

INTERIOR DESIGN

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INTERIOR DESIGN GIANTS II

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Ellen Tracy

James D'Auria transposes the firm's product distinctions to his design of the New York showroom.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WARCHOL

Long known as an expert in apparel showroom design—and proud rather than apologetic about deliberately maintaining his narrow focus in specialization, despite current trends to broaden one's targeted markets—James D'Auria not surprisingly won the Ellen Tracy commission on the strength of his reputation. Also in character was his basic approach. Dedicated to the proposition that no two fashion concepts are created equal, he follows a "philosophy of appropriateness," crafting environments that best suit the pertinent client. This, he states under relentless questioning, holds true even if claims to distinction appear to be identical. *Quality of workmanship*, an example of frequently professed identity, in this instance is carried over almost literally from fashion product to interior design. Thus fine sewing construction is expressed by exacting detailing, choice fabrics by uncommon materials. Additionally the client's corporate credo, referring to the firm's clothes as being dedicated to "the modern woman and the life she lives today," is translated into distinctly contemporary design.

In the 20,000-sq.-ft. showroom (about 16,000 of them devoted to the main-level sportswear division, the remainder to the relatively new dress line below) in Manhattan's garment district, the stated design treatment, with

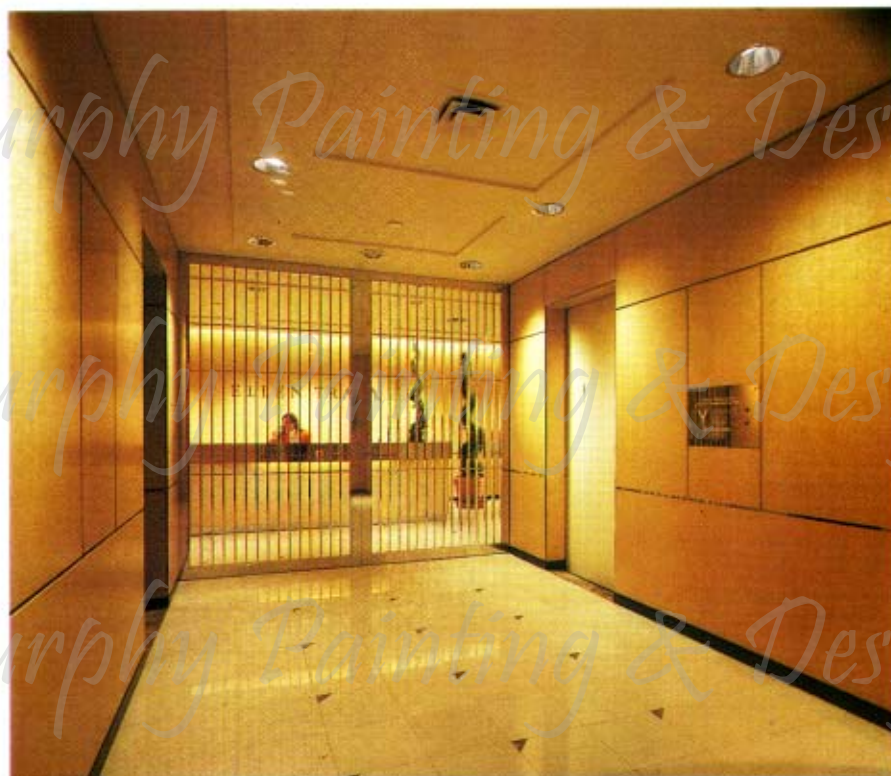
emphasis on detailing, is visible as soon as one enters. Walls in the elevator bank are paneled with bird's-eye maple scored with stainless steel reveals. Floors are paved with periline marble and accented with darker paradiso stone in triangle shapes, laid to suggest a carpet runner. Molding delineates and animates the ceiling, stainless steel gates lock in the linearity. The design approach is continued in the nearby waiting area, with slight deviations seen in silk wall upholstery and custom-colored grayed/beige leather (described by D'Auria as "truly neutral: neither hot nor cold"). Picture railing here is both functional and decorative, serving as it does its intended purpose of suspending wall hangings while adding the finishing touch to rows of reveals.

