. Wintergarden and pantry
6. TV broadcast
7. Radio broadcast

hub, where a pantry with free snacks brings employees together, open stairs and escalators connect to floors immediately above and below.

In keeping with the desire for transparency, Studios enclosed the conference rooms (125 in all) in vibrantly tinted glass, and strategically placed them as buffers between the open offices and the circulation areas. With their vivid orange, gold, fuchsia, lavender, green, and blue colors, the conference rooms appear to be life-size counterparts to the signature Bloomberg aquariums, filled with multihued exotic fish, coral reefs, and plants, found throughout the offices.

Low, modular white desks, 5 feet or 6 feet 6 inches long, depending on function, allow clear sight lines to prevail. Since ceiling heights range from 9 feet 6 inches to 12 feet 6 inches, the spaces rarely feel oppressive.

More than anything, the spectacular use of art and graphics in the public areas galvanizes the environment and provides a sense of orientation to this multilevel hive of activity. For example, Pentagram Design sparked up the wintergarden with a Times Square-size, four-band LED zipper carrying financial data. Permanent large-scale artworks, chosen in consultation with the Public Art Fund, transform the various circulation nodes: They include Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's *Cloud* over a spiral escalator, and two lighting pieces by Spencer Finch mounted in equally visible places. For their part, the architects transformed the various floors into light sculptures by backlighting the open risers with fluorescent tubes in red gel sleeves. A koi pond replete with colorful fish and a frog adds an unexpected note at the base of the sixth-floor stair.

Commentary

"This is a total collaboration," remarks Darrah about the conjunction of architecture, art, graphics, and interior design. Obviously, such collaboration costs money—the reason most office workers may not benefit from this approach. Nevertheless, it

The two-story-high reception lobby on the sixth floor acts as the hub and a pantry. Pelli Clarke Pelli designed the steel radial-truss structure supporting the skylight (left) on the bridge between the two towers. The bipartite floor plates run generally from 30,000 to 40,000 square feet in the east tower and 20,000 to 30,000 square feet in the west one.





A chrome-paneled, curved escalator (this page) runs from the sixth to the fifth floor broadcasting studios. Founder Michael Bloomberg saw a similar one in Japan, but in this application it is topped by Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's titanium *Cloud*.

The “paperless” open office with no partitions features modular desks and Bloomberg-designed monitors (below). The elevator lobby on the sixth floor (bottom left) is dramatized by a black glass chandelier art piece by Cerith Wyn Evans. From the wintergarden, viewers can look into the two-story broadcast studios (bottom right).



should be studied for the effect that architecture and design have on productivity. With regard to the common complaint that loud voices travel too well in the open office, Krizmanic replies that since there are no partitions and you see everybody, people automatically keep their voices down. To this observer, the main problem seemed to be the lack of storage space. (Overheard: It works best for “paper-phobic Lilliputians.”) In terms of a total design, the Pelli columns and skylight in the wintergarden/pantry introduce a brawny muscularity not quite in sync with the shimmering weightlessness of the graphics, art, and interior design. In spite of all that, the headquarters is so far removed from the conventional office, it throws this normal Dilbert-in-a-cubicle drone into a state of (euphoric) shock. ■

Since the lower-level training center has no windows, the waiting area is enlivened by a sunny, yellow-tiled curved wall concealing closets and restrooms. In addition, a 100-foot-long fluorescent-light art piece by Spencer Finch, called *Sunrise*, and bold fuchsia seating energize the space.

