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plus **OFFICE INTERIORS**

Traboscia Roiatti introduces a modern point of view to the offices of French vintner Clicquot in New York City

By William Weathersby, Jr.

Veuve Clicquot, which translated from the French means “Widow Clicquot,” is the premium champagne and parent company named after the extraordinary woman who was a trailblazing entrepreneur in 19th-century France. Widowed at age 28 in 1805, Madame Clicquot took the reigns of her family business and over six decades built a premium brand, exporting champagne to Russia and America, among other precedent-setting destinations. Today, the international bottler and distributor has an expanded portfolio reaching beyond France’s Champagne district to include wines from the Marlborough region of New Zealand and vineyards in the Pacific Northwest.

Clicquot, Inc., the U.S. subsidiary, is helmed by president and C.E.O. Mireille Guiliano, a woman on whom the tenacious legacy of Madame Clicquot is not lost. When scouting for space to house a new headquarters in Manhattan, Guiliano says she sought a location and interior style that were less traditional than the company’s previous Midtown offices and more in line with its current spirit of modernity and global trade. “In the 1980s and ’90s, the

The curving forms and orange accents at Clicquot, Inc. (below) were inspired by the vintner’s champagne bottles (right).



conventional place for a luxury company to be was on Fifth Avenue,” Guiliano says. “It was time for us to move on from our location there, and we wanted to be where the action is.”

Working with architects Traboscia Roiatti, Clicquot secured a 13,500-square-foot space in the Chelsea neighborhood’s Starrett Lehigh Building, an address that could not be more *au courant*. Converted several years ago for office use, the circa 1931 former railroad depot houses high-end fashion and lifestyle tenants, including Assouline, Hugo Boss, and Martha Stewart Omnimedia, plus a roster of commercial art galleries and photo studios. Clicquot also uses its office as a venue for entertaining clients, so the location’s dealmaking attraction was an adjoining 4,000-square-foot terrace with two exposures framing views of the Hudson River, the Statue of Liberty, and Midtown landmarks such as the Empire State Building.







Though their colleagues in France typically work in pastoral châteaux or city town houses lined with rich wood paneling and antique furnishings, Clicquot's New York executives envisioned an office that was "contemporary, open, and light," says principal architect Robert Traboscia. The 15th-floor facility was graced with broad expanses of landmarked, factory-style windows, but presented challenges in terms of layout and programming, he notes. To reach Clicquot's corner area beyond other tenant locations, for example, a new public corridor was required to connect to one corner of the company's rectangular space. Because enclosed executive offices would adjoin the terrace at the end of the office opposite the entrance, circulation between public and private

TRADITIONAL INTERIORS WERE REPLACED BY A LOFT WITH OPEN SIGHT LINES AND PANORAMIC VIEWS OF MANHATTAN.

zones was a grappling point for the design team.

A kitchen, bar, café, and wine-storage area were set requirements. "Flexible, accessible facilities to accommodate special events such as wine tastings were a key part of the program," adds project partner Caterina Roiatti, AIA. In terms of circulation, "no one wanted guests to wade through open office areas to reach the terraces during a party. The floor plan had to balance the demands of entertainment areas on one hand and private office, support staff, and production areas on the other."

The conference room (opposite, bottom left and top) juts into the bar and café area. The C.E.O.'s private office (above) and another executive's office (opposite, bottom right) are faced with glass walls and doors treated with translucent film.

To maintain internal sight lines while maximizing daylight and framing the panoramic views, a series of glass-framed enclosures were set within the boxy building envelope. The architects say they were inspired by the classic Veuve Clicquot champagne bottle itself. The shapely container influenced curving glass walls "with a liquid, transparent feeling, which transmit daylight to the core while encouraging a flow of movement," Roiatti says. Meanwhile, the bottle's distinctive orange label (called "Clicquot yellow" by employees) was adapted as an accent color.

The office design capitalizes on volume and light to trump the space's vast horizontality. Visitors are greeted at the Clicquot reception area by long views looking diagonally through the glass-enclosed conference room and work spaces beyond; one can see skyscrapers from the outset. Set between the concave front edge of the reception desk and the perimeter of glass doors and windows facing the terrace, the private meeting room becomes a central focal point, with the "fork in the road" it creates in plan presenting two main circulation choices. The floor-to-ceiling glazing of the conference room enclosure is faceted to echo the lines of the Starrett Lehigh Building's perimeter wall. Though its meeting-in-a-fishbowl configuration puts participants on view at center stage, the room is fitted with blackout draperies that can be deployed for privacy.

The beveled line of the building's glazing is reiterated by the outline of the nearby bar (below). The existing concrete floors were stained in a sepialike shade that approximates the color of

vintage Veuve Clicquot wine labels and bottle glass. A café area beyond the conference room is set near windows overlooking the 4,000-square-foot terrace, newly outfitted with pavers (right).



Enclosing executive and management offices, floor-to-ceiling glass walls configured without visible framing seem to dissolve the mass of interior spaces. Treated with bands of translucent film, the enclosures afford a degree of privacy while conveying openness. Ceiling tiles and tackable surfaces manufactured from recycled materials also convey a progressive culture. To also meet the mandate of low-cost, durable materials, an orange laminate bar and tabletops, in addition to orange paint accents, approximate the signature Clicquot hue without requiring custom color-matching. Bright, lightweight chairs and bar stools are a perfect spot for guests to perch while toasting the sunset over the skyline. ■

Project: *Clicquot, Inc., New York City*
Architect: *Traboscia Roiatti—Robert Traboscia, Caterina Roiatti, AIA, partners in charge; Diego Otero, Michael Silverman, Andres Tenorio, project team*
Consultants: *Liker Associates (engineer); Jim Willey/International Lights (lighting)*
General contractor: *Celtic General Contractors*

Sources
Furniture panels: *Trespa USA*
Acoustical panels: *Tectum; P.E.P.P.*
Chairs: *Heller; Vitra*
Shelving: *Rakks*
Lighting: *Atlite; Lucifer Lighting; Selux; Hess America*

For more information on this project, go to Projects at www.architecturalrecord.com.