

WALLS & CEILINGS

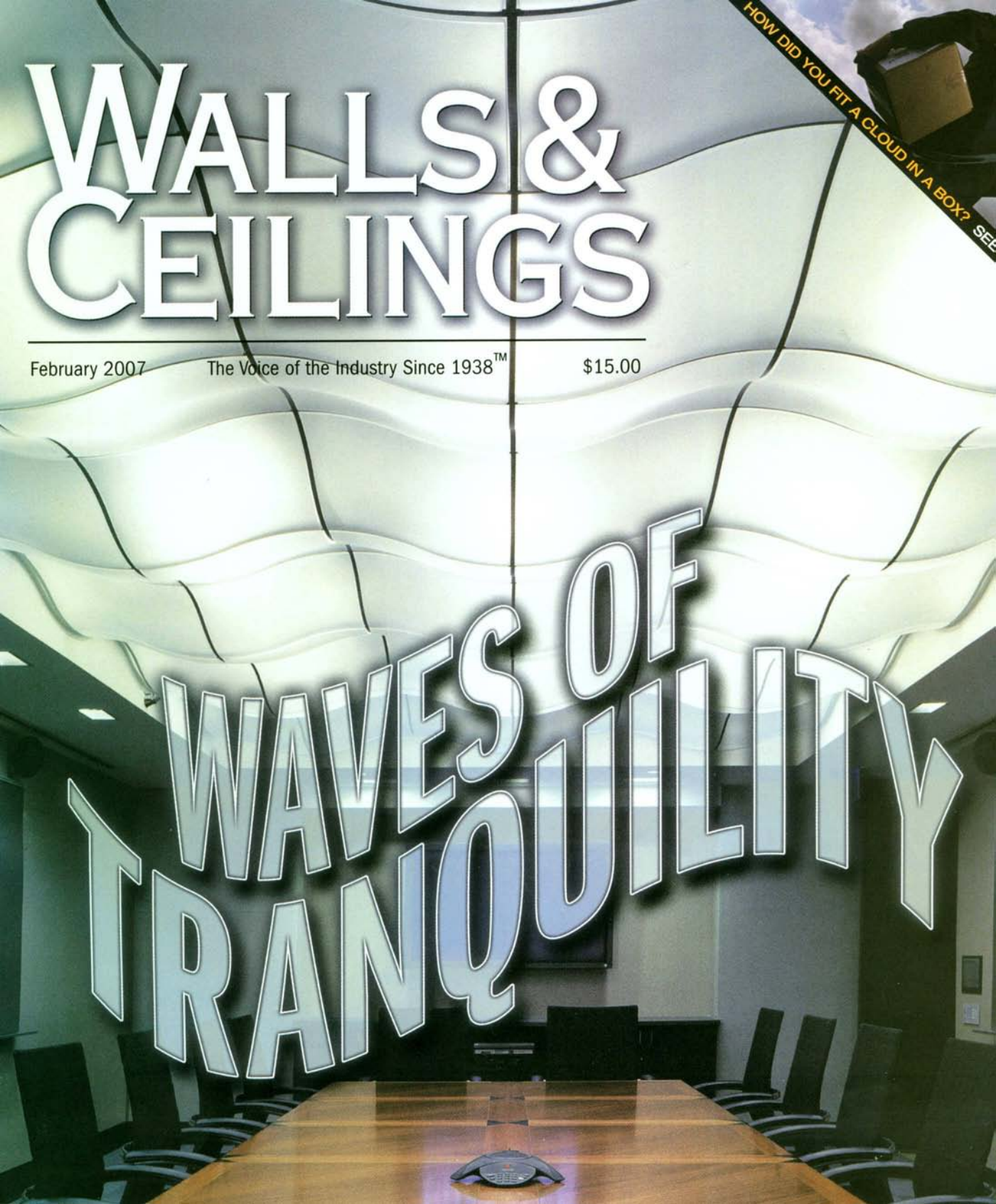
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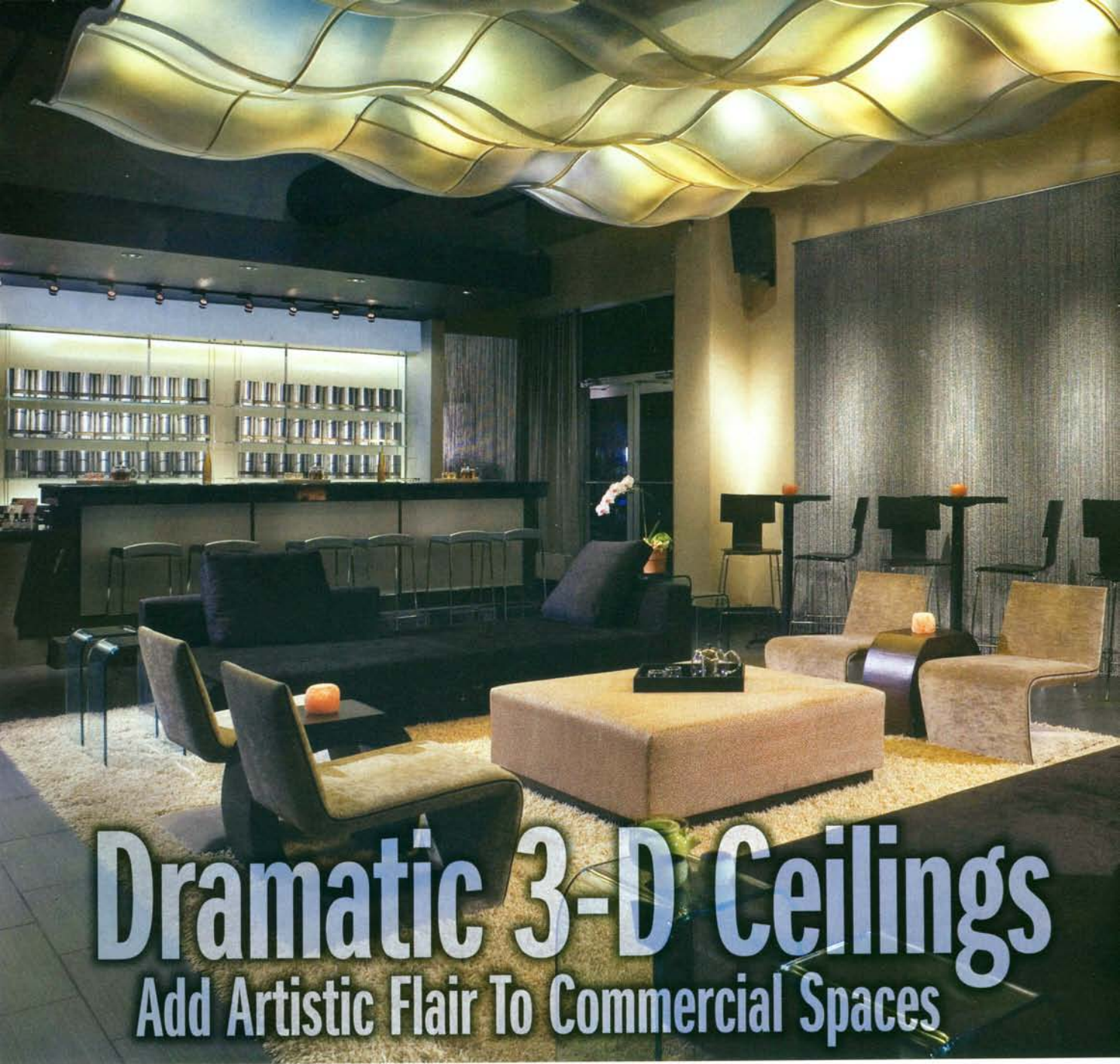
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WAVES OF TRANQUILITY





