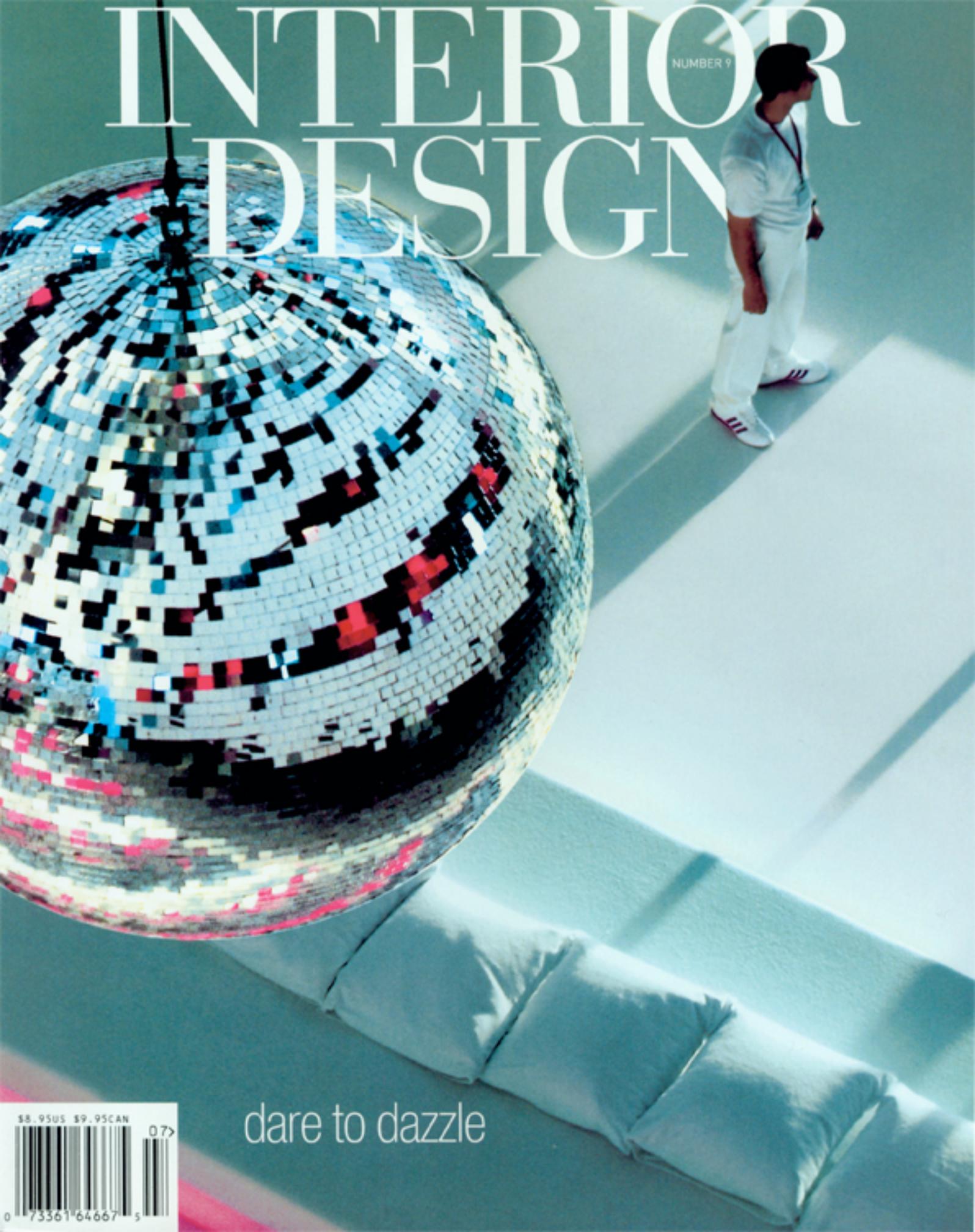


# INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 9



dare to dazzle

\$8.95US \$9.95CAN

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# no glass

At the Los Angeles office of the Feminist Majority Foundation and *Ms.* magazine, Lewis/Schoeplein gets a chance to excel

text: edie cohen photography: art gray

# ceiling





433

FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION  
JULY 2003

**Different clients, different priorities.** One childless New York bachelor may insist on decorating his Park Avenue spare bedroom as a nursery, while a Los Angeles trophy wife takes her designer shopping for a Jaguar XJ8. For L.A.'s Feminist Majority Foundation, in need of more space after the purchase of *Ms.* magazine, the prerequisite for an architect was being a woman.

As it turned out, the research organization opted for a woman and her husband, a team known as Lewis/Schoeplein Architects. Toni Lewis founded the firm in 1998; Marc Schoeplein joined two years ago. Beforehand, he was at Moore Ruble Yudell Architects & Planners—where he worked on the Malibu house of Feminist Majority Foundation board chair Peg Yorkin.

FMF had been proud of its existing headquarters, a single-story Richard Neutra building. Aside from the space issue, though, the rigid layout didn't mesh with Yorkin's description of the organization's vision: "A comfortable workplace where everyone is visible but privacy can be obtained when necessary." A 1950's building in Beverly Hills offered the right location and 10,000 square feet of space. As for the rest, Lewis/Schoeplein's renovation saved only the ductwork and core.

