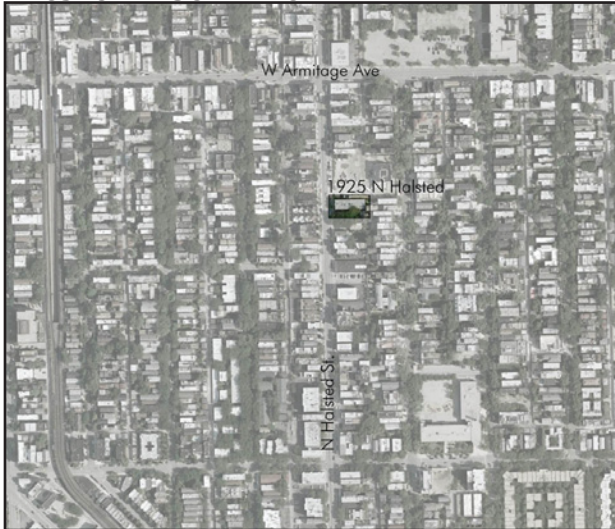


## Floating World Gallery

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION



The project, a gallery for Japanese contemporary prints, is located in one of Chicago's most vibrant neighborhoods, Lincoln Park. It is an area where residents can walk to a variety of shops, services and restaurants. The existing 8,000 square foot structure was built in the 1920's as a twine factory and was later converted into a single-family residence in the early 1990's. The original brick exterior walls remained but everything else had been drastically altered including the front facade. An eight-foot wide gangway separated the building from its residential neighbor to the south. The hope was to reuse as much of the original structure as possible, in order to preserve the almost zero-lot line footprint.

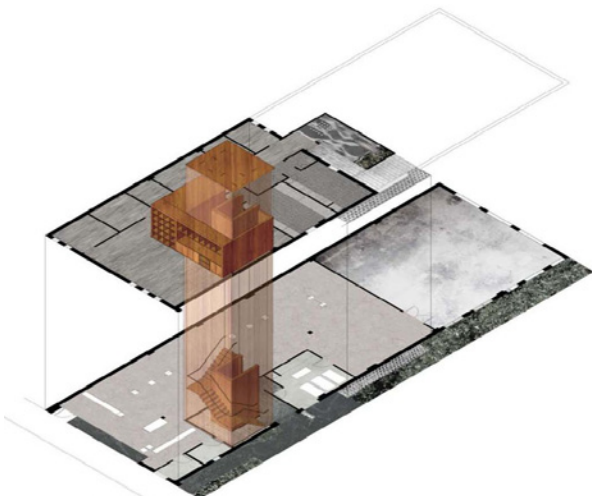
Initially, the owners requested that the gallery be

located on the second level to allow for a commercial tenant to occupy the ground floor. They did not need nor want much foot traffic. The program included the gallery, library, art preparation, and offices. The challenge for this project was to create a calm, quiet space, filled with light, to view artwork amidst a dense and bustling urban area. It was decided early on that movement would be guided and revealed by the defining element of light. The garden along the south side of the building begins



