

# INTERIOR DESIGN

\$7.95

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House Rules  
Reinventing the Domestic Landscape



# Spa Plush

UT designs a state-of-the-art Bliss spa in the new LVMH tower on Manhattan's East 57th Street.

THE BLISS LEGEND is well known among New York fashionistas. Founder and executive director Marcia Kilgore had some skin problems, began experimenting with solutions and, in early 1991, opened a small office where she gave professional beauty treatments. Two years later came a three-room mini-spa and, as the press release explains, "her cult-like following...grew faster than you can say 'glycolic peel'." In 1996, Bliss was born. Recently joined with the global luxury goods giant LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) in a strategic partnership, Blissworld now comprises a catalogue with circulation of over one million, an expanded Soho location, and a plush new spa in the recently opened LVMH tower by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Christian de Portzamparc. Plans are currently in the works for spas in London and San Francisco, as well as a new midtown Manhattan "nail bar."

The New York design firm of UT, a partnership of Clarissa Richardson and Heidar Sadeki, began working with Bliss on the company's corporate headquarters and warehouse in Brooklyn (*Interior Design*, April '99). Since then, UT and Bliss have forged a fertile, ongoing collaboration. According to Kilgore, "We have a bit of a wacko twist on spas, and UT's design sensibility suits us perfectly. Their work is modern and smart, but never loses its sense of humor."

UT's most recent projects for Bliss include the renovation of the Soho spa's lobby and the total design of the 57th Street location. For all the Bliss projects, Richardson and Sadeki have worked to develop an intelligent spatial language that can be adapted to different contexts and budgets. Its major elements include a dynamic approach to spatial planning, tectonic clarity, and a fresh, inventive take on the use of materials and finishes. →

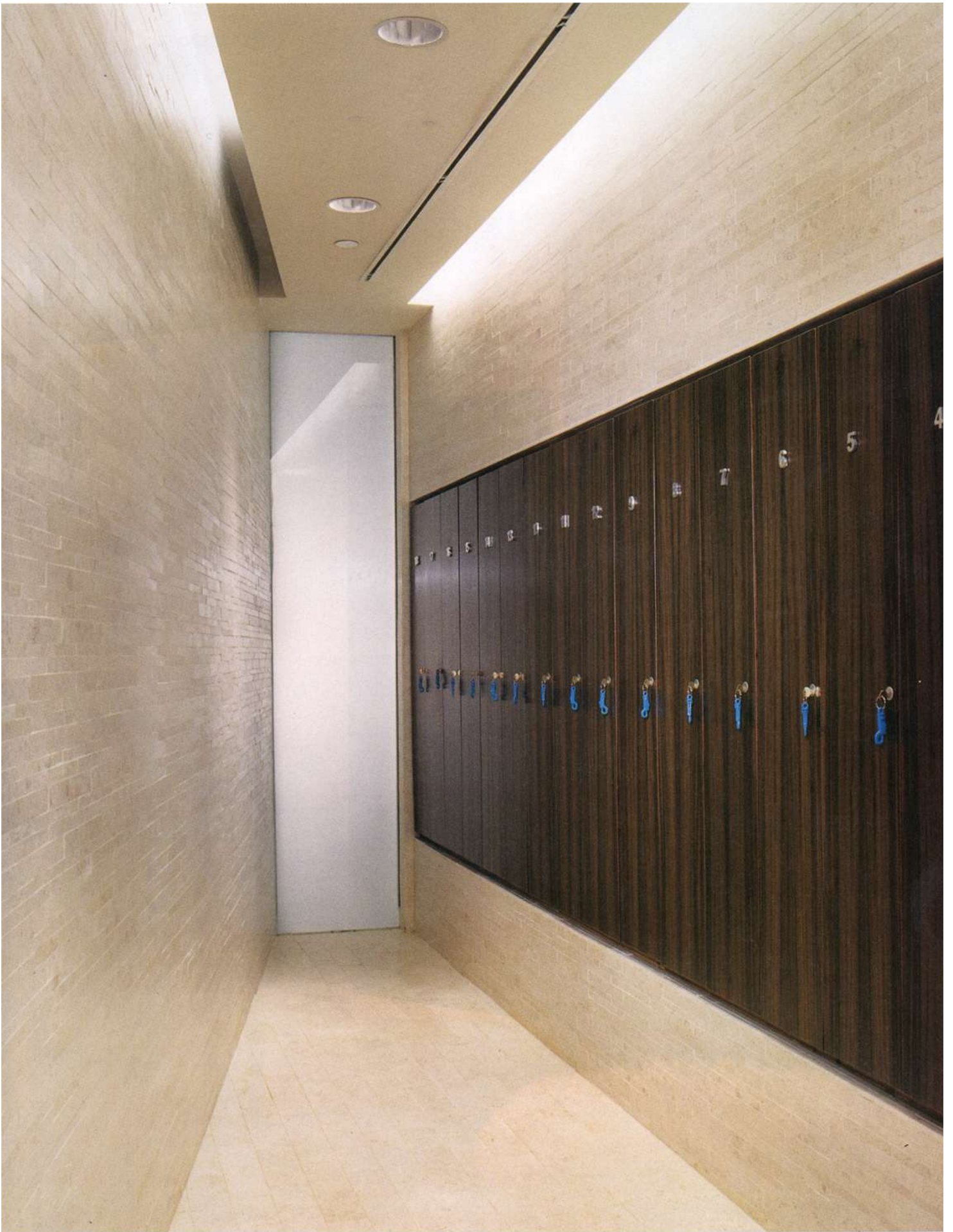
*Above: The elevator lobby of Bliss 57 sets the luxurious yet funky tone. UT designed the signage as suspended letters on steel cables. Beyond the reception desk, which is made of St. Croix limestone and lacquered wood, is the custom display shelving. UT also designed the dyed Mongolian lamb benches.*

