

## BLUEPRINTS

# In 1 Office, 3 Spaces For Doctors' Work

By CLAIRE WILSON

**W**HEN Drs. Nolan Karp and Mihye Choi, plastic surgeons in Manhattan, considered the design of their new offices, they wanted the space to reflect the artistic approach they took to their work. Sure, they needed it to be functional and comfortable for the patients, coming to them for cosmetic or reconstructive procedures, but they also wanted it bright, loftlike and art-filled.

"We feel we do joyful work, and we wanted something modern that would reflect that," said Dr. Choi, an associate professor of plastic surgery at the New York University School of Medicine. "We wanted something that was playful and fun."

Designed by Paul David Taylor, the president of Stonehill & Taylor Architects and Planners in New York, the 6,000-square-foot street-level space is awash with light, punctuated by bold modern furniture and works of art that were chosen by the doctors, who are art lovers.

The office space is in Midtown, at 305 East 47th Street, in a former industrial building whose tenant roster includes United Nations missions and related nongovernmental organizations. It faces south over the leafy Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza between First and Second Avenues. The space began as a near-perfect rectangle but has been divided by the architect to create three distinct spaces, each of which retains a sense of openness in part because of the 13-foot ceilings. To do that, he constructed a large, rectangular box that he set at an angle along the left half of the space. Inside the box are treatment rooms, which seem all the more private because they are in the enclosure. There is also a photo studio used for the team's research projects.

The off-center placement of the box helps to delineate separate areas for doctors' offices, the spacious waiting area at the front and the patient-care area; they also avoid the hum-drum of a grid that is all right angles.

"The block placed in the space creates two unevenly shaped corridors that make it more of a space than a corridor," said Mr. Taylor, who specializes in hotels and is designing the NoMad

Hotel at Broadway and 28th Street in Manhattan and working on four Manhattan projects for the Denihan Hospitality Group. "It's all about sculpture."

The box layout also goes a long way to preserve the loftlike feel. In addition to treating patients, both doctors train plastic surgery residents and fellows and do research. The space accommodates all three functions, according to Dr. Karp, who is the director of plastic surgery at Tisch Hospital at N.Y.U., in addition to being an associate professor of plastic surgery at the N.Y.U. School of Medicine.

"We can open up all the doors in the back for conferences and support groups and teaching residents from the



medical center while the front is a little like a living room where we can have informal get-togethers," Dr. Karp said. "Some of it is social, some of it is professional — and we have the open spaces that allow us to do all of those things."

Columns running down the middle of the space further reinforce the notion of a loft. But by designing brushed aluminum lighting fixtures that cast the light upward from four sides of each column, the architect turned them into giant torchieres.

"We went with the loft feel and made them into pieces of sculpture," Mr. Taylor said. Stonehill & Taylor has also done design work for St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx and St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan.

Nature and the tranquility of a Japa-



Paul David Taylor, left, designed the Manhattan offices for the plastic surgeons Drs. Nolan Karp and Mihye Choi. The 6,000-square-foot space is bright and loftlike and filled with modern furniture and artwork. The décor includes pendant light fixtures in the conference room, made of filigree, that resemble floating clouds.



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nese garden are the theme within the space, from which you can see the trees in the park across the street. The pale terrazzo floor is laid out to evoke the stones along a path. In tones of light beige and cream it delineates the waiting area from the offices and guides patients around the irregular layout.

Different kinds of natural materials reinforce the garden idea. They include a reception desk made of white onyx and walnut, behind which is an arrangement of live bamboo. Off the pathway to the rear of the space is a large walnut conference table that retains the soft organic curves of the logs from which it was cut. It seats 10. Over it hang a pair of pendant light fixtures designed out of white metal wire filigree. They float over the table like clouds, as light as the

large panel of cut paper on an adjacent wall. Against a wall behind the table is a shelving unit made from wenge wood and steel at the rear of this area.

Consulting rooms have wooden floors, as do the two doctors' private offices. Rooms where surgery or other procedures are performed have terrazzo or other waterproof surfaces, as required by law. Most walls are bright white, the better to enhance the art, all of which is large scale and some of which is pure whimsy. Inside the box-like structure where patients are treated, walls are a pale blue-green and treated with a technique called Venetian plaster that lends texture with subtle variations of glossy and flat finishes.

A similar shade of green is picked up in the sliding glass doors that enclose

the offices on the right side and back wall of the space. Meant to evoke Japanese screens, they open very wide to encourage interaction among staff members and patients. When they are all closed at night and lighted from behind, they have the mysterious, romantic look of an illuminated lantern, especially when viewed from the dark of the street.

Before its transformation, the space was used for the administrative staff of a law firm. Drs. Karp and Choi both had private offices in Midtown and shared a small office at N.Y.U. before moving their practice to the new space. Dr. Choi said she planned to spend the rest of her career there. "I walk in and the office just makes me happy," she said. "That's a good feeling." □