



Photography By: © 2016 Kim Smith Photo

SUE-JOLIE RIOUX, PRESIDENT & TIMOTHY BOYLAN,
VICE PRESIDENT OF TRES JOLIE MAISON, INC

SHUFFLE OFF TO BUFFALO

The Small City that Could

By: Gina Samarotto

It's the place William G. Fargo founded Wells Fargo and American Express. It was the "Gateway to the West" for immigrants looking for their proverbial cup of milk and honey. It's a city fairly bursting with arts and culture. It was where Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, H.H. Richardson and Eliel and Eero Saarinen among others chose to craft masterworks that still punctuate the skyline; affording the city a landscape that defines Buffalo's aesthetic to this day. Case in point, the 'Electric Tower' - an instantly recognizable icon in the Buffalo skyline.

Aptly named to draw attention to its original distinction as one of the world's first 'fully electrified' buildings. The beaux-arts tower was originally completed by Buffalo architects Esenwien and Johnson in 1912. In the hundred-plus years since then, it's been expanded and reborn on several occasions; the most recent incarnation beginning in 2004 when the building was acquired by Iskalo Development. Today it sits as a solid, magnificent illustration of where Buffalo has been and, just as importantly, where it is going.



DESIGN





“There is a huge resurgence in this city,” says designer Timothy Boylan. “In recent history Buffalo has emerged as a very desirable place to relocate. Or in the case of returning Buffalo natives, a wonderful place to come back home to. Only a handful of cities have such a huge influx of major architecture and not since Buffalo’s heyday in the early 1900’s has there been such growth here.” Boylan is very familiar with Buffalo’s growth. working together on-and-off for ten years and then marrying Sue-Jolie Rioux, the President and Founder of Tres Jolie Maison – one of Buffalo’s premier design firms - the Chicago-born Boylan joined the firm as Vice President. Today, the pair has both their professional and personal roots in the upstate New York city and count among their projects one of Buffalo’s most striking spaces – the corporate offices of Argyle Technology Group that call the Electrical Tower’s 14th floor home.

When asked to design the space for Argyle, Boylan and Rioux were tasked with more than merely creating office space. Explains Rioux, “We created a plan for this project with Argyle that would truly help restore the space to its original grace and splendor.” And splendor it has, from the casual elegance offered by the public spaces to the curved

conference room clad in painstakingly restored hardwood and artisanal mouldings, the offices of Argyle are part industrial, part mid-century modern, part glamorous gilded age – and entirely alluring.

“I wanted a place where elite software engineers could come and work happily and productively,” explains Robert Maefs of Argyle. “People seem to think engineers like working in dungeons and brutally fluorescent concrete coffins. In reality, like all humans, engineers yearn for pleasant surroundings”. Boylan agrees, adding that “in addition to creating a space that was calming, physically comfortable and spiritually nurturing; maintaining the building’s integrity was very high on Argyle’s priority list. We involved Argyle in seeing that priority through fruition. Through all the nitty gritty details, we encouraged them to put their thumbprint on this project”.

A warm, embracing aesthetic within a technologically-based corporation housed within a period building no doubt poses quite a challenge, but Rioux and Boylan enthusiastically rose to the task. “One of the first elements we chose for the space was the cork flooring,” says Rioux. The material,

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in addition to having visual appeal and warmth served the very practical purpose of being comfortable underfoot – an important element for Argyle’s plethora of engineers, many of whom choose to work at stand-up stations. “The cork was a major jumping off point for the project”, the material was soon joined by other ‘Earth elements’ like natural wood, stone and water all of which were woven into a design that is at once tech savvy and utterly approachable. “There’s a stunning water feature in the main area,” continues Rioux. “It was one of the ‘must haves’ Argyle had on their list and another natural element that helps bring the space together”. Low slung seating, sinuously curved chairs reminiscent of Eames, teak cubes serving as cocktail tables and vista-like views of Buffalo combined with original art bring even more depth – and balance – to the project.

The result is a space that, according to Maef, has been brought to life. “So much so that we’ve impressed visitors from places known for design opulence like Riyadh, Saudi Arabia”. And so it would seem that what is old is new again, and that Buffalo – for the technologically driven, aesthetically focused and lifestyle seeking alike – deserves a second look. ✈