

# Art of Glass

A TriBeCa interior by Boschen Design, Architecture, emphasizes the aesthetic range and multiple applications of Bendheim's

In 1927, Margaret and Sem Bendheim established a business importing mouth-blown glass from Europe. In 1958, their son-in-law, who had taken over, moved from the original space, in the West Village, to a building farther downtown. During the 1980s, Bendheim developed a line of handblown glass specifically intended for such restoration projects as the White House and Monticello. Now the company has upgraded its New York presence at a TriBeCa loft. With three times the capacity of the previous showroom, downstairs in the same building Bendheim has occupied for 44 years, the 1,000-square-foot space displays thousands of types of glass. Product comes in sheets as big as doors or as small as 8 by 16 inches.

Credit for these improvements goes to Richard Boschen of Boschen Design, Architecture. Boschen saw the job as a chance to demonstrate the aesthetic and



functional range of Bendheim's architectural glass, giving designers and developers a playful hands-on experience. A stupendous 8,000 pounds of glass are presented on three sets of 15 sliding steel racks, all hanging from boomerang-shape tracks. (The tracks are suspended via open web joists a few feet from the ceiling, so its handsome pressed tin remains visible.) Racks are positioned to be viewed both from the center of the showroom, looking toward its south-facing windows, or from the showroom's perimeter, looking toward

*Above: A southern exposure illuminates samples of architectural glass in sliding steel racks, while a sophisticated, nearly invisible lighting system provides precise controls.*

*Left: A steel accordion door divides the showroom into twin meeting spaces.*

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Each rack contains from one to 24 modular samples Velcro'd into metal frames, allowing clients to remove pieces and experiment with them in various contexts: in the backsplash of a cabinet, wall-mounted, or inserted into a tray that projects different types of fiber-optic light: halogen, fluorescent, incandescent. "Glass is a very tactile product," says senior vice president Donald Jayson as he pulls a whorled sample from its frame.

The showroom has also become a forum where clients and Bendheim can brainstorm together. "We do our own research and development. Designers use us as a think tank," says Jayson, who now runs the third-generation business with brothers Steven and Robert. A steel accordion wall efficiently divides the space into two meeting areas, with the same 1,000-plus samples available to each. Of the three sets of sliding racks, the end sets hold identical merchandise, while the middle set is shared.

Another kind of wall, this one composed of Bendheim's innovative Linit U-Profile plank system demonstrates how glass can today reach heights previously unattainable in North America. A wall comprising a grid of glass sheets—etched, mirrored, or layered with rice paper, ginkgo leaves, plastic, or bulletproof material—glows in a Jolly Rancher rainbow. "It's like a candy store," says Boschen. "For architects."

-- Shonquis Moreno

*Left from top: Three sets of 15 racks each hang from boomerang-shape tracks suspended from the pressed-tin ceiling. Glass can be etched, mirrored, or layered with various options.*

*Above: A wall built of Bendheim's Linit U-Profile planks demonstrates their structural superiority.*