

design

work hard, play hard

Swanke Hayden Connell Architects channels Broadway—and all its glitz and glamour—into Wurk Environments' flagship flexible office space in the heart of Manhattan's Times Square

By Holly Richmond
Photography by Chuck Choi Photography





Often referred to as the “crossroads of the world,” Times Square is the quintessential “bright lights, big city” manifestation. Dreams are made here, which is why it was the ideal location for Wurk Environments’ flagship flexible multi-tenanted space. Located in the imposing 54-story building at 1515 Broadway, New York-based Swanke Hayden Connell Architects (SHCA) transformed two floors into an interconnected space that reflects the vibrancy, personality, and iconic charm of the ever-pulsating neighborhood.

The overriding idea at Wurk—and all of the upscale amenities it encompasses—is not about work in a literal sense. As such, the corporation uses a creative, phonetic play on words to express its mission. Gorguin Shaikoli, Wurk’s vice president of marketing and brand development, says that one goal for the flagship location was to revolutionize the often negative connotation that temporary, flexible office spaces elicit, noting, “They don’t have to be bland, boring boxes.” He further explains that many of Wurk’s tenants have recently downsized from Fortune 500 offices and appreciate an upscale work environment. “We don’t want our tenants to feel penalized, like they’re trading down,” Shaikoli adds. “Our aim is to offer the same or better quality of space they were used to, but with the added amenities of a 5-star resort.”

What do those amenities entail? In addition to its prime location, Wurk offers concierge service for restaurant reservations, travel plans, theater tickets, and other business traveler needs, as well as on-site maintenance and tech services. Most notable, however, is the space’s unique, bold design that blends the idea of work and play into an interactive environment ideal for socializing and networking. Tenants will have an office space with unmatched aesthetics and boutique amenities to meet, greet, eat, drink, relax, network, and generate business. Hannah Dahlquist, IIDA, LEED AP, and senior designer who led the SHCA team, says, “There are often a lot of ‘what ifs’ when designing a flagship space, but the client was comfortable to let us run with dynamic design solutions that would not only make the space unforgettable, but unmatched in this niche.”

From the moment tenants and guests step off the elevator into the 65,000-sq.-ft.-space, divided between floors 11 and 12, they feel what Shaikoli describes as a “shock value and wow factor.” Glass panels and white, highly reflective tile provide a crisp backdrop for the interior accent pops of color. The main visual draw, however, is the perimeter and views to the outside world—the lights, hues, bling, and drama of Times Square and Broadway. Dahlquist notes that her team used the surroundings very purposefully because Wurk was intent on making this a non-branded space in order to provide a sense of exclusivity, yet not be overly blatant. Shaikoli clarifies, “Wurk does not dictate an idea or brand or logo. It is free to be interpreted by each tenant.”

