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Kratchman completes work on Cornell Univ. study center

Work has been completed and seminars are now underway at the architecturally redesigned and renovated former factory loft that is now the new New York City study center for the Cornell University College of Architecture, Art and Planning at 50 West 17th Street in Manhattan.

The announcement was made jointly today by Steven Kratchman, founder and CEO of Steven Kratchman Architect, P.C., the NYC-based architecture firm of record for the renovation, and Mohsen Mostafavi, the Dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Planning at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

"We were honored to be selected as architects for the famed Cornell University College of Architecture and to have the internationally respected architect Mohsen Mostafavi as our client," Kratchman said. "Dean Mostafavi made it clear to us what his vision was for this second-floor, former factory loft space. We have taken great care in creatively making those concepts come to life as a rough but intelligent loft space that is informal yet flexible and practical. Our goal was to make this the best possible New York City study and learning center for his College's students of art, architecture and city and regional planning."

"We are extremely pleased with and proud of our new New York City space at 50 West 17th Street," Dean Mostafavi said. "This center is a home for our new Cornell program in New York, which makes the City a living laboratory for our students and also gives them direct exposure to many of the world's leading practitioners in art, architecture and urban planning. This program in New York is a sibling to our *Cornell in Rome* program, and our *Cornell Abroad* program of study worldwide, which bring together artistic, cultural and architectural experiences along with a more complete sense of global citizenship, for our students." Professors are now using the space for spring study visits. It will house Cornell's seasonal 2006 summer program in NYC and will be fully functional by fall.



Photo by Elizabeth Sanfelippo

The newly renovated study center at Cornell's College of Art, Architecture and Planning.

The new Cornell University center in NYC occupies the entire second floor of 50 West 17th Street in a 4,000 s/f loft space that had once been used as a factory. Architect Kratchman removed a number of walls and partitions, and gutted and opened the space to create a large, open atelier area capable of holding dozens of movable study tables.

They constructed an enclosed classroom with a capacity of up to 30 seats, and a corner alcove and pin-up space for individual project study plus two small faculty offices with built-ins for books and supplies. They also designed separate art-sink and kitchen/coffee areas, two modern bathrooms, including one that is handicapped-accessible, numerous lockers and storage areas, and a dedicated model-building room that is enclosed and properly vented for safety with a fume hood.

To ensure totally modular flexibility of desk placement and space usage

without the "spaghetti mess" of wires, cords and cables, Kratchman helped Cornell equip the space with its own Wi-Fi system for wireless internet access throughout. Instead of a traditional grid of outlets on the floor on the perimeter poles or pillars, Kratchman installed an electrical access system with 12 spring-loaded, overhead, pull-down electrical boxes spaced throughout the studio loft area, each of whose cables rewind into a ceiling mounted receptacle when not in use. In this project, modernization was an essential element, as was maintaining an aesthetic simplicity.

"Most of the original factory floor was salvaged and refinished. A modern air conditioning system was installed. And, then, the entire space, including all duct work, was painted photo white to create a largely open white shell with a natural wood floor, as envisioned by Mohsen Mostafavi for his students," explained Kratchman.