

2010 AIBC Special Jury Award

Rennie Art Gallery and Offices

Firms: Walter Franci Architecture Inc. and mcfarlane green | biggar | ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC.

Lead Design:

- Walter Franci MAIBC, Walter Franci Architecture Inc.
- Michelle Biggar BBE Int.Design, mcfarlane | green | biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC.
- Michael Green MAIBC AIA RAIC, mcfarlane | green | biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC.

The Rennie Art Gallery and Offices in Vancouver’s Chinatown is a substantial rehabilitation project involving the historic Wing Sang Building located at 51-69 East Pender Street. The revisioning of the space combines a fresh take on both the original six-storey laneway brick building and its adjacent three-storey street-front brick structure, dating back to the late 1880s.

With this ambitious project, the design team was charged with marrying two distinct programs: a private, contemporary art gallery; and a bustling real estate marketing office.

Aesthetically speaking, this entailed integrating a modern sensibility within the framework of a historic site and culturally rich neighbourhood. To achieve this delicate balance, the design team went for restraint and simplicity, creating a gallery space that allows the art within to shine in its own right while complementing the buildings’ original character and charm.

Much of the six-storey building on the northern portion of the site was retained.

The existing exterior was reinforced with a monolithic, concrete interior shell. Inside, an exposed original brick wall juxtaposes with the smooth, white walls of the adjacent gallery. Forty-foot ceilings and high windows contribute to the light, airy atmosphere of the main gallery.

The office areas in the south building offer their own charm. As a nod to the building’s legacy as home to Vancouver’s first Chinese school, the school room was kept intact and re-purposed as a meeting room.

The entire project is punctuated by select design elements. For one, the central stair

leading from the front entrance to the main gallery halls one floor above is a signature piece constructed of glass, concrete and steel – artwork in its own right .

Another distinctive feature is the roof-top deck. A neon installation by artist Martin Creed broadcasts its positive Marley-induced mantra to the world: “Everything is Going to be Alright”.

The Rennie Art Gallery and Offices project balances substantial conservation and restoration with selective new construction and demolition. In bestowing this award, the awards jury recognizes a raising of the bar – a new standard in adaptive re-use.

“It’s delightful because of the surprises.”

— juror comment

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| Project Name: Rennie Art Gallery and Offices | Interior Architects mcfarlane green biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC. |
| Completion Date: October 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michelle Biggar, BBE Int.Design, Principal• Michael Green, MAIBC AIA AAA MRAIC, Principal• Susan Scott, Associate• Tracey Mactavish, MAIBC MRAIC LEED®AP, Associate |
| Project Location: 51 East Pender Street Vancouver, BC | Additional Team Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owner’s Representative: Waldron Morton Consulting Ltd.• Construction Manager: N.Wallace & Company Ltd.• Heritage Consultants: Robert Lemon Architect Inc. and Donald Luxton & Associates• Code Consultants: CFT Engineering Ltd.• Structural Engineer: JM Engineering Ltd.• Mechanical Engineer: IMEC Mechanical Ltd.• Electrical Engineer: Cantec Electrical Services Ltd.• Landscape Architect: Jonathan Losee Ltd.• Envelope Consultant: Morrison Hershfield Limited• City Heritage Planner: Zlatan Jankovic |
| Project Architects: Walter Franci Architecture Inc. | |
| Interior Architects: mcfarlane green biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC. | |
| Lead Design: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walter Franci MAIBC, Walter Franci Architects• Michelle Biggar BBE Int.Design, mgb• Michael Green MAIBC AIA RAIC, mgb | |
| Client: Rennie Marketing Systems | |
| Project Architects Walter Franci Architects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walter Franci MAIBC Project Architect• Scott Mitchell MAIBC• Mark Ashby MAIBC• Vince Knudsen IA.AIBC• Hazen Sise MAIBC | |

“I love the details on this one – it’s beautiful.”

— juror comment



Image courtesy of mcfarlane | green | biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC. Photo by Martin Tessler.



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Image courtesy of mcfarlane | green | biggar ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN INC. Photo by Nic Lehoux.