



GORDAN & ASSOCIATES
LIVE | WORK TRANSFORMATION



LIVE | WORK

“Once a new technology rolls over you, if you’re not part of the steamroller, you’re part of the road.” – Stewart Brand

At JSDA Inc, that statement rings true on every transformation project. Just ask Gordon & Associates (a 30-year-old African-American founded and owned accounting firm in Los Angeles). When we met, G & A was transitioning from Baby Boomer-to-Millennial next-generation ownership and looking for owned real estate to escape the corporate mid-rise office space and increasing rents. They searched for commercial real estate options for a year and along the way, the Millennial future-owner envisioned a more creative environment with flexible workspaces for his staff to work within.

Enter JSDA Inc

We were asked to consult during the real estate acquisition process. The mission was to create a live | work space, with industrial character and an African heritage-inspired concept. When the right space came on the market, inspiration hit hard. Its’ multiple levels, rooted by a central



vertical set of wooden stairs held in place by steel stringers - the strength of which felt like the trunk of the mighty tree - inspired a 'treehouse concept', with a loft positioned at the landing of an upper story, branching off, just as a tree might grow a new branch.

It was clear that the existing levels needed to be free from the dialect of architectural drawings and take on a new organic focus, one that would resemble nature itself. This was the interest of the current female owner and CEO and something that played directly into the J S D A wheelhouse since the concept of nurturing culture is at the very core of our craft. The idea of nurturing the G&A staff was derived directly from the treehouse.

Transformation Overview from the Bottom Up

Instead of garage level, we introduced the idea of 'cargo', indicating below. The garage level with its concrete floor, limited lighting and glass contributed to the shadowy character of the cargo space.

Next, the primary level of the space was imagined as the Main Deck, Bridge and Nest, the latter 'team space', a gathering place for eating, or conferencing, or both. The 'Main Deck' offers an extended lounge area with a large monitor for additional soft seating teaming space, or group zoom calls. It has a relaxing vibe, grounded with a coffee table that is composed of solid wood pieces, interlocked together, allowing people to have that tactile sense of nature. The 'Main Deck' space exists under the canopy of a tall weeping ficus tree which recalls the iconic tree canopy of the Serengeti.

The 'Branch' serves as workspaces for two of the accounting professionals. As the only nearly private space, it is enclosed in glass and overlooks the 'Bridge' and 'Main Deck'. Further up the staircase is the upper level, the 'Birdhouse', so named as it implies the top of the tree or canopy, where wildlife hangs out. In this case, it's the space that is most familiar to workstations which are sit/stand desks, non-specific to any employee. Anyone can sit anywhere in the space; if you're working on your phone, you could hang out at the 'Main Deck' or 'Bridge' ... or, hook up with others at the 'Nest' for a quick team meeting. Or if you need a CPU and two monitors to do detailed work, you grab one of the sit/stands at the 'Birdhouse'. There, you'll find the scanning station and two requisite printers, as well as the shredding bin for recycled paper. The 'Birdhouse' level offers a get-away outdoor balcony, complete with cacti, aloe and jade.

The 'Backyard'

The ground-level patio space was gravel floored and enclosed by plastic fencing. A highly functional wellness center, it now offers a contemplative bench surrounded by climbing ivy shoots that will, within a few months create a wall of greenery. A small ceramic fountain with an African textile motif, gurgles a bit of ambient sound to outpace the freeway noise.

Flora, Fauna and Art

All evoke an African, tropical or desert origin, as appropriate for the light levels in the space. In collaboration with JSDA, landscaper Graciela Gonzales composed the plant-scape using native African plants to formulate a textural contrast to the industrial and glass dominated



architectural envelope. The fresh and playful bright green colors, indigenous textures and patterns evoke the energy and diversity of the essence of Gordon & Associates, as they honor nature and exhibit their commitment to a carbon neutral environment. Art in the space is recycled materials in sculptural collage by Loring Cornelius, a nationally known African-American artist. His work incorporates found materials, including the copper penny which attracted the CPA owner in her early years.

Perfectly Imperfect

We embraced the concept of wabi-sabi, giving honor to the irregularity. The American walnut 'Bridge' table, an island standing height table (for spatial variety) had a flaw - a sizeable rectangular hole had been cut into its center. We embraced it and completed it with a stainless steel flush inset. The pattern of the etching on the steel further connotes the industrial idiom. We mounted second use pendants at the 'Bridge' and the 'Nest', giving direct-down dimmable LED lighting to the tables there. And when some of the ceramic cups and plates (upgrades to the previous practice of single use paper) arrived broken, we again used wabi-sabi and repaired them for use, highlighting their broken/repaired status.

The Build-Out

We decided against formal construction methods in favor of limited scope additions, various levels of repair/refinish, custom millwork and interior landscaping to complete the overall design solution - all accomplished by fast-track methods/relationships existing between vendors and our experienced, well-networked design firm. The goal was a move-in mid-February given that it is tax season and the firm needed clarity of mind as April approached. The project was completed as requested: a rapid-delivery, design-on-demand process with completed construction and furniture installation within 30 days.

Rapidly created - a real dream space designed full of meaning and metaphor. It was an extraordinary effort to make the impossible possible. Non-exhaustive, but night and day, hour by hour coordination, shifting challenges, working with people ... It's what we do: Transformation.