



Design Secrets: Office Spaces

ROCKPORT

50 Real-Life Projects Uncovered

Ben Franklin proved that electricity could be channeled from the sky using **a simple, small wooden model** with a removable roof and collapsible walls hinged at the base.

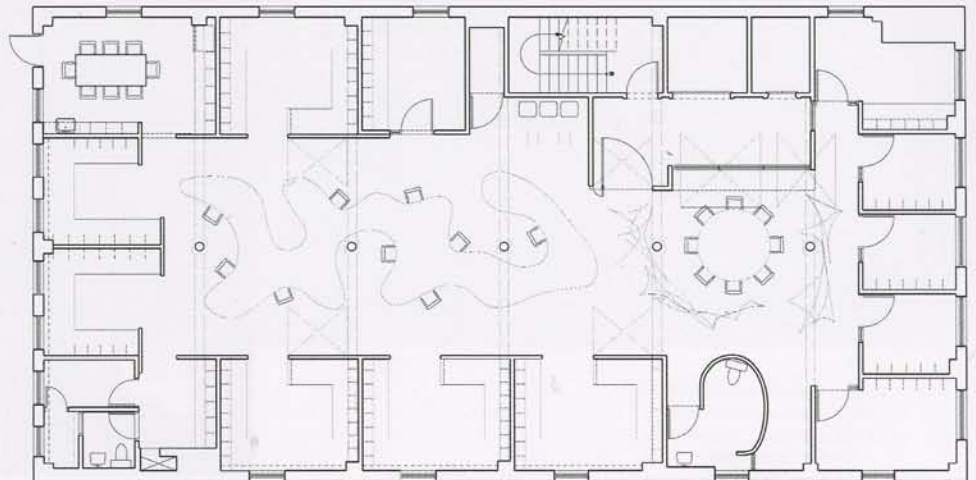


- ④ The design team maintained their practice's long-held commitment to the incorporation of the latest technology, in this case Mac-based CAD programs, to expedite the design process.
- ④ An overall illustration of Thunder House's new 5,000-square-foot (465-square-meter) office space.

A lightning rod ran up the gable and ended in a detachable brass ball above the chimney. Inside, he placed a cup of gunpowder. When in contact with the electrical current, an explosion occurred. Franklin called this a House of Thunder.

The online marketing and communications company, Thunder House, owned and operated by McCann-Erickson Worldwide, specializes in website strategy and design and describes itself as "a convergence of different attitudes and sensibilities. These varied sensibilities create a dynamic atmosphere where whatever moves through is a result of not one individual but the influence of many."

Understanding both Ben Franklin's scientific theory and the name-sake company's work ethic, Resolution: 4 Architecture took on the project—Thunder House's new 5,000-square-foot (465-square-meter) office space. Located in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood, the headquarters occupies the top floor (twelfth) of an old loft warehouse. According to Thunder House's director Amanda Richmond, the company currently employs nine people but is expected to grow to thirty-five within two years. The Internet company required a design solution capable of sustaining such rapid growth in an overall process of ten weeks and a budget of \$135,000. Joseph Tanney and Robert Luntz, partners in Resolution: 4 Architecture, and the architects for the parent company's premises, were called upon to work some quick magic. With the help of project architects Setu Shah and Mike Sweebe and a one-man project team consisting of Brian Bowman, the group maintained their practice's long-held commitment to the incorporation of the latest technology—Mac-based CAD programs for both the design and documentation—to expedite the design process.





⊗ Low-acrylic partitions measuring four-, five-, or seven-feet (1.2, 1.5, or 2.1-meter) high, create an envelope wrapping the perimeter that define semiprivate offices for the creative team.

The space was gutted except a curved bathroom enclosure, which soon became the inspiration for the interior scheme. Skylit, an entry portal (or walk-in point) made of corrugated metal and acrylic translucent panels that project a warm glow provides a transition for visitors between the time they step off the elevator and move through the oversized, pivoting front door that measures 7 ft. x 6 ft. (2.1 m x 1.8 m). Once inside, private offices for accountants and money managers occupy the north end of the space, while a series of low-acrylic partitions measuring four-, five-, or seven-feet high, create an envelope wrapping the perimeter that define semiprivate offices for the creative team, each measuring approximately 165 square feet (15 square meters). The open, communal space has overhead linear blue lights that reference computer screens and the idea of the digital. Fabricated on site from full-scale drawings, a forty-foot (12.2-meter) custom Baltic birch table weaves its way around columns, knitting together the work area that accommodates website production. Designed to literally link ten people, the table seats Web designers and a receptionist.

Installed by designer and noted tent maker Gisela Stromeyer, a conference area, where final client presentations are made, is defined by an annular overlapping of Lycra panels stretched to create an ephemeral volume with visual privacy and make-shift projection screens. The overlapping fabric leaves narrow slits between the folds for entry access and a warm glow of incandescent lighting washes over the space.

Like most new media ventures, the client worried about an inevitable workforce explosion. So, both the birch table and the creative offices allow for added seating—moving easily from a single to shared occupancy.

“Ben built his Thunder House to prove that electricity could be channeled from the sky,” say both Tanney and Luntz. “This Thunder House is an interactive agency responsible for creating electrifying websites, interactive media campaigns, and marketing programs for high-energy clients.” The architects conclude that design decisions were made not only in adherence to the tight budget and schedule, but also to articulate the convergence of such ideas.



A forty-foot (12.2-meter), custom Baltic birch table weaves its way around columns, knitting together the work area that accommodates Web site production. It links ten people, Web designers, and a receptionist.





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