

by Diane Wintroub Calmenson

Photography by Whitney Cox

## Office in the Sky

**N**icosia Creative Espresso Ltd., or NiCE as it's called, actually may be only eight floors above 52nd St. in Manhattan. But from inside it appears to be at a much loftier height thanks to a work space that includes a 6,000-square-foot penthouse office, a 900-square-foot rooftop conference room and a 4,500-square-foot rooftop garden.

NiCE was founded by Davide Nicosia in 1994, and does graphic design, packaging and multimedia design for clients such as Bath & Body Works, Calvin Klein, Tiffany

The receptionist's desk at NiCE features a steel frame construction that essentially communicates the feeling of the entire office—open, dynamic, creative. The curtain behind the desk defines the reception area and softly conceals the confidential goings-on in the work area. (A)



& Co. and *The New York Times*. Nicosia, who is originally from Rimini, Italy, and studied interior architecture and business management in Europe, came to the United States in 1987. After working for a couple of small firms in New York City, Nicosia had built up his freelance work to a point where he was ready to take off on his own.

"My first office was only 2,000 square feet," Nicosia recalls. "When we outgrew that office, I started looking for a new space in midtown that would not only be convenient for our clients, but also would be a bright and artistic environment for the people who work here. It took about a year to find this space, but then we only took three months to move in."

Nicosia designed the office along with project architect Todd Erlandson, (M) Arch., Strategic Architectures, and project coordinators at Allen & Killcoyne Architects. Aside



The custom designed and built work stations are modeled after the receptionist's desk. Satin-etched divider glass in the stations creates private space within a very public office.



The multi-color flooring is a glossy, non-slip surface that is usually used for helicopter landing pads. The colors delineate the office's different areas. The 14-foot high ceiling was painted white to enhance the ceiling's height and the feeling of openness within the space.

from an airy and light work space, Nicosia's design emphasized industrial elements, bold colors and a few fun and quirky design notes.

What immediately attracted Nicosia to the space was the string of windows all around the perimeter. These windows offer an outstanding view of the city, as well as of the Hudson River and New Jersey to the west. In addition to the view, of course, the windows let natural light fill the space. To reinforce the natural light, some 80 spotlights and aluminum factory-style lights are suspended from the ceiling. And at 14 feet

Plunked down in the middle of the office is a staircase that leads to a 900-square-foot rooftop conference room. There is also a rooftop garden. (K)



high, the ceiling itself is something to spotlight.

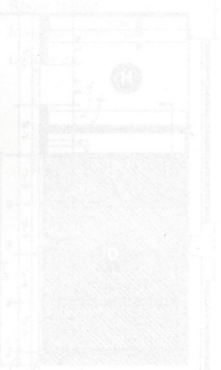
"When we came upon the space, the ceiling was criss-crossed with pipes," says Nicosia. "We took down about 40 percent of the pipes, none of which were functioning, and painted the ceiling white to enhance its height and the light within the space."

**N**icosia favored strong industrial design elements throughout the space in order to convey an image of cutting edge creativity that seems to say this is "the office of the future." From the elevators, visitors naturally approach the receptionist's desk, which immediately establishes the style of the office. The desk has a steel frame that is visible through a steel mesh front. The desk top and transac-

