



Wow factor

Urbàna Cityspa & Teabar captivates guests with a ceiling of colorful, translucent waves

By Jessie Bove, Associate Editor

Oftentimes, the Urbàna Cityspa & Teabar, a loft-style spa, art gallery and tea bar in Charlotte, N.C., is referred to as “the spa with the cool ceiling,” says Scott Wilson, principal of Nashville, Tenn.-based Gresham Smith and Partners, the firm responsible for Urbàna’s design. In fact, it was Wilson who first recommended the TOPO 3-D System from USG to Urbàna’s president, Nancy Goodwin, as a way to incorporate a unique element into the space. The 12-ft.-by-24-ft. ceiling system is the focal point of the lounge area. At 3,500 sq. ft., Urbàna offers a massage-only spa with a full-service tea bar, and was designed to be extremely unique. “The space had to give the customer a sense of being out of the daily world and in an almost celestial space of calm serenity,” Wilson explains.

The design of Urbàna’s lounge/tea bar area is texture-on-texture, featuring 1-ft.-by-2-ft. Italian, charcoal-colored ceramic tiles with charcoal grout as the foundation for an oatmeal-colored frieze rug.

Ultra-contemporary, deep-brown sofas and champagne-colored chairs by Minotti lend sleekness to the space, Goodwin says. Earth-toned walls and a rust-colored accent wall in the reception area add warmth, while the ceiling and soffits are midnight blue, accented by a silvery-blue wall in the tea bar area. “Seventy stainless steel canisters of looseleaf tea float on suspended glass shelves in front of translucent panels that are illuminated from behind,” Goodwin explains. “MR-16 track lighting accents a wall of stainless steel beads, as well as a rotating art exhibit.”

The space was essentially designed around the ceiling, which is suspended by black airplane cables, and appears to be a sea of translucent waves floating in the center of the lounge, 10 ft. in the air. “As soon as guests walk into the tea bar entrance or walk from the reception into the lounge, they are drawn to it,” Goodwin says. “It creates an amazingly tranquil environment.”

The ceiling system adds serenity to the space by reducing the appearance of the 14-ft. open ceiling. Goodwin explains that it was important to make the space spa-like, with warm colors of rich beiges and rust, and with the inclusion of the TOPO ceiling, which gives the lounge area an intimate feel. Backlit with MR-16 bulbs with dichroic filters that give off a warm peach color, the ceiling system can alter the mood of the lounge depending on the time of day—a cooler feeling in the day and a warmer feeling at night.

The ceiling has been interpreted somewhat differently by those involved with the design process. Some see it as gentle rolling landscapes or a dreamy, serene cloud, while others describe it as bold, elegant and captivating. However, everyone seems to agree that it is the heart and soul of the space. “This is where we needed the wow factor,” Wilson says. “It softens the light and makes it much more interesting and complex.” **ddi**