



City Bites

Edwin Bronstein, AIA, brings the New Wave to a Philadelphia restaurant.

PHOTOGRAPHER: COURTNEY WINSTON

Viewing the movie *Starstruck*, looking at David Hockney paintings and listening to New Wave music is scarcely the stuff of which the usual design briefing is made. But this is exactly what Edwin Bronstein, AIA, and the client—an established Philadelphia restaurateur with whom the architect had worked over the past ten years—did. The client, says Bronstein, “was ready for the big risk. This was to be a restaurant that was fun, different and on the cutting edge of what is now aesthetically acceptable.” This by way of background for the City Bites look—a collage of off-beat scenes combined as a loose interpretation of the New Wave cultural phenomenon.

Before Bronstein faced the fun of staging his theatrics, he had to deal with both a strict time limitation and design problems inherent to the space—7,488 square feet that would eventually seat 250. The ten-week time frame meant that elements had to be custom designed (of inexpensive but durable materials) even while the interiors were being renovated. Then, there was the space itself, formerly a successful restaurant. To save the time and expense of creating a new kitchen, Bronstein decided to work around the existing floor plan. The kitchen was centrally located; the front-of-the-house domain snaked around the perimeter. The main problem concerned traffic flow. Bronstein explains that the entry was at the rear of the restaurant while the prime seating area was along the glass front, facing

Continued

Above and on our cover: View down the corridor. The sculpture, a porcelain piece entitled *Dog/Man*, is by Liz Stuart and is one of many avant-garde works in the installation.

Right: A windowless narrow corridor leading from the rear entry to the prime up-front seating area was made to appear even darker with blue paint and narrower with a series of enclosed booths. The booths, all with irregularly shaped backs and cutouts, are assembled on a perspective-distorting angle. The faux marble lintel complements the floor.





Photographer: Dorothy Alexander

Memphis Fallout? Not Dangerous

This morning the *New York Times* offered, as accompaniment to our coffee, a selection of work by young avant-garde designers of custom (not by any stretch of the imagination mass-produced) furniture. Our spies in California, meanwhile, report a similar phenomenon: at Los Angeles' Whiteley Gallery, for example, tables, chairs, clocks, and television cabinets given bizarre new forms and finishes and presented under the fearful name "L. A. Apocalypse." A visit to SoHo's Milliken Gallery is likely to turn up the latest furniture marvel of Wendell Castle, and an onyx table by Scott Burton was recently seen at the Whitney Museum among much less utilitarian sculpture.

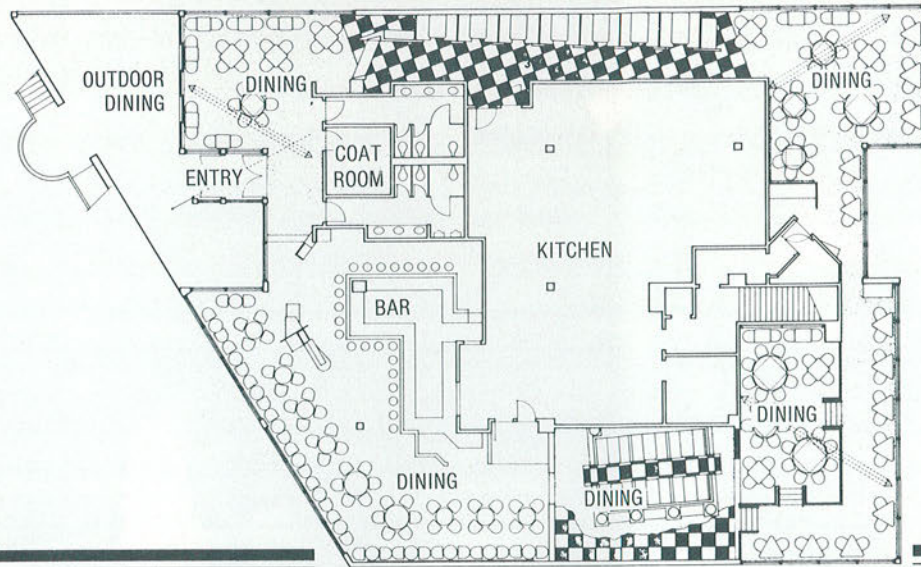
Now Denise M. Domergue has written a book, soon to be published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., called *Artists Design Furniture*. It shows what happens when 150 well-known artists, including Jim Dine, Robert Rauschenberg and Mark di Suvero, turn their attention to sofas, lamps and bookcases.

