

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

NUMBER 4

fashion: on the catwalk

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# theory and practice

Rogers Marvel Architects and Zeff Design fashioned  
a New York headquarters for the label called Theory

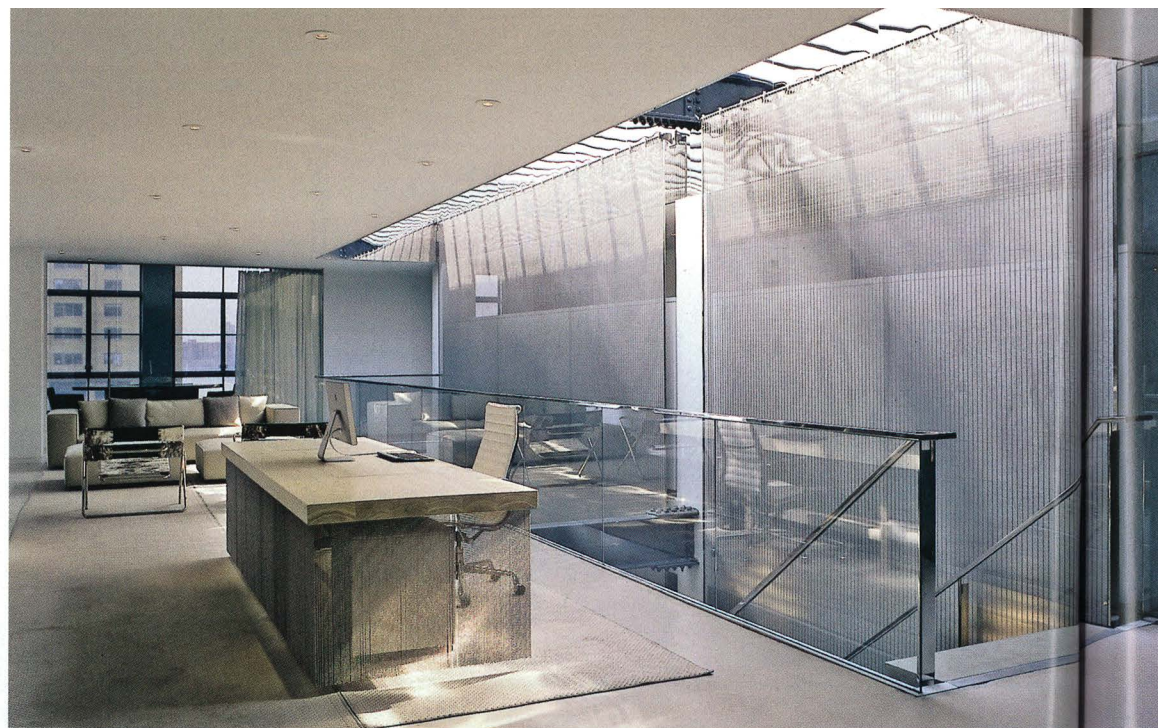
text: lisa selin davis photography: eric laignel





**Previous spread:** In an office area at New York's Theory headquarters, a collaboration between Rogers Marvel Architects and Zeff Design, models dressed in Theory separates pose on RMA's custom desks, featuring lacquered tops and raw-steel legs. The aluminum pendant fixtures are by Sergio Brioschi.

**Top, from left:** A staircase with precast concrete steps, low-iron glass balustrades, and polished stainless-steel handrails and caps runs through the building. For the receptionist serving the executive offices and showroom, Mark Zeff chose a Victoria Meyers desk with a lacquered top and a leather-covered chair by Charles and Ray Eames. **Bottom, from left:** Beyond the staircase, Zeff furnished reception's seating area with a sofa by Francesco Rota and galvanized-steel folding chairs with leather seats. A polyester curtain closes off the showroom, with its custom maple-topped table by Zeff, galvanized-steel chairs, and flooring of poured concrete.



**Trading in an elevator for a** simple staircase might seem to be taking a step down in the world. So might leaving a Gordon Bunshaft tower for anonymous new construction. But not in the eyes of Theory, a New York company that produces sophisticated casual and business wear for men and women. "We were on three completely separate floors," founder and president Andrew Rosen says of the sublet space in Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's W.R. Grace Building.

When Rosen spotted a five-story commercial structure going up in the meatpacking district, he signed the lease right away. The core and shell of the building were mostly set, but the rest could be custom-tailored. Three years later, Rogers Marvel Architects and Zeff Design had transformed the 60,000-square-foot space into a world headquarters with an urban campus feel—much like the offices of his friends Kenneth Cole and Coach CEO Lew Frankfort. "Plus," Rosen

says, "I've always dreamed of having our offices, showrooms, and retail all in one."

