

INTERIOR DESIGN



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EXIT

name in lights

Endeavor talent agency in Los Angeles discovers the next rising star, Neil M. Denari Architects

text: edie cohen photography: benny chan/fotoworks

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Above: Endeavor's main lobby on the building's third floor is a study in terrazzo. Piero Lissoni 250 Met leather-upholstered sofas infuse shots of color. **Below:** With angled drywall planes and a terrazzo-and-glass stairway integrated into the ceiling, the lobby makes a statement about strong architecture rather than precious materials.

You'd think a talent agency with a client roster that includes Matt Damon, Martin Scorsese, and Aaron Sorkin would hire an equally established architecture firm to design its new headquarters in Los Angeles. But Endeavor, one of Hollywood's most influential talent agencies, likes the unexpected. For its recently leased 70,000-square-foot space, in a 1961 Charles Luckman office building in Beverly Hills, Endeavor signed on Neil M. Denari Architects, a small firm that at the time had only one previously built project to its credit.



"I was looking for a firm for which this job would be an important stepping stone," recalls Tom Strickler, one of Endeavor's founding partners and somewhat of an architect manqué himself. "Because the results are more likely to be different." His other criterion was that the firm be local (NMDA is based in Culver City). Perhaps the most important feather in NMDA's cap, though, was its one completed project: Hollywood's sleek, gallerylike L.A. Eyeworks, which Strickler was crazy about.

Nonetheless, it's risky business to hire neophytes for a



Below: The custom reception desk is composed of honeycomb acrylic panels sandwiching fluorescents and is framed and topped in brushed stainless steel.

project of this scope. But all fears subsided once the design process began. The NMDA team worked with Endeavor's 13 partners to develop the program, which includes 54,000 square feet of office space on the eight-story building's third and fourth floors, 8,000 square feet in the basement for accounting and the mailroom, and a 7,000-square-foot street-front space with its own entrance, a reception area, and an 80-seat screening room.

Surprisingly, the client came with no predetermined visual imagery. "They instructed, 'Simply do your work. That's



who we are," says principal Neil M. Denari. "This was no marketing or branding exercise. We were 'final-cut' architects."

Endeavor's most salient characteristic is its vitality, and NMDA strove to capture that quality in the architecture. "We created a clean, white background and put the energy in the ceiling and walls," explains Denari. Sharp drywall angles contrast dramatically with mod curves throughout the space. "The crispness of the drywall makes the project," adds Duks Koschitz, NMDA's codesigner for the project. For economy →

of scale, the architects standardized the ceiling angles and radii of the curves and then had curved panels made from fiberglass-reinforced gypsum board.

The script unfolds in the lobby, on the building's third floor. NMDA opened one half of a structural bay in order to form a double-height volume for an internal stairway. "We integrated the stairway into the ceiling to make it part of the environmental fabric, rather than a separate monumental piece," Denari says. "To set the stage for experiences to come, we modulated the ceiling height. The shaped surfaces break the linearity of the precise box."

The total treatment recognizes the lobby as the crux of



Above: A section of curved drywall with integral up-lighting interrupts the fourth-floor corridor's linearity. **Below:** Although planning was dictated by typology, NMDA added distinction with shapes, color, and graphics. Assistants sit in Alberto Meda chairs at Ad Hoc workstations by Antonio Citterio and Glen Oliver Löw.

operations. As both the horizontal and vertical circulation hub, it's constantly abuzz with staffers on the go. The lobby also works as a gateway—agents or assistants come here to greet clients at the custom reception desk, a gleaming 20-foot-long structure of honeycomb acrylic panels sandwiching fluorescents and topped and framed in brushed stainless steel. The terrazzo flooring is equally shiny. A smattering of Piero Lissoni seating options in indigo, gray, and Bordeaux-colored leather break up the all-white scene.

From the lobby visitors can peer through a glass wall etched with a sunburst motif for a filtered view of the conference



room. It's an impressive venue. Masters of the creative universe sit around a 40-foot-long custom table of Corian, laminated glass, and stainless steel, assembled in sections on-site. Assistants surround them on tiered Aero benches designed by Lievore/Altherr/Molina.

