

# Reverent Redo

*Henriksen/Butler Design Group transforms the historic B'Nai Israel Temple into a workplace worthy of worship.*

BY CHRISTIE MARCY PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS SWAN



Henriksen/Butler's focus on the collaborative workspace is clear in this meeting area, located just past the reception area.

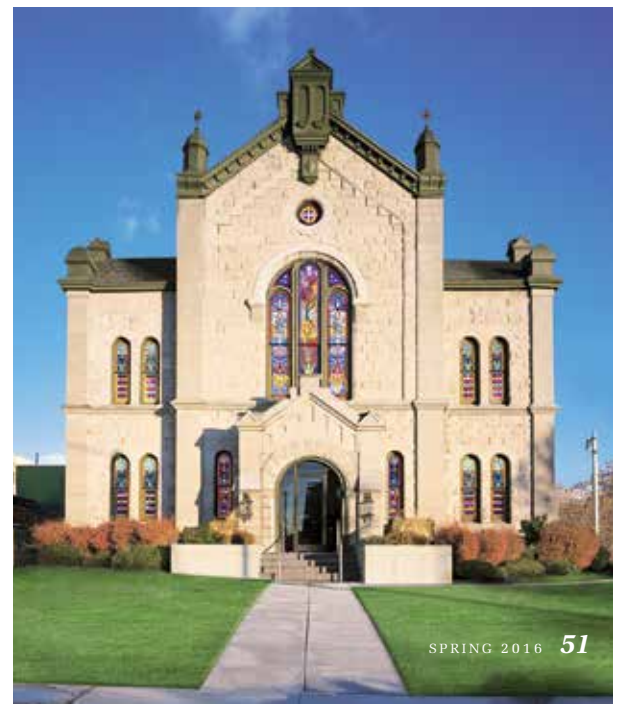
**OPPOSITE:** This meeting space boasts an inviting residential feel.

**BELOW:** The exterior celebrates the former synagogue's past.

**T**owering stained glass windows and an ornate dome are historic touchstones to the history of the B'Nai Israel Temple, which now functions as Henriksen/Butler Design Group's Salt Lake headquarters. Tucked back from the street in downtown Salt Lake City, the temple was built in 1890. It first served as home to the state's oldest Jewish congregation and, later, to clusters of the city's homeless who set up camp inside its walls.

"According to the history, there were homeless people living here, but they never destroyed the windows," says David Colling, CEO of Henriksen/Butler. "They started a fire once, but for some reason they had some reverence for the windows."

Philip Meyer, a German architect whose family were retailers in Salt Lake, traveled to Utah and modeled the building after Berlin's Fasanenstrasse synagogue. The Berlin synagogue was first devastated by Nazis during the infamous 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom and later flattened during Allied bombings. Meyer died in a concentration camp, according to Andrea Barlow, vice president of marketing for Henriksen/Butler. "I think about him and the gift he left us in Salt Lake often," she says. "We're so far across the world and it's a different time now, but it's still just such a gift."



# ARCHITECTURE



Glass partitions foster light-filled, open interiors while helping shape private workspaces.

The Jewish congregation moved its synagogue into a bigger space in the early 1970s, and the old building was put on the real estate market. But it struggled to find a new identity. “It became a couple of restaurants that both failed. The second one was a Mexican restaurant that blacked out the stained glass windows, had a fake tile roof and a fountain in the center of the room,” laughs Colling. “Who has that kind of vision?”

When Henriksen/Butler’s founders came across the once-again abandoned building in 1987, they had a different kind of vision. It took about a year of renovation before they moved their business

operations into the space. But the work wasn’t completed.

“As we progressed through the ‘90s I realized we did a pretty good job renovating the first time,” says Colling, a 24-year veteran of the company “but I felt like it needed a massive renovation.”

The resulting work was not without its troubles. Case in point, contractors discovered that the molding that holds the front stained glass window was inadequate and a big wind storm could send the entire 20-foot window shattering down. The window had to be removed and its framing rebuilt at a substantial cost. But it was a small price to preserve what Colling

## HOT SEATS

FORM AND FUNCTION INSPIRE ULTRA STYLISH CHAIRS FOR HOME OR OFFICE



**Spun Chair**  
Magis for Herman Miller



**Scissor Chair**  
Geiger



**Chair One**  
Magis for Herman Miller



**Nelson Coconut lounge Chair**  
Herman Miller

and the firm see as the soul of the building.

“We did—and we do—have ultimate respect for the windows,” he says. “When we do design work, we purposefully think about the fabrics and materials that would go up near the windows. Always respect the windows. We never want to distract from the beauty of the windows.”

