

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

NUMBER 11

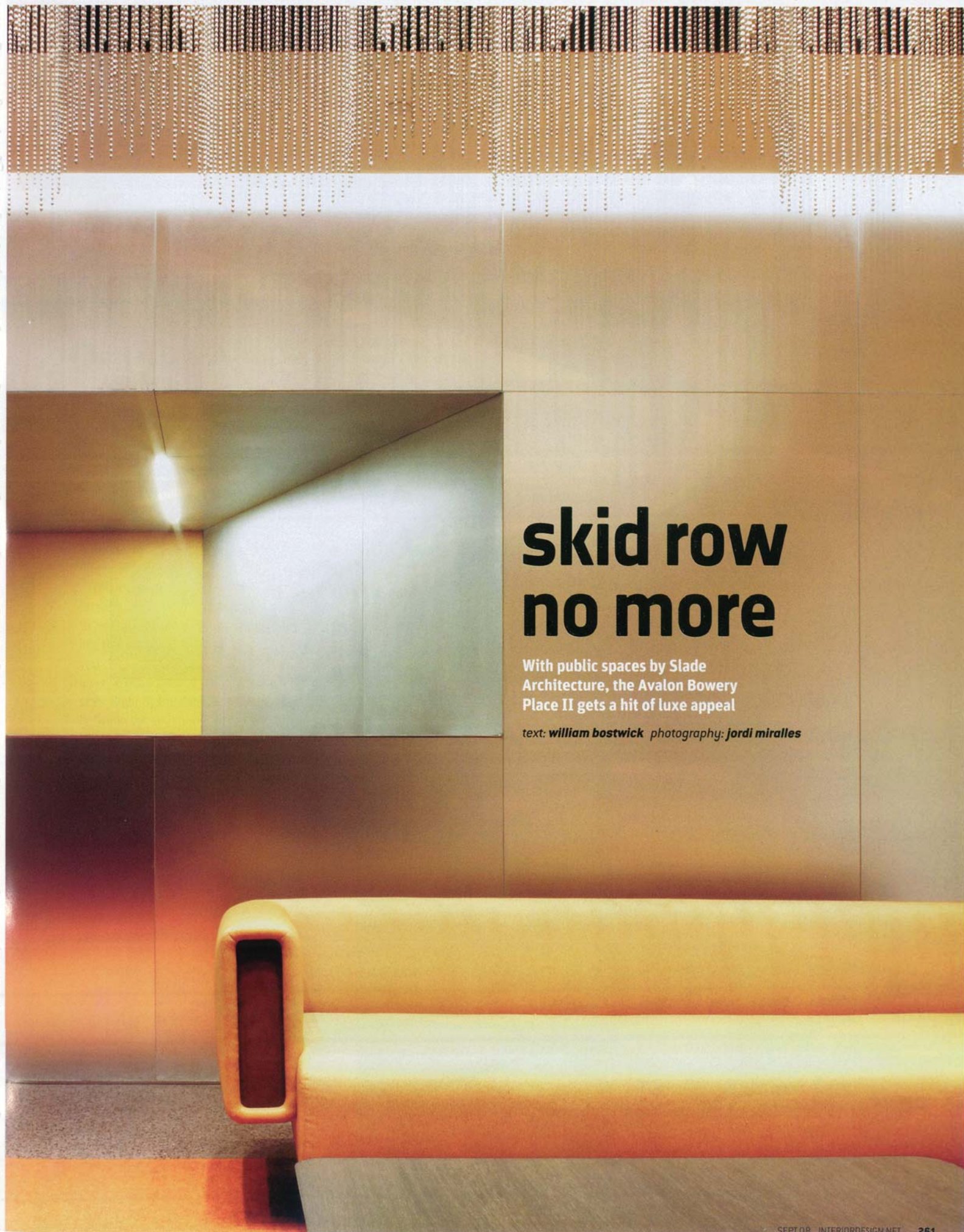
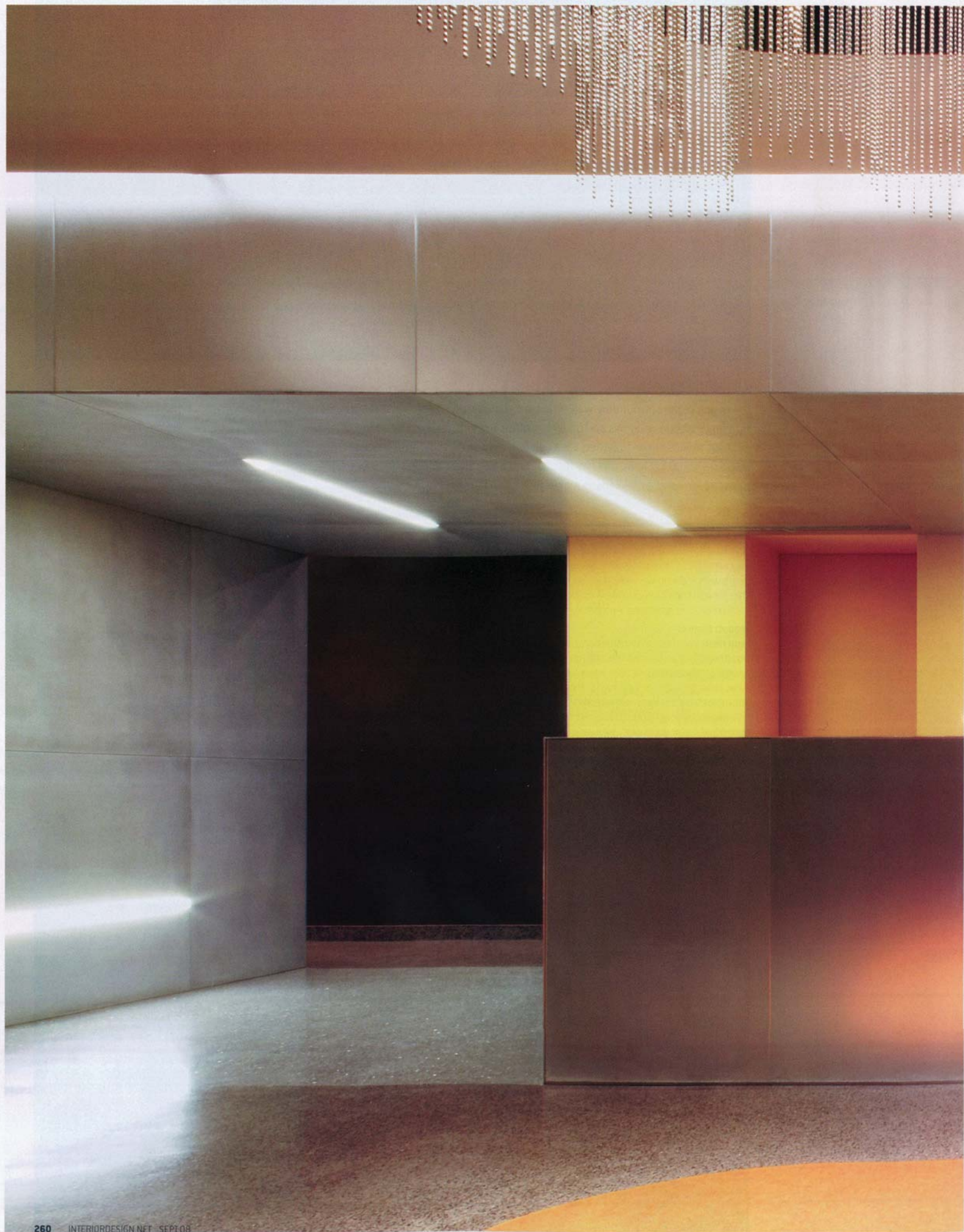
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# skid row no more