For Endeavor's staff of 180—split into television, film, literary, and gaming divisions—NMDA designed the workplace according to standard agency typology: Agents occupy private offices along the perimeter; assistants sit in a line outside. Visual and voice contact between them is key. (Remember Swimming With Sharks?)

But NMDA did work to provide a more compassionate setup for

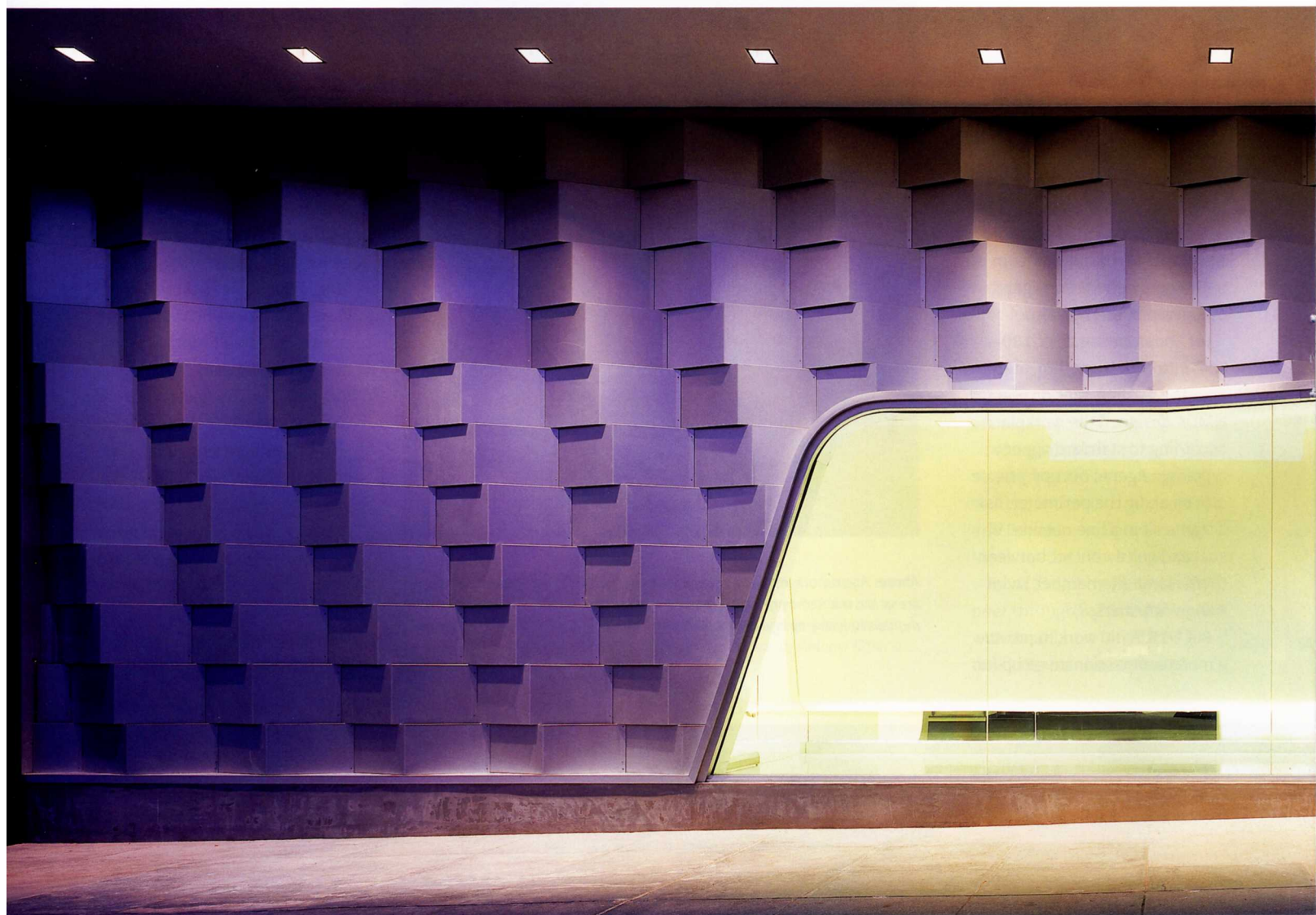


Above: Agents' offices line the perimeter of the floor plate. Below: Service areas are marked by graphics derived from pixel imagery, designed by multidisciplinary design firm 2x4.

the young right-hand men and women. They deserve daylight too, and it infiltrates through clerestories punched in the perimeter. Curvilinear drywall sections with a base of fluorescent up-lights supplement natural light and break up the long lines of their Ad Hoc workstations by Antonio Citterio and Glen Oliver Löw. Analogous sectors of curved back walls provide a sense of enclosure.