Two questions arise about all this work. First, is it just a we-should-have-known-it-would-happen reaction to Ettore Sottsass' Memphis collection, first introduced at the Milan furniture fair in 1981 and commented on in these pages by both Edie Cohen and George Nelson? Or was Sottsass' group just a bit more precocious in detecting a *zeitgeist* that would soon have artists all over the world twisting chair legs and splattering enamel? Or is Memphis irrelevant, and the American work a product of independent artistic urges or of the hunger of galleries for new goods to sell? The question is probably unanswerable. At any rate, there is a more interesting question:

Can anyone sit on these chairs? Or balance an ash-tray on these tables? Is Robert Rauschenberg really knowledgeable about ergonomics? I assume not, but never mind. While all of us opt for comfort, usefulness, and healthy posture for ourselves and for our clients, none of us should be satisfied with that alone. We must as well guard against the visually moribund, and the infusion of wit, good humor, good ideas and—to be sure—bad and silly ideas from those on the periphery of serious furniture design and production can't help but to jar our preconceptions and free our imaginations. A chair must not only suit our bottoms and our backs; we also experience furniture with our eyes and our minds, so what these artists are telling us may be well worth listening to. We'll be showing some of it here in coming months.

STANLEY ABERCROMBIE, AIA

City Bites



river views. How to move people through two uninteresting corridors to this up-front zone posed the problem.

The solution centered on the environments—described as tongue-in-cheek or campy—that were created in each hallway. One narrow windowless passage was made even more so when Bronstein darkened the walls with deep blue paint and further narrowed the area with an assemblage of booths along a perspective-distorting angle. The second passageway, an area with a high ceiling and clerestory windows, was the site for a Doric-columned temple in which the dining environment was filled with 'fifties diner imagery. "No one ever wanted to sit in that area before," says Bronstein. Now, with its turquoise banquettes, brushed aluminum edged tables and round headlight fixtures, it is one of the most popular zones in the house.

Adjacent to this temple site is the bar, an existing fixture given a new face with pink and white ceramic tile and bright yellow paint. Continuing the progression through the restaurant, one reaches the front area where

Continued

Both photographs: A Doric temple construction surrounds a dining area characterized as having a "Fifties diner motif." The seats built into the exterior of the construction are meant to accommodate overflow from the adjacent bar area. In the previous restaurant, this had been an area where no one wanted to sit; now, Bronstein reports it's one of the most popular. The silkscreen print is by Keith Haring and comes from the Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York. The ceramic piece, *Dog-Woman with Asparagus*, is by Jack Thomson and comes from the Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia.



City Bites



presumably the most desirable seating is located. All tables at the window are triangular shaped deuces, while those stepped back but still with access to the views are for larger parties. The black metal structure that defines this front zone was, says Bronstein, "a quick and cost efficient way to change the lighting." It serves to anchor supplementary accent fixtures while retaining the ceiling and existing lighting scheme as it was.

In addition to all of this, there are works of art that make a vital contribution to this avant-garde concept. Pieces by upcoming Philadelphia and New York artists were purchased by the client, and include the "Killer Rocking Horse" sculpture, the dog sculpture standing near the bar, and an abstract construction with headlights by Bronstein. Several of the pieces are hung on stretches of brilliant yellow chain-link fencing that line three of the walls. Since the painted Sheetrock walls needed texture and depth, the fence, very much a part of the city landscape, seemed the perfect inexpensive solution.

With its bright, sometimes garish colors, bizarre imagery, and art that frankly needs explaining to this observer, City Bites is very much of a particular culture at a particular time. Yet won't this very trendiness—so appealing in its diversity now—ultimately make the place look dated and perhaps contribute to its demise? A definite possibility. "We realize that it will have a short life—maybe three or four years, but that's O.K.," says Bronstein. Even during its life span, limited though it may be, the designer foresees periodic changes in decor. In one respect, however, the design is a resounding success. Whether people love the place or hate it, virtually every patron asks for a complete tour before deciding where to sit.

