

# INTERIOR DESIGN

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international style

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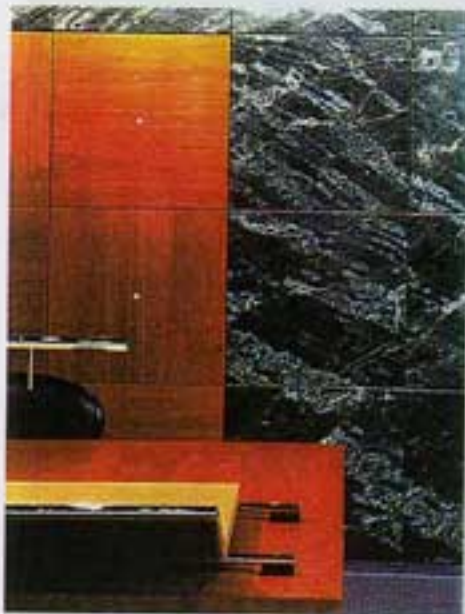
# Law and Order

Designer Jaume Tresserra makes a grand entrance and builds a library for the Cuatrecasas law firm in Barcelona.

THE LUXURY OF BUILT-IN ASHTRAYS AND leather-clad magazine trays distinguishes the Cuatrecasas law firm's Barcelona offices from the comparatively dour interiors of many American law firms. Prominent Spanish designer Jaume Tresserra recessed steel ashtrays into frosted-glass tabletops in the reception waiting area, where he also installed tawny-colored leather sofas and hung copper-plated sconces low on the wall, thus realizing the paradigmatic environment for dark-haired Catalonian power brokers who wear Armani suits, smoke cigarettes and hire lawyers.

Tresserra similarly outfitted the firm's library as part of a collaboration with GCA Arquitectes of Barcelona, who renovated three floors of the otherwise unsightly 1960s building to accommodate Cuatrecasas's 23 partners and 150-person staff. The design team has

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*Above: A pair of stainless steel rods supports leather-clad paper stand atop reception desk.*

*Right: GCA converted the existing light well into a skylit, glass-walled atrium. A new staircase allows for internal circulation between office floors.*

*Below: Walnut panels in San Denis marble wall conceal cabinets behind reception desk. Rotation of wood grain creates checkerboard effect.*

*ALL FURNITURE THROUGHOUT: TRESSERRA Collection, Barcelona; available through LeCoCo, Miami. CARPET: Mauricio Aschl, Barcelona.*

*PHOTOGRAPHY: LUIS CASALS*



worked together before, most notably on the chic, streamlined private apartments atop the Hotel Arts in Barcelona (*Interior Design*, February 1995).

An unlikely group of luminaries has collected Tresserra's intricately-crafted furnishings, including most notably Margaret Thatcher, Tina Turner and Jacques Chirac; and a Tresserra-designed desktop accessory featured in an apartment at the Hotel Arts has even appeared on the set of the movie *Batman*. For the Cuatrecasas project, Tresserra's work was limited to the reception area and library, but his taste for warm colors and natural materials prevails throughout.

