

The

Office Designs for Corporations, People & Technology

KARIN TETLOW



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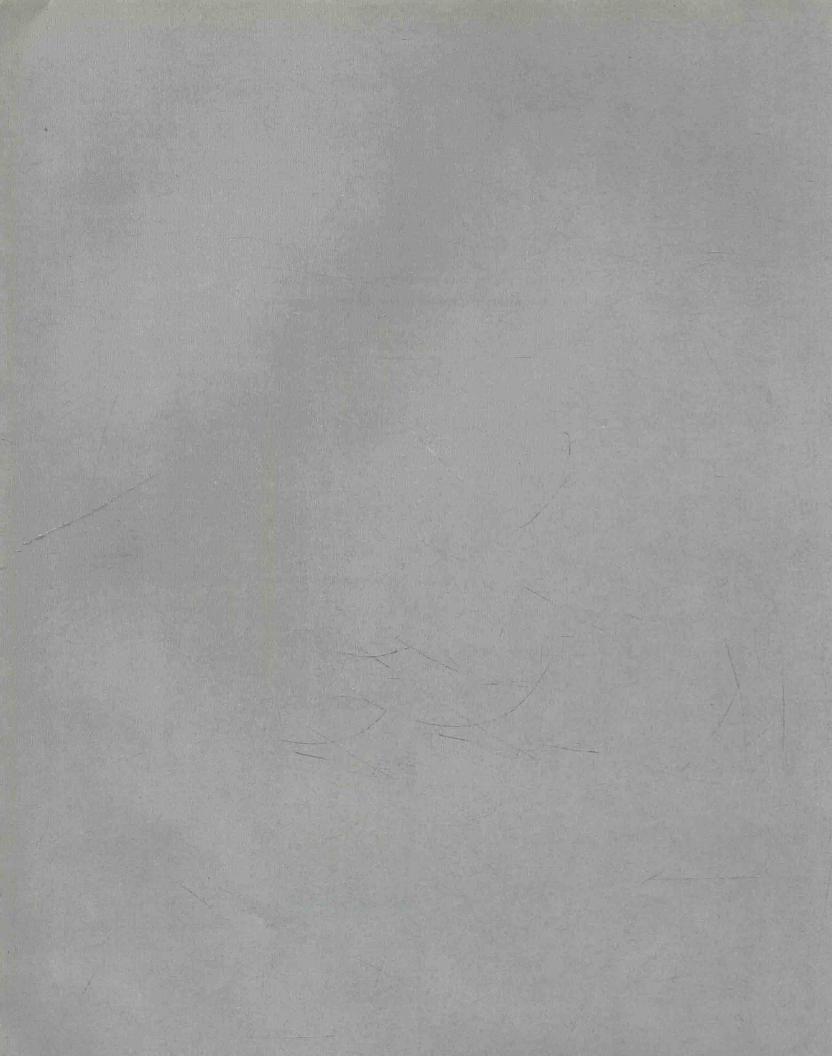
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I dedicate this book to my children Sam and Georgia and to my mentors and friends in Five Element Acupuncture



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Foreword

AESTHETICS AND COST MAY HAVE BEEN THE CORNERSTONES FOR THE WORKPLACE of the last two decades, but design of the workplace for the nineties is dictated by a number of additional elements. Any business, no matter its location, is facing a staggering list of challenges: rapid technological developments; increasingly complex and more costly environmental concerns; flexibility to accommodate re-configured work teams; sustainable design measures; employee concerns (ergonomics, ambiance, day care); fierce world-wide competition; dramatically shorter schedules; customers demanding more services and quality products at the lowest prices; the changing workforce; and global politics. These forces of change are affecting not only the way people work, but also how office environments are planned and designed. Clients are turning increasingly to designers to create a framework in which they can succeed in today's business world. Perhaps, as designers, our biggest challenge is learning to truly interface with our clients, to understand their businesses, and to form a partnership with them in order to most accurately meet their facilities' needs. Designers should focus on finding out what clients need and then on developing the strategies to deliver the services which meet those needs.

