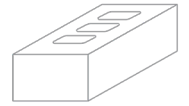
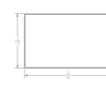
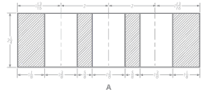
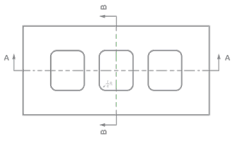


BRICK BLUEPRINT+



The Avant

1148 Frankford Avenue

OOMBRA ARCHITECTS

Philadelphia, PA

Belgian Grey & Silver City

Wirecut Texture, Emporium+ Series
by Glen-Gery

OOMBRA is a small, creative firm of design professionals, focused on creating thoughtful, unique and socially responsible environments using skills forged through past experiences that are built on meaningful and lasting human relationships.

Through diverse expertise, OOMBRA creates spaces meant to evoke a conversation, an emotion and an experience. OOMBRA takes a client's objectives and communicates them through compelling designs. They believe successful architecture and placemaking is realized when the complexity of the problem is simplified through the design process, resulting in a clear expression of purpose, material, light, shadow and form. OOMBRA strives to create a strong sense of community and a responsibly built world that enhances the human experience.



Q: What was your inspiration for The Avant at 1148 Frankford Avenue?

A: This project sits in a parking lot used for the historic bank on the corner of Girard and Frankford Avenue. The Kensington National Bank, designed by renowned Philadelphia Architect Frank Furness, served as a significant source of inspiration. The bank's intricate details and bold architectural features provided a rich tapestry from which to draw creative ideas. However, the challenge lay in creating a new structure that paid homage to the historic building without overshadowing it. Our goal was to design a building that not only complements the architectural legacy of the Kensington National Bank but also introduces contemporary elements that speak to the evolving character of the neighborhood. We wanted our building to be special but also sit as a background building that allowed the Kensington National Bank (KNB) to really shine. Balancing these elements required a thoughtful approach to design, material selection, and the integration of modern functionalities, ensuring the new structure harmonizes with its historic surroundings while standing out as a landmark in its own right.

Q: Why did you choose brick for this project? How important is material to your approach?

A: At OOMBRA, we love using brick for its historical relevance, ease of use, and the knowledge of building by local trades. Additionally, brick has a relatively known cost and experienced less fluctuation during the pandemic. Brick was chosen for its enduring appeal, historical significance, and versatility. In architecture, material selection is crucial as it influences the aesthetic, durability, and contextual relevance of the building. For The Avant, brick helps bridge the gap between the historic bank and the new structure, ensuring a cohesive visual narrative.

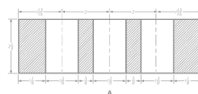
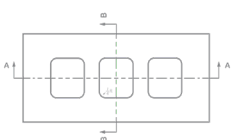
Q: What features of brick are most important to you? What made you choose Glen-Gery?

A: The key features of brick that stand out include its durability, aesthetic flexibility, and low maintenance. Glen-Gery was chosen for their high-quality products, wide range of colors and textures, and their commitment to sustainability, which aligns with OOMBRA's values.



Q: Why did you select Glen-Gery's Belgian Grey Wirecut and Silver City Wirecut products?

A: We selected Glen-Gery's Belgian Grey Wirecut and Silver City Wirecut bricks because their colors closely matched our vision for creating a harmonious blend with the historic surroundings while introducing modern design elements. The blend consisted of 25% Belgian Grey and 75% Silver City. The brick allowed us to use sympathetic material colors that worked with the historic bank and also fit within the context of the neighborhood and Philadelphia. We used a standard modular-sized brick in two different colors. For the brick patterning, we rotated a standard brick 90 degrees and projected it 1/2" to give texture and shadows to the facade.



Q: What interested you most while designing The Avant in Philadelphia?

A: The most intriguing aspect of designing this project was the challenge of balancing respect for the historic architectural elements with the desire to create a contemporary and functional space. This duality required innovative design solutions and a deep appreciation for the site's historical context. Additionally, at OOMBRA, we have a wealth of experience in designing housing, making this project a particularly good fit for our expertise and interests.

Q: What made this design process different from others you have worked on?

A: This project was unique due to its strong historical context and the need to seamlessly integrate modern design elements without overshadowing the historic bank. Additionally, there were challenges in fitting a residential building on such a tight footprint where a typical 60' double-loaded corridor building would not fit. We had to be creative and used our "OOMBRA LT Studio ©" unit that allowed the building footprint to be reduced by 21' in width. This project was also a bit of a full circle moment for our firm, as we opened our first bank account for OOMBRA in this Wells Fargo Bank. Phase 2 of the project is currently under construction to add another 5 residential units to the second floor of the historic bank and a commercial space on the ground floor.

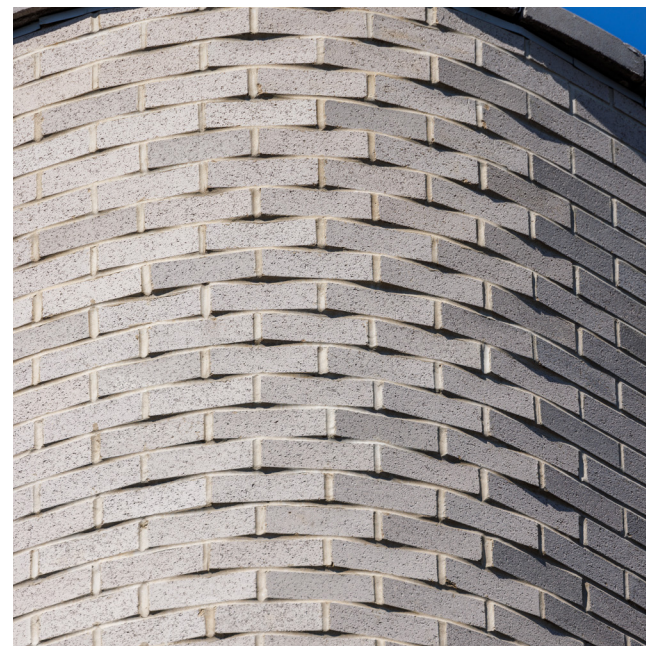


Q: What was the overall goal, or desired outcome, for this project? Why?

A: The overall goal for The Avant project was to create a design that both respects and complements the historic architecture of the Kensington National Bank. OOMBRA aimed to integrate modern elements with classic details to create a timeless piece that contributes to the neighborhood's architectural heritage while providing contemporary functionality. Another goal was to keep the project within budget, meet and exceed the client's expectations, and ensure the building ultimately met the needs of the end users.

Q: What is a typical timeline for a project of this scale?

A: A typical project of this scale takes about 8 months to design and a year to construct, but this took a little longer with the supply chain issues and construction cost increases that occurred during the pandemic. The building was completed in the Fall of 2023. It houses 60 apartments and a retail space, including the relocation of the Wells Fargo bank from the KNB building into the new building along the corner of Girard Avenue and Dunton Street. Moreover, the collaboration and commitment from our project team and the clients, Alterra/HK Partners, were instrumental in overcoming these challenges and achieving the project's goals.



Q: Has this project won any awards?

A: The Avant project won an AIA Philadelphia Honor Award in 2022 in the Unbuilt category, recognizing its innovative design and successful integration with the historic bank.

