

INTERIOR DESIGN



GENSLER NY
20th Anniversary

Don Brinkmann Remembered

Eastern *Exposure*

Gensler designs a Japanese conglomerate's Manhattan-based U.S. headquarters, devising a global/cosmopolitan style that's neither only-Asiatic nor all-American.

JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN, one learns from project principal Robert M. Cataldo and design director Mark Morton, don't come with pre-conceived notions when they engage professional experts. Instead, they ask to hear what the consultants propose and then, having listened and approved, they go with the presented plan. The hired pros must, of course, be the very best. As was the case when Nissho-Iwai American Corporation (NIAC), one of the world's largest holding companies, turned to Gensler for design of their U.S. headquarters in New York.

Actually the global firm is no newcomer to the city, having for some time occupied three floors in a Rockefeller Center high-rise at 1211 Sixth Avenue. But the lease was about to expire. Alternative options were considered, resulting in the decision to remain in the building but move to the two top (43rd and 44th) floors, where means for best-ever efficiency were to be implemented. Cultural mores and sensibilities were considered as well, partially accounting for the 3:1 preponderance of open-plan areas within the 66,000-sq.-ft. space. For at NIAC, it is not

Below: Main reception room, looking to divisible conference room.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK MERRICK, HEDRICH BLESSING



unusual for top brass to work among the troops; only four top execs have private offices in New York. Systems furniture comes with 42-in.-low panels to foster visibility and interaction. Though more densely deployed in less space than before, the new work units make it easier to perform with greater proficiency. Cinnamon-hued support columns (those at perimeters were painted soft moss green) were built out to hold storage, with work stations placed in-between.

The aesthetic tenor, says Cataldo, is neither Japanese nor American but, rather, "modern, contemporary, international." Much of the furniture is sculptural. Woods, mainly sycamore, are light; translucent glass is plentiful; different textures are carefully balanced; and sisal-like carpeting upholds the natural look discernible throughout. Artworks, including pieces by Philadelphia Art School students working under the direction of consultant Connie Vick, add the finishing touch. Done one floor at a time, the job took about two and a half years. Also on the team were project principal Walter Hunt, project manager Davey Riley, Jr., project designer Mieko Suzuki, and Toufic Saad. —Monica Geran



Above: Lounge/conference room. Photograph, provided by consultant Connie Vick, illustrates architectural detail of Rockefeller Center building.

Right: Open-plan "teaming"/break-out area. Cinnamon-painted columns incorporate storage space.

CARPETS: **MONTEREY**; **BENTLEY**. UPHOLSTERED SEATING: **BALERI ITALIA**; **ERIK JORGENSEN**. FABRICS: **JACK LENOR LARSEN**. TASK SEATING: **TECNO**. ROUND TABLE, CHAIRS, FILING: **KNOLL**. SIDE TABLE: **NIENKAMPER**. RECEPTION DESK: **TECNO**. TABLE LAMP: **JOHN SALADINO**. CONSULTANTS: **VICK CORP.** ART ADVISORS: **EDWARD & ZUCK COMMUNICATIONS (A/V)**; **METROPOLIS CONSULTING (CODES)**; **SUSAN BRADY LIGHTING DESIGN**; **EDWARDS & ZUCK (MEP)**. PROJECT MANAGEMENT: **VAN NORSTRAND VASCOTTO ASSOCIATES**. CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT: **STRUCTURE TONE**.