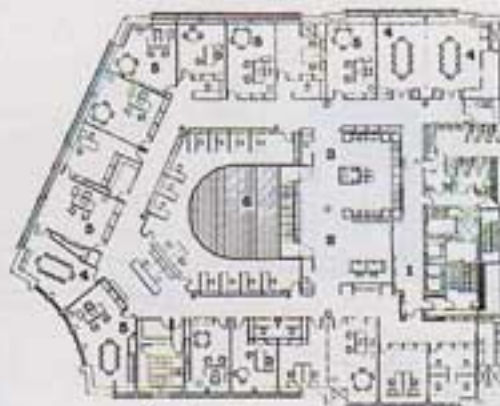
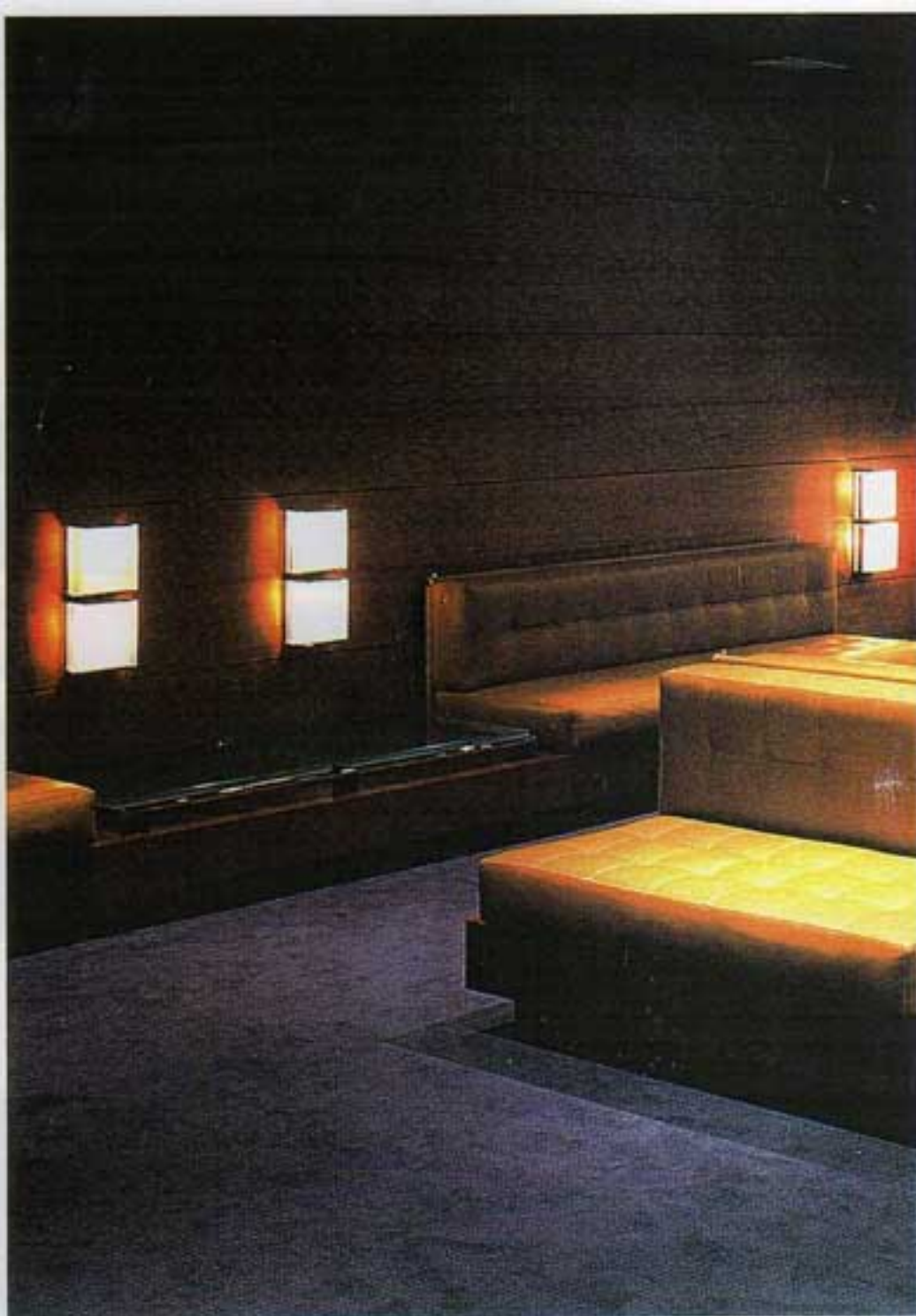
GCA reorganized the law offices with a simple parti. The library, reception area, conference rooms and open offices were located around an existing central light well, which the architects transformed into an atrium with the installation of a steel-supported glass roof and glass perimeter walls; an open corridor separates work stations facing the atrium from private offices flanking the building's street facades. The addition of a finely engineered staircase within the atrium allows for internal circulation between floors. Lest Cuatrecasas's employees toil under the mind-numbing tyranny of fluorescent lights, ambient lighting enhances the flood of daylight in the office areas.