The renovations continue. “In our business we have to stay current—like the way that a Chevy dealer has to have the new model on the floor,” Colling explains. So last fall the design team put the space through what Colling calls a “major refresh.” The team added meeting space, but not your father’s conference rooms. Instead, the company converted areas from conference rooms into cozy spaces with comfortable sofas, throw pillows, smart boards and other creative tools.

“The juxtaposition of the historic 125-year-old synagogue against this contemporary interior is a fun thing for us,” he says. All of it occurred with a focus on—almost a reverence for—the integrity of the historic building. “A lot of us get used to it and take it for granted,” Colling says with a sly smile, “but I still think you come in and think to yourself, ‘I work in a pretty cool place.’” ■

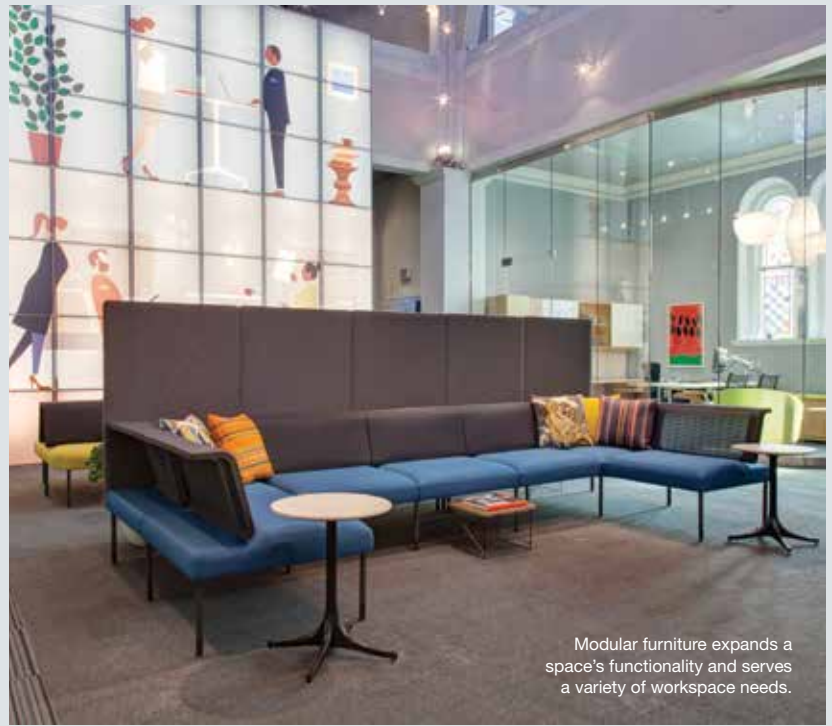


A more traditional workspace is livened with fun light fixtures and bright colors.



**Tuxedo lounge chair**  
Geiger

All chairs available through **Henriksen/Butler, SLC**



Modular furniture expands a space’s functionality and serves a variety of workspace needs.

## WORKING THE ROOM

DAVID COLLING BREAKS DOWN THE DESIGN OF TODAY’S WORKSPACE



David Colling

David Colling says we are in the middle of a workspace revolution. Five years ago telecommuting was the buzzword. Working from home seemed like the ideal situation for both employers and employees.

But Colling says that employers have moved away from that early digital thinking to a knowledge-based economy where face-to-face collaboration is essential. “There’s this idea that when you bump into your colleagues, whether it’s on purpose or happenstance, you are exchanging information,” he says, “That kind of exchange and connection is becoming an important component as businesses try to grow and achieve.”

How can offcimates best creatively connect? By being in the same building for starters, and by tearing down the walls. “Gone are large private offices, and gone are the offices that run the perimeter and render the interior darker,” explains Colling. And those dreaded cubical walls that made working-stiff Dilbert’s world so oppressive are disappearing, too. The height of cubical walls is half what it used to be.

Studies have found that the typical workspace is empty about 60 percent of the time, Colling says, so companies like Henriksen/Butler are investing in more meeting spaces. “Different kinds of spaces for different kinds of work,” he explains. And office furniture aesthetics have taken on a residential look.

This change in direction began when company executives started seeing their facilities as a corporate asset. “There’s an understanding that space is a critical and strategic tool in running a business,” Colling says. “It creates a brand that they can share with their customers and suppliers, and it attracts great employees and those employees have a space that is really productive and functional.”

As for Henriksen/Butler’s space, Colling says the spaces his company creates are powerful recruitment tools. “I want to hire the greatest people,” he says, “And I want those people to come into our space and say ‘This is awesome. I want to work here.’”