

DESIGN CONCEPT | Cohen Carnaggio Reynolds

The re-design of Baker Donelson's Birmingham office was inspired by its distinctive civic legacy. The people of this office have played an important role in Birmingham's history, most significantly by reshaping laws and government during the Civil Rights Movement. Their enduring support of individual rights, and continued participation in the Birmingham community and beyond, was the inspiration for the design. Layered on top of that was the industrial history of Birmingham itself.

Red Mountain is the primary geological identity of Birmingham, and its stone, iron ore and organic richness form the basic color palette for the design's composition. Alabama marble is a main element of the design, along with concrete formed from local aggregates, raw lacquered steel, and natural stained woods.

The colors of white and red adorn the office's main reception and gathering hall, and symbolize the heart of the Firm. White walls serve as unwritten blank pages, an innocence of sorts, and the red is a symbolic nod to the red iron ore of the city's foundation as well as a reminder of the city's industrial and societal struggles. This symbolism is repeated in the center of the floor, which is anchored by cornerstones of white Alabama marble that are separated by an exposed wall of red glass. Running throughout the floor are exposed concrete ceilings and columns, along with raw steel and exposed connectors. A large steel gear system stands near the reception area and moves a screen wall back and forth. These are additional representations of Birmingham's industrial past.

Raw steel doors flank the elevator lobbies of all four floors. On the office's main floor, these doors break through the lobby's Alabama marble and into a bright reception area, meant to symbolize efforts of cutting through the past to a better future. White glass walls enhance the gathering hall, and a translucent ring of glass forms a halo to encircle the core and diffuse natural light from the windows.

Meeting rooms surround the heart of the floor and run along the building's perimeter. The rooms are intentionally different from each other, and are designed to celebrate our individuality while reminding us that we are all in this together. Each meeting room also bears the name of an Alabama river. Rivers are a common symbol of creative power, and are used here to evoke a philosophical journey representing a fundamental change in attitude. Inside the Alabama meeting room, which is the floor's second-largest conference area, a deep red carpet is shaped like the state itself. Located outside the meeting rooms are shelves of stained wood and lacquered steel. This shelving holds the office's legal library and signifies growth, knowledge, insight, and understanding.

The swirling floor pattern in the gathering hall characterizes the fluid and evolving nature of the law. Composed from thousands of pieces of marble and concrete, the floor itself symbolizes the diverse beliefs, ideas, and relationships that form the collective whole of the law.