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WHEN THE BREEZE BLOWS IN JUST THE right direction, you can still get a whiff of the industry that gave the meatpacking district its name. Banchet Flowers, an airy corner atelier by De-Spec, infuses the neighborhood with a more pleasant aroma—and a burst of color—while preserving a sense of history. The palette of grays and browns evokes →

At Banchet Flowers, customers can enjoy a view of the meatpacking district while seated at a steel counter.



From top: A 40-foot-long Corian sink extends behind a steel-clad enclosure housing an office and a restroom. Doubling as a display fixture, a custom mahogany service bar runs across the refinished cement floor; the table in the corner is by Jerome Abel Seguin. The Corian sink is installed perpendicular to a custom 8-foot-long resin sink set on a base of mahogany and steel.



the cobblestones and rusted metal of the defunct Gansevoort Market. The steel counter of the "flower bar" looks like the ones used to process meat. And there's even an industrial refrigeration room for storing not sides of beef but dahlias and calla lilies.

Like the neighborhood's transformation, Banchet Flowers's evolution is a quintessential New York story. The shop moved here shortly after 9/11, when owner Banchet Jaigla lost one of her biggest customers, Windows on the World. Three years later, a deli next door closed, and Jaigla seized the opportunity to annex 1,800 square feet. But because the building had just been designated a landmark, it took another two years to complete the expansion.

De-Spec principal Farnaz Mansuri's aim was to deconstruct the traditional notion of a flower shop. To create a streamlined presentation, she opened up the original 1,500 square feet by demolishing a mezzanine and partitions. Then she sandblasted the walls down to the brick.

She also brought production out into the open. "Why hide the flowers? It's amazing to watch Banchet at work," she explains—likening the experience to witnessing performance art. Mahogany storage units, some set on steel bases, enable staff to stash the tools of the trade once a design is perfected.

In a similar spirit of openness, three clear acrylic panels serve as windows into the massive steel refrigeration room in a rear corner. This transparency was meant to convey the exceptional quality of the exotic stems and finished arrangements. And it's →



From top: The steel enclosure marks the boundary between the original shop and the addition. Acrylic panels front the fluorescent light boxes. In a rear corner, clear acrylic panels offer a peek into the industrial refrigeration room.



been a hit. Neither Jaigla nor Mansuri anticipated the occasional requests to use the fridge for special events—from photo shoots to weddings, with rows of flowers as a backdrop.

Besides accommodating larger parties, the expansion allowed Mansuri to add the “flower bar,” where customers enjoy tea and sweets and, naturally, the blooms adorning the steel counter. “You can really hang out there now,” Mansuri says. “It’s not just a corner flower shop.” Behind the flower bar, white-lacquered shelves and cubes offer candles and vases for sale, a budding ancillary venture.

The old and new sides of the space are separated by a steel-clad volume containing an office and a restroom. Refinished cement flooring flows around this enclosure. Behind it, extending on either side, runs a 40-foot-long Corian sink used for flower preparation and dishwashing.

Across the entire storefront, glass doors and windows transmit a profusion of petals to the eyes of passersby. From inside, customers can observe a vibrant cityscape still very much in transition. Luxury high-rises are sprouting slightly off in the distance. Directly across the street will be the Whitney Museum of American Art’s satellite by Renzo Piano Building Workshop and the entrance to Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s High Line park.

—Jeannie Rosenfeld

40-FOOT SINK: EVANS & PAUL UNLIMITED CORP.; DUPONT IMATERIALI. SINK FITTINGS: AF SUPPLY. TABLE: JEROME ABEL SEGUIN. VASES: HENRY DEAN. TRACK LIGHTING: MONO RAIL. FLOOR REFINISHING: KAMWAY CONSTRUCTION. MILLWORK: MJA CLASS. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: VISTA ENGINEERING. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: PRAXIS IMAGO, WING KIN CONSULTING.