

INTERIOR DESIGN

Taslimi

California Modern

Beckson Design Associates interprets the regional aesthetic for a financial concern in Los Angeles.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OFFERS a vast array of images—from its car culture and beach scene to its experimental architecture making headlines worldwide. There is also a quieter side to California's architectural culture that centers on its own history of modernism tied, for example, to Schindler, Neutra, Eames and the iconic Case Study houses. These currents of modernism, coupled with the inescapable association of comfortable living connected to the outdoors, were to become Beckson Design Associates' conceptual basis for the Los Angeles headquarters of a California holding/investment company. Far from arbitrary, the concept is entirely appropriate to the project's site, which is a 1959 building by Welton Beckett Associates in the modern development of Century City.

New headquarters encompass the 9,000-sq.-ft., fifth-floor penthouse blessed with an additional 2,000 sq. ft. of terrace space. Coming from offices that had been replete with the symbolic trappings of commercial success, the client wanted its new venue to be the very antithesis of corporate gravitas. Casual was to be the operative adjective, and the site's indoor/outdoor attributes were to be accentuated. From the start, the client, design firm principal Michael Beckson and associate Steven Heisler were on the same wavelength.

Encountering the location as a depressingly dark space in a state of partial demolition, the designers' initial concerns centered on bringing in daylight plus creating a link with the terrace. They popped in three circular skylights and determined that →

Below: Classic modern furnishings in the reception zone are in keeping with the interior landscape's association with early California modernism. Glass-topped partitions run through the space to maximize daylight infiltration.

SLATE FLOORING: **EUROCAL**. CARPET (THROUGHOUT): **MONTEREY**. SEATING AND SIDE TABLE: **KNOLL**. UPHOLSTERY FABRIC: **DONGHIA**. LIGHTING: **DUR-RED** (SPOTLIGHTS); **PRUDENTIAL** (FLUORESCENTS). CUSTOM MILLWORK, GENERAL CONTRACTOR: **TASLIMI CONSTRUCTION**.

Opposite: Focal wall of glass-enclosed conference room is composed of laminate panels that have been custom ground and colored to achieve a textured surface. Artwork, a composition of metal plate on plywood, is by Tony Berland.

BRERA PENDANTS: **FLOS**. TABLE: **KNOLL**. CONFERENCE AND PLYWOOD CHAIRS: **HERMAN MILLER**. UPHOLSTERY LEATHER: **SPINNEYBECK**. FURNITURE DEALER: **ASSOCIATES PURCHASING**. ART: **L.A. LOUVER**

PHOTOGRAPHY: **TOM BONNER**





glass would figure prominently in the materials palette. The interior/exterior connection is made through the floor plane, which, as a sweeping pattern of biomorphic curves, is the project's most visually arresting element. Inspired by "the early free-form modernism of the Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle-Marx, the design is seamless in its transition from carpet to exterior deck

paint. Conceptually, however, this early component of the project solution derives from the Case Study houses," says Heisler, "where you have a built interior sitting on a landscaped property." And, in fact, it was this tie to period architecture that sold the client, long appreciative of the era, on the parti.

Juxtaposing the free-flowing composition of curves is the orthogonal grid of the

floor plan. Straightforward, the scheme gives perimeter placement to most private offices, central position to the conference room and adjoining open work area, plus convenient location to an informal conference/lounge space, which is next to the kitchen and just off the terrace. While needs and adjacencies left little room for experimentation in developing the project's blueprint, the design team found room for investigation in its implementation. Using a finely wrought mixture of materials and colors reminiscent of the sun-faded tones of period Fiesta ware, Beckson and Heisler formed an interior landscape where "each plane connection and intersection is articulated throughout the space," they comment. Glass, as a clerestory ribbon that virtually encircles the space, and as both transparent and translucent vertical planes, creates layers of transparency while aiding light infiltration from the perimeter. To contrast with the glass are the two unusual treatments accorded to focal walls at the reception zone and conference room: One is OSB (oriented strand board), commonly known as flakeboard, that has been sanded, painted and hand-rubbed to achieve its texture; the second consists of plastic laminate panels, custom ground to

Left: Second executive office illustrates glass entry and characteristic clerestory treatment.