Designers are also having to re-think how the workplace is designed. We are learning how to integrate design, technology, data and service to create a business insight. Technology is important, design and production are critical, but understanding the client's business is essential. This is especially true as companies continue to look for ways not only to downsize and consolidate operations, but also to take advantage of new technologies and make employees more productive. Clients are demanding an inherent flexibility to allow for changing staff, size, projects, and cultures, all of which are greatly enhanced and facilitated by the use of new technology. More companies are consolidating specific elements of their operations, while relocating support staff and functions to decentralized, less expensive sites.

Companies will be incorporating more amenities (child care centers, fitness areas, cafeterias) into their office environments in order to attract the right staff and for recruitment at college campuses. However we label the transformation—re-engineering, reinventing, reorganization, downsizing or right sizing—these new strategies provide designers with opportunities to work very closely with clients to maximize use of their space. We find companies most effectively use space not only through efficient manipulation of space, but through comprehensive analysis of work needs, social needs, and careful monitoring of

Studies have shown that workers are actually out of their workplaces a good deal of the time—on the road, in meetings, or on site with clients. The traditional nine-to-five work structure is no longer predominant, and the day of the contract worker, independent consultant, part-time employee prevails. As a result, the traditional work environment—single-occupancy workstations and private offices—is giving way to a number of alternative work environments to accommodate hoteling, telecommuting, etc. The reality is that people still want to work together in a community, to collaborate, and to produce. Therefore, in the end, clients tend to focus more on creating specific areas for different acitivities: project rooms, quiet rooms, guest areas, as well as collaborative environments that promote team-oriented work and facilitate interaction among employees. But, the vision of an office environment that only accommodates transitory workers will not be a reality in the immediate future.

Any business today must use all available resources—time, people, space, money, information, technology—to their fullest potential. Clients must be educated on the benefits of good office design and planning in order to help them see that just cutting costs will not make companies more competitive. A designer's work must exemplify one reality: good design can have a direct impact on a company by increasing productivity, adding value to the organization, and enhancing the environment and personal well-being of employees.

Antony Harbour, IDA

space utilization.

Vice President, Managing Director, London

Gensler ... Architecture, Design & Planning Worldwide

Introduction

OFFICES OF TODAY ARE THE HUBS OF OUR INFORMATION-DRIVEN WORLD. Equipped with fast-changing technology which makes time zones and geography irrelevant, they link a global economy and serve as workplaces for millions of people. They offer an anchor in a society increasingly on the move in cyberspace and elsewhere. Sometimes a comfy base to counteract the stress of technology, at other times a cacophony of colors, the office of the nineties is a place of unusual creativity. Smaller than the mega-projects of the eighties, they are expressions of a new expertise which relies on innovation rather than tradition and the transparent luxury of rich materials.

Whether the address was an exclusive chocolate house in seventeenth-century London or a high-rise cathedral to commerce built at the turn of the century, the office has long been more than simply a place of work. It was, and is, marketplace, image-maker, and metaphor for business goals. Its identity expressed in location, architecture, layout and furnishings, the office sends unmistakable messages to employees, clients and customers. The gothic-style paneling and hand-tooled Moroccan leather of New York's Woolworth building and the aged 98-year-old board room at MetLife awe visitors to this day. In contrast, present day interiors communicate more contemporary messages of excellence, flexibility and cost consciousness.

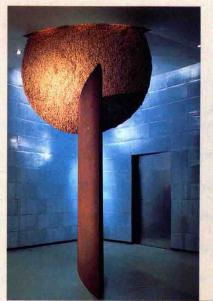
Yet it is as a place of work that the office has generated most attention since the turn of the century, when scientific management advocated regimentation of highly supervised workers seated in neat rows toiling at their adding machines. By the end of the eighties, most workers sat in individual cubicles and the expense of offices was second only to salaries and benefits. Officing had become very big business as consultants advised on the impact of office design and manufacturers sold millions of dollars of mostly the same free-standing "systems" furniture. Meanwhile, environmental and social consciousness grew along with knowledge of endangered wood species, the discovery of sick building syndrome brought about by deficient air circulation and toxic off-gassing from furnishings, and the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Then came the convergence of accessible technology with a tightening global market. Merger mania and corporate downsizing resulted in white collar layoffs in the millions since the early nineties. Networked computers on virtually every desk meant that office assistants could know as much as their immediate bosses and layers of management became redundant. Investment in computerization boomed and employers argued for new strategies—later named alternative officing, or AO—to reduce office costs by providing less space in their new downsized quarters and to enhance performance. AO includes "hoteling" and "free address" for salespeople and consultants usually in the field, and "caves and commons" for project team members who need private and community spaces for solitary tasks and "teaming." Other options are telecommuting from home or satellite office and work anytime, anywhere in the "virtual office" using lap-tops and cell phones. Perhaps not unexpectedly, the most innovative AO has appeared in the creative sector where advertising agencies have commissioned striking new environments of team zones and wheelabout workstations.