With public spaces by Slade  
Architecture, the Avalon Bowery  
Place II gets a hit of luxe appeal

text: *william bostwick* photography: *jordi miralles*



**James and Hayes Slade came late to the party**, but they made a big entrance. When the husband-wife principals of Slade Architecture began working on the 4,500-square-foot lobby and common areas of the Avalon Bowery Place II, a 90-unit rental apartment building in the East Village, the architects of record were ready to put down their pencils and close their PowerBooks. "They were almost done," Hayes Slade says. "We came in like, 'Oh, can we, uh, move that whole area from the back of the basement to the front?'"

Apparently, the answer was yes. The Slades slipped that area—a party room and an adjacent lounge—right under the lobby's revolving door and rotated the entirety 90 degrees. Then the architects opened up the lobby's floor to create a light well for the underground spaces, taking advantage of the full-height windows at ground level. Mirroring the short wall above the light well turned the lobby into an observation deck and the sidewalk into a show.

"People come to the Bowery for the street life," James Slade says. "It's about hanging out, looking cool, being seen." Tall, dark, and sunglassesed, both Slades could arguably be the Bowery type—the new Bowery, that is. He's got the close-cropped goatee and fitted shirt; she has the chic choppy haircut. One wonders if their lobby is a window onto a world long gone, one that the Avalon Bowery Place II's very existence pushes further into the past. The genre-defining punk club CBGB is around the corner. Well, was. It's now a John Varvatos boutique. Gentrification has hit the neighborhood hard. In fact, another new AvalonBay building faces the Slades' lobby. But just as Varvatos preserves some of CBGB's gritty character, displaying \$100 T-shirts under framed vintage concert flyers, the Slades filter street energy through a luxury lens.