The structural bravura of the atrium, dominated by the steel tension members, stainless steel handrail and green marble steps of the staircase, wholly complements the Miesian-cum-Deco look of the 50,000-sq.-ft. interior. Visitors enter the firm on its second level, as if onto a *piano nobile*, where

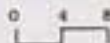
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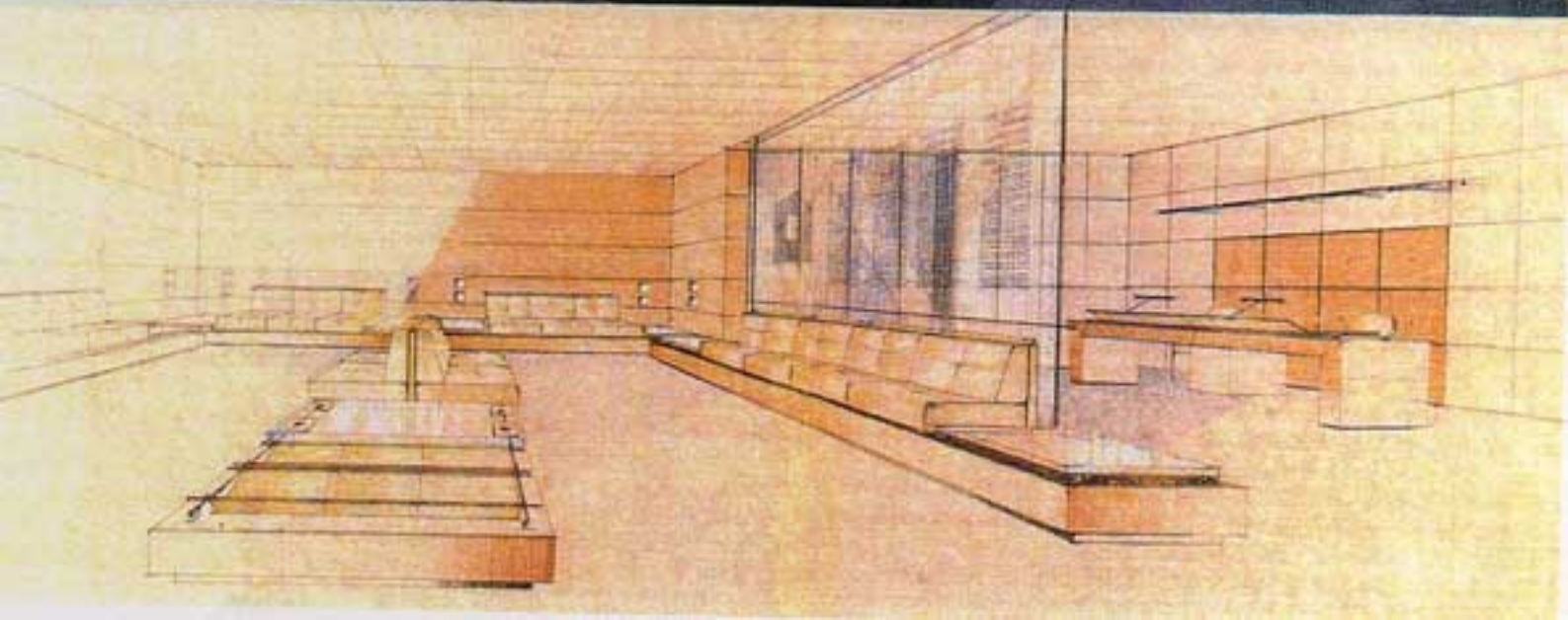
