

Suyama Peterson Deguchi

Seattle, Washington

1 MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLING A GALLERY, THESE OFFICES HELP THE ARCHITECTS CONVEY A REFRESHING ARTISTIC SENTIMENT.

By Sheri Olson

Architect: *Suyama Peterson Deguchi; George Suyama, FAIA, partner in charge; Jay Deguchi, project architect; Ric Peterson AIA, Jeff King, Kim Lavacot, project team*
Owner: *George and Kim Suyama*
Consultants: *Swenson Say Fagét (structural)*

Size: *12,283 square feet*
Cost: *\$500,000*

Sources

Metal/glass curtain wall: *Kawneer*
Aluminum windows: *Milgard Windows*
Glazing: *Cardinal Low-e2*
Skylights: *Crystalite*
Sliding doors: *Northstar Woodworks*
Cabinetwork and custom woodwork: *TRSW*
Fiberglass panels: *American Acrylic*
Metalwork furnishings: *Gulassa; Drew Middlebrooks; Kevin Quinn*

Workdays at Suyama Peterson Deguchi might include a visit from a group of out-of-state university students or a couple of globe-trotting art aficionados dropping by to check out the latest installation in the gallery. Tourists mix with clients who get a full-blown introduction to the firm's emphasis on elemental materials and pared-down designs. "The new office helped us to clarify our design direction and has allowed us to push our ideas with clients in a way that our old space couldn't," says George Suyama, FAIA.

Program

The program is a result of a surfeit of space—12,283 square feet for an eight-person office (now 19), which concentrates on high-end residential projects. When the search began for new space, the goal was not more room, but a more urban—and urbane—location than its old residential neighborhood. Suyama spotted a late 1800s livery-stable-turned-automobile-service-garage in Belltown, a gritty downtown neighborhood where hip nightclubs rub shoulders with old maritime flophouses. He was struck by the vast—albeit dark and filthy—barrel-vaulted space.

A scheme emerged from the city's requirement for storefront



space along the street and the office's need for only 2,000 square feet at the back. An open area in the center of the building would house an exhibition space. Word got out about the huge space, and local galleries began inquiring about renting it to show large pieces of art.

Solution

The first clues signaling new life behind the anonymous gray facade are the deep metal frames surrounding Minimalist glass storefronts and a metal garage door. A steel channel bolted onto the facade is part of an extensive seismic retrofit and sets the tone for the confrontational relationship between the new and the

old, the raw and the refined inside. "We didn't want to do a restoration, we wanted to do an intervention," says Suyama.

One of biggest undertakings was lowering the floor several feet along the front of the building to match the sidewalk, for a more accessible retail space. What was once the second floor now functions as the first floor, thanks to city fathers who regraded this section of Seattle at the turn of the last century, burying a whole level of the city underground. The past is left exposed in the mottled old walls where the below-grade windows are patched with new concrete. "We loved the building's patina but didn't want to be nostalgic about it," says Suyama.

www For more information about the people and products involved in this project, go to Building Types Study at architecturalrecord.com.

Sheri Olson, AIA, is RECORD's Seattle-based contributing editor and architecture columnist for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.