The lobby can seem a bit imposing at first. Straight ahead, the concierge desk appears to be carved from a silvery mass. "It looks like this monolith from outside. But when you come in, the details are apparent. There's a sense of surprise, a journey," James Slade says. Right by the desk, at a magic threshold between the semipublic lobby and the private elevator vestibule beyond, paneling shifts from satin-finished mirror glass to brushed aluminum, and the terrazzo floor changes color from dark asphalt to cement gray. The terrazzo is made with recycled glass—broken bottles from CBGB, perhaps? ➤

**Previous spread:** Slade Architecture clad the rear wall of the lobby at the East Village's Avalon Bowery Place II apartment building in satin-finished mirror glass. Recycled glass adds sparkle to the terrazzo.

**Opposite:** The lobby's sectional by Pearson Lloyd wraps a table by Frédéric Ruyant.

**Top:** Strands of ball bearings in nickel-plated steel are lit from above by 29 incandescent spots. **Bottom:** A stainless-steel rail tops the balustrade guarding the light well above the basement party room.





The panels of satin-finished mirror glass extend partway down into the light well. Though the glass isn't quite reflective, light bounces and blurs, filtering the street's energy. "At night, the colors inside reflect out, the colors from the street reflect in, and they kind of blend together," James Slade says. A swath of sunny yellow backs the concierge desk, while the streamlined sectional and goat-hair rug are a yellow-orange. Above this seating area, in a rounded ceiling cutout, incandescent fixtures spotlight dangling lengths of nickel-plated steel ball bearings, the same stuff a keychain or necklace might be made of. With all that industrial metal, the lobby verges on spaceship-y, but the warm colors bring it down to earth.

By contrast, the downstairs is almost cozy. Seating in the lounge is upholstered in deep orange. Vinyl in a lighter version of that shade covers one wall in the party room, where the swooping ceiling curves up to meet the light well. The curve is a nice touch, but James Slade admits he was skeptical at first: "Yeah, the ribbon. We worried it was a little trendy. But if you squared the corners, there'd be no connection between the two levels. The curves tie everything together."

Again, the emphasis is on the eye: The curve creates a natural sight line. Even though the architects emphasize the building's context on the Bowery as their biggest influence, it's this attention to visual experience that defines all the firm's projects. "That's a consistent thread in our work," Hayes Slade offers. Her husband picks up the thought: "The relationship between body, space, and perception—no matter what, you have to deal with the person in the space."

As they're talking, a young woman struts by on the sidewalk, stops, and fixes her makeup in the lobby window. James Slade looks disappointed. But his wife shakes her head. "No, that's what it's all about," she insists. "Seeing and being seen." ☞

#### PROJECT TEAM

**EMILY ANDERSEN** (PROJECT ARCHITECT); SLADE ARCHITECTURE. **SLICE ARCHITECTS**: ARCHITECT OF RECORD. **COSENTINI ASSOCIATES**: LIGHTING CONSULTANT, MEP. **DESIMONE**: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **S&C PRODUCTS**: METALWORK. **PETERSEN GELLER SPURGE**: WOODWORK. **BOVIS LEND LEASE**: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

#### PRODUCT SOURCES

**FROM FRONT XAL**: STRIP CEILING, WALL FIXTURES (LOBBY). **BCM ARCHITECTURAL**: CUSTOM CHANDELIER. **PROGRESS LIGHTING**: SPOTLIGHTS. **KURT VERSEN COMPANY**: RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES (LOBBY, PARTY ROOM). **EUROTEX**: CUSTOM RUG (LOBBY), CARPET (PARTY ROOM). **DUNE**: SOFA (LOBBY), SOFA, CHAIRS (PARTY ROOM), SOFA, TABLE (LOUNGE). **LIGNE ROSET**: TABLES, OTTOMANS (LOBBY, PARTY ROOM), CHAIRS (LOUNGE). **WOLF-GORDON**: WALL COVERING (PARTY ROOM). **MARK ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING**: STRIP CEILING FIXTURES. **CARVART GLASS**: WALL PANEL MATERIAL (LOUNGE). **CRATE AND BARREL**: RUG. **THROUGHOUT ENVIROGLAS THROUGH PORT MORRIS TILE & MARBLE CORPORATION**: FLOORING.

**Top**: The party room's vinyl-covered sidewall and goat-hair carpet terminate at walnut cabinetry concealing the media center. **Bottom**: In the hallway to the elevators, the wall panels change to ¼-inch-thick brushed aluminum.

**Opposite**: Lloyd's sofa and table and Christian Werner's chairs gather in the lounge.