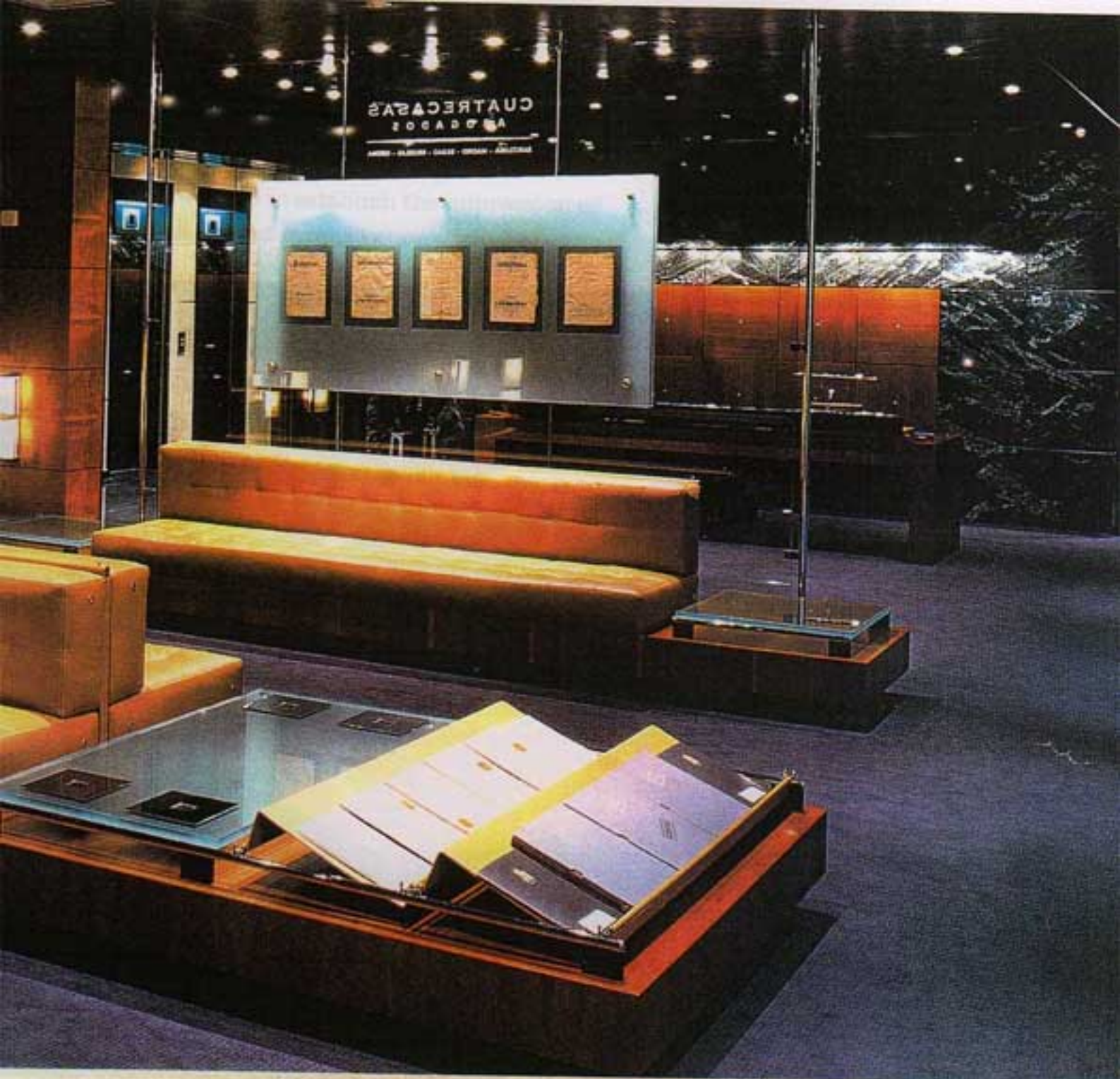
*Above and opposite: Tresserra's drawing of reception and waiting area shows symmetrical arrangement of built-in sofas as seen from atrium. Spanish white walnut adorns walls in waiting area. Names of the firm's partners are engraved in the glass partition.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOAN MUNDO

