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**New York’s renovated Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library features cohesive, timeless appearance and sustainable design with Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling systems**

***Mecanoo and Beyer Blinder Belle designed The New York Public Library’s completely renovated Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL). The design team selected Rockfon Alaska® acoustic stone wool ceiling panels to create a cohesive, timeless appearance, while providing best-level sound absorption and sustainability benefits.***

Chicago (Jan. 2024) – The New York Public Library (NYPL) recently reopened its completely renovated, 180,000-square-foot, eight-story Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library ([SNFL](https://www.nypl.org/locations/snfl)). The state-of-the-art central circulating library is located at 455 Fifth Avenue on the site of the former Mid-Manhattan Library and serves the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Providing a cohesive, timeless appearance and optimized acoustical comfort throughout SNFL’s distinctive programmatic areas, the design team selected [Rockfon Alaska®](https://www.rockfon.com/products/rockfon-alaska/) acoustic stone wool ceiling panels. In addition to providing best-level sound-absorption, the ceiling panels’ bright white surface maximizes daylighting throughout the library’s interior. The natural basalt and recycled content, and inherent high-performance properties of Rockfon’s stone wool material also supports the project’s sustainability goals.

The full-scale renovation project was funded through a generous gift from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and support from the City. Known as a “library whisperer,” Francine Houben, founding partner and creative director with Dutch firm Mecanoo, served as the project’s lead architect. For seven years, she worked closely on SNFL’s design with Elizabeth Leber, AIA, LEED® AP, managing partner with architect-of-record, New York City-based Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners. Together, they created capacity for 400,000 books and materials in general and specialized library collections plus reading and study rooms, an adult learning center and multipurpose rooms.

“A central circulating library must empower the community it serves. Here, the community is all New Yorkers,” said Houben. “Super-charged with energy, diversity and hope, America’s greatest city deserves the best that a central circulating library can be. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library is a powerhouse of wisdom, and its street presence brings drama and magic to Manhattan.”

The all-new SNFL offers a beautiful, light-filled, inspiring central circulating library with a classic, timeless, functional design complemented by the smooth, modern aesthetics of Rockfon’s acoustic stone wool ceiling panels. Metro Interiors Distributors Corp. supplied approximately 60,000 square feet of Rockfon Alaska 2-by-4-foot panels with fully concealed edges and Chicago Metallic® 1200 15/16-inch suspension grid.

Jacobson & Co. Inc. installed Rockfon ceiling systems above all the book stacks in the general collections, business library collection, adult learning center, young adult room and children’s reading room. Rockfon Alaska ceiling panels also were installed in the library’s multipurpose and conference rooms, offices, study spaces, training rooms, computer labs, recording studio suites, the book sorting area, connecting corridors and common areas including the lobby and the “Long Room.”

Inspired by the Long Room in Ireland’s Trinity College library, SNFL’s five-story Long Room is considered the most significant architectural element of the transformed library. It fronts a dramatic, 42-foot-high atrium capped with decorative graphics by artist Hayal Pozanti. This innovative solution spans both horizontally and vertically to present the library’s hundreds of thousands of books and other materials. Strategically positioned windows enhance the light-filled space with exterior views of a pocket park and vibrant streetscape.

“We took the bones of the building, filled the building with light, created a ‘Long Room’ to showcase all the books of the library with a beautiful artwork on the ceiling,” said Houben. “My dream is I hope that all New Yorkers will love it.”

She continued, “By creating the iconic ‘Long Room’ for the circulating collection, dedicated spaces for children and teens, an adult learning center and business library, plus a rooftop destination for multipurpose use, the building will inspire serendipity and the discovery of all functions of a modern library.”

***Supporting Sustainable Goals***

According to NYPL, it has been designed and constructed to meet LEED green building guidelines, and is in the process of obtaining certification. The architectural design and construction team for SNFL focused on selecting building materials with low volatile organic compounds (VOCs), products made from recycled materials, and products that contributed toward the building’s energy conservation goals.

Contributing to these sustainable considerations, Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling panels met the project’s selection criteria for material ingredients, performance and durability. Stone wool is made from abundant basalt stone and recycled content. It naturally resists fire, water, moisture and does not support harmful microorganisms, like mold and bacteria.

LEED recognizes the benefits of low-emitting products to healthy indoor air quality. Demonstrating their advantage, Rockfon Alaska ceiling panels are UL® GREENGUARD® Gold low-VOC certified for both office and educational environments, such as housed with the SNFL building. Rockfon further supports the design team’s selection and specification with documentation including a UL Certified Environmental Product Declaration (EPD), a Health Product Declaration (HPD) and a Declare Label.

Acoustic comfort also is a recognized benefit by LEED as well as by librarians, readers and other visitors. Throughout SNFL, Rockfon Alaska acoustic stone wool ceiling panels deliver best-level sound absorption with a Noise Reduction Coefficient of 0.90 NRC. The high-performance acoustic ceiling tile helps optimize interior comfort for the library’s different spaces and functionality. In reading and study rooms, the ceiling panels absorb sound for quiet, concentration. In the learning center and multipurpose space, they reduce noise levels and reverberation time, helping improve speech intelligibility.