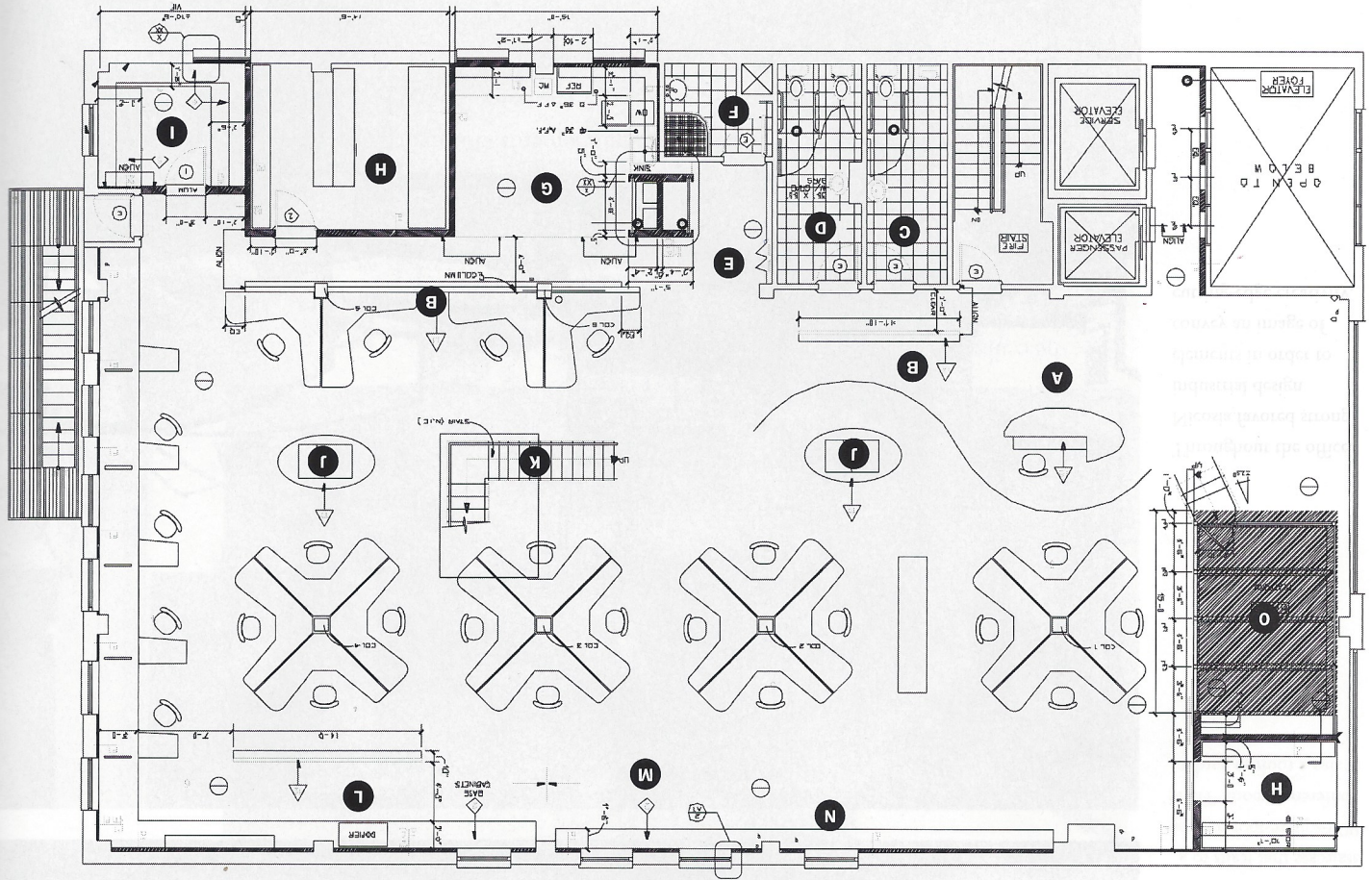


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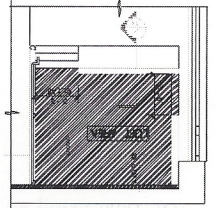
Nicosia's private office is a glass box elevated off the main floor. The wall shelves behind Nicosia's desk double as stairs leading to the doorway of a small storage room that is above and behind the private office. (O)



Throughout the office, Nicosia favored strong industrial design elements in order to convey an image of cutting-edge creativity.



