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INTERIOR DESIGN

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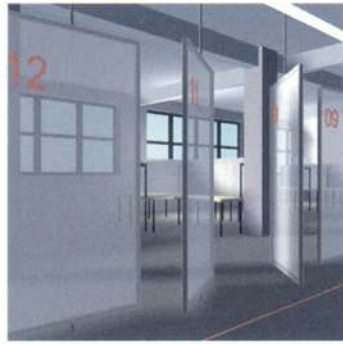
SPECIAL ISSUE:

Inside Fashion

Sheer Bliss

UT DEVELOPS A SMART, LUMINOUS, AND COST-EFFECTIVE OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE FACILITY FOR BLISSWORLD IN BROOKLYN.







IN THE GRITTY and newly fashionable Brooklyn neighborhood known as Dumbo (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge), a new facility has opened for Blissworld, the marketing, mail order, and product distribution arm of the celebrated Bliss spa in Manhattan. Designed by Clarissa Richardson and Heidar Sadeki of UT, the 25,000-sq.-ft. space, formerly a Federal Express filing warehouse, was reorganized to accommodate new programs—storage for skin care products, offices and work stations, a laboratory, meeting areas, and services—and to provide flexibility for rapid expansion and change as the young company grows.

Occupying a half floor of a former manufacturing building, the space gathers light along three sides. Sadeki and Richardson found the existing envelope in excellent condition, except for a messy concrete floor that they covered (everywhere but in the warehouse areas) with new, rubberized epoxy concrete flooring. Air conditioning, lighting, and other building systems were already in place, a situation that helped UT bring in the project for a very modest \$10 per sq. ft.

The primary design challenges of the project were to bring light through the offices, to allow for a sense of spatial openness, and to make allowances for future expansion while still organizing programmatic zones, making efficient work areas, and providing a strong visual identity. “We needed →



Previous spread: A special pivoting panel—constructed from solid, 1½-in.-thick acrylic mounted on seven ball bearings—separates the reception and telemarketing areas. UT designed the telemarketing work stations with acrylic, folded sheets of steel, and a swinging tray for computer monitors. Above are computer renderings for custom furnishings.

Opposite, above: Computer renderings show UT’s work stations, which are made from plumbing fixtures, acrylic, Homasote, and butcher block.

Opposite, below: The acrylic sheets are a standard, 4-ft. by 8-ft. dimension. Sadeki explains: “To save money, we chose to go with a system where there was little or no cutting involved.”

Right, above: Closed panels separate work from circulation areas while still allowing for the passage of light and a sense of spatial connection.

Right, below: The conference room, painted a pale blue, appears as a solid object interrupting the perspectival expanse of sheer planes. The warehouse wall is made of corrugated, sanded plastic sheets with an intermediate layer of bubble wrap for sound insulation.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW BORDWIN

to bring a sense of loose hierarchy to the space," says Sadeki, "as well as to create a relationship between the warehouse and the offices where the connection was facilitated, but restrained."

UT located two large warehouse areas around the building's core, leaving the perimeter, with its light and views, for the offices. One warehouse serves BlissOut, the company's mail-order division of bath and beauty products, while the other houses a sister distribution company called Remede. Each space has access to a freight elevator and other necessary services, and was fitted with sturdy metal shelving to organize a large inventory of skin care products. UT wrapped the two warehouses with an innovative skin made of sanded, corrugated plastic sheeting with an intermediate layer of bubble wrap. The bubble wrap provides sound insulation while the sanded plastic has the effect of diffusing light across the space.

An L-shaped circulation corridor/gallery loosely separates warehouses from work stations and offices. The gallery forms a reception area at its

hinge and leads, along its shorter side, to administrative offices and a telemarketing area; on its nearly 200-ft.-long side, it opens to the publicity and art departments as well as the general and executive offices. The inner edge of the gallery is formed by the translucent warehouse walls while the outer edge is lined with translucent, pivoting panels that allow for multiple spatial configurations. When open, the entire area can be used for parties, photo shoots, and fashion shows; when closed, the work spaces regain a degree of privacy and separation. The 32 panels can be demounted and repositioned should the company's need for office space increase. Each panel carries a large numeral, which serves as a kind of addressing system, as well as an index of the space's linear expanse, an effect which UT emphasized by using strong colors for the rooms and focal partitions at the ends of the gallery.

UT provided BlissOut with multiple meeting spaces. An enclosed conference room, as well as a laboratory for developing prototypes, occupy the space between the two large warehouses, and the galleries allow for informal gatherings. A second conference space and lounge are partially enclosed at the end of the corridor, and an extra large private office at the end can be used for small meetings. The primary conference room is painted a soft blue; against the azure and baby pink walls of the lounge at the end of the gallery, it appears as an anomalous solid object in a field of light, permeable planes.