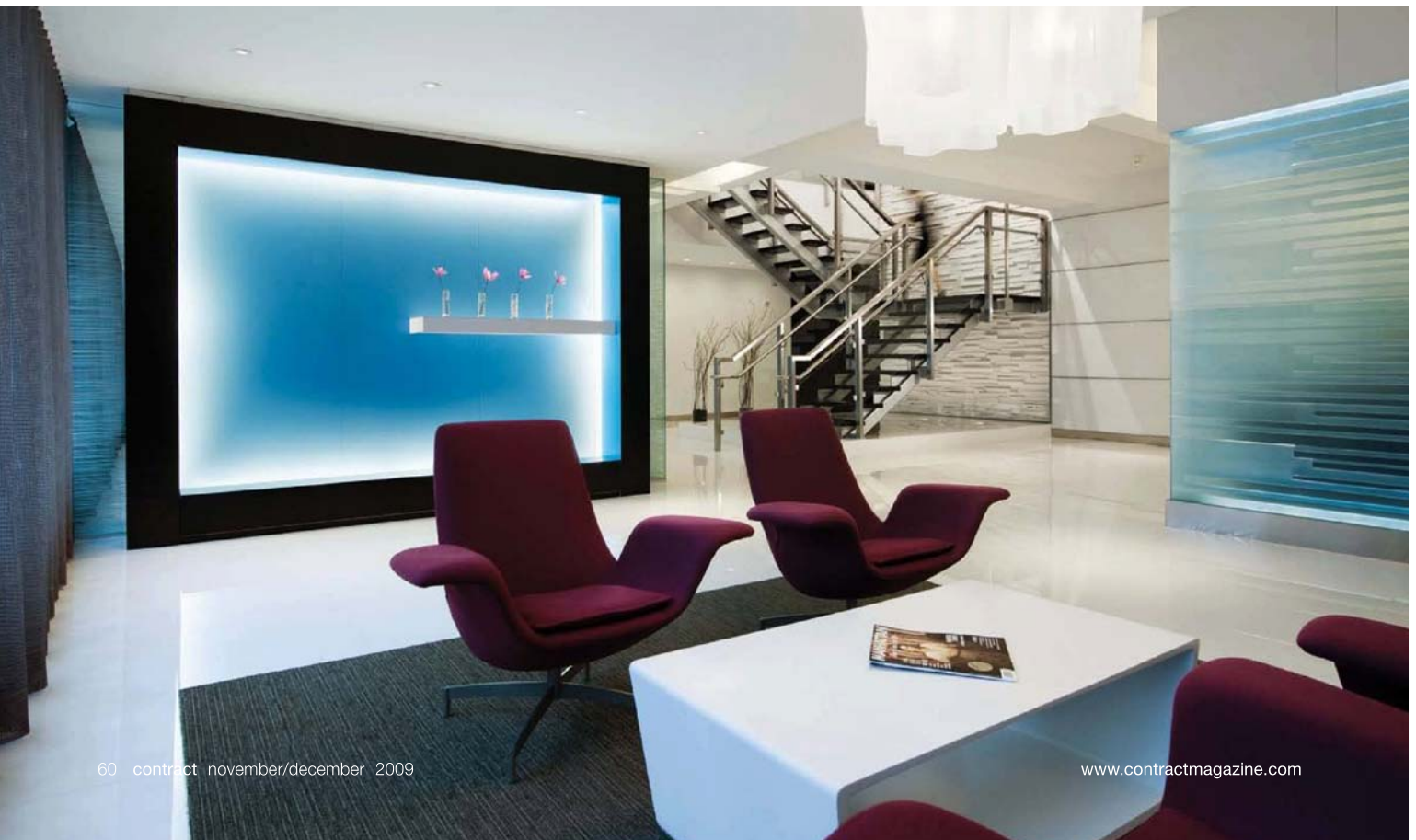
The Plā Lounge (left) is used for a variety of functions and transforms from day to evening with a preset LED lighting program. A range of blue hues set against light and dark backgrounds give the space a hip, club-like vibe. Ideal for networking and socializing, the Plā Lounge, with floor-to-ceiling windows, makes Broadway and its environs the star attraction. The lounge itself is ideal for small group gatherings, or for larger events that require overflow space the glass partitions can be opened to the Boulevard Café and reception area.