In a site where long floor plates are broken into two rectangles per floor, color-coding is crucial to way-finding. The cyan, magenta, orange, and green neighborhoods are part of a graphics program devised by 2x4, a New York multidisciplinary design firm brought on board by →






NMDA. Accent walls painted in saturated colors provide the broad strokes, while core partitions have quirky wallpaper graphics derived from pixel imagery.

Studios, agencies, production houses, and network headquarters all have screening rooms, and Endeavor is no exception. This final piece of the project is where NMDA really makes its mark. The firm exploited the 54 linear feet of street-level frontage with an eye-catching facade of folded anodized-aluminum panels. A broad expanse of glass allows views—and entry—into the airy, open reception area that precedes the 80-seat screening room. Its shapely white planes cause passersby to wonder whether there's a new gallery or bou-

Above: *Folded anodized-aluminum panels span the 54-foot-long street-front facade of Endeavor's screening room, accessed via a separate entrance.*

Below: *In the conference room on the building's third floor, the custom 40-foot-long table in Corian, laminated glass, and stainless steel accommodates up to 36 agents in Alberto Meda chairs. Assistants sit on tiered leather-and-aluminum Aero benches by Lievore/Altherr/Molina.*



tique in town. "That type of voyeurism," says Denari, "is similar to stargazing." NMDA, can we get your autograph? 

PROJECT TEAM: BRENNAN BUCK; STEVEN EPLEY; BETTY KASSIS; STEFANO PAIOCCI; JAE SHIN; MATT TRIMBLE.

LOUNGE CHAIRS (RECEPTION AREA, LOBBY): B&B ITALIA. COFFEE TABLE (RECEPTION AREA), WORKSTATIONS (ASSISTANTS' WORK AREA), CHAIRS (ASSISTANTS' WORK AREA, CONFERENCE ROOM): VITRA. CARPET (RECEPTION AREA, ASSISTANTS' WORK AREA): SHAW; M.S. ROUSE CO. (INSTALLATION). SOFAS (LOBBY): CASSINA; SPINNEYBECK (LEATHER). CUSTOM DESK METALWORK: DEC. FLOORING: BISAZZA; JB MARBLE COMPANY (INSTALLATION). STAIRWAY: ATLAS ORNAMENTAL IRONWORKS. CUSTOM TABLE (CONFERENCE ROOM): SEELEY BROTHERS. BENCH SEATING: DAVIS FURNITURE. CEILING PENDANT: PEERLESS LIGHTING. FACADE (SCREENING ROOM): EUROCRAFT. DRY-WALL: MARTIN BROS./MARCOWALL. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: LIGHTING DESIGN ALLIANCE. HVAC: AIR-TEC. ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR: O'BRYANT ELECTRIC. MEP: SYSKA HENNESSY GROUP. ARCHITECT OF RECORD: INTERIOR ARCHITECTS. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: TASLIMI CONSTRUCTION CO.



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Below: Inside the reception area's glass entry vestibule, shaped planes introduce the office vocabulary.

- 1 LOBBY
- 2 CONFERENCE ROOM
- 3 STAIR
- 4 ASSISTANTS' WORKSTATIONS
- 5 AGENTS' OFFICES



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At Endeavor talent agency in Los Angeles, a gallerylike, street-level reception area precedes an 80-seat screening room. Neil M. Denari Architects employed fiberglass-reinforced gypsum board for the curved wall and ceiling plane. The leather-covered lounge chair is by Jeffrey Bernett and the tubular-steel coffee table by Antonio Citterio.