



Inside the New York Offices of AD100 Firm Studio Sofield

Radiating drama and drop-dead chic, the New York offices of Studio Sofield are a study in sophistication

By Mayer Rus on August 13, 2019 | Photography by Gleves Anderson

The Manhattan offices of AD100 designer William Sofield are a calculated seduction, a deep immersion in the style Sofield, with all its arcane historical allusions, eccentric details, unexpected material juxtapositions, and spellbinding beauty. Part workspace and part Wunderkammer, the expansive loft is chockablock with art, furniture, and curiosities, all tracing Sofield's peregrinations through the worlds of architecture and design over the past quarter century. It's no wonder that tastemakers on the order of Tom Ford and Richard Buckley, artists Brice and Helen Marden, Ralph and Ricky Lauren, and Mary-Kate Olsen and Olivier Sarkozy have called on Sofield to help forge their particular visions of domestic bliss.

Fittingly, Studio Sofield is located in an idiosyncratic New York City design landmark, the Schermerhorn Building, a Romanesque Revival structure built in 1889 by architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, whose résumé includes the Dakota Apartments and the Plaza Hotel. "When we moved in, I stripped the cast-iron columns myself with a blowtorch and a bucket of toxic Strip-Eez," the designer recalls with a laugh. "I think my brain-cell count diminished by half."

Since that time, the studio has evolved, layer by layer, into a wonderland of design inspiration. An informal meeting room is crowned with a seductive octagonal ceiling—rendered in luminous violet and aubergine lacquer, with a constellation of inlaid mother-of-pearl orbs—originally crafted by Nancy Lorenz for Sofield's erstwhile Los Angeles home in Laurel Canyon. The entry foyer likewise incorporates remembrances of things

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past and present: a desk and cabinet from the designer's furniture collection for Baker; artworks by friends Nan Goldin, Matthew Benedict, and Gary Hume; and a pair of sconces fashioned from an antique fire hose that graced the designer's former Manhattan apartment in the 1990s.



“Things from different phases of my life have a way of migrating to the office. It’s like a final resting place,” Sofield quips. Of course, there’s plenty of evidence of the studio’s current projects, which include the ultra-luxurious interiors of the new Steinway Tower on West 57th Street in Manhattan, a Las Vegas hotel project called The Drew, and a host of tony residential and retail assignments. In one corner of the office, a gilded linen console designed by Billy Baldwin for Villa Fiorentina on the French Riviera is piled high with building models. “You can see the table in one of the Baldwin books, with a Rothko or Gottlieb hanging above it,” Sofield notes. “Since then it’s come down a notch or two.”

An informal meeting room features a Nancy Lorenz lacquered ceiling, Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann Elephant chairs, and a beaver carpet.