The International Facility Management Association reports that 83 percent of companies are embracing AO. While we wait for research on its pleasures and pitfalls, serious questions are arising as to its long-term impact on our work-oriented culture, especially for those who seldom work in the office. On the corporate front, workers report an erosion of bonding with colleagues and losses of informal mentoring while on the personal side, many feel alienation, isolation and find difficulty drawing a boundary between home and work.

Meanwhile, the speedily-built offices of the late nineties catch the breath and spark the mind as each serves a multitude of complex roles. Refreshed by consciousness, challenged by budgetary limitations and driven to solve the practicalities of boosting performance, they lead the world in office design.

Karin Tetlow









Office as Marketplace

best, sellers have known that presentation has to be just right. So it is with the office. Whether the item be product or service, Fred Flintstone, investment management or architectural expertise, appropriate visual presentation is crucial.

Professional display and a correct address are core ingredients, but the designer's true talent lies in identifying and translating into three-dimensional space the exact nature of what is being sold. In these days of sophisticated marketing, this is more likely to be concept and aspiration than mere product or service. Hence the themes of outdoor modernity for G.H. Bass and "back home" of the American Trade Center in Moscow.

The following offices range from the spectacular to the serious. Including The Design Collective's "learning laboratory" set in the heart of a shopping mall, California ambiance for Credit Lyonnais and an iconoclastic showroom for Betsey Johnson's fashion flair, they are prime examples of the contemporary office as marketplace.



Betsey Johnson Showroom

Fashion Design

etsey Johnson clothes have their own distinct character, which is very much part of the persona of Betsey Johnson. So when she decided on new headquarters and showroom in the heart of New York City's bustling garment district, she chose a design firm which understood her unconventional and iconoclastic flair for mixing color and shape. Tarik Currimbhoy Design & Architecture had recently completed her apartment and knew how to translate her image into a threedimensional functional space by delivering a skeleton floorplan and built-ins and leaving the rest to Betsey.

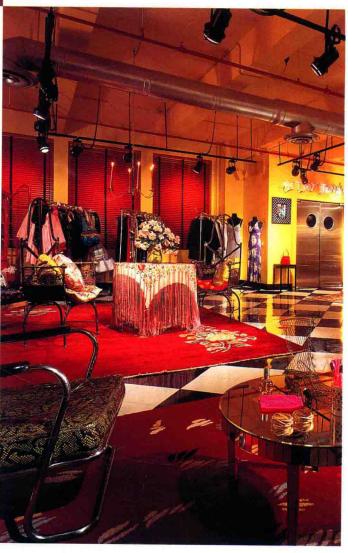
Breaking all design school rules regarding the need for a consistent conceptual scheme, she co-mingles bright ochers and hot pinks, and places a 70s table next to a gilded chair. The antiques are an eclectic marvel picked up piece by piece. Currimbhoy assisted with the lighting, floor finishes and custom office furniture.

The heart of the 12,000 square foot space located in

New York City's frenzied garment center is the showroom. Buyers stepping off the elevator and entering through a small reception and lobby immediately experience the impact of

LOCATION: New York. New York ARCHITECT: Tarik Currimbhoy Design & Architecture INTERIOR **DESIGNER:** Betsey Johnson SIZE: 12,000 square feet COST: \$40/ square foot PHOTOGRAPHY:

Peter Paige



the colorful eccentric space. The checkerboard flooring and steel doors serve as an ideal hard-edged backdrop for Betsey's eccentric choices and murals which she painted herself.

