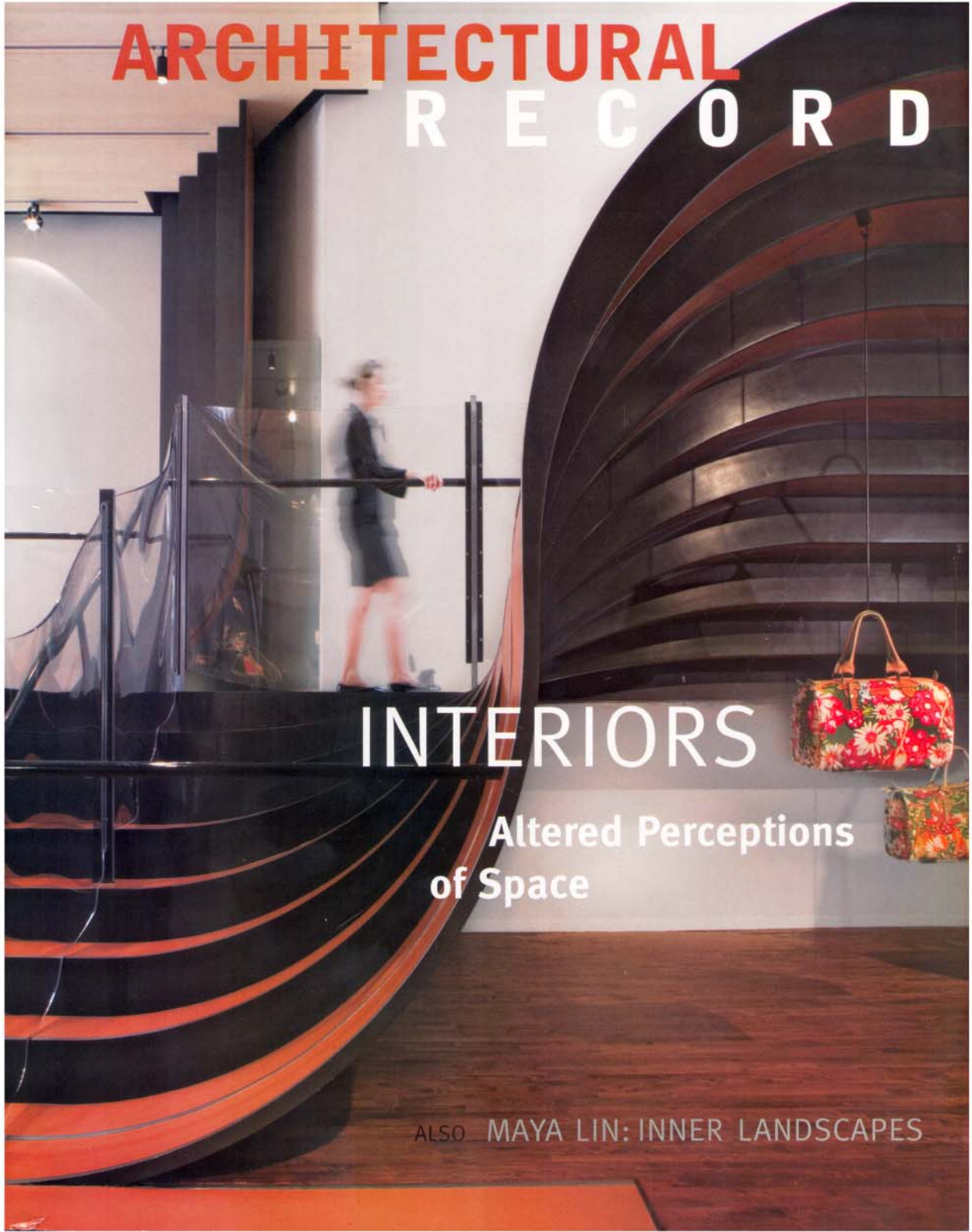


# ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

## INTERIORS

Altered Perceptions  
of Space

ALSO MAYA LIN: INNER LANDSCAPES



The reception area's 3D wall cover, made of paper, was designed by Tracy Kendal of London. Another artist, Alyson Shotz, created the hanging sculpture with oval magnifying lenses (in partial view).





# René González transforms an old warehouse into **KARLA**, a serene and glowing event space and production venue in Miami

By Wendy Moonan

I wanted a sequence of spaces where we could bring clients to ‘seduce’ them,” says Karla Dascal, founder of an event-organizing business that caters to such high-profile clients as Madonna, Ricky Martin, and the office of President George W. Bush. For her company, Karla Conceptual Event Experiences, Dascal envisioned “a place where clients could get inspired ... with enough openness to let them imagine.”