Just as acoustical comfort is key in a library setting, so is visual comfort, especially when it contributes to energy efficiency. Rockfon Alaska stone wool ceiling panels’ bright white surface reflects 86 percent of light. This allows the SNFL to maximize daylight and energy-efficient lighting throughout the building’s interior. The diffused illumination reduces glare on screens and monitors, promoting library patron’s comfort, concentration and productivity. Reducing glare also helps reduce eye strain and associated health issues, improves readability and by extension, enhances comprehension.

***Honoring History, Focusing on the Future***

“This building has stood the test of time for over 100 years,” said Beyer Blinder Belle’s Leber. “This building had not seen a renovation since 1978; that’s over 40 years. We wanted to make sure that the life we gave to SNFL was going to last that long, if not longer. This is a durable and a forever renovation, and it was designed with that in mind.”

Supporting the library’s long-term, cost-effective operational efficiency, Rockfon Alaska ceiling panels provide a simple-to-maintain solution. The ceiling tiles are easily removed to access the plenum for future renovations and upgrades to SNFL’s technology, HVAC, security or other systems. Reducing labor and material costs with resilient material choices respect the library’s bottom line, and the community’s investment in it.

Rockfon Alaska acoustic stone wool ceiling panels support improved aesthetics, acoustic comfort and sustainability throughout the newly renovated Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library. It is NYPL’s largest and busiest circulating library with more than 1.7 million visits a year and an annual circulation of 2 million items. The renovation is the largest public-private rehabilitation in NYPL’s history, creating a lending library that serves as both a model and catalyst for a rejuvenated library system.

“The Library has never been more heavily used or more deeply needed. Making the right decisions about how to renovate and integrate our Midtown locations is part of our larger endeavor to strengthen and prepare The New York Public Library system for the future,” said The New York Public Library’s president, Anthony (Tony) W. Marx.

Honoring its design excellence, SNFL and its team have received many accolades:

* The Municipal Art Society of New York, MASterworks Award, Best Adaptive Reuse 2021
* *The Architect’s Newspaper*, Best of Design Awards, Institutional - Libraries 2021
* International Design Awards, Silver in Architecture/Institutional, 2021
* *Metal Construction News*, Project Excellence Award, Overall Grand Winner, 2021
* Society of American Registered Architects, New York Council, Design Awards, Special Award for Innovation in Civic Architecture, 2022
* American Library Association and International Interior Design Association, Library Interior Design Award, Public Libraries - over 30,000 square feet category, 2022
* Structural Engineers Association of New York, Excellence in Structural Engineering Awards, Winner Renovation/Retrofit/Rehabilitation, 2022
* The Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design, International Architecture Awards, Library Award, 2022
* International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers, Finalist, Design Distinction Award for Humanitarian Design, 2022

“This building has dedicated spaces for the adult education center, for the business library; spaces for children, for teenagers; and also event spaces. It’s all about providing access not only to education, not only to learning, but also to free public space where people can actually come together and engage,” described Stavros Niarchos Foundation’s co-president, Andreas Dracopoulos.

He concluded, “This library is exactly what New York needs right now: a truly open and public place accessible to all, where people of all ages and backgrounds can experience wonder, grow in their understanding of the world, and launch on new trajectories that enrich life for all of us. Thriving public space is space that people can truly make their own, where everyone belongs, and SNFL is beautifully designed to encourage just that. As New Yorkers and global citizens, we could not be prouder and more excited for all SNFL has to offer the city in the years to come.”

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***The New York Public Library, The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL);
455 5th Ave., New York City, NY 10016; https://www.nypl.org/spotlight/snfl***

* Owner: The New York Public Library; New York; https://www.nypl.org
* Lead architect: Mecanoo; Delft, The Netherlands; https://www.mecanoo.nl
* Architect of record: Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners; New York; https://www.beyerblinderbelle.com
* Construction manager: Tishman Construction Corporation; New York; https://www.tishman.com
* Ceiling – installing contractor: Jacobson & Co., Inc.; Elizabeth, NJ; https://jacobsoncompany.com
* Ceiling – distributor: Metro Interiors Distributors Corp.; Hauppauge, NY; https://metrointerior.com
* Ceiling – manufacturer: Rockfon; Chicago; https://www.Rockfon.com
* Photographer: Max Touhey, Touhey Photography

***About Rockfon***

*Rockfon is part of ROCKWOOL Group and is offering advanced acoustic ceilings and wall solutions to create beautiful, comfortable spaces.*

*At ROCKWOOL Group, we are committed to enriching the lives of everyone who experiences our product solutions. Our expertise is perfectly suited to tackle many of today’s biggest sustainability and development challenges, from energy consumption and noise pollution to fire resilience, water scarcity and flooding. Our range of products reflects the diversity of the world’s needs, while supporting our stakeholders in reducing their own carbon footprint.*

*Stone wool is a versatile material and forms the basis of all our businesses. With approximately 12,000 passionate colleagues in 40 countries, we are one of the world leaders in stone wool solutions, from building insulation to acoustic ceilings, external cladding systems to horticultural solutions, engineered fibers for industrial use to insulation for the process industry, and marine and offshore.*

*For more information, please visit* [*https://www.rockfon.com*](https://www.rockfon.com)*.*

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