Robert Rogers and Jonathan Marvel attribute the success of the project to the fact that RMA and Theory started out by translating architectural drawings of offices and open work areas into full-scale representations in foam core. "It's the equivalent of trying on clothes to get exactly the right fit," says Marvel—who found the experiment so useful that he's vowed to make →







**Top, from left:** A stainless-steel mesh curtain hangs all the way down through the stairwell, passing a meeting area en route. Zeff selected the adjacent lounge's wooden armchairs by Byron Sessel. **Bottom:** In the showroom, Theory's fall 2007 line hangs on RMA's custom steel bar system.

**Opposite:** In the meeting area, Norman Cherner's chairs line Zeff's custom raw-steel table.

full-scale models from now on.

To respect Theory's predecessors in the meatpacking district, RMA revealed the new building's I beams and used very little paint. "It's kind of gutsy. Literally, the guts are showing," Rogers says. "It's rugged and authentic, meant to stimulate the people who work there."

Interior designer Mark Zeff explains that his job was "to differentiate one floor from another but at the same time unify them." Colors, finishes, and furnishings are variations on a theme. In keeping with Theory's clothing, an understated neutral palette runs throughout. Zeff rendered the brand's dove grays and creams, for example, as polished concrete flooring and lacquered tabletops.

White sheers either curtain off the top-level showroom or open it up to the reception area serving the executive offices that hug the perimeter of the floor plate. On levels two through four, →







designers and merchants work at rows of desks or workstations, again surrounded by private offices. Lounges are furnished with sofas, daybeds, and ottomans—some contemporary, some vintage, some by Zeff.

Adjacent to the street-level Theory boutique, where the steel of his display racks is meant to recall the meat hooks once so common in the neighborhood, the corporate lobby returns to a luminous minimalism. A tinted-concrete reception desk glows with a twilight blue-gray. To the side, Zeff essentially paneled a

long wall with textured white canvases that together create a topographical world map representing Theory's international business.

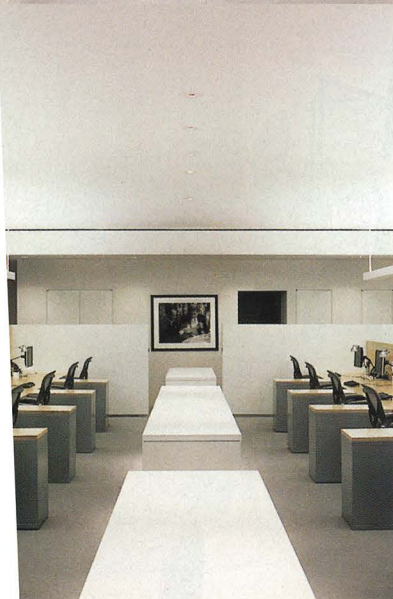
Above the lobby, the four upper levels connect via Rosen's famous staircase, topped by a skylight. "If I just walk up or down the stairs, I can get the buzz on every floor," he says. Dropping all the way through the stairwell, a 40-foot-square curtain of stainless-steel mesh acts as a diaphanous veil between offices and meeting areas while allowing light to shine through. Not →

**Opposite top:** For company president Andrew Rosen's office, Zeff reupholstered the vintage guest and desk chairs. Meyers's desk has a lacquered top and chrome legs. **Opposite bottom, from left:** Robert Reuter and Charles Rozier designed an office area's AutoStrada workstations. Behind Rosen's desk hang photographs of his own father, Marlon Brando, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

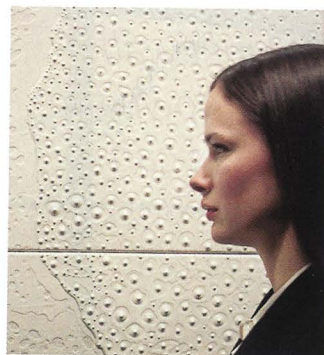
**Left:** In the CEO's office, a Philippe Starck lamp sits on the acrylic top of RMA's custom desk. Also custom, the table is by Douglas Fanning.

**Right:** Maarten Van Severen chairs face Mark Seliger's photographic portrait of Bono in the creative director's office.

"If I just walk up or down the stairs, I can get the buzz on every floor"







**Top, from left:** Gary Gagliano painted the square acrylics on canvas installed as a continuous mural in the lobby. Supported by stainless-steel mullions, the stairwell's fritted-glass skylight is strong enough to walk on. **Bottom:** Metallic-painted signage stands out against the slate wall backing the lobby's tinted-concrete reception desk. Flooring is granite.

