

Sanctuary of Solidarity

A historic church transforms into a modern haven for women leaders.

12/29/2023 by [Misty Milioto](https://www.bizneworleans.com/author/misty-milioto/) (<https://www.bizneworleans.com/author/misty-milioto/>), Photos by [Sara Essex Bradley](https://www.bizneworleans.com/author/sara-bradley/) (<https://www.bizneworleans.com/author/sara-bradley/>)



A co-working space dedicated to supporting local professional women, Salon22 occupies the main area of what was once a Mid-City church.

Salon22 2401 Bienville Street // New Orleans

Salon22Nola.com (<http://Salon22Nola.com>) // [@Salon22Nola](https://www.instagram.com/Salon22Nola)

Looking to create a membership-based professional women's club to connect leaders and change-makers, Christa Talbott, Fay Kimbrell, Fresh Johnson and Mariska Morse founded Salon22 in September 2021. Since then, the club has grown to more than 150 members.

"[This] is primarily a club providing opportunities for women to develop community and grow as individuals, as we believe personal development and large-scale change are connected," said Talbott, Salon22's co-founder and program director. "To meet this goal, we provide an inviting atmosphere to support women who are launching their dreams and contributing to societal change. We offer our membership a dedicated community co-working space for professional women who work remotely and are eager to make connections."

Salon22 soon found it needed facilities to accommodate its growing numbers. That's when the founders turned to New Orleans architecture firm NANO to create the perfect space.

As luck would have it, NANO had rezoned a historic Mid-City church at 2407 Bienville St. in 2016 before buying the property. Led by project manager Sam LeBlanc, the team started renovating the church in 2021, beginning with remediation of the roof above the first-floor space.



NANO redesigned the historic church, which was built in 1944 and designed by Ferdinand Lucien Rousseve (the first Black architect licensed in Louisiana), to offer space to multiple tenants, including Salon22 .

Salon22 recently moved into the church's main areas, while NANO now occupies space that it created by using the original opening of the organ area and extending the second-floor area.

"No walls were removed during the project [because they] were ideal in their layout, but we did add doors and openings to further balance the space and provide access for a multi-tenant facility," said Terri Dreyer, owner and founding partner at NANO.

During the redesign, NANO kept a number of original elements intact, including the bell tower, the stages on the first and second floor, all of the classroom walls, the original exterior brick, the oak stairs, the metal columns and all of the stunning stained-glass windows, which were restored.

To create the perfect environs for its club, Salon22 reached out to Nomita Joshi-Gupta, principal of Spruce and Nomita Joshi Interior Design. Joshi-Gupta applied what she calls international modernism design as a way to incorporate elements from many cultures and countries.

"We [used] colors, textures, shapes and forms that were modern yet welcoming and practical," she said. "Us women love to do everything with flair, and we brought that into the space."

Joshi-Gupta redesigned the sanctuary to become a multipurpose space. It now features six distinct pods (less formal spaces outfitted with tables and chairs for solo work, collaborations and meetings), two central open-seating areas and a stage seating area (with two large meeting areas that can be converted to host guest speakers, panels and talks).



(Left) Salon22 features six distinct working areas, each with their own personalities. (Right) Salon22's carefully designed space harnesses feminine power, providing an environment where women can connect, collaborate, work and create.

“We wanted the space to have an upscale hotel/residential feel,” Joshi-Gupta said. “We designed each pod to have different furnishings so that the space would not look institutional. We loved mixing colors, shapes and textures to achieve this comfortable harmony.”

There are also three office spaces along the left side of the building, along with two private conference rooms, two bathrooms and a dry-bar area with seating along a modular wall structure. Meanwhile, a 700-square-foot breakroom and fully equipped galley kitchen (attached to the sanctuary building and with its own entrance) features a serene blue/green palette and church pews that have been reconfigured to create seating areas.

In keeping with Salon22's concept of embracing the power of women, Joshi-Gupta made every design choice — from the colors and furniture to the lighting and function of spaces — based on how women like to work and gather. Each space has its own design personality. For example, one of the private meeting rooms is blue with wallpaper, and a mid-century table and chairs, while the other private meeting room features marble tables and plush chairs.

Both the pods and meeting spaces have custom-designed privacy screens that can be moved to make multiple space configurations. They also have an acoustic screen for noise control.

“One of the most interesting features was the use of a modular paper wall system that divides the sanctuary from the other offices,” Joshi-Gupta said. “Upon entering, you see a reception desk with the paper wall behind the desk, and, on the other side, the paper wall houses the dry bar and seating components. The wall is fully collapsible and portable and has acoustic qualities.”

A coworking space, event venue and professional social club, Salon22's carefully designed space harnesses feminine power, providing an environment where women can connect, collaborate, work and create.

QUICK LOOK

Number of years in operation

2 years

Style of architecture

Late Gothic Revival

Square footage

12,660

Number of Employees

4

Persons in Charge

Christa Talbott and Fay Kimbrell

Architecture

NANO

Interior Décor

Nomita Joshi Interior Design

Initial Brand Development

Minmoo

Art and furnishings

Nomita Joshi Interior Design

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