

INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 6



\$8.95US \$10.95CAN

05>



head over heels for office





soaring

text: jen renzi photography: adrian wilson

ambitions



Top-notch design firms rise to the challenge of Time Warner's New York headquarters

New Yorkers have been keeping close tabs on Columbus Circle since 2000, when the much maligned Coliseum was razed to make way for an ambitious mixed-use development, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's glass-sheathed skyscraper. As the twin towers of the Time Warner Center rose from the ground, so did the building's symbolic value, coming to signify not only the neighborhood's revitalization but also the politics of communications mergers, the nation's economic health, and the city's capacity for regeneration after September 11.

Hoopla and semiotics aside, →

Time Warner occupies 17 floors in the south tower of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's skyscraper.



one thing mattered most to the 1,600 employees whose offices occupy 17 floors of the south tower: Would it work as a workplace? That was the question that guided Time Warner's real-estate group in navigating the intricacies of bringing corporate headquarters, the Turner Broadcasting ad-sales department, and CNN's New York facilities together under one roof.

Extensive interviews, online surveys, and focus groups were conducted to determine exactly what staffers needed most. "We collected a lot of information from employees with different functions and titles," says Philip Pitruzzello, vice president for real-estate projects. Natural light, openness, and adjacency emerged as priorities.

To meet those needs, Time Warner harnessed the talent of several design firms. Perkins & Will oversaw Turner Broadcasting, teaming up with Mancini Duffy for Time Warner executive and corporate floors, while Kostow Greenwood Associates tackled CNN. Add SOM's lobby, executive planning by HLW, and a vast in-house team, and you have yourself a lot of players. "It was about everyone checking their egos at the door and giving the best they had to offer," says George H. Ladyman, Jr., vice president for special projects, real estate. "This job was completed via Blackberries and E-mail."

High-tech means, perhaps—but not in the service of high-tech decor. Corporate floors in particular were conceived to reflect the company's 75-year →

Top left: Executive reception's custom desk, surfaced in zebrawood and leather. **Center left:** The encaustic-finished curved wall of an executive floor's meeting room. **Bottom left:** An executive office. **Right:** Angling around an internally lit glass spine, a staircase connects executive levels and the amenities floor.









roots in publishing and film. Accordingly, the designers favored millwork in American walnut and zebrawood, carpet and wall finishes in warm but subtle gray and gold. Red and other bright colors were reserved for accents such as the curved encaustic-finished walls denoting meeting rooms.

The restraint helps create a continuous experience throughout the 10 corporate floors. "We developed a common chassis that allows for separate expression and functionalities," explains Pitruzzello. Adds John A. Lijewski, principal at Perkins & Will, "The planning challenge involved treating an 865,000-square-foot project—encompassing many divisions—as a single entity. One office system, one standard." Floor plans are based on a module of four workstations or three offices. Meeting areas and copy centers sit in uniform positions, enhancing way-finding through acre-size floor plates.

"The length of the corridors required careful attention to two-dimensional articulation," says William Bouchey, Mancini Duffy director of design. "We animated them with mullions, frames, reveals, and the use of painted drywall, glass, and millwork. The detailing breaks up length and adds texture, pattern, modulation, and shadow." The curved walls of meeting rooms also take the edge off the rectilinearity, and internal stairwells' midpoint landings scale down vertical distance.

This clean envelope is →

Left: A curved ceiling distinguishes CNN broadcasting, outfitted with custom desks of pearwood veneer and plastic laminate. **Top right:** Etched glass and custom storage units at the base of CNN broadcasting's raised control area. **Center right:** One of six private offices lining the CNN newsroom. **Bottom right:** An edit room on the CNN production floor.





activated by a media system—“rather than via materials like chrome or stainless steel,” explains Mancini Duffy CEO Anthony Schirripa. The high-definition fiber-based network can draw in live input, ads, or movie trailers. Images run on flat-screen monitors in the main lobby, passenger elevators, and most waiting areas.

Technology plays a starring role at CNN, on floors four through nine. At the heart of the installation are the three black-box studios where *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* and *Paula Zahn Now* are shot. Soundproof and lightproof, they’re equipped with floating floors and suspended ceilings to snuff out vibrations from the tangle of subway lines below.

However, almost every corner at CNN is able to serve as a backdrop for on-air action, thanks to 6,000 miles of cable and careful consideration of how colors, finishes, spatial composition, and even back-of-house activities translate on-screen. “Reporters and editors are the ones creating the content, not just the anchors,” says Kostow Greenwood Associates principal Michael Kostow. “The design reflects and celebrates the news-making process.”