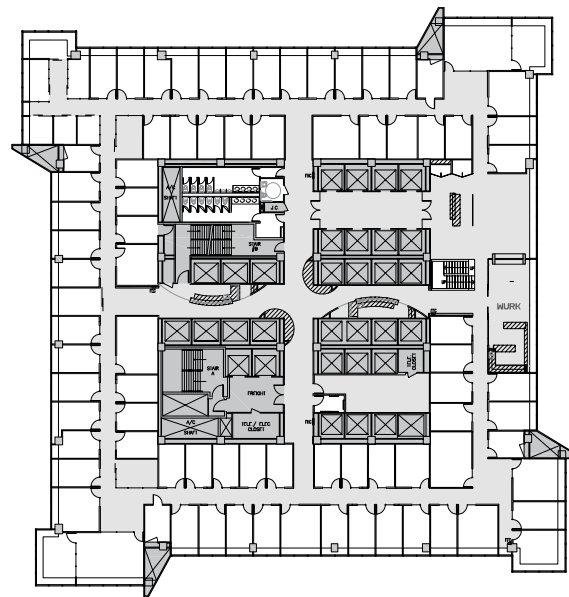


The challenge was to bring a subliminal brand to life and make a strong first impression. “We created a brand without a brand through geometry and architecture that speaks to the environment around it,” Dahlquist explains. “We ran with the boulevard idea and used linear accents as interior design solutions to ease wayfinding, connect the various venues, and mimic the constant stream of taxicab lights coming down Broadway.”

The sleek reception desk and concierge are located on floor 11 just off the elevator lobby and adjacent to the main guest reception area. This is the initial stop for guests and tenants making their way to private offices, conference facilities, the Boulevard Café and Bistro, the main Plā Lounge and numerous smaller lounges ranging in size and function. There are subtle differences between the 11th and 12th floors, which are connected by an interior stair—the 11th floor is modern-chic, suiting media and entertainment types; the 12th floor is conservative-contemporary, designed to accommodate corporate, legal, and financial service tenants.

Dahlquist remarks that the boulevard design concept was used on each floor, which presents thoroughfares extending through the space, accented by coffee niches, small lounge areas, and touchdown stations that can be used for a variety of functions from checking messages on a phone or laptop, to reading the morning news, or hosting a small meeting. “These stations can be rented for the day or if they are open they can be used by the tenants. Wurk is all about flexibility. The main design goal was to meet and exceed every need imaginable,” she says.





The biggest draw for tenants is the Plā Lounge, which was designed to drive several functions seamlessly. In the morning and afternoon hours, it is a day lounge with coffee and breakfast services, newspaper, and television options, and a place for spontaneous meetings or a catered function. In the evening hours it transforms into an ideal venue for pre-dinner cocktails and hor d'ourves. "Like clockwork, each evening the lighting and music change to mimic the vibe of Broadway," Dahlquist notes. Additionally, if the Plā Lounge cannot accommodate all guests for an event, sliding glass partitions open to the reception area and Boulevard space. AV, sound, and lighting integrate to all of the various Wurk zones, so a tenant can host an intimate gathering of six clients or a catered event for 120 guests.

Dahlquist concludes by expressing her appreciation for the design team and client's willingness to take risks. "The learning curve for this flagship space got very curvy at times," she chuckles, "but it was a fantastic raw idea with many puzzle pieces that came together to realize the client's vision."

More than 75 percent leased in the mere 10 months since its opening, Wurk is no doubt a hit. "Given our success at 1515 Broadway, our corporate expansion strategy—namely to open another New York City location as well as branches in Los Angeles, the United Kingdom, and Canada—is right on target," states Shaikoli. "We believe people deserve more for their dollar, and here they'll get it." ☐

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Located just inside the elevator lobby and adjacent to the main guest reception area, the reception desk (opposite top) presents Wurk's sleek, hip persona without the obviousness of branding. Dark woods, highly reflective white tile flooring, glass panels offering constant views to Broadway, and linear design accents provide dynamic, contemporary appeal. The guest reception area (opposite bottom) provides the ideal location for tenants to greet their clients—adjacent to the Plā Lounge on the 11th floor with easy access via interconnecting stairs to the main conference room on floor 12. The boulevard design solution is a concept that snakes its way through the space seamlessly connecting public zones to the private offices. The Boulevard Café (above left and right) features a coffee bar and bistro and acts as a town hall or village square where people come together and network. The Café also links space between the core and perimeter of the building. Dropped ceilings, candlelight and contrasting dark and light tones present an atmosphere of exclusivity, while constant views to the exterior allow for natural light to penetrate and ease wayfinding.

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