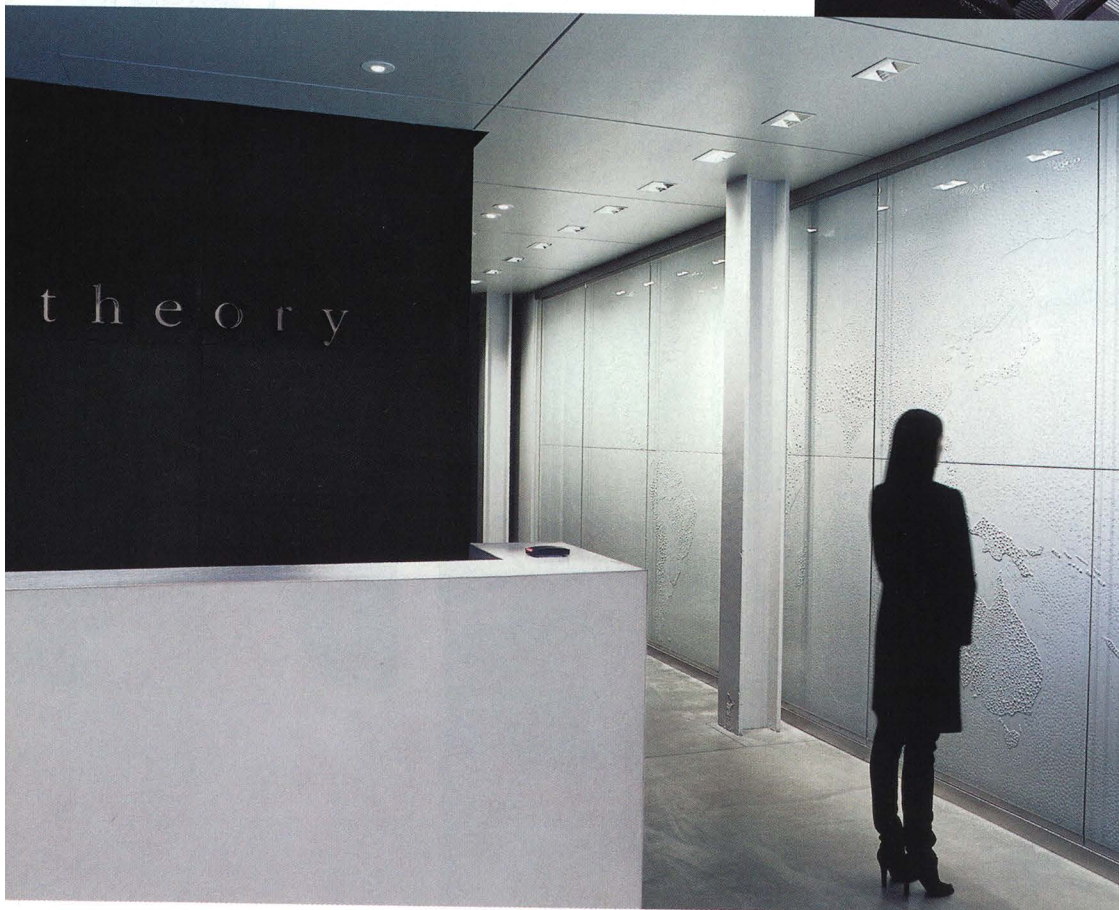
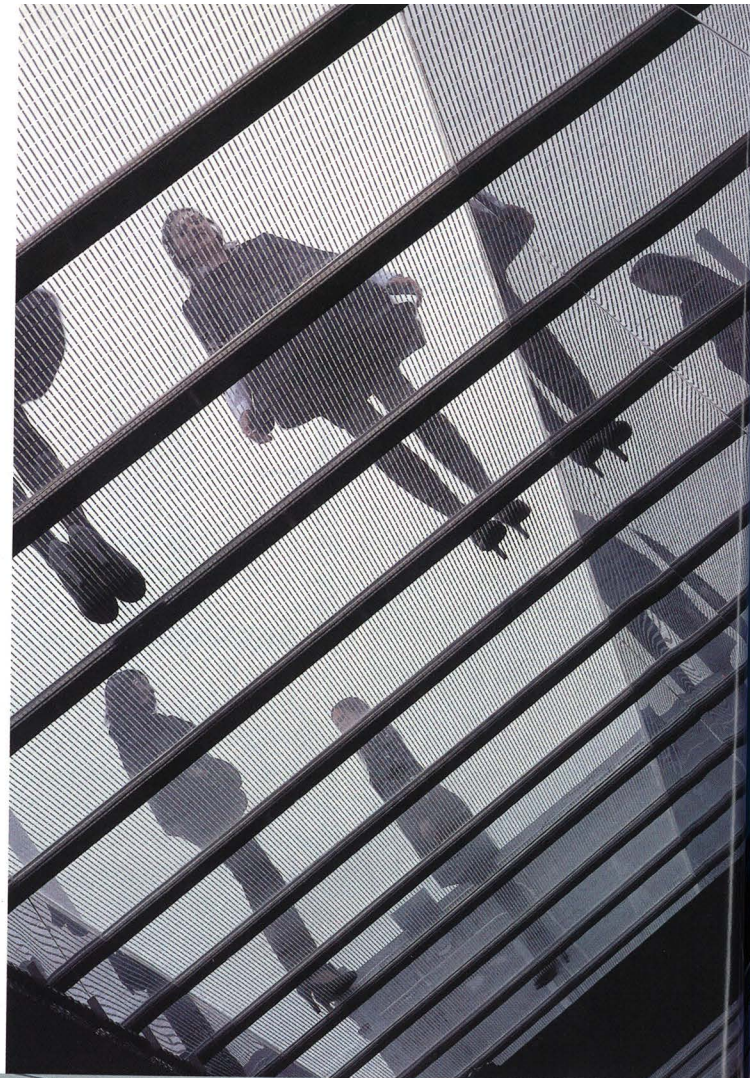
**Opposite:** LEDs illuminate the facade of the building, designed by Morris Adjmi Architects.

