

GREEN with Envy

A newly designed Manhattan chiropractic office gives 'alternative medicine' a healthy dose of sustainable design.

When New York City chiropractor Scott Duke was ready to build and design his new Manhattan office, his minimum requirement for the final product was a warm and open space that would both promote healing and reflect his practice's growing focus on alternative medicine. When longtime architect and designer Amie Gross was finished, Duke had a treatment center that went way beyond his expectations—and gave new meaning to the phrase "green with envy."

Duke hired Amie Gross and her team at Amie Gross Architects in New York to build and design his office in the 4,000 square feet of sweeping former warehouse space he purchased in Midtown Manhattan based on her innovative, environmentally friendly vision and openness to receiving his ideas and working with him. "Amie took the time to personally meet with me, and she was totally up front," says Duke, a specialist in sports injuries, spinal rehabilitation, post-surgical rehabilitation and nutrition.

RIGHT Movement was created in the design of Duke Chiropractic by having a focal point at the end of each space.

Shown here, the curved wall of the studio at the end of the hallway leads the eye in that direction.





Gross, who has had her firm for 20 years and has been a practicing architect and designer for nearly 30 years, has worked on various projects, including new building construction, a wide variety of interior design and pre-design consultation. An evolving interest and issue to Gross over the years has been sustainability and environmentally friendly design. Gross—who is a member of New York's Community Environmental Center, which provides energy, building performance and environmental services for residents in the New York metropolitan area—says she saw a great opportunity to use green materials in her design of Duke Chiropractic. "When I proposed the green idea, Dr. Duke was very responsive," she says. "It was in tune with his (alternative healing) philosophy."

Gross and her team—Patrick

Holder, Mark Jewell, Helen Choi and Peter Sanchez—chose a few green materials as the staples of the building and design, including low-VOC paints, wood and bamboo. Gross says she likes using Bamboo flooring because it is both environmentally friendly—the tree grows at a rate much faster than most other trees—and sustainable, as its tight grain doesn't absorb dirt and oil as easily as other wood flooring. The bamboo flooring installed at Duke Chiropractic was stained in a honey hue and used throughout most of the office's rooms, "to set the tone," Gross says. In the main areas and most of the other rooms, the walls were done in a yellow-gold paint containing shimmering tiny pieces of pearl, which complemented the floors.

Panelite—a versatile fiberglass-aluminum composite material—then was utilized in different

forms, including as ceiling and wall accents and lighting fixtures, to contrast the warm tone with a crisp, edgy element. The variety of design options Panelite presents as well as its ability to transmit light is what makes Gross a fan

of the translucent honeycomb panels, particularly in this case—one of the challenges to building and designing the treatment center was to brighten the space, which had nominal natural lighting. Gross used the Panelite to craft hanging lighting fixtures, wall treatments, ceiling accents and even sliding doors. Taking a minimum amount of materials and manipulating them in different ways is one of Gross' design philosophies. "It's very aesthetically pleasing," she says.

To create movement in the office—which includes a reception area, nurses' station, four therapy rooms, five treatment rooms, an exercise and therapy studio, two X-ray rooms, and rooms for acupuncture and massage—Gross installed a soothing fountain on the wall at the end of the curved reception desk in the waiting area. The fountain leads to the corridor, which has a curved wall at the end, where the studio is. The idea, Gross says, was to have a focal point at the end of each space. While the floors in the main areas and most of the rooms in the new treatment center were done in bamboo,



ABOVE Duke says the use of the fountain, which is in the office's reception area, "promotes an overall sense of well-being."

LEFT Gross installed blue Panelite doors to the therapy rooms. She says the blue helps to foster a soothing environment.

an environmentally friendly laminated vinyl tile was installed in the treatment rooms, and solid vinyl tile by the same company was used in the therapy rooms. To cultivate a soothing feel, Gross created blue Panelite doors for the therapy rooms, where patients usually are sent first to be prepared for treatment. Those rooms are small and simple in design, just big enough for a bed to fit comfortably. In the treatment rooms, which are more spacious to provide for more movement, Gross used different furniture and surfacing elements than in the rest of the treatment center. Half of the cabinet space in each treatment room consists of open solid wood shelves, while the remaining cabinets are closed and treated with rice paper.

Overall, Gross is "extremely pleased" with the Duke Chiropractic project, calling it her most comprehensive green design yet. In general, she believes that more homes and buildings are moving toward green design, a trend she says has been very exciting to watch. Another benefit Gross says she received from working on the Duke project was the chance to influence her client's business and environment. "We really enjoy working with entrepreneurs," she says. "They really have a vision of the kind of space they want, but don't have it yet. We are able to help them formalize their office and business."

For his part, Duke says that he continues to be thrilled with his new office—which is important, because he spends most of his life in the space. "There isn't a day that goes by that I'm not happy to come here, and my patients enjoy coming to the doctor's office," he says. "Now I feel that the office finally matches the quality of our practice." ●



ABOVE & LEFT Among the many Panelite creations used in the design were several lighting fixtures, like the one over the therapist station (above); as well as ceiling and wall treatments, such as these near the studio (shown left).

RIGHT The studio, used for both physical therapy sessions and exercise groups, is the biggest closed-in space in the office.