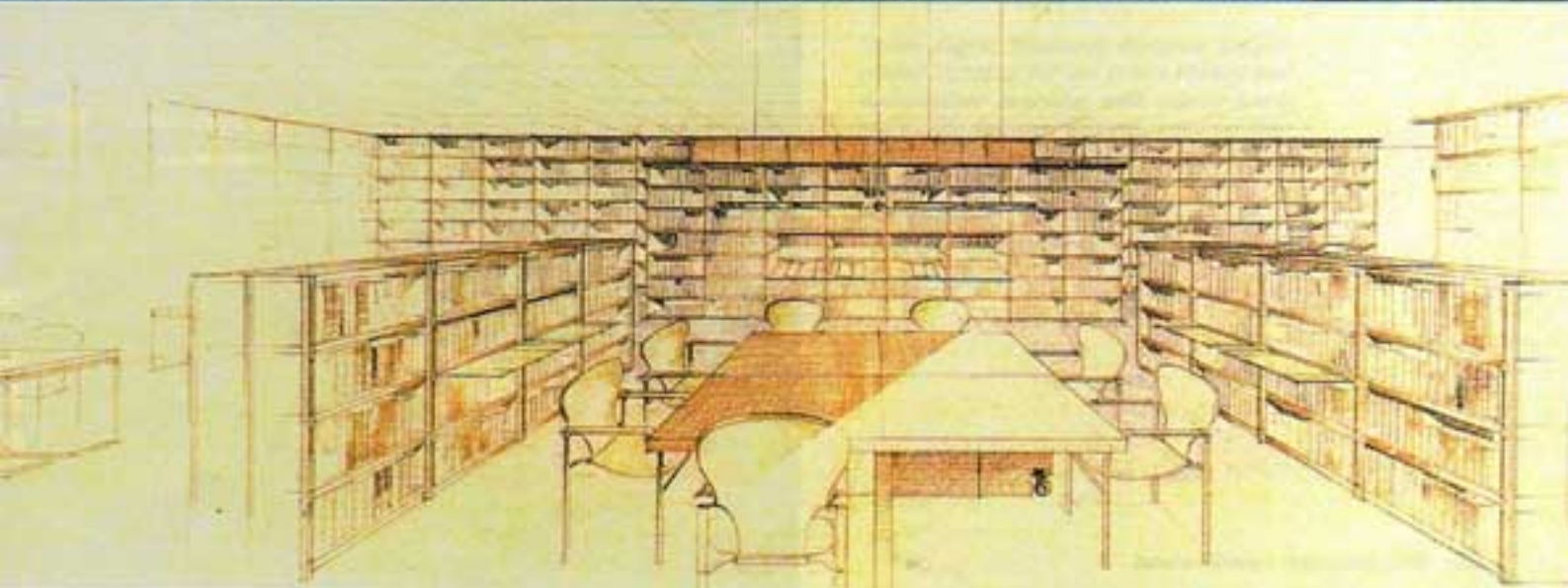


- 1 ELEVATOR LOBBY
- 2 RECEPTION
- 3 WAITING AREA
- 4 CONFERENCE ROOM
- 5 OFFICE
- 6 ATRIUM
- 7 WORK STATIONS





Tresserra wanted to establish the impression of a "strict, solid and serene rationalism."

