

Offices · Restaurants · Bars · Clubs · Hotels · Shops · Cultural and Sports Buildings

INTERNATIONAL INTERIORS

Lance Knobel



with 293 colour illustrations

Offices · Restaurants · Bars · Clubs · Hotels · Shops · Cultural and Sports Buildings

INTERNATIONAL INTERIORS

LANCE KNOBEL



THAMES AND HUDSON

First published in Great Britain in 1988 by
Thames and Hudson Ltd, London

Assistant Editors
Helen Buttery and Jane Lamacraft

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INTRODUCTION

This volume is intended to be a unique selection of the most important commercial interior designs of the last two or three years from around the world. Attempts have been made to find worthy projects from as many countries as possible; there are exciting examples included from as far afield as the USA, Britain, Japan, France, Spain, West Germany, Austria, Finland, Italy and Australia. Thus the book provides a valuable international forum for different design ideas, allowing cross-fertilization between Japanese and American designers, Italian and British, Scandinavian and French; for this is a far wider survey than any offered by the few magazines (largely nationally focused) that feature contract design. In addition, many of the interiors are unpublished elsewhere, such as Ron Arad's *The Bureau*, or the somewhat bizarre designs of Finnish architect Leo Mitrinen. The selection has been made using the author's network of contacts in this field, by a process which has involved intensive research and several trips abroad over the last two years.

The offices, stores, restaurants, bars, galleries and other public buildings in the book exemplify both the most original and the most practical currents in modern design. Importantly, many also display an especially creative use of new techniques and new technology. Although the criteria for the inclusion of different projects vary, a number of considerations arose in most cases: first, aesthetic impact; second, the imaginative use of space, no matter how small or awkward; third, lasting style; fourth, innovation in finishes, materials and graphics; fifth, the thoughtful use of budget; and last, but especially important, functional success – did each interior enable the visitor to eat, drink, shop, work or enjoy himself in comfort? An office in which it was difficult to work, or which imposed an inappropriate system of management, would clearly be an unsatisfactory design, no matter how stunning initial visual impressions were. Apple's Advanced Computer Development Center (pp. 40–3) shows that providing a clearly functional environment is not incompatible with a strong design conveying an important message about corporate identity; and even Richard Rogers' Lloyd's Building (pp. 32–7), though unpopular with some of the more hidebound underwriters, has as its primary motivation the demands of a contemporary, information-led organization, not mere aesthetics.

The interior can have a far more profound effect on users than the exterior, however important a building may be in a cityscape. In the last decade, interior design, once the impoverished relation of architecture, has been transformed. In a number of crucial areas interiors have assumed an importance that on occasion transcends concern about exteriors. Office workers spend one-third of their lives in the office, and the shopping or eating 'experience' can be profoundly altered by the quality of the environment the designer provides (and hence the profits of the store or restaurant owner can also be affected). The revolution in information technology has dramatically increased the pace of change for commercial organizations, while in retailing and catering in particular the growing sophistication of the consumer has also altered the typical 'shelf-life' of an interior design. Thus, in the major cities of the Western world, the modern condition is for buildings – notably those that house offices and stores – to be standard shells (with perhaps a 'designed' external skin), within which the designer creates a relatively transient interior. Over the life of a building, its interior spaces may well be changed many times, adding up to a total cost far in excess of the building itself. The pressures of economics have placed interior design (as opposed to mere decorating) firmly at the centre of both architectural and commercial debate in today's world.

Thus interiors now have an even more vital role as a proving ground for new design ideas. While some of the projects included here may well cost a lot of money, on the whole this book shows that interiors can be designed and built in less time and on a smaller budget than any building; and, protected from the weather by the building shell, and often incorporating few specifically structural elements, interiors may show a disregard for many of the practical considerations forced on building design. Indeed, many of the examples in this book illustrate how a design in itself may be used as the primary lure for the customer. Nigel Coates and Shi Yu Chen's iconoclastic restaurants in Tokyo (pp. 54–9) are perhaps extreme instances of this, but others too, such as Jiricna Kerr's Legends in London (pp. 88–91), or the Sottsass-designed Esprit stores (pp. 194–207), are also inspired by the paramount need of the client to differentiate his business from that of a mass of competitors. Interior design can fulfil this basic commercial requirement.

All the projects in this volume satisfy both the client's and the user's functional demands; but they go beyond this achievement to explore new design ideas, to provoke a response, and sometimes even to amuse. The bewildering variety of styles reproduced here reflects the exciting range of ideas now current in design. From Tokyo minimalism to Los Angeles bizarre to Barcelona chic to London high-tech, an unprecedented array of talented interior designers are now exploring the limits of their art.



OFFICES

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**Note: Designers' or architects' names appear first,
and are listed in alphabetical order.**

William Adams Architects Pytka Film Studio, Venice, California, USA

Emilio Ambasz & Associates Financial Guaranty Insurance Company,
New York City, USA

Ron Arad The Bureau, London, UK

DEGW Wang Laboratories, Brentford, UK

Coop Himmelblau Baumann Studio, Vienna, Austria

Coop Himmelblau Iso-Holding, Vienna, Austria

Leo Design Leo Design Studio, Helsinki, Finland

Mack Architects Mack Studio, San Francisco, California, USA

Richard Rogers Partnership Lloyd's, London, UK

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill The Boston Globe, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

STUDIOS San Francisco Advanced Computer Development Center,
Apple Computer Inc., Cupertino, California, USA

Tilton + Lewis Associates Schwinn Bicycle Company, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Vignelli Associates Vignelli Associates, New York City, USA

**The sleek efficiency of the modern high-technology
company is communicated by the polished plaster
walls, Sardinian granite and etched glass panels at
Wang Laboratories, Brentford, UK, designed by DEGW.**

PYTKA FILM STUDIO

VENICE, CALIFORNIA, USA

Designed by William Adams Architects

Film production companies are traditionally not keenly image-conscious, tending not to lavish time, thought and money on their environment. Pytka Film Studio is very different from this. In a standard warehouse building, William Adams has constructed a small office village, complete with 'buildings', 'streets' and 'landscaping'. Adams describes it as 'an abstract version of a traditional Venice walking street'. And since this is LA, there is nothing

typical about any of these elements.

A broad 'street' of polished and sealed concrete runs down the centre of the building. Arranged irregularly along this internal boulevard are the 'buildings' that house the various office functions of the agency: meeting rooms, work spaces and even lavatories. The 'buildings' are a *mélange* of current architectural styles: an Oswald Matthias Ungers-like white pavilion topped by a barrel vault of square

glazing, an Arata Isozaki-like curving white wall surmounted by a glazed cupola, and even a Mario Botta-like concrete and glass cubic composition (the affinity with Botta is somewhat strengthened by the use of his chairs for some reception areas). The designers were not responsible for choosing any of the other furniture used in the interior.

Pytka Film Studio might have been a strained architectural conceit but, throughout, the work has been immaculately detailed and carried through with conviction and flair. It would have been easy to descend into feeble pastiche, but Adams has built this office village with all the certitude of a grand town-planner, and some welcome humour as well.



(left) Work spaces are housed in 'buildings', like this white pavilion topped by a barrel vault of square glazing. Furniture, chosen by the client, is minimalist in style rather than functional.

(right) Inside the standard warehouse building, the designers have created a small office 'village'. The Mario Botta chair from Alias is positioned for effect rather than visitor comfort.





(left) Ranged along the wide central 'street' are the pavilions housing the main offices and production facilities.

(below) Even the lavatories are part of the design's grand conception: the walls beneath the glazed barrel vault are varnished plaster.