Assisting Bronstein on the design team were John Chase and Rachel Simmons. **E.C.**

This page: The restaurant's most desirable seating area is up-front where the glass elevation looks out to river views. The window covering, which can easily be adjusted by patrons, is flameproof ballooning fabric, as is that in the metal structure. Just back from the tables at the window is a raised platform (existing) from which still more diners enjoy the view.

Opposite: To the left of the console is the refinished bar and the lounge seating. The construction with the headlight, by Bronstein, separates additional lounge seating from the bar area. Above the piece is a monitor that lists daily specials. Chain-link fencing, beyond, is a novel display vehicle for art.

*General contractor: Ron Markee
Window fabric: Howe & Bainbridge
Chair fabric: Clarence House
Booth upholstery material: Naugahyde by Uniroyal
Drapery workroom: Foamland Inc.
Custom tables: Palko Designs & Mfg.
Table tops: Nevamar
Lighting, metal structure: Options Lighting
Fencing: Alexander's Chain Link Fence Co.
Columns (custom): Schwed Mfg.
Marble: Integrity Tile
Carpet: Wunda Weve
Vinyl tile: Kentile
Faux marbre: Tish and John Albright
Chairs: Empire State Chair*



Then and Now

Bank of Orange County (California)

interiors by John Wolcott Associates Inc.

fuse old architectural elements with contemporary lines.



PHOTOGRAPHER: MARSHAL SAFRON

The main objective in converting the historic Hull Building of Culver City, California, into suitable premises for the Bank of Orange County was to create a unified entity melding contemporary interiors with the original 1928 architecture. But even more challenging, one has to deduce, was the schedule set and met: an all-embracing nine weeks' time span.

These background notes, culled from the briefing supplied by director of design/project designer Michael Bensch of John Wolcott Associates, further indicate that the connective links between then and now were interpreted via colors, materials and forms. Starting with the latter, it was the curving asymmetrical shape of the building (see floor plan) that suggested the free-flowing configurations of interior function allocations and tellers' line placement. Old exterior tiles, now replaced with

new look-alike ceramic surfacing, similarly are repeated on the inside. Another material associated with late 20's/early 30's buildings in this country, Bensch points out, is glass block. This, too, is a major element today defining the layout and emphasizing the fluidity of con-

Continued

This page: A recessed entry, adjacent to the rounded corner formerly containing the front door, accommodates a sheltered area with walk-up teller station. **Opposite:** Serpentine configuration of main tellers' line and overhead detailing repeat the free-flowing contours of the landmark building. Neon strips at counters and ceiling, glass block, and sconces further recall the late 1920's period.





INTERIOR DESIGN

APRIL 1984



BANK DESIGN PORTFOLIO
RESIDENCES BY SCRUGGS • MYERS AND CHARLES PFISTER
PROFILE OF A YOUNG FIRM: MOJO/STUMER



73361164667

It's easy to see why Kentile's Kencove® vinyl wall base is such a favorite with architects and designers. For one thing, Kencove means quality. It's made with a unique formulation that insures dimensional stability. It won't shrink. So it looks and holds better. Lasts a long time. Won't fade. Won't crack. Won't chip. Won't ever need painting. Ends butt up evenly and stay together. And

you'll find that its top lip is always snug against the wall.

Corners, too, are always snug. Because you can easily form Kencove into one seamless corner piece right on the job. Of course, Kentile® also makes pre-formed corners. And for carpeted floors, there's also Kentile vinyl straight base.

In short, Kencove adapts to any architectural condition you can

name. Which is why jobs well done are always done with Kencove. Kencove comes in 11 decorator colors. In 2½" and 4" heights in 48" lengths and 96' rolls. And in 6" heights in 48" lengths only. White in 2½" and 4" heights in 48" lengths only. Call your Kentile representative now.



Kentile Floors Inc., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215



the Kentile decision.

It's the easiest one you'll ever make.