

# ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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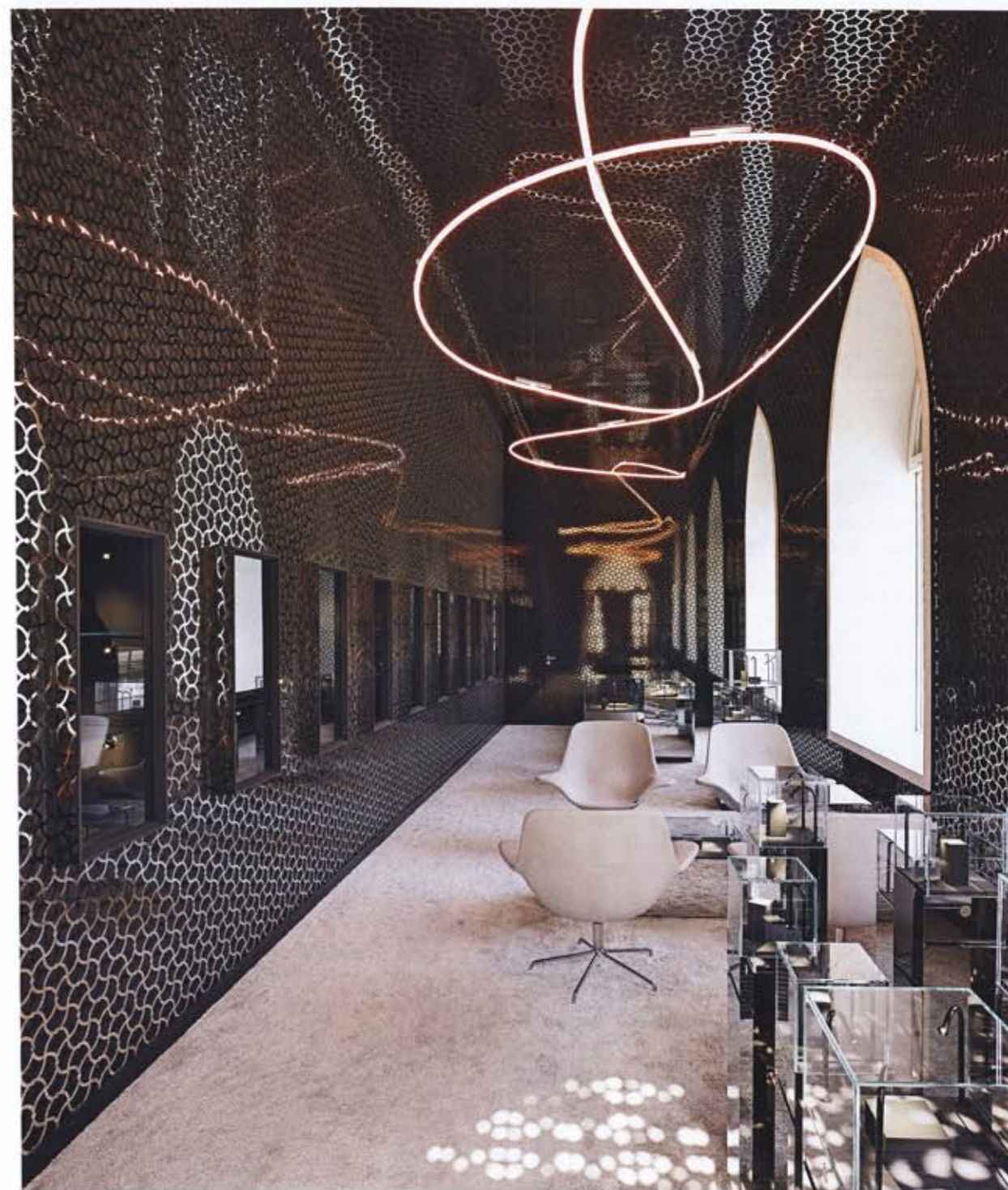
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RECORD INTERIORS 2010





PROJECT **BELFRY TASHKENT**  
 LOCATION **TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN**  
 ARCHITECT **IPPOLITO FLEITZ GROUP**  
 BY **WILLIAM HANLEY**



OPPOSITE: The stainless-steel scrim covering the walls and ceilings of the sales floors was laser cut by the Bavarian company RIEDL and assembled on-site by the building team.

LEFT: Patterns created by light entering through arched windows and reflecting off of the walls change throughout the day.

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**THE CITY OF TASHKENT JUST CELEBRATED ITS 2,200TH BIRTHDAY**, but the Uzbek capital, once a stop on the Silk Road, has retained little of its ancient architecture. In 1966, a 5.0-magnitude earthquake mostly leveled the city's historic center of clay-brick buildings. The Soviet Union rebuilt with modern structures lining wide boulevards. But in the decades since Soviet rule, the Uzbek government has redeveloped the area with an eye toward bringing traditional ornamentation back to the city's architecture while creating a sophisticated capital that embraces an international brand of contemporary design.