*Opposite: The lounge door is finished in Australian walnut. Walls and banquettes are upholstered in Ultrasuede. The floor is pickled oak.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW BORDWIN







The 57th Street project posed a number of planning challenges. The 5,000-sq.-ft. space had to accommodate a range of programmatic elements, and all plumbing had to be set behind the central column line. UT developed a clear sequence of movement through the spa while providing undeniable spatial interest in tight confines. Service and office areas are at the back, separated from treatment rooms by a generous reception and product display area. Behind the desk is the changing room (unlike Bliss Soho, the uptown spa serves women only) with showers and sauna. Clients pass directly from the locker area into a comfortable lounge and, from there, into one of eight multi-treatment rooms. Large enough to accommodate several technicians at once, the rooms allow for maximum grooming in minimum time. There is also a “wet” treatment room outfitted with a multi-directional Vichy shower and finished in glass tile.

UT used pickled white oak flooring in the reception area, and poured rubber flooring—normally used for indoor basketball courts—in the treatment rooms and corridors. The rubber surface is durable, a bit springy, and *très sportif*. Changing room doors were finished in rubber tile as well. The reception desk has a cantilevered, polished limestone top above a lacquered base that rests on a podium of cast concrete. In the very swish lounge, oversized banquette seating and some of the walls are upholstered in pale gray Ultrasuede. Stainless steel magazine racks, a cantilevered wenge buffet, and faux lizard ottomans add a further touch of chic.

Perhaps the most striking spatial move at the uptown Bliss is the wedge-shaped changing room. Treated as a kind of landscape, the corridor incorporates veiled views and irregular volumetric projections to establish scale and interest. Acid-etched glass panels offer a luminous, monochromatic presence while also revealing bodies and objects beyond in silhouette. From the corridor →

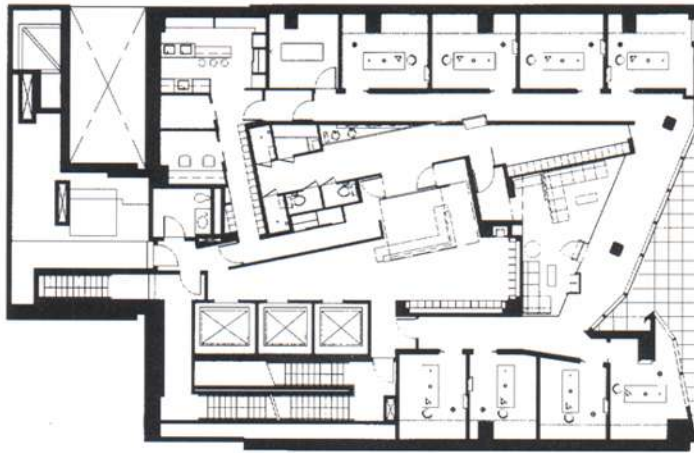


*Opposite: The lockers are set into walls finished in unpolished limestone. The wedge-shaped space terminates in a panel of translucent, acid-etched glass.*

*Top: UT designed the banquette, the molded fiberglass table, and the natural Mongolian lamb ottoman. The wenge buffet cantilevers out of a wall finished in rubber tile.*

*Above: The locker room offers a landscape of dynamic, interrelated elements set into a deep, perspectival space.*

TILE: STONE SOURCE. TILE INSTALLATION: LANZILOTTA. GLASS: BENDHEIM. LOCKER MILLWORK: HAIFA WOODWORKING CO. VANITY LIGHT: ARTEMIDE. BATHROOM ACCESSORIES: D-LINE. PLUMBING FIXTURES: KROIN.