Dramatic 3-D Ceilings

Add Artistic Flair To Commercial Spaces

Utilizing specialty ceilings as an artistic element is one of the latest trends in commercial design. Three-dimensional shapes, cool colors and creative lighting add intrinsic drama to any space, large or small. By integrating materials as diverse as wood, metal, plastic, acrylic and glass into unusual forms and shapes, these unconventional ceilings not only make a visual statement, but reinforce the emotional feel of a space as well.

From offices, hospital waiting rooms and hotel lobbies to restaurants, store aisles and school cafeterias, architects, designers and builders are experimenting with a variety of ceiling styles, including domes and barrel-vaulted drywall

ceilings, open-celled and dropped ceilings, and three-dimensional suspended ceilings.

Recently, in Charlotte, N.C., a unique suspended ceiling, the TOPO 3-Dimensional System from USG, was chosen to add both drama and

serenity to the lounge area of a new loft-style spa, art gallery and tea bar.

FIT TO A TEA

The 3,500-square-foot Urbana City-spa & Teabar combines elements of a massage-only spa with a full-service tea bar to create an organic, international experience. The black granite bar serves 60 premium loose-leaf teas from around the world, while the spa features eight massage rooms where patrons can get 12 types of massages, including couples, Thai floor and barefoot massages.

“We wanted the physical surroundings to reflect a relaxed, com-



Translucent, wavy system adds serenity from above.

By Colleen Lyman



comfortable atmosphere," said Nancy Goodwin, president of Urbana. "In particular, we wanted the design of the lounge area to encourage patrons to spend time relaxing and drinking tea. We envisioned the lounge as the centerpiece that draws all the parts of the spa together."