- A. Reception desk
- B. Pin-up screen
- C. Men's restroom
- D. Women's restroom
- E. Coat room
- F. Shower
- G. Kitchen
- H. Storage
- I. Spray booth
- J. Light table
- K. Staircase
- L. Production (on platform)
- M. Bookcases
- N. Library
- O. Private office



Floor plan

spray booth and copy room. quarters ceiling height and covered in aluminum serve to hide areas such as the Aside from this curtain, a very limited number of internal walls that are all three- not to a degree that would compromise the confidential work we do for our clients." A serpentine curtain separates the reception area from the rest of the office. "The curtain is made of mesh fabric, so you can see through it somewhat," says Nicosia. "But end of the desk. and functional. A steel pole carrying electrical wiring from the ceiling penetrates one drawers to one side and a rollaway filing cabinet on the other make the desk flexible tion counter are cherry plywood and have a metal strip along the edge. Three built-in

## Client

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Davide Nicosia, project

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director of NICE

## Project Architect

Strategic Architectures

Todd Erlandson, (M) Arch.

## Project Coordinator

Allen + Killcoyne Architects

Custom designed and built work stations, modeled after the receptionist's desk, are in X-formations around support columns. Divider glass in the stations creates private space within this very open and public office. According to Nicosia, the glass is a satin etched Italian glass that is 1/4-inch-thick, thus helping to block the movement of sound from one station to the next. Task lighting at the stations also was custom designed using industrial parts. Each light moves up and down and has a dimmer.

Most of the flooring throughout the office is an epoxy by Garon, a product that is more commonly used for helicopter landing pads. But according to Nicosia, the inexpensive product provides a non-slip, glossy surface. Furthermore, Nicosia was able to define different areas of the office by pouring bold colors into the floor; the reception area is gray, the work area is light blue, the path that clients follow through the space is dark blue and the kitchen is yellow.

Only the library is carpeted in order to create a sense of quiet. Here, employees can relax and read on benches that face the office's western windows.


In the center of the work space is a metal staircase which, at first glance, seems to be just for show. However, upon closer inspection, one sees that the stairs do indeed lead somewhere—up to the rooftop conference room and garden. The conference room, which like the main office is ringed with windows, provides a space for client meetings, brainstorming sessions and the occasional game of ping-pong.

Also on the rooftop is a NiCE garden, a precious commodity anywhere, but especially in the concrete jungle.

When clients and visitors step off the elevators, they may approach the receptionist's desk, but what they are likely looking at is the raised glass box along the windows to their left. This box is Nicosia's private office. Resting upon wood and steel supports that are hidden behind sheets of aluminum, the office sits about three feet off the main floor and is accessed via cinder block stairs. "We had intended to build real stairs, but everyone began to prefer these," Nicosia says.

Except for the lower half of the front glass panels, which are sandblasted to give a bit of privacy from the elevator lobby, Nicosia's entire office is visible to employees and clients alike. A steel frame holds the glass panels in place. The floor is made of three-inch cherry planks that run from the desk to a lip that extends beyond the door, thus providing a more stable entry from the stairs.

Behind the desk are wall shelves. But these are no ordinary shelves. The far end of the bottom four shelves are actually steps that lead to a small doorway into a storage room above and behind Nicosia's office.

"My children love to sneak up there and play," Nicosia laughs. "That's why I like to think of my office as a big toy box." 

## Resilient flooring

Garon

## Carpeting

Fraser-Gold Carpet Corp.

## Work station filing cabinets

Vitra

## Work station chairs

Herman Miller

## Curtains

Clear Design

## Couch, chairs

Camperello Enterprises

## Ping-pong table

Harvard

Following items were designed by Davide Nicosia with Todd Erlandson

## Work stations

Constructed by Able Steel Equipment Co., Anko Contractor Co.

## Reception desk

Constructed by Memphis Wood Working Corp./The Construction Co.

## Light tables

Constructed by Eso Tools

## Window trim

Materials from Fireslate

## Lighting

Constructed with Fabulux components

## Roller tables

Materials from York Ladder Inc.