Since the dress collection, its smaller show space notwithstanding, ranks as high in corporate thinking as

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Opposite: Office of fashion designer contains table/desk, its legs tipped with silver-leafing, for work and informal meetings. Folding doors screen storage wall.

Below: Main reception room as seen from elevator bank, where bird's-eye maple walls with stainless steel reveals and marble flooring with triangular insets introduce uncommon materials/ detailing seen through.



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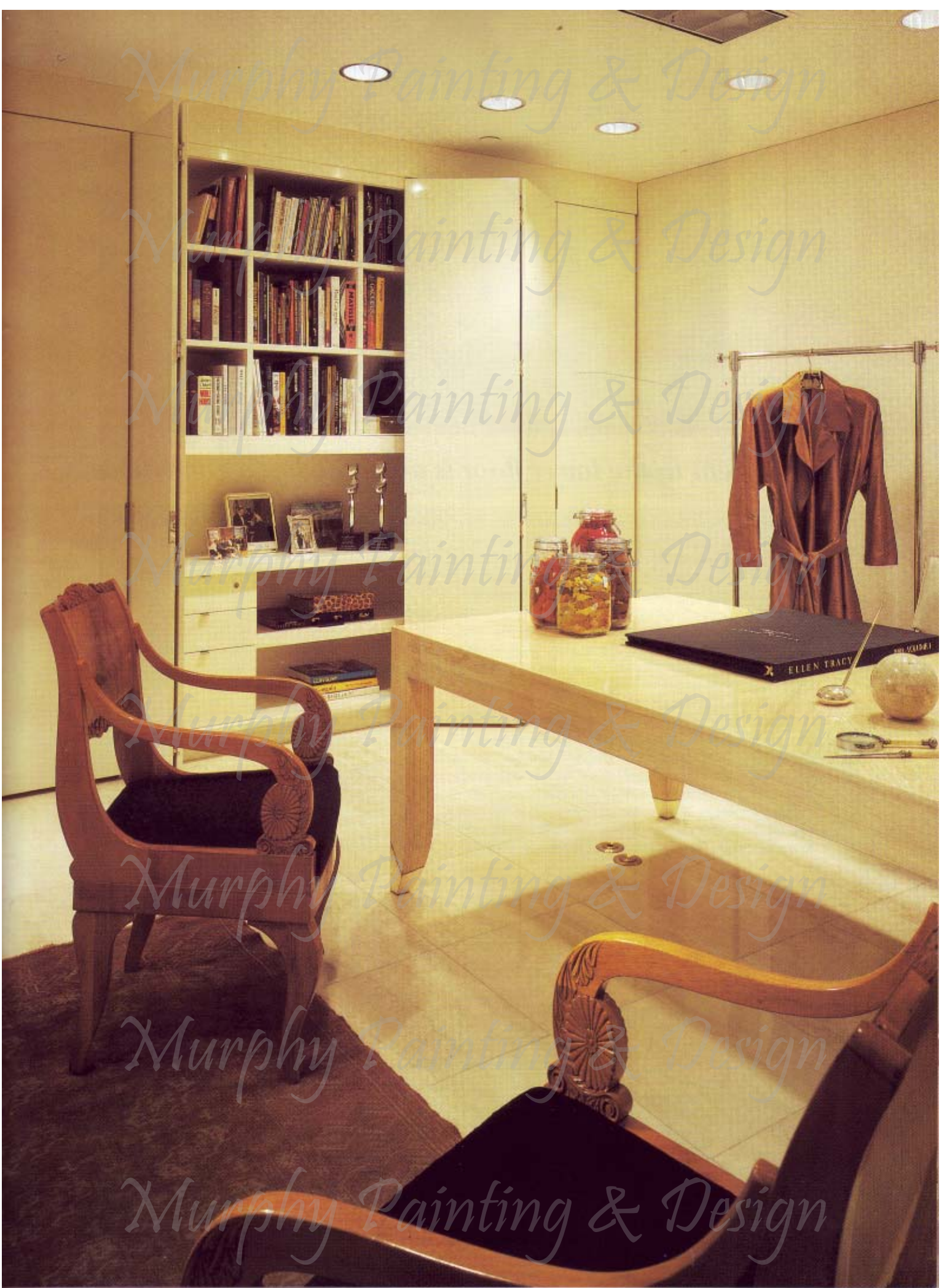
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...descent to the lower floor is anything but a comedown

