

CASE Interiors & sources Excellence in Commercial Design

Who knew a grand staircase could facilitate communication
and wayfinding and look good doing it?

to COMMUNICATION



The interconnecting
staircase is an awe-inspiring,
aesthetically pleasing and
functional design element.
It's the "wow" factor
in the office.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO



Most of us give little thought to the staircase in a facility. We know it's important, but it doesn't receive many second thoughts. For individuals working in and visiting the Washington D.C. law offices of Finnegan Henderson Farabow Garrett & Dunner (Finnegan Henderson), the staircase most certainly creates an immediate and lasting impression. It is only one of the many memorable design features in this striking and elegant office.

"Everyone who visits our office is in awe of the staircase," says Christopher Foley, Finnegan Henderson's managing partner. "They probably don't realize that the stair is really a symbol of our firm's culture and our business philosophy. Our firm is about connecting people, information sharing and access to resources."

Foley says that the staircase is a means for people to see one another and for them to make personal connections. He adds, "It's the origin from which our functional infrastructure is built."

The seven-story, spiral metal-pan stair in brushed stainless steel is encased by a 9-foot glass wall with low-voltage cable lighting underneath. Virginia-based Davis Carter Scott (DCS), the project's architect and interior designer, designed the staircase to serve many functional and aesthetic purposes. "The staircase is a critical design element used to fulfill communication and wayfinding goals," says Lena Scott, principal of DCS.

Finnegan Henderson occupies 250,000 sq. ft. on seven floors in a new downtown office building. The triangular-shaped structure has 50,000-sq. ft. floor plates, which required DCS staff to develop numerous approaches to wayfinding and to create intimacy.

The firm's offices include a state-of-the-art conference center, a multi-purpose room, visiting attorney offices, a café-style dining room, staff offices, administrative areas and support spaces. The firm occupies all or part of the seven floors, which provides ample room for its 700 employees.

"Wayfinding begins at the interconnecting stair," says Scott. "We used subtle color changes directly off the stair on each floor to indicate to staff where they are in the space. This approach is first incorporated in a small seating area that is part of an overflow library space directly off the stair on each floor. Uniform furniture in each seating area reflects the unique color of that floor, and wall and accent colors mirror colors in the seating areas."

The main reception area is on the 11th floor and features warm, richly-figured anigre wood that complements the natural stone floor.

● **ABOVE** The reception area features richly-figured anigre wood, stone and warm colors that create a very elegant first impression for visitors. The elliptical-shaped reception desk visually anchors the area.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO

The custom wood, glass and stone reception desk visually anchors the space. Veneers in the reception area and elevator lobbies were hand selected.

The conference center is located off the reception area and includes large and small conference rooms, break-out areas and caucus rooms. The DCS design team used glass as a key detail throughout the area, including glass walls, partitions and a sliding panel system. Each glass wall and door is double insulated for sound proofing. The extensive use of glass allows natural light to permeate the space—an important design goal.

The multi-purpose room has state-of-the-art video and teleconferencing capabilities, and can be divided into three rooms via moveable wall partitions. The room can seat up to 165 people and is used for training, trial preparation, large group meetings and entertaining.



BELOW Figured wood veneers, glass and the stone floor blend to create an elegant environment in the elevator lobby. The seven-story, spiral staircase is seen in the background.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO

RIGHT Custom secretarial workstations are eye-catching and very functional. The use of clerestory glass and side lights in perimeter offices, seen on the right-hand side, allows natural light to flow into interior spaces.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO





The café-style dining area would make anyone want to dine in. The space features a commercial kitchen, servery area, and various seating options including cafeteria-style tables, banquettes, a small seating area with plush, oversized chairs and coffee-bar-style pedestal tables. The brightly colored walls, including a red, curved wall with green niches to hold artwork, colorful and whimsically patterned carpet tiles, and organically patterned, terrazzo floor in the servery, create a lively environment. The space is also used for large personnel gatherings, meetings and entertaining.

Through efficient planning, partner offices were reduced in size from 275 to 225 sq. ft. This enabled Finnegan Henderson to

accommodate up to 131 more employees in an additional 10,000 sq. ft. that the firm previously occupied, while also achieving a 37 percent reduction in rentable sq. ft. per attorney. Attorney offices are located along the building's perimeter. The side lights and clerestory glass used in all perimeter offices and meeting rooms allows natural light to penetrate into the interior.

Built-in secretarial workstations are constructed of custom-figured anigre wood with glass and natural stone. Workstations feature a "floating glass" transaction ledge achieved through the use of secured metal pins and a special adhesive, which gives the illusion that the glass ledge is suspended in mid-air. A vertical filing system, record storage at each station, built-in "in-out" document systems, and a concealed closet provide a work area that is very functional. Recessed lighting, supplemented by task lighting, is mounted on the underside of cabinets and in filing areas.

Davis Carter Scott's design meets the client's short and long-term requirements, and with its elegant and highly-functional appeal, this office space will serve Finnegan Henderson for many years to come. ●

OPPOSITE Built-in niches along the serpentine wall and down the 11th floor corridors create custom spaces for showcasing the firm's private art collection.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO

BELOW The café-style dining area is bright and lively. Various seating options accommodate individuals or small groups in a setting that is very welcoming.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO



RIGHT The area outside of the large and small conference rooms provides a place for one-on-one meetings or to relax during breaks. The fabric and carpet colors blend nicely with the warm woods of the tables and walls.

PHOTOGRAPH ©2005 JIM TETRO



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