One of its recent efforts, the International Forums Palace, anchors a prominent site on Tashkent's Amir Timur Square. A large convention hall – and an outward-looking public face for Uzbekistan – it was designed by a local team, but officials decided to bring in Stuttgart-based Ippolito Fleitz Group for the interiors. Pleased with the result, officials also asked the German firm to design interiors for the adjacent



Belfry Tashkent, a 3,600-square-foot retail space selling traditionally made jewelry, housed in a re-created historic bell tower.

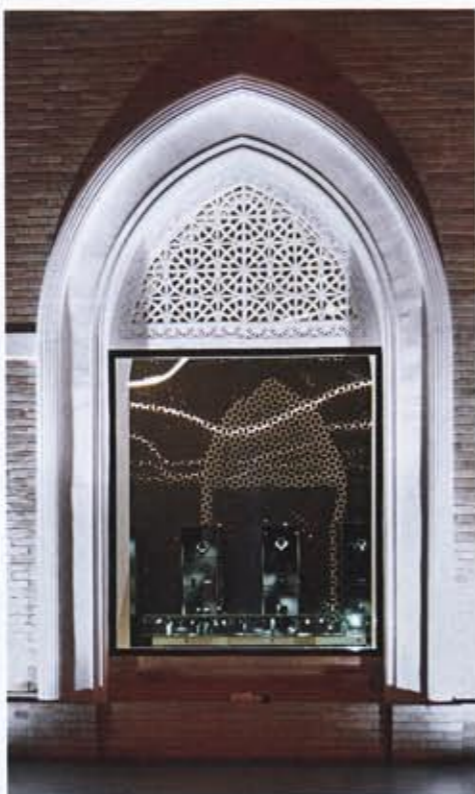
For the store, the firm produced a jewel-box space designed to appear contained and precious but also wrapped in seemingly infinite layers of ornament. "We wanted to interpret the ornamental architectural history of Uzbekistan in a very modern context," says firm principal Gunter Fleitz.

The central conceit hinges on a polished stainless-steel scrim laser-cut into a reductive version of an arabesque pattern. It lines both the ceiling and the walls of two long showrooms and hovers just above the nearly black painted surfaces in order to make it difficult for the eye to discern the actual depth of the spaces. According to Fleitz, "The room doesn't have an end."

Working with Pfarré Lighting Design, the firm also developed a lighting scheme to accentuate the sense of never-ending ornamentation. In both showrooms, pointed-arch windows punctuate the otherwise hermetic space. The focused beams that they admit bounce off of the highly polished scrim to create patterns. Above, a serpentine cold-cathode lighting element draws a gestural line across the ceiling, adding another level of reflected embellishment.

Amid the swirling patterns, LEDs and adjustable spotlights allow the store to fix attention to the objects on the sales floors. "You can change the lighting easily, and in every showcase there are several focal points," says Fleitz.

The plays of focus and abstraction, traditional and modern that occur throughout the project stem from the firm adapting its ideas to a different design history, says Fleitz. "It's not our idea to bring a kind of German architecture to Uzbekistan. We wanted to find an interpretation of their historic architectural language. Of course, it's an interpretation from our point of view." The result is the kind of space Uzbek officials were seeking: It edifies an idea of tradition but projects a cosmopolitan outlook. ■



LEFT: A milled-acrylic silver mirror covered with transparent gray foil and mounted in traditionally styled window frames bounces reflected patterns back on the stainless-steel scrim.

OPPOSITE: Beyond massive wooden doors at the two entries – which heighten the sense of enclosure – and the crisp white furnishings, the only fixed points in the shifting layers of decoration are the vitrines and wall cases that display jewelry.



- 1 ENTRANCE
- 2 SALES FLOOR
- 3 LIBRARY/CONFERENCE ROOM
- 4 RESTROOMS
- 5 BELFRY

#### CREDITS

**PROJECT:** Belfry Tashkent, Uzbekistan  
**ARCHITECT:** Ippolito Fleitz Group – Peter Ippolito, managing partner; Gunter Fleitz, managing partner; Steffen Ringler, project director  
**INTERIOR DESIGNERS:** Alexander Fehre, Christian Kirschenmann, Tilla Goldberg  
**LIGHTING CONSULTANT:** Pfarré Lighting Design  
**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** RIEDL Messebau, Ladenbau und Objektbau GmbH

#### SOURCES

**ENTRANCES:** Handcrafted wood doors  
**WALL PANELING AND MIRRORS:** RIEDL Messebau, Ladenbau und Objektbau  
**CARPET:** Kasthall  
**CHAIRS:** Offect  
**LIGHT SCULPTURE:** Lichtlauf  
**DISPLAY LIGHTING:** Roblon