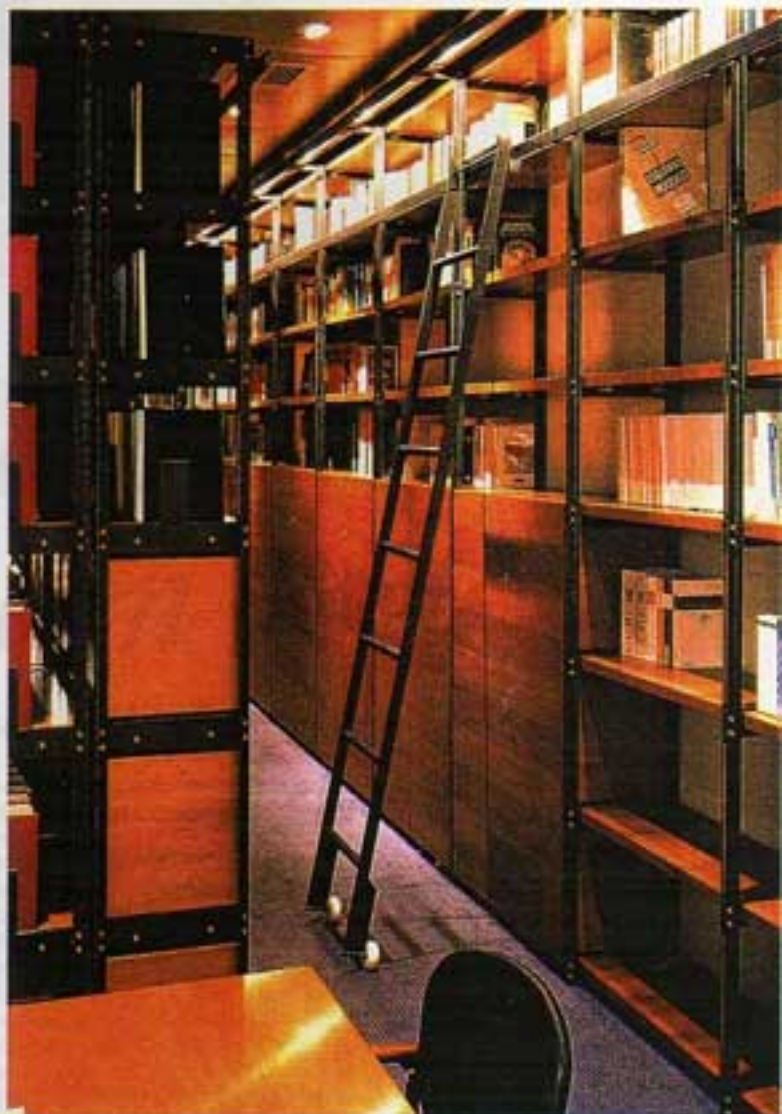


Tresserra wanted to establish the impression of a "strict, solid and serene rationalism." The intricate simplicity of the Tresserra-designed white walnut reception desk plainly conveys corporate sobriety and prestige, as opposed to the current predilection for unfortunately overwrought reception desks that one might describe as freestanding sculpture.

A glass partition engraved with the names of the firm's partners screens the reception desk from the waiting area. Here, Tresserra's symmetrical arrangement of leather-upholstered benches orients visitors to the atrium and echoes the organization of the library, located directly overhead on the floor above. This room, like the waiting area, showcases furniture and fixtures all designed by Tresserra, including copper-plated table lamps, reading tables and a delicate iron scaffold that supports three walls of continuous walnut bookshelves.

Tresserra succeeds, in this case, by virtue of his restraint. With a rigor suited to the pursuit of law and order, the designer elevates ordinary offices to the realm of architecture simply by emphasizing the quality of materials, craft of assemblage, and precision of the straight line.

M. LINDSAY BIERMAN



*These pages: Tresserra designed copper-plated lighting for the firm's library and embellished shelving with copper hardware. The designer's drawing shows view of library from atrium. Micro-perforated steel panels form acoustical ceiling.*

*PHOTOGRAPHY, LEFT: JOAN MUNDO; OPPOSITE PAGE AND ABOVE: LUIS CASALS*