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Pleats, Please

Alper Aytac turned to an age-old fold when he designed a very contemporary office in Istanbul

BY SUSAN WEINER

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There are no colorful wool kilims, intricate iznik ceramic tiles, or glass evil eyes in the executive suite that Alper Aytac of Aytac Architects designed for his older brother's Istanbul construction company, Aytac Insaat. Instead, the younger Aytac says, he looked first to the "Turkish pleat," which "animates the space where a square plane meets a dome in Ottoman religious architecture." Then he considered the marble pleats carved by Giovanni Bernini in 17th-century Italy—but Aytac's inspiration wasn't only architectural. He also cites the pleated garments of Issey Miyake and pleats observed in nature: mountain ranges, canyons, and river deltas.

Provenance aside, the pleats of Aytac's integral "furniture landscape" divide the 380-square-foot suite into two distinct sections, specifically a work area and a library. However, the pleats don't function exclusively as boundary markers. "The installation was conceived as a continuum. It creates both a separation and a transition between surfaces and spaces of action," he says. "A bookshelf becomes a desk, then dissolves into the floor and pixelates into a wall of light boxes."

It wasn't easy for Aytac the architect to convince Aytac the CEO to embrace such an unusual design, but winning over the client wasn't the only challenge. Modeled on Rhinoceros software, the MDF furniture landscape had to be produced in one piece and lacquered in a uniform shade of off-white. When installation time came, the office's dropped ceiling meant that the entire structure had to be self-supporting rather than suspended from above.

With the steady fluorescent glow emitted by the light-box wall and the changing angle and intensity of natural light from floor-to-ceiling windows at one end of the suite, the pleats appear to transform themselves—some surfaces seeming to disappear entirely. And the effect animates what was once a boring box of a room. "The visitor faces complexity and strangeness," Aytac says. "An unknown territory to be explored."

Opposite: Part of an integral "furniture landscape" in semigloss-lacquered MDF, this desk descends to meet the merbau hardwood floor in the executive suite at Aytac Insaat.

Clockwise from top left: The furniture installation divides the front portion of the suite, with its task chair by Alberto Meda, from a library with a leather-covered lounge chair by Charles and Ray Eames. The bookshelf's frosted safety glass highlights the transition between the spaces on either side. A strip of epoxy flooring connects the desk to a lacquered wall punctuated by frosted-acrylic panels backlit by fluorescents. Custom cotton shades conceal a run of full-height windows. The 13-foot-long desk is used by the CEO, Alper Aytac's brother.



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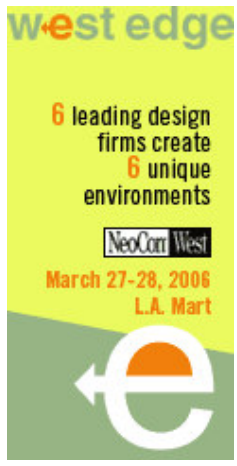
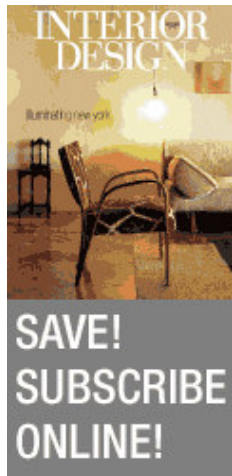


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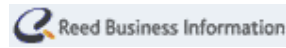
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