served by the main stair is the basement lunchroom, where bright red vinyl floor tile and vending machines stocked with Vitaminwater and trail mix enhance the campus feel.

The only aspect of Rosen's vision that wasn't fulfilled concerns office doors: He didn't want any. RMA did install versions in black powder-coated steel or birch but, Rosen points out, they're never closed. Except, he says, when he's trying on a new pair of pants. 🍑

PROJECT TEAM (ROGERS MARVEL ARCHITECTS): BETH O'NEILL; GUIDO HARTRAY; CAITLIN TRAVERS; BARRETT FELDMAN; TIM FRYATT; COREY HOELKER; CAROLINE RAZOOK; CANDICE ROSS; MIKE RUSSO; JAKE SINCLAIR; SO SUGITA; EDNA VUONG. PROJECT TEAM (ZEFF DESIGN): JENNIFER MORRIS; GREG HOROWITZ.

PENDANT FIXTURES (OFFICE AREA): ANTON-ANGELI ILLUMINAZIONE. TASK LIGHTS: ARTEMIDE. TASK CHAIRS (OFFICE AREAS, EXECUTIVE RECEPTION, CEO'S, CREATIVE DIRECTOR'S



OFFICES): HERMAN MILLER. CUSTOM RAILS, CAPS, SKYLIGHT FRAMING, CURTAIN (STAIRWELL): UAD GROUP. CUSTOM STEPS (STAIRWELL), CUSTOM DESK (LOBBY): GET REAL SURFACES. DESKS (EXECUTIVE RECEPTION, PRESIDENT'S OFFICE): DUNE. FOLDING CHAIRS (EXECUTIVE RECEPTION): M2L. SOFA FABRIC: DE LA ESPADA. SOFAS (EXECUTIVE RECEPTION), OTTOMANS, PILLOWS, RUG (LOUNGE): PAOLA LENTI. FOLDING CHAIR UPHOLSTERY (EXECUTIVE RECEPTION), DAYBED UPHOLSTERY (LOUNGE), RUGS (CEO'S OFFICE): GLOBAL LEATHERS. CURTAIN FABRIC (SHOWROOM, LOUNGE): VALLEY FORGE FABRICS. CHAIRS (SHOWROOM): THROUGH SUNDANCE CATALOG COMPANY. CUSTOM TABLES (SHOWROOM, MEETING AREA), CUSTOM HANG BAR (SHOWROOM): DAVID G. FLATT FURNITURE. CHAIRS (MEETING AREA): CHERNER CHAIR COMPANY. CHAIRS (LOUNGE): THROUGH TROY; CALITEX (FABRIC). TRACK LIGHTS (SHOWROOM): LITE-LAB CORPORATION. OTTOMANS (PRESIDENT'S OFFICE): OBJECTIQUES. SEATING FABRIC: BOGESUNDS VÄVERI. WORKSTATIONS (OFFICE AREA): KNOLL. SIDE CHAIRS (CEO'S OFFICE): GORDON INTERNATIONAL. LAMP: MOMA DESIGN STORE. CUSTOM TABLE: DYAD. GUEST CHAIRS (CREATIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE): VITRA. MILLWORK: RETAYLOR'S INTERIORS. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: L'OBSERVATOIRE INTERNATIONAL. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: ROBERT SILMAN ASSOCIATES. MEP: THOMAS POLISE CONSULTING ENGINEER. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: MACKENZIE KECK.