To help direct visual interest toward the lounge area, the Charlotte office of Gresham, Smith and Partners, an architecture, engineering and interior design firm, suspended the 14-by-20-foot TOPO ceiling with black airplane cable thread over the seating area. Because the thread is barely visible, the ceil-

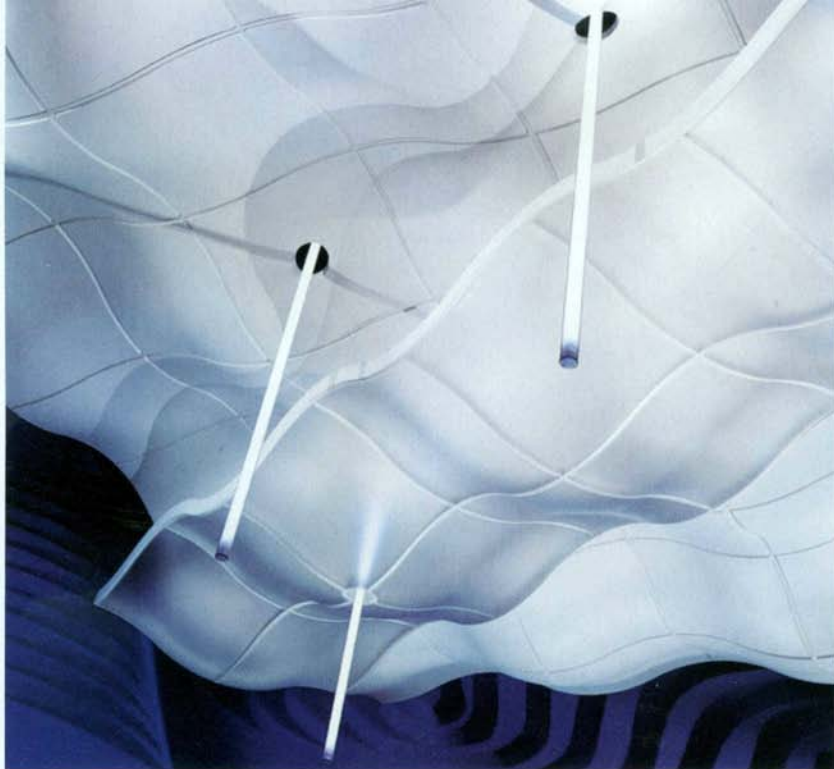
ing appears to float across the space. Moreover, the ceiling's clear, translucent color and undulating pattern simulate soothing waves gliding across an ocean.

That soothing feeling was exactly the mood that Urbana wanted to project.

"We wanted to create a feeling of total tranquility, said Melissa Teng, project interior designer from Gresham, Smith and Partners. "The ceiling's wave effect – like water cascading across the lounge – is fluid and tranquil. Dropping it several feet from the structure above also gave the room a warmer, more intimate feel."

The ceiling's dramatic impact is even more compelling at night.

"To create a 'glowing' effect, we installed special illumination," said Jim Starr, Urbana's construction coordinator. "All around the perimeter of the ceiling, at different angles, we tracked small MR-16 spotlights that have dichroic filters. These filters allow only one prism of light to filter through the lens. We chose to filter a warm peach color, which gives a beautiful, shadowing effect. The light literally washes the panels in an iridescent glow and creates a more textural image in the room."



The flooring and Italian furniture complemented the mood of the ceiling. Low-profile lounges and chairs by Minotti, all in chocolates and pale gold, form an intimate square in the central area. A charcoal gray Xilo porcelain tile floor and a gold frieze rug complete the cozy space.

The result was a relaxed, but hip, look. "There is a visual connection between the suspended ceiling and warm-toned furnishings, which makes the space so inviting," said Goodwin. "Our patrons love relaxing there, and the ceiling has not only achieved the wow factor we

were looking for, but has reinforced the escape we want to foster."

BOARDROOM BEAUTY

In another application, the specialty ceiling added the "pop" factor that DRAFT FCB, a large advertising agency in the fashionable Magnificent Mile area of Chicago, was looking for when updating its boardroom.

"The management wanted to modernize the 600-square-foot space in a bold way that would reinforce the company's image," said Scott Becker, project architect at Partners by DESIGN, incorporated, Chicago. "They hoped

to link the physical design of the room to their advertising vision – bold colors and cropped images."

After viewing various specialty ceilings, Becker also recommended the TOPO 3-Dimensional System as the perfect visual focal point for the agency's boardroom. The 12-by-24-foot clear translucent ceiling features 24-inch panels that transform the flat ceiling plane into an expressive undulating landscape full of form and dimension.

"The ceiling fills almost the entire space; the light wavy feel of the pattern creates visual interest while reinforcing the agency's 'pop' concept," Becker said. "While the ceiling adds drama that makes the whole room glow, it doesn't overpower the small, 12-by-38-foot space."

The ceiling also provided the perfect accent to the long conference table, plasma and video screens, and tack board surfaces that were all in understated gray and charcoal tones.

The creative uses for the 3-D specialty ceilings appear limitless. From spas to boardrooms, these artistic expressions have become integral design elements that not only add dramatic flair and visual appeal, but help reflect the function of the space and its inhabitants. **W&C**

Colleen Lyman is a freelance writer based in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. She writes frequently about ceiling design projects.

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