

**The Winter Garden**  
222 Berkeley Street  
Boston, Massachusetts

### *A Springtime Oasis in the Heart of Boston's Back Bay*

#### **Project Background**

222 Berkeley Street is an office and retail building located in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood. Designed by Robert A.M. Stern, the 22-story building was completed in 1991. Inside at the street level beyond reception, a marble staircase leads to a mezzanine level, where a 5,100-square-foot, five-story, glass-enclosed atrium is illuminated by skylights. But the vast atrium space was not a place that fostered either relaxation or connection. With its marble and glass, the atrium echoed so much that it discouraged conversation, and the reverberating splashing of several fountains only added to acoustical issues. In addition, because of the scale of the atrium and its lack of focal points, a sense of arrival was lacking.

#### **The Design**

Today's business leaders know that the total experience of working at a company is key to attracting and retaining the best talent. They also know that spontaneous conversations, as well as social/cultural gatherings, inspire both innovation and company cohesion. The design brief for Elkus Manfredi Architects was to reinvent the atrium to make it an inviting gathering place that offers opportunities for tenants, colleagues, and visitors to meet, rest, recharge, and establish a sense of community. In addition, the owner wanted the space to be a venue for a variety of more formal gatherings, such as wine tastings, meetings, and cultural events.

Inspired by Stern's strong neoclassical aesthetic, Elkus Manfredi's designers preserved the majesty of the space while transforming it into a contemporary garden retreat, a tropical oasis alive with springtime. They repainted the dark interior walls using a palette taken from the existing marble of white, creamy pinks, and soft greens. Acoustics were improved with a series of eight lifelike olive trees in planters, drapery in the niches, and upholstered furniture, including high-backed seating that brings a cozy sense of enclosure and has a residential rather than a commercial sensibility.

But the unrivaled star of the space is the carpet. Working with an impossible deadline that allowed only one strike-off, Elkus Manfredi's designers partnered with Brinton's Carpets to achieve their vision, working closely to coordinate delivery dates as the design was in process. The result was a stunning, multi-colored, one-of-a-kind design - a 20' X 50, no-repeat, hand-knotted Axminster wool carpet that is an explosion of bright, unexpected colors in olive green, violet, coral orange, pink, and soft yellow interspersed throughout a pattern of abstract foliage. Elevating the atrium with its vibrancy and warmth, the carpet is a contemporary work of art that transforms the space, creating a lush all-season garden destination not only for the building, but for the extended cultural community of Boston's Back Bay.

Elkus Manfredi Architects  
Elizabeth Lowrey, Principal and Director of Interior Architecture  
Project Manager: Jane Bae  
Client: Oxford Properties Group  
Carpet Design: Oren Sherman  
Photographer: Eric Laignel  
Dancers: Florimond Lemort and Maria Baranova, Boston Ballet