Nearly all of the furniture was designed and built specifically for this project, with an emphasis on economy, interchangeability, and easy access to equipment. Telemarketing stations, made of acrylic and steel, hold swinging trays for computer monitors. Office work stations are organized as four-unit clusters that plug into pre-established wiring that runs along the columns. Work stations were designed with plumbing hardware, laminated Homasote, and acrylic with butcher block tops stained white and sealed. Each unit is independent so that one can be removed while the others remain, and privacy at seated height is maintained without high walls that would disrupt the flow of light.

UT's work for Bliss continues. Currently they are developing a new lobby and retail area for the SoHo spa, a new spa facility for East 57th Street, and a new Bliss retail space in London. In addition to Sadeki and Richardson, the design team included Guillermo Garita, Ralph Habbel, Keiko Kobayashi, Gordon Tsai, and Innes Yates. —Henry Urbach



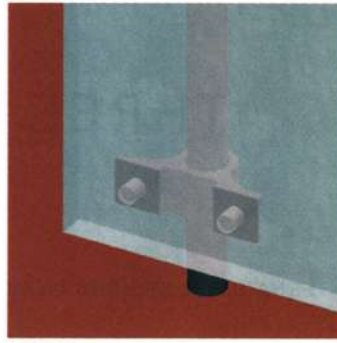
Left, above: The conference room maintains a visual link to the laboratory and warehouse beyond the translucent walls.

Left, below: UT's work stations are made with acrylic partitions and Homasote that provide both privacy and pin-up surfaces.

Right, below: Blissworld's executive offices open to stunning views of the Manhattan Bridge and the East River.

POLYCARBONATE WALLS: POLY GAL. ACRYLIC SHEETING: AIN PLASTICS. VINYL LETTERING: THE ALPHABET SHOP. FURNITURE FABRICATION: MAGAAN CONSTRUCTION CO. METAL FABRICATION: SHADI + COMPANY. RECEPTION DESK AND CONSOLE: LIGNE ROSET. WINDOW COVERINGS: MECO SHADES. EXECUTIVE CHAIR: HERMAN MILLER. BOWLS: 20TH CENTURY MODERN/INDUSTRIAL FURNISHINGS. DESK LAMPS: MCMAS TER CARR. CONTRACTORS: SUNRISE CONSTRUCTION CORP.; MAGAAN CONSTRUCTION CO.

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designers | *in this issue* Continued



Collins



Clima



Richardson



Sadeki

David Collins (Vivienne Westwood, page 190) opened his design business in 1985, today employing a staff of 14 architects, interiors experts, product and graphic designers. Educated at Bolton Street School in Dublin and trained via freelance work at Irish and British firms, Collins handles varied project categories with emphasis on restaurants, retail stores, and exhibitions. Completed jobs include Gary Rhodes Restaurant in Edinburgh, Eats (sandwich/coffee chain) in London, Langtons (bar/club) in Dublin, and "a Gothic ruin rebuilt as a private residence" in Kent. Russian projects include a hotel and restaurants in St. Petersburg. Participating in most assignments during the past three years has been project designer **Alessandro Clima**, a former student at the Accademia delle Arti e Nuove Tecnologie in Rome. David Collins Architecture and Design, 6/7 Chelsea Wharf, Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ, England, (44) 171-349-5900.

Tony Duquette (Various Projects, page 194) was born in Los Angeles; was educated at the Chouinard Art Institute in L.A.; freelanced for famous Hollywood designers such as Adrian, William Haines, James Pendleton, and Sir Charles and Lady (Elsie de Wolfe) Mendl; and designed sets and wardrobes for films, operas and ballets. He married the late Elizabeth Johnstone in 1949. Together, they embarked on varied joint enterprises, probably best known among them the non-profit Anthony and Elizabeth Duquette Foundation of the Living Arts. Nearly 30 years ago he was joined by **Hutton Wilkinson**, who, when in the seventh grade, resolved to work with the master upon seeing his picture in the *Los Angeles Times*' magazine wearing cardinals' clothes and sitting, in his studio, on a throne from Chapultepec Palac, Mexico. Already susceptible—both his father and grandfather were well-known Hollywood architects—Wilkinson had to wait till he reached age 18 when indeed he did join Duquette. Today he owns half the enterprise, use of the name, and about 5,000 archival designs running the gamut from lighting to jewelry. Tony Duquette, P.O. Box 69858, West Hollywood, CA 90069, (323) 874-7760.

Clarissa Richardson and **Heidar Sadeki** (Bliss Headquarters, page 202) established **UT** in 1998. With a focus on retail and commercial projects, UT strives to consolidate all areas of visual and spatial design, combining architectural, graphic, furniture, and product design. In addition to architectural design, the SoHo-based office has expanded its operations to offer brand development and visual identity consulting. Projects in progress include a retail space for Bliss Spa in SoHo, a Bliss Spa on East 57th Street, and a Bliss retail store in London. Richardson studied architecture at Princeton University and the Bartlett School of Architecture in London. Sadeki studied film at SUNY Purchase and architecture at Princeton University. Their website can be found at www.utarchitecture.com. UT, 578 Broadway, Suite 506, New York, NY 10011, (212) 966-8815.