The new headquarters, simply called Karla, is just off Biscayne Boulevard in Miami’s trendy Wynwood Arts District, occupying a 12,000-square-foot warehouse and an unbuilt adjacent lot of equal size. Dascal needed a venue for throwing parties, making sets (such as the wedding decor she created for an episode of TV’s *Extreme Makeover*), and preparing floral arrangements for catered events. The program also included corporate offices, a conference room, a flower cooler, workspace, and ample storage.

Even before finding the warehouse property, Dascal signed on Miami architect René González. She was impressed by his installation for *Design Matters*, an exhibition of industrial design, fashion, and graphics that he curated in 2000 at Miami’s Museum of Contemporary Art. As she recalls, “He applied common materials like bubble wrap in a way you would never use them. He made them very elegant.” Dascal later sought out González and outlined her program for him. The event planner remembers explaining, “We’re a full-service production company—we do weddings, art-related parties for collectors during Art Basel, branding and corporate identity work, and dinners for the President. I want a Minimal space whose materials speak to me.”

A Minimalist approach suited González, who was born in Cuba but raised in south Florida, and had worked in Los Angeles for Richard Meier (on the Getty Museum) and Frank Israel before opening his own



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The interior—even its office cubicles (above)—engages in a dialogue with the garden (left).

Miami firm, now with six architects. In converting the warehouse into Karla, González turned the property’s empty lot into a lush, subtropical garden, which you must traverse to enter the structure. Here, huge, single-paned glass doors between lobby and garden heighten ambiguities in the indoor/outdoor relationship.

The building now features a simple floor plan with innovative material applications. Entry, conference room, and work space form a series of high-ceilinged, boxy white spaces, some with glowing, light-infused walls. The built-in reception desk seems to float above the high-gloss epoxy floor. Behind the desk is handmade, 3D white wallpaper by artist Tracy Kendall. Etched-acrylic, floor-to-ceiling panels, backlit through blue filters, define the reception area’s other edges. The idea, says González, is to “create vertical planes that seemingly go on forever, emphasizing a volumeless quality of

**Project:** Karla, Miami, Florida  
**Architect:** René González Architect—René González, principal; Monica Vazquez, project director

**Engineers:** Douglas Wood and Associates (structural); Vidal (m/e/p)  
**General contractor:** Madison Construction

PROJECTS



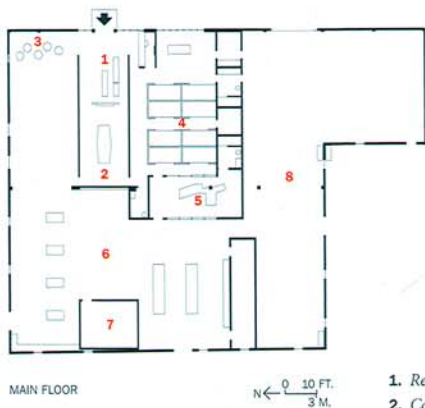
Against high-gloss epoxy floors and luminous, backlit walls, the entry area presents sleek benches, a hunk of driftwood, and Shotz's hanging sculpture (above left). The conference room includes a blue resin table designed by González (above right). Each event gets its own installation (right).







Behind the reception area is a relaxed meeting space facing the garden, to the east. The clear acrylic chairs and high-gloss epoxy floor dematerialize visually.



1. Reception
2. Conference
3. Installation space
4. Open-office area
5. Executive office
6. Production and floral-design studio
7. Flower cooler
8. Warehouse space

space.” He furnished the entry area minimally, with sleek Italian benches, a hunk of driftwood that his client found, and a hanging sculpture with magnifying lenses projecting kaleidoscopic reflections onto the walls.

In a narrow conference room next to the entry area, Dascal meets with potential clients. In this area, two luminous, backlit walls of translucent acrylic cast reflections onto another seamless floor of shiny epoxy—all surfaces that dematerialize visually. The architect also designed the 12-foot-long table with a blue resin top. The custom light fixtures, made of Styrofoam cups, are by British designer Paul Cockledge. While one wall has a monitor for video presentations, the opposite elevation alternates panels of clear and translucent glass, allowing glimpses of set-building, floral-arranging, and party-prep activities in the work space next door—a back-of-the-house peek intended to spark the imagination of the company’s clients.

Earlier this year, the project won the 2006 AIA Honor Award for interior architecture. Now Dascal is talking to González about adding onto the place. “René captured exactly what I wanted here,” she says. “It’s luminous and has the opulence I was looking for.” From the minute you walk in, it speaks of her enterprise—and ultimately seduces you. ■

#### Sources

**Aluminum storefront:** YKK America  
**Lighting:** Bartco; Artemide; Luminis  
**Plumbing fixtures:** Vallve; Duravit

For more information on this project, go to Projects at [www.archrecord.com](http://www.archrecord.com).