

INTERIOR DESIGN®



Taslimi



Opposite: A canted wall and freestanding light bar define the public area while bridging gaps in the floorplate. A steel-framed panel of Tamo ash is a backdrop for reception seating and partially screens the glass-enclosed conference room.

Above: View from within the conference room with intersecting light bar above, left.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JON MILLER, HEDRICH BLESSING

"I LOVE DESIGN," says Marc Abraham, president of Beacon Communications. "I'd be a designer if I didn't have to deal with clients." The producer, whose films include *The Hurricane*, *The Family Man*, and *Thirteen Days*, certainly knew enough about the field to commission an architecture firm with tried and true success in the entertainment industry—AREA, whose own stellar credit list includes Brillstein-Grey, Endeavor, 3 Arts, and Nickelodeon. Abraham entrusted the firm with the design of Beacon's new offices on an 18,000-sq.-ft. piece of prime real estate overlooking the beach in Santa Monica.

Previously housing a law firm, the new space was claustrophobic, with many of the trappings of flawed commercial design: a warren of dark offices removed from the view, low ceilings, faux veneers, yards of metal shelving, and unappealing carpeting. The spatial configuration was also very awkward. "The area was bifurcated by an exit corridor," explain AREA partners Henry Goldston and Walt Thomas. "Our challenge was to create an office that seemed to flow as one. We wanted to blow it out and create a dynamic space, but one with a sense of warmth. And inexpensive materials were part of the brief." →

Thomas and Goldston razed the interior to its shell of concrete flooring and exposed ceiling. They then settled on a new plan: Reception, conference, and public function areas occupy the smaller area off the elevator lobby, while the workplace proper is located in the larger wing across the corridor. The partners then concentrated on architectural elements that bridge the gap between the two areas while creating visual unity throughout the floor.

The initial gesture occurs just past the entry where "a curved, canted wall and an ambient light bar direct the flow of traffic through two sets of double doors crossing the exit corridor," Goldston and Thomas remark. Simplifying potentially complex circulation, these "rough and ready elements," as the designers call them, also function to break up the loft-like expanse at the front. The L-shaped light bar frames a freestanding reception configuration, piercing through a glass-enclosed conference room with ocean views. Beyond the conference room and double doors, the work area, which accommodates 30 at both custom stations and in private offices, is a double-faced corridor culminating in a glass wall literally steps from the beach.

"This client took us in a direction where not many of our clients go," says Goldston of the overall look. "He kept saying 'industrial'. Many say that but they don't really mean it." The

AREA partners scaled back some preliminary refined treatments in favor of those adhering to a mostly raw materials palette. Kalwall is used for the reception desk and for work stations, with suspended panels of metal-framed drywall adding an architectural component to the furniture. Medium density fiberboard, in its natural state, forms storage walls; sealed Masonite in galvanized-metal frames is used for the doors. Metal mesh canopies and clamp-on barn door fixtures complete the picture.

Abraham was thrilled with the relation between the industrial aesthetic and his firm's hands-on approach to filmmaking. AREA, however, contributed some elegant touches, elevating the interior from strictly warehouse status—for example, a focal wall of metal-framed Tamo ash, a highly figured granite conference table, custom rugs, plush upholstered furniture, and zebra-wood tables. Meredith Boswell, a production designer, is credited for custom seating as well as furnishings in Abraham's office.

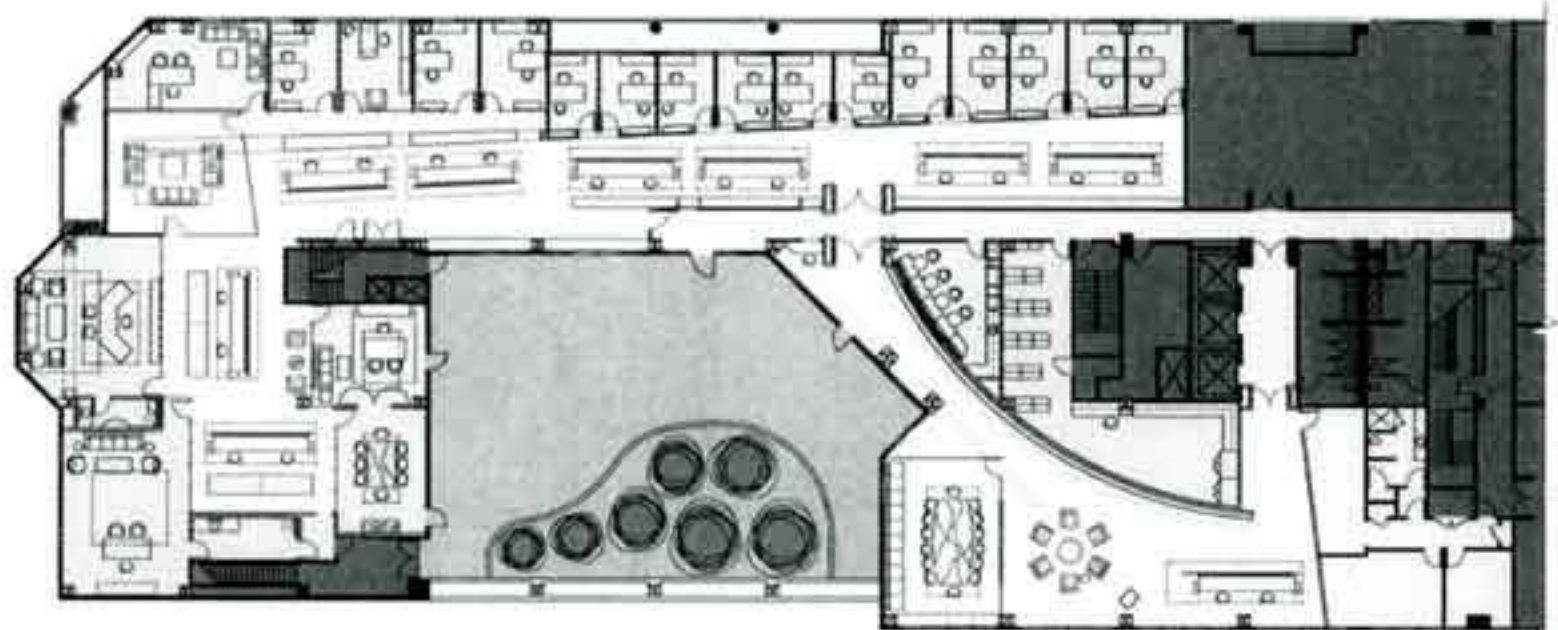
—Edie Cohen



Above: Assistants, seated at custom Kalwall work stations, have uninterrupted views of Santa Monica's beach.

Opposite: View of the executive area with its own lounge sector to the left.

MILLWORK: F.K. ANDERSON. UPHOLSTERY FABRICS: SINA PEARSON; JOSEPH NOBLE. FIBERGLASS PANEL SYSTEM: KALWALL. WINDOW COVERINGS: MECO SHADE THROUGH ARCHITYPE. CUSTOM RUGS: RODEO MILLS THROUGH DECORATIVE CARPETS. AERON CHAIR: HERMAN MILLER. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: AL SHOLZE. MEP ENGINEERING: SYSKA & HENNESSEY. CONTRACTOR: TASLIMI CONSTRUCTION COMPANY.



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