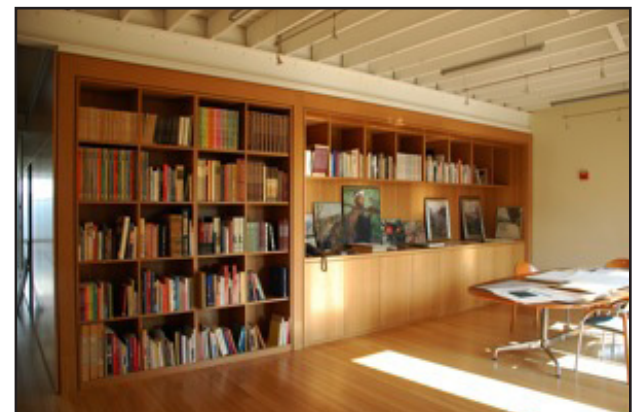
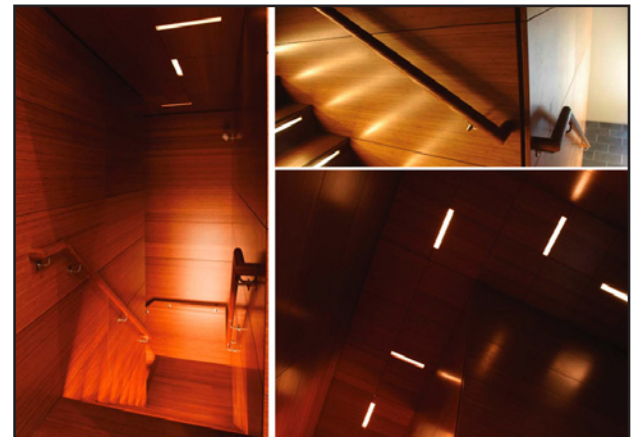
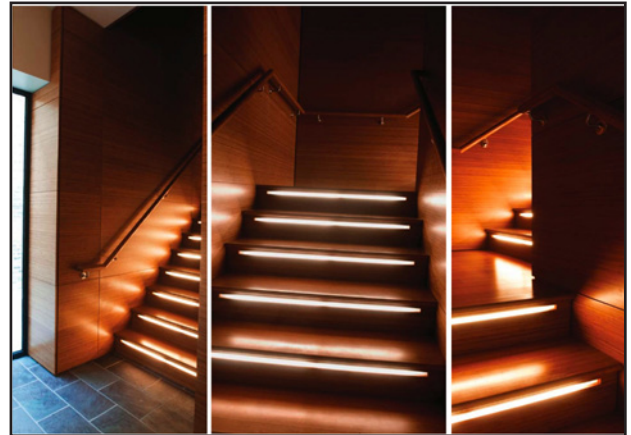
the entry sequence to the gallery. A substantial gate announcing the gallery name – Floating World Gallery – pivots to open onto the slate path leading to the entrance.

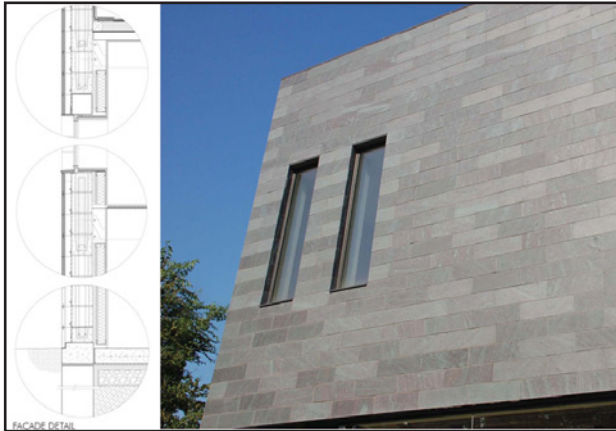
Upon arrival to the gallery’s front door, the exterior



slate pavers continue through to the interior foyer where shoes are removed before ascending the all bamboo stairwell.

The stair marks the journey from the outside world





into the “floating world” with light emanating from small slots within the stair risers, punctuated only by a few glowing lights peeking from above. This carefully detailed millwork capsule transports the participant into the cerebral world of the gallery.

On the second floor, the linear circulation with its north facing skylights links the gallery to the roof garden where one views a serene and contemplative space. Given the tight urban lot, the use of filtered natural light allows for the small gallery to seem more expansive.

Materials sensitive to the sophisticated neighborhood’s character augment the exterior’s original common brick. The building’s front facade is a highly detailed but minimal plane of natural cleft slate from Vermont, which helps to integrate and distinguish the building. The slate extends beyond the confines of the existing brick south wall to emphasize its planar quality. The storefront allows for an expansive view into the ground floor while the small jeweler’s window adjacent to the gate leading into the side garden is the only indication of the gallery above.

After the second floor was completed, the owners decided to occupy the ground floor and expand the gallery’s offerings. What was initially conceived of as speculative commercial space was now to be an extension of the gallery. A new challenge arose – how to provide two galleries and differentiate them – one public gallery for the neighborhood and a private gallery for the cognoscenti. Exposed brick walls and ceiling set a completely different tone to the 14-foot high and 40-foot wide ground floor space, allowing for much larger art to be displayed. In keeping with the unrefined quality of the space, the installation pieces were designed using common brick, plywood and the surplus slate from the façade. As one enters the front door off of the busy street, screens of bamboo obscure the view of the loft like gallery, creating a pause before viewing the artwork.

Although unique in material and in stark contrast to its neighbors, the building comfortably fits into its surroundings.