That celebratory mission partially involved focusing on elements that play less glamorous roles backstage: rest rooms near the sets, makeup rooms with adequate ventilation. (“They used to do all the hair spray out in the open,” associate Angie Lee says →

Top left: CNNIn’s open broadcast pod, with stainless-steel mesh chairs and a custom acrylic-topped table. **Center left:** Vinyl flooring in the broadcast zone. **Bottom left:** The set’s camera-ready stair in pearwood and aluminum. **Right:** Changeable colored LEDs illuminate the anchor pod’s aluminum base. Dimmable fluorescents back-light printed vinyl partitions.









incredulously.) And internal stairs are sited to facilitate the movement of bodies and information—a minute, after all, makes a difference in live programming. “Sometimes it all comes down to a fast intern in running shoes,” says Turner Properties project manager Jerry Sullivan.

Better break out the Nikes—or the cleats. Open-plan CNNfn is larger than a football field. For production staff, KGA chose Ayse Birsal’s Resolve workstations, because their 120-degree configuration better accommodates departments of fluctuating sizes and production methodologies. In the newsroom adjacent to the five broadcast sets, staffers work at two-tiered oval desks of pearwood veneer and plastic laminate.

The desks—often visible in wide shots—were developed by Production Design Group, A Jack Morton Company, which oversees CNN’s on-air identity. “CNN collapses the gray area between editorial and on-air zones,” explains design principal Erik Ulfers. “And this building is fully wired, which provided us with a unique opportunity to expand the branding to the public areas and allow for incredibly flexible programming.”

Hence the preponderance of curves, from the desks to cutaway ceilings to the raised control stage at CNN. “The camera hates hard corners,” says Kostow. The finicky equipment has a lot of other dislikes as well, Ulfers elaborates: →

Left: Custom desks curve across CNNfn’s 20,000-square-foot newsroom. **Top right:** A staircase with stainless-steel mesh balustrades, cherry treads, and a painted concrete base. **Center right:** Ayse Birsal’s Resolve workstations, customized with extra-low partitions for production staff. **Bottom right:** The stair’s Luma-site acrylic spine.



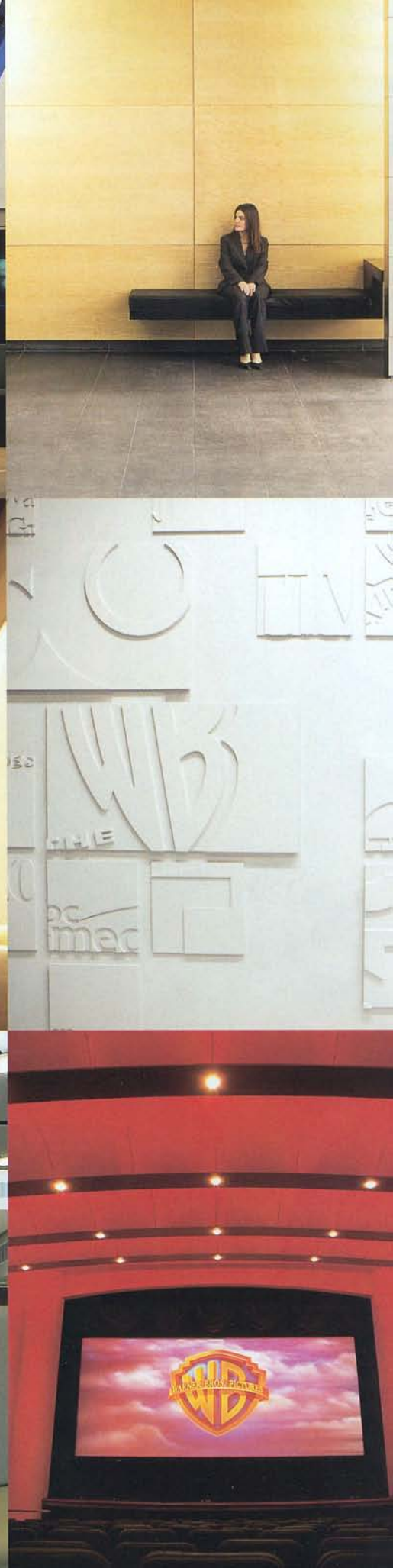
"Digital video is unforgiving in that it flattens and compresses. Faux-painted woods look really fake because of the resolution. Reds become redder, blacks crush, and whites can blow out. High-contrast patterns vibrate."

The designers rigorously camera-tested every material, from striped carpet tiles to the stainless-steel mesh balustrade of the central staircase that makes frequent cameos on-screen. "At the end of that process, you just wanted to shoot yourself," says Ulfers. (No pun intended.)