WALL UNIT: PACE. BARCELONA TABLE AND WALL COVERING: KNOLL. LIGHTING: MODULAR.

Above: Private offices at left are signaled with a soffit suggestive of an awning. The linear configuration of the office landscape, expressed in what the designers term "sun-faded colors," contrasts with the bold, organic design of the carpet.

SPOTLIGHT: DUR-RED. PLASTIC LAMINATE: PIONITE. GLASS: DIAMOND NATIONAL.





express layers of texture and then stained to put color back into the material. Both, says Beckson, "are examples of common materials made precious through their treatments." Clearly, they impart custom detail and a degree of finish to the space, yet the final look is not one remotely associated with high-powered finance or corporate status symbols. It is just this aspect that Beckson found most satisfying. "We were able to do something different for a type of client that we normally couldn't do this for."

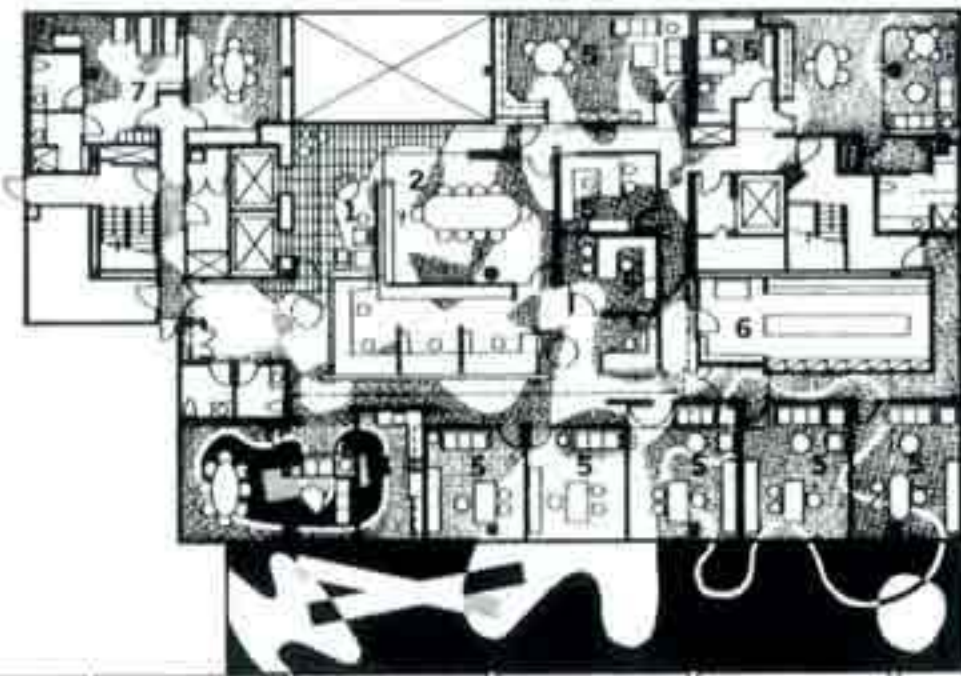
—Edie Cohen

Above: An existing column in one of the executive offices was used as a marker to separate work and lounge areas and to anchor an overhead plane for integrated lighting.

EAMES GUEST CHAIRS: HERMAN MILLER, ALL OTHER FURNITURE, WALL COVERING AND UPHOLSTERY FABRIC: KNOLL, LIGHTING: CSL.

- 1 RECEPTION
- 2 CONFERENCE
- 3 LOUNGE
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 OFFICE
- 6 FILE STORAGE
- 7 EXERCISE ROOM
- 8 ROOF TERRACE

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FIFTH FLOOR