does the perhaps better-known sportswear line, the descent to the lower floor is anything but a comedown. Stairs are truly grand, utilizing marble treads and stainless steel railings. Walls are glazed; furnishings vouch for quality. Even the long upper corridor, a transitional passage followed by visiting buyers en route from one level to the other, is given unabated attention and care. It is lined with display niches intended to create a kind of ceremonial rhythm; wall reveals support slip-in custom brackets for fashion styles and fabric lengths. Vertical surrounds alternate wood panels with glazed planes.

Although D'Auria most likely would insist that any part of every assignment is the best ever, his office for Linda Allard, Ellen Tracy's fashion designer, emerges as a special favorite. The occupant herself is the undisguised reason. She is, the spokesman asserts, alert to recognizing new concepts, always receptive to fresh ideas and responsive in her evaluations. In short, he thought it a joy to work with her. Reverting to objectivity, he points to the

large table/desk in her 320-sq.-ft. quarters, noting its double role as work and meeting center; cites the silver-leafed leg caps as further evidence of fine detailing; and stresses the clutter-concealing assets of folding doors that screen a storage unit incorporating a desk counter and library shelving. Walls are upholstered with silk; flooring is of granite; chairs and antique rug are her own.

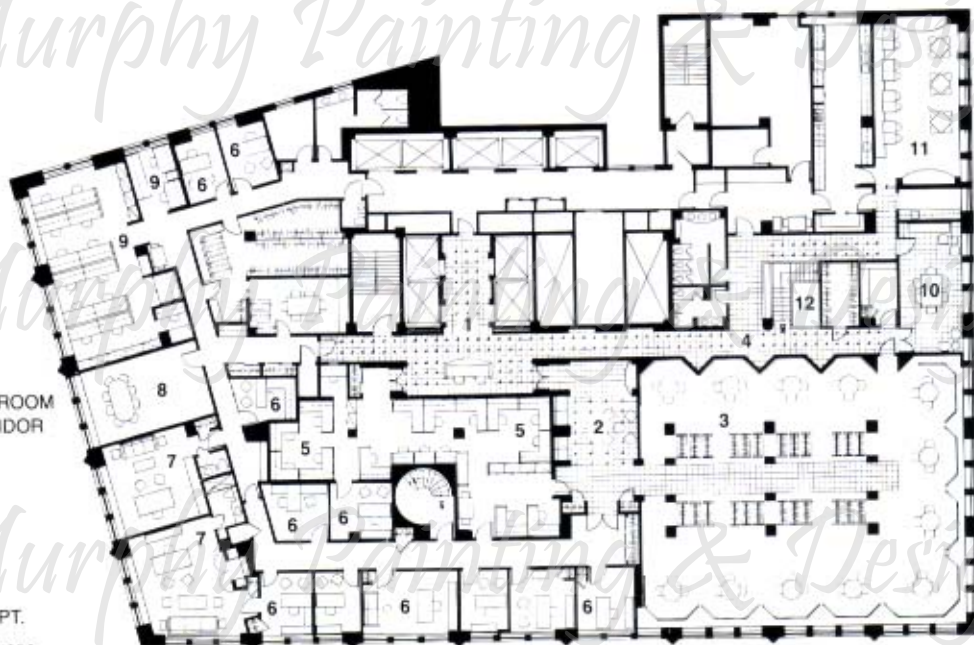
Working with the design principal was associate John James. Budget release is barred.

