

North Bennet Street School Gallery

Multi-level design combines public outreach with a retail gallery



This nationally prominent school of fine craft required the transformation of an existing disused storefront space into an institutional public face. The new gallery provides a place to receive visitors and to educate the public about the history, activities and completed work of the school's eight departments. At the same time it serves as an outlet for the sale of select craft items as well as course-related materials and equipment.

Design Solution

Jonathan Levi Architects created a solution which organizes the various display needs into vertical bands using custom fabricated multi-functional cabinetry. At mid-height a continuous mural of illuminated black and white photographs documents the school's culture and history. Between mural panels, concealed support brackets hold glass shelving for additional small items. An undulating wood ceiling conceals existing mechanicals and provides openings for flexible lighting placement. At the center of the space a rolling counter allows reconfiguration of the room from retail mode to reception and gallery use. While still responding to the school's modest budget, the casework's flush birch construction is accented with inlaid strips of marquetry – an homage to the traditional woodworking typical of the school.

Features

- Vertical banding organizes multi-functional displays
- Ceiling 'landscape' allows flexible lighting
- Rolling counter provides for reconfiguration of space for different uses
- Sweeping curve enlarges perceived size of space

Recognition

- 2006 Small Projects Design Award, Boston Society of Architects/AIA

JLA Role
Lead Design Architect, Architect of Record

Personnel Jonathan Levi FAIA,
Project Designer/Partner-in-Charge

Client North Bennet Street School

Location North End, Boston, MA

Size 560 sf

Construction Cost \$220,000

Construction Complete 2006

