



FORD FOUNDATION HISTORIC RENOVATION NEW YORK, N.Y.

Meticulous detail and new glazing for a landmark building.

By: Amanda Gibney Weko

CASE STUDY

AGI Glazier

Beletz Brothers Glass Co., Inc.
Philadelphia, Pa. | New York, N.Y.

Team

Owner: Ford Foundation
GC/CM: Henegan Construction
Architect: Gensler
Engineer: Jaros, Baum & Bolles

Scope

Architectural glass and metal for
a 420,000-square-foot historic
renovation of a 1967 headquarters

Completion

Fall 2018



Ford Foundation entry (all photos © Garrett Rowland, courtesy of Gensler, unless noted)

INTRODUCTION

Highly publicized and award-winning, the historic renovation of the Ford Foundation headquarters at 320 East 43rd Street in New York revitalized the 1967 landmark designed by Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo. Led by architecture firm Gensler with construction management by Henegan Construction, the 18-month project was completed in Fall 2018. Code-mandated improvements necessitated the work, which encompassed asbestos abatement, HVAC replacement, elevator upgrades, and a comprehensive interior renovation with updates for modern accessibility and energy efficiency.

Restoration of the glass roof plus repairs and restoration of the exterior Corten steel framing, glazing, doors, and windows comprised a significant portion of the work, as did the restoration and replication of brass light fixtures, handrails, and other details. AGI member glazing contractor Beletz Brothers Glass Co., Inc. performed the architectural glass and metal scope of work.

“Every aspect of the work was meticulous,” explained Beletz Bros. Owner Stephen Beletz. “The Ford Foundation is truly a unique building deserving New York City landmark status.”

ROOF RESTORATION

One of the building’s character-defining features is its sawtooth glass roof and skylight system, which spans the full footprint of the building above a full-height atrium. Beletz Bros. performed a complete restoration including removal, cleaning, and replacement of all gaskets, pressure plates, beauty caps, frames, and glass. LU252 glazier Andrew Mattie, who led the job, was fortunate to have original drawings for reference.

LOGGIA GLASS

Adjacent to the atrium, a garden loggia features a 40-foot-long glass wall with sloped glass that ties back to the structure above. Beletz Bros. re-glazed the sloped area and undertook the task of

renovating the glass wall into a fully power-operated fire/smoke-purge window system. Each opening includes a subframe, window, and power operator finished to match the existing Corten steel. According to Beletz, the section was boarded up when the project began, to protect it from work taking place above. "When we first looked at the job, we couldn't see it," he explained. "But everything was rotted." A structural engineer prepared all new drawings and Beletz did the careful reconstruction to ensure the new work matches the original appearance.

BRASS & CORTEN DOORS

The original building design featured dozens of brass doors in single and double sets. The renovation design preserved as many as possible. These were removed and brought to the Beletz Bros. shop where new hardware (either refurbished or new machined to match the original) was installed. Doors were stripped, polished, and re-lacquered, with minor welding as needed before being reinstalled. In situations where the old doors no longer met code, Beletz Bros. installed new custom center hung and balance doors that were fabricated to match existing framing. Hand artistry finishing techniques were used to replicate different shades of patina.

Beletz Bros. also fabricated new automated exterior doors of Corten steel to match the exterior framing. These were hand-finished to match the exterior patina and powder-coated to match the interior.

INTERIOR GLASS & METAL

Over nine building floors, Beletz Bros. installed new mirror-polished stainless steel, refurbished existing brass handrails, and fabricated new lighted handrails to match originals. Glass in the kitchen servery area was back-painted to match original brass light fixtures. "There are three different kinds of brass in the building," Beletz described. "Some have a little more gold, some a little less. We went through many rounds of samples to be sure the colors matched perfectly."

HONORS

The new Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice achieved LEED Platinum certification, in part for its extensive building envelope improvements. For its attention to preservation detail, the project has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Architect's Newspaper 2019 Best of Design Award for Commercial Building Renovation, the New York Landmarks Conservancy 2019 Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award, and the Society of American Registered Architects 2019 SARA NY Award for Historic Preservation & Restoration.

Clockwise: interior atrium showing roof/skylight system; garden loggia with new purge windows and lighted brass handrails; interior brass doors; the Beletz Bros. team setting glass from below; welding Corten

