



Photos by Robert Chase

After the renovation, the Fieger, Fieger, Kenney, Johnson & Giroux office complex now spans an entire city block.

# BLOCK Party

## Fieger complex 'mushrooms' in Southfield

BY JEANINE MATLOW

It is hard to believe that a workplace with a “wow” factor — home to Fieger, Fieger, Kenney, Johnson & Giroux — was once a modest house. Thanks to a \$20 million renovation, the 35,000-square-foot space now spans an entire block.

From the classic façade to the impressive interiors, there’s little doubt that a great deal of care went into the design, down to the last detail. The complex includes a mock courtroom, “state-of-the-art” television studio, waterfall, atrium, and much needed office space for what is now the largest plaintiffs’ firm in the state.

A pair of bronze lion statues that formerly guarded the French Embassy in Morocco sets the tone at the entrance to the sophisticated setting. Woven metal art and a soothing fountain greet visitors in the lobby, letting them know they’re in for a visual treat. Unique works of art line the endless hallways, such as a collection of miniature rugs that were custom-framed and hung in a series.

Diane DeCillis, owner of The Print Gallery in Southfield, has provided count-

less works of art and custom framing for the firm for close to 30 years. The shop owner says that Geoffrey Fieger likes to collect a series of something, or works by an artist he admires. He is also intrigued by specific subject matters, like law-related themes.

The art that lines the walls may be diverse but everything was done with the same impeccable taste.

“We commissioned three-dimensional wall installations that would complement

the decor in his office,” DeCillis says. “There is a lot of cherry and mahogany along with marble, which make a solid, timeless statement.”

DeCillis also was the source for custom canvas art made from photos of Fieger, such as a larger-than-life image of the attorney speaking into a microphone, which is perfectly suited for the media room. Photo collages of his many television appearances were turned into

*(continued on Page 30)*



*A waterfall cascades down a neatly landscaped rock wall in the office atrium.*

canvas art for the green room.

The Print Gallery covered an entire wall of the men's room in style with vintage New Yorker magazine covers from the '30s and '40s featuring subjects like law, sports and politics. They also acquired bronze sculptures by renowned sculptor James Muir for the common areas.

DeCillis was responsible for contacting the former owner of The Golden Mushroom for original memorabilia to fill the honorary "Mushroom Cellar" space, including plates, menus and culinary awards. The former restaurant in Southfield was a favorite of Geoffrey's father, Bernard. Now the scenery has been meticulously restored with the original bar, restaurant booths, and more.

A long hallway is lined with a series of large lithographs by Esteban Chavez featuring Detroit's top 10 buildings, including the Guardian, Penobscot, Book Cadillac, Renaissance Center, and others.

"Art makes a statement," DeCillis says. "It's important not to have everything look generic or sterile. Personal art can provide clients and visitors with added



*Bronze lion statues, sporting a French historical flavor, flank the entrance to the office complex.*



*The original bar from The Golden Mushroom restaurant, complete with autographs from former patrons of note, serves as a fashionable retreat for the firm's employees and visiting clients come meal time.*

dimension to the person or company they are working with. It can also educate and inform and be a catalyst for conversation."

Detroit photographer Holly Flory captures the provocative side of Fieger's persona with a series of photographs that hang in the firm's hallways. One of the images features Fieger wearing what appears to be the American flag as a blindfold, while another shows the outspoken attorney with police tape over his mouth.

A limited edition print from the movie "To Kill a Mockingbird" is one of the many pieces that pay tribute to the law.

Fieger is not afraid to poke fun at himself by displaying a prominent grouping of artists' renderings for newspaper cartoons that feature the renowned Michigan attorney. The black and white images make a powerful presentation when placed together for more impact.

Fieger, who dabbled

in theater before becoming an attorney, is an avid fan of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. He is said to have the largest collection of festival posters in the state of Michigan. The posters of the many plays come to life in the building's stairwells, a place where one does not often see art.

Another hallway is home to a collection of vintage posters.

Everything is intentional, he says.

"It's essential for me. It's my home really," Fieger says. "When a client or associate comes into my building, it's like coming into my home."

The attorney is proud to have an inviting and stimulating environment where he and his colleagues can go to work each day.

"It makes me feel good and I hope it

makes them feel good too," he says.

The atmosphere is not only aesthetically pleasing, but comforting as well. Special perks include barbecues and 15-minute massages on Friday.

The three-story structure features a brand new office for Fieger, but he is careful to preserve the past while building the future.

"I tried to maintain little icons," he says, referring to the fact that he maintains his former workspace along with the original office of his father. "My office is intact and his office is intact."

The homage to The Golden Mushroom provides great memories, he says.

References to Clarence Darrow and Gerry Spence speak to the great respect and admiration that Fieger has for both attorneys.

"He was a very modern thinking lawyer," Fieger says of Darrow. "He made so many great arguments."

*(continued on Page 33)*

*"When a client or associate comes into my building,  
it's like coming into my home."*

**GEOFFREY FIEGER**



*The irrepresible Geoffrey Fieger strikes a pose next to some of the newspaper cartoons that adorn his firm's headquarters on West 10 Mile Road in Southfield.*

Fieger is hard-pressed to pick a favorite spot in his new surroundings because he clearly appreciates them all, including the TV studio, The Golden Mushroom restaurant re-creation, outdoor eating area, mock trial rooms, and more. He also finds the fish tank in his office to be very soothing to his senses.

For the past 14 years, Jeff Cope has been the project manager for the building, a job that involves everything from extensive renovations to day-to-day maintenance and repairs. Cope was there when they went from a simple house to 8,600 square feet back in 1995. And he is proud to be a part of everything it took to get to the 35,000-square-foot masterpiece that houses the firm today. The building has won several beautification awards from the city of Southfield. One of Cope's favorite moments was seeing The Golden Mushroom space completed.

"That was a highlight to see it come to life," he says.

Next up is an outdoor space for employees.

Cope says Fieger is not only involved in the selection of art, but also the two



*A mock courtroom is among the many features in the firm's elongated 35,000-square-foot presence in the Oakland County city.*

get together for what they call "hammer time" where they hang the various works on the walls.

As to how Fieger selects all of the art that is on display, "I just like things intuitively," he says.

Fieger credits architect Nicholas Pastor of Nicholas Pastor & Associates

in Birmingham with the vision for the cohesive space. Fieger has purchased close to a dozen homes on the same block since his father first occupied the space more than four decades ago, and the long-held location means the world to him.

"The fact that I stayed here is a good thing," he says. **M**