BLISS 57TH STREET

0 10 20 40

outside the changing area, towel storage is visible as a translucent, back-lit cube, reorienting the client and interconnecting the various elements.

Downtown, the lobby of Bliss's Soho spa was renovated in only two weeks, with UT acting as construction manager. The 400-sq.-ft. space incorporates a modular product display system made of hand-sanded acrylic, which reappears in the uptown facility. The translucent material allows for rear illumination as well as spotlighting; the effect is high visibility and a subtle aura for the merchandise. Off-white vinyl flooring and walls allow the retail display full prominence.

The Soho lobby incorporates various built elements that establish, and then blur, boundaries to link different parts of the program. Walls stop short of the ceiling to further imply spatial continuity. At one end of the lobby, UT installed a makeup booth finished in dramatic red rubber and Ultrasuede. Although the booth is part of the small lobby, it achieves a remarkable degree of intimacy and privacy thanks to its legible, cubic form, rich materials, and sensuous color.

Along with the Ultrasuede, other materials and treatments link Bliss's uptown and downtown locations. A signature "feather wall" expresses something of the Bliss aesthetic; it is made of two sheets of glass with individually glued, white turkey feathers. In the uptown spa, the translucent feather wall links the locker room to the reception desk. Set against this wall, cuddly, Mongolian lamb benches underscore the quirky sensuality and witty luxe that is sheer Bliss. —Henry Urbach

*Opposite: The makeup booth at Bliss Soho is a red room finished in rubber and Ultrasuede. The product display shelving is of hand-sanded acrylic.*

*Above: The Bliss 57 showers are finished in small-scale marble tile.*

*Right: The entrance to Bliss Soho is a sandblasted glass door with a clear, round aperture that frames product display beyond.*

FLOOR: TOLI. TILE: STONE SOURCE. PLUMBING FIXTURES: DORNBRACHT. UPHOLSTERY: PARKS UPHOLSTERY. SIGNAGE: EAGLE MASTER SIGNS. DISPLAY SHELVING FABRICATION: BLOOMFIELD PLASTICS CO. MILLWORK: MIELACH/WOODWORK. ULTRASUEDE: ALCANTARA. UPHOLSTERY: DUNE INC. OTTOMAN AND BANQUETTE FABRICATION: IDS CORP. DOOR HARDWARE: D-LINE. CONSTRUCTION MANAGER, CONTRACTOR: LEHR CONSTRUCTION CO.





Sadeki



Richardson

Fame, she is the recipient of many other awards and prizes. She earned her B.S. degree from the State University of New York at Cortland, participated in a masters program in sociology at the University of Wisconsin, and added a M.S. in environmental design with undergraduate studies in architecture from Pratt Institute. Participating on the job was senior designer **Marina Lanina**, who joined in the late 1990s after 15 years' experience in architecture. She hails from Russia, and was educated at Lowow Polytechnic Institute. Naomi Leff & Associates, 12 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001, (212) 686-6300.

**1100 Architect** (Shiseido Studio, page 160) was founded in 1983 by partners **David Piscuskas** and **Juergen Riehm**. To date, the firm has designed a broad body of commercial and institutional projects including large and small-scale buildings plus residences ranging from urban lofts to country homes. Recent retail and business clients include J. Crew, TSE Cashmere, Esprit de Corp and the new MoMA Design Store. The residential client roster reads as a who's who of the arts: Ross Bleckner, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Eric Fischl and April Gornik, Ron Rifkin, plus Liam Neeson and Natasha Richardson. Gallery projects include Metro Pictures, AD Gallery, and Blum Helman Warehouse. Institutional commissions comprise the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, The Little Red School House & Elisabeth Irwin High School, The Pennington School, and the National Building Museum. 1100 Architect, 435 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, (212) 645-4670.

**Clarissa Richardson** and **Heidar Sadeki** (Bliss Spa, page 164) established **UT** in 1998. The firm pursues multiple aspects of visual and spatial design, including architectural, graph-

ic, furniture and product design, as well as brand development and visual identity consulting. Richardson received her M.Arch. from Princeton University in 1996 after completing her undergraduate degree at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London. Sadeki received his M.Arch. from Princeton University in 1997 after completing his undergraduate degree in film at SUNY Purchase. The design team for Bliss Spa 57th Street includes **Guillermo Garita**, **Julia Mock**, **Cecilia Kuriyama**, and **Raymond Silverio**. In addition to the Bliss spas, Richardson and Sadeki have completed a number of other residential, office, and retail projects. UT, 578 Broadway, Suite 506, New York, NY 10012, (212) 966-8815.

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