MONICA GERAN

Above: Stairs with marble treads and stainless steel railings connect sportswear spaces with dresses displayed below.

Architectural woodworking: Hird Blaker; Cozzolino • **Metalwork:** Norris Metals • **Decorative wall painting:** Maer Murphy • **Custom banquettes:** Carl Olmstead • **Wall upholstery:** Jules Edlin (fabrication); fabrics: Ian Wall; Roger Arlington • **Window treatment:** Delon Freres (installation); fabric: J. Robert Scott • **Furniture:** Karl Springer (desk and drum table in designer's office); Atelier International (leather-covered seating in waiting room); The Pace Collection (end tables on lower level) • **Lighting:** Lightolier; Lucifer Lighting • **Marble supplier:** Stone Source • **Lighting consultant:** Hayden McKay • **General contractor:** Herbert Construction

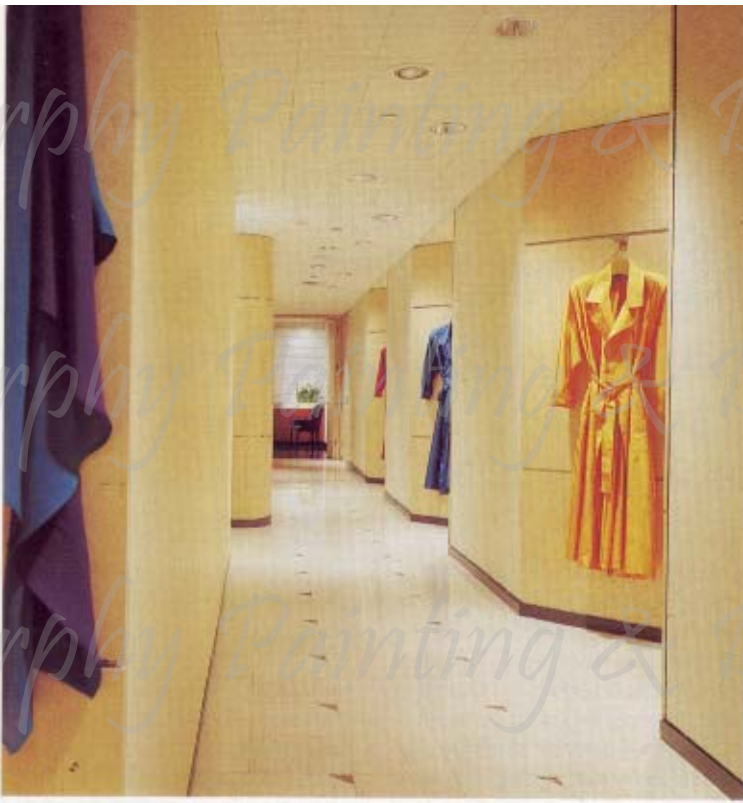
- 1 RECEPTION
- 2 WAITING
- 3 SPORTSWEAR SHOWROOM
- 4 TRANSITIONAL CORRIDOR
- 5 SALES
- 6 OFFICE
- 7 EXECUTIVE OFFICE
- 8 CONFERENCE
- 9 DESIGN
- 10 PRIVATE DINING
- 11 DINING
- 12 STAIRS TO DRESS DEPT.



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Right: Long corridor, treated as transitional passage linking sportswear and dress levels, contains display niches for fashions and fabrics. Visible at far end is executive dining room.



Below: Custom banquettes and other seating in main waiting area are covered in grayed beige leather dyed to specifications. Whereas triangular marble inlays elsewhere trace outlines of carpet runners, here they suggest an area rug.

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