

Leading architect firm to turn iconic skyscraper into model of workplace design

Richard Ferris

When it first opened in 2013, New York's Woolworth Building was the world's tallest skyscraper and the most modern and worker friendly offices ever designed. Over 100 years later, leading architectural firm [M Moser](#) recently announced they will setup their newest office there, creating a new model of excellence for workplace design.



Designed by Cass Gilbert, the Woolworth building is an early US skyscraper standing 60 storeys high, with over 5,000 windows. Heralding a new healthy approach to office design in the early 20th century, it ensured every office had access to natural light from its big windows, and an air ventilation system brought cool air up, and hot air down, keeping employees comfortable in the warmer months. It also won widespread acclaim for its pioneering steel-frame structure and stunning interior and exterior appearance. Now, a century later, it will once again be on the frontier of modern design.

The WELL Building Standard

M Moser specialises in creating effective workplace environments, and Flokk have called upon their expertise on two occasions to help design our spaces, with both our London and Düsseldorf showrooms receiving their attention. This year they began drawing up plans for their brand new offices in New York, which will meet the “Platinum” rating for the [WELL Building Standard](#), a leading metric for measuring a buildings impact on health and wellbeing.



Flokk's Düsseldorf showroom was designed by M Moser, and is full of colour and style

The WELL Building Standard is all about creating the best possible environment for inhabitants. The quality of light, air and water, the impact on people's health and wellbeing, even their fitness, are all key indicators on the WELL Building Standard, and the Platinum rating is the highest rating of an already high standard. Earlier this year we spoke to Simon Wyatt of Cundall, who explained the [WELL Building Standard & designing for health and well-being](#).

Part of their designs include movable vertical plant walls placed in sight of desks based on research which shows that mood and productivity improves when you can see greenery at work. They will also help with air purity, and have in-built fans to help circulate air. The layout will encourage movement, which is a key factor in any office well-being strategy, and lighting will be optimized for performance levels. Recent studies have continued to highlight the direct link between [workplace design and performance](#).

This type of office design gives the architects at M Moser direct experience of the kind of environments they recommend to their clients. They can feel the benefits of the WELL Building Standard, which makes it much easier to communicate it. It also allows them to think about new ideas, how to push things even further.



Lines light & colour at work. Photo: [M Moser](#)

Revitalising old spaces

When it comes to such high measures, many organisations will start from scratch, but the challenges of moving into a 100 year old building with old HVAC, plumbing and electrics is something that M Moser relish, as explained by Director Christine Bruckner:

“I think people already recognize that this is a special space because of its role in history, but many older buildings that don’t have quite as remarkable a history or a lobby, they’re just knocked down... There’s a lot of what’s called embodied energy in every built in item, and that embodied energy needs to be recognized...There should be a benefit given to people when they’re working with existing buildings and giving them new life.”

We look forward to the development of this project, and can’t wait to see the end result in the years to come.

For more on revitalising old spaces, read our [case study on the new HQ for French Advertising Agency BET-C](#), an impressive structure on the banks of the Canal de l’Ourcq, which until recently had been a playground for graffiti artists whose artwork covered the entire complex.

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