CNNfn sets feature clear acrylic tabletops and glossy black vinyl "wet" flooring, its reflectivity enhancing visual depth. Partitions are vinyl, backlit by dimmable fluorescents and digitally printed in a collage of images connoting finance. The design, says Ulfers, is relatively sedate for TV, putting the spotlight on the content and the anchors. "Head shots look better when there's soft clutter behind. In this case, we had Central Park, so we didn't need much else."

Central Park views may be only soft clutter to the TV →


Top, from left: SOM's lobby. The lobby's leather-covered bench and ash-veneered walls. An executive staircase's midpoint landing. The CNN reception desk in stacked slate and mirrored etched glass. A stair connecting executive floors. **Center, from left:** The walnut-veneered ceiling of the corridor to the boardroom. Time Warner brand logos rendered in carved plastic laminate. En route to the boardroom. Caio Fonseca's work in the boardroom proper. A private dining room with a zebrawood-topped table and woven-leather chairs. **Bottom, from left:** Glass mosaic tile cladding the cafeteria's pizza oven. The screening room's stretched-PVC acoustic ceiling. The cafeteria condiment station veneered in Macassar ebony. A leather-covered banquette in the screening room pre-function area. Screening-room walls and theater seats upholstered in faux suede.









camera. To staff, they're the building's greatest attribute, appreciated on a daily basis from the 10th-floor cafeteria's prime vantage point in the building's southeastern wedge. Time Warner's zebra-wood-wrapped boardroom faces Central Park, too—but set back 12 feet, behind the internal glass wall of a park-front break-out area. Perkins & Will and Mancini Duffy chose the configuration deliberately, to minimize distractions when Richard Parsons and Ted Turner have important business to conduct. 

PROJECT TEAM (KOSTOW GREENWOOD ARCHITECTS): JOHANNA DICKSON; STEWART GREEN; NAJEEB HAMEEN; ADAM MEAD; ROBIN PENDLETON; MICHELLE SANDQUIST; PAM SLIGHTER. DESIGN PRINCIPAL (MANCINI DUFFY): ARNOLD CRAIG LEVIN. PROJECT MANAGER: ROBERT SPATARO. TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: NABIL KAFROUNI, AIA. PROJECT ARCHITECT: LEV KRASNY. PROJECT MANAGER (PERKINS & WILL): DONALD R. WILLIAMS, AIA. DESIGN PRINCIPAL: THOMAS SANSONE. TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: RICHARD DIAMOND, RA. PROJECT ARCHITECT: M. WADE STEVENS, RA. SENIOR DESIGNERS: RAYA ANI; EUGENE HARRIS; JENA HWANG. JOB CAPTAINS: PATROCINIO BINUYA; DAVID FERNANDES.

CHAIRS, ROUND TABLE (EXECUTIVE RECEPTION), SIDE CHAIRS, SIDE TABLE (BOARDROOM), LOUNGE CHAIRS, TABLES (BOARDROOM WAITING AREA): HBF. TASK CHAIRS (EXECUTIVE FLOOR, CNN BROADCASTING), TASK CHAIRS, WORKSTATIONS, FILE CABINETS (CNNFN PRODUCTION): HERMAN MILLER. DESK (EXECUTIVE OFFICE): DESSIN FOURNIR. GUEST CHAIRS: TROSCAN DESIGN. TASK CHAIR (EXECUTIVE OFFICE), CHAIRS (BOARDROOM): KEILHAUER. CARPET TILE (CNN PRODUCTION): INTERFACE. FLOOR TILE (CNNFN SETS): LONSEAL. STAIRCASE LUMASITE (CNNFN FLOOR): AMERICAN ACRYLIC CORPORATION. CARPET (EXECUTIVE STAIR): MONTEREY CARPETS. TABLE (PRIVATE DINING ROOM): SR WOOD. CHAIRS: GEIGER INTERNATIONAL. COLUMN TILE (CAFETERIA), FLOOR TILE (ELEVATOR LOBBY): STONE SOURCE. THEATER SEATS (SCREENING ROOM): IRWIN SEATING COMPANY. LOUNGE CHAIRS: ICF GROUP. CHAIRS (CAFETERIA): DAVIS FURNITURE INDUSTRIES. TABLETOP CORIAN: DUPONT.

Left: Beech chairs pull up to custom Corian-topped tables beneath the cafeteria's acoustic ceiling panels, their angularity reiterating the tower's. **Top right:** The boardroom's leather-upholstered seats and zebra-wood tabletop. **Center right:** An elevator lobby's enclosures for up-lights and footlights. **Bottom right:** Barbara Barry's seating in the boardroom waiting area.