Changes began at the facade, which was plaster painted in drab gray and white. Lewis/Schoeplein decided on a fresh face of blue and green tones, then sparked up the fenestration with steel framing painted off-white. The architects continued their color story by replacing the aluminum-and-glass door at the building's double-height entry with one of blue-tinted tempered glass. And they discreetly placed new signage of sleek cast aluminum to the lower right.

The first impression is intentionally welcoming. "Our opening gesture was to bring people in," says Schoeplein. When they do enter, they find a 21-foot-high foyer that leads, via a flight of limestone steps, to reception. A plaster-coated canopy swoops overhead; pendant spheres and two round skylights provide illumination. In front of the reception desk, Lewis/Schoeplein set a round of tomato-red carpet into the honed-limestone floor, completing the scene with Jean Prouvé armchairs and a Maya Lin table. "The composition's levity →



**Previous spread, left:** An employee opens the front door at the shared Los Angeles office of the Feminist Majority Foundation and *Ms.* magazine. Lewis/Schoeplein Architects renovated the building.

**Previous spread, right:** The 1950's building's updated glazed facade features painted-steel framing and cast-aluminum signage.

**Top:** Private offices' glass fronts and sliding glass doors are sand-blasted halfway up. **Bottom:** Circular skylights and a plaster-coated canopy define the ceiling in reception. Wilhelm Wohlert designed the glass pendant spheres hanging above the Imago-fronted desk.

**Opposite:** Jean Prouvé's painted-steel Cité lounge chair and Maya Lin's concrete Stones side table sit on carpet set into reception's honed-limestone floor. An ash case displays recent *Ms.* covers.





**Opposite:** Lewis/Schoeplein enlivened the back alley by painting a blank concrete wall. The concrete planters were already in place; the partners simply cleared out the debris, watered the soil beneath, and were rewarded by sprouting clover.

**Top:** At one end of the "big room," which accommodates 100 for training and conferences, vintage chairs by Charles and Ray Eames surround a Lewis/Schoeplein table topped in plastic laminate. Ash panels frame the presentation wall's tack board. **Bottom:** In the rear lounge, the architects combined felt-covered seating cubes with a custom banquette upholstered in a reissued cotton blend from 1951.



offsets the seriousness of the client's work," says Lewis.

Reception occupies the center of the symmetrical floor plan. Lewis/Schoeplein put FMF spaces to the left. To the right are Ms. functions and the "big room," a 1,325-square-foot training and conference space shared by the magazine and foundation.

On both the FMF and Ms. sides, private offices line the front elevation, but there's no uptight, closed-door atmosphere. Yorkin is quick to differentiate this setup from the "male" paradigm of "corner offices with windows for executives." Lewis/Schoeplein fronted the offices in glass to bring daylight through the 66-foot-deep interior. Sandblasted halfway up and transparent above, the partitions offer visual privacy to employees seated at their desks.

The translucency theme continues in runs of Imago fabric-fused resin panels. They first appear fronting the reception desk. To screen a copy room, the architects combined Imago with white acrylic panels and a painted wood frame.

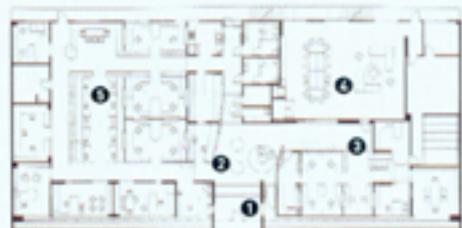
Color surprises constantly, too. In the "big room," Lewis/Schoeplein installed two strips of gypsum board below the ceiling and painted them in three tones of green. "Fun with paint," says Lewis. FMF's open work area features file cabinets painted tomato red or acid green; custom workstations' desktops are checkered in putty and gray plastic laminate. Yellow, orange, and gray felt covers seating cubes in a rear lounge.

On a 10-foot-high concrete wall facing the office's rear, the architects painted blocks of sky blue, lime green, and tomato red. "The wall is very present inside, so we made it a colorful view," says Schoeplein. It's a cosmetic makeover—but one sure to pass muster with even the most die-hard of feminists. 🍷



**PROJECT TEAM:** HUMBERTO HERRERO, DAVID GARNETT.

**DOOR HARDWARE (ENTRY):** HARDWARE+, **CARPET (WORK AREA):** BENTLEY MILLS, **PLASTIC LAMINATE:** ABET, **TASK CHAIRS (WORK AREA), SIDE TABLE (RECEPTION):** KNOLL, **RESIN PANELS (RECEPTION), TACK FABRIC (BIG ROOM), BANQUETTE FABRIC (LOUNGE):** KNOLL/TEXTILES, **PENDANTS (RECEPTION):** LOUIS POULSEN **LIGHTING, LOUNGE CHAIR:** VITRA, **FLOORING:** WALKER ZANGER, **CARPET:** TUVA LOOMS, **TABLETOP PLASTIC LAMINATE (BIG ROOM):** WILSONART INTERNATIONAL, **SEATING CUBES (LOUNGE):** PAOLA LENTI THROUGH **MODERN LIVING, ACOUSTIC CEILING PANELS:** TECTUM, **MILLWORK:** FK ANDERSON CO. **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** FORT HILL CONSTRUCTION.



- ENTRY 1
- RECEPTION 2
- MS. OFFICES 3
- "BIG ROOM" 4
- FMF OFFICES 5