

# INTERIOR DESIGN

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**Taslimi**



# Come the Revolution

In a media world of loft-vernacular renovated warehouses, Michael S. Smith and Gensler present a cogent case for the antithesis



IF THE NEW Los Angeles headquarters of Revolution Studios (*America's Sweethearts*, *Black Hawk Down*) exudes the relaxed elegance of the 1940s Hollywood film colony, it's no wonder—given the cast of collaborating characters. Michael S. Smith, the interior designer, calls himself a “child of the movies.” His practice is heavily residential, and any of Revolution's lounge or office settings could easily be mistaken for a living room. Joe Roth, chairman of 20th Century Fox and Walt Disney Pictures prior to founding Revolution in 2000, favors casual as a design genre, despite his serious-player status. As *Variety* editor-in-chief Peter Bart describes the producer-director, “Joe Roth is unique in being widely respected both as a filmmaker and a top-ranking executive. He's →





always been a jeans-and-sports-shirt individual who resisted the 'corporate suit' image." And Gensler needs no introduction. The architect for Revolution's building, part of Santa Monica's Lantana complex of spec offices geared to the film industry, the firm continued with interior architecture when Revolution leased all three floors.

Smith had already completed four residences and several offices for Roth, so the two started out by formulating their own design script. Part pragmatic, part intangible, the program for the 60,000-square-foot Revolution project addressed both the business and creative sides of filmmaking. Given the scope of operations, Revolution needed spaces for pre- and postproduction, final screening, and the usual array of executive, conference, and assistant areas common to less glamorous business endeavors. On a more theoretical level, the sophisticated environment was to foster creativity and bon-

homie within the company while directing references to cinematic success at the film community as a whole.

Reception, screening room, and some production offices and edit bays are on the first floor. Above are animation and production used by outside collaborators for each film. The topmost level comprises executive and administrative spaces, secondary reception-lounge areas, and conference rooms. Each floor feels unique, comments Gensler project manager Martha de Plazaola, but contributes to a cohesive whole.

In marked contrast to the bow-truss paradigm, the studio proclaims a strongly built and decorated setting. Consistent materials and repeated details are linked to the building's architecture though, given the site's nondescript views, the team focused attention inward. "Grounded in a classical idea, the studio is not trendy or dated. It really does look like California," says Smith. There's

*Previous spread, left: Douglas fir, tinted plaster, limestone, an up-lit pool, and distinctive planes form a strong envelope for furnishings with living-room qualities at the headquarters of Revolution Studios. Michael S. Smith, who collaborated with Gensler on the interior, designed the sofa and coffee table. The pendants are by George Nelson.*

*Previous spread, right: The reception desk has olive-wood and limestone surfaces.*

*Above: Outside the main conference room on the top level, a reception area owes its residential quality to a custom mirror, round coffee table, sofas by Smith, and pedestal stools by Chris Lehrecke. The movie poster is from 1940.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN EDWARD LINDEN













*Above: Centrally located, the main conference room is enclosed by an aluminum and laminated-glass partition system. The custom table, stained walnut, seats 16.*

no mistaking the designer and Gensler's intervention, which begins with the lobby's graphic composition of background planes and a shimmering, up-lit water element inspired by a pool with dappled light that Smith had just seen at Michael Gabellini's Armani/Via Manzoni 31 in Milan. The feature seemed appropriate to southern California, Smith continues, because "we have the idea of being at the beach."

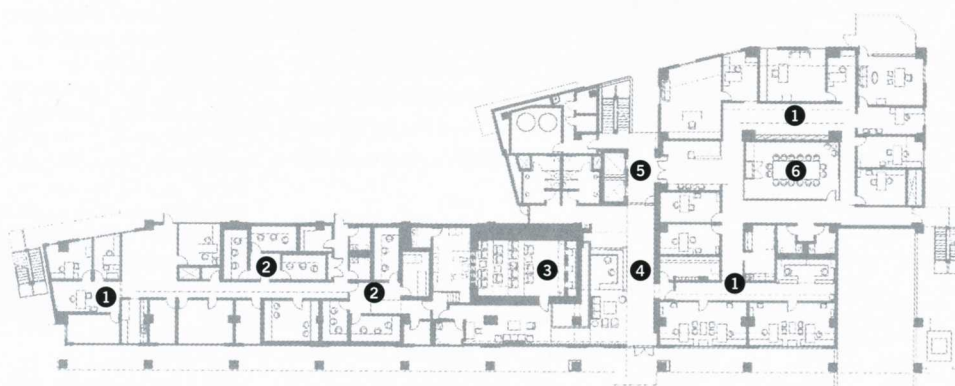
Lowered ceiling directly above the pool forms a continuous canopy extending to both street-front and parking-lot entries at opposite ends of the axis. Over the reception desk, midway along the spine, Douglas fir slats create an awning, repeated to one side as a wall treatment to break up the length. Tinted-plaster walls are an upscale take on the concrete facade; flooring is limestone.

Similar treatments continue on the third-floor executive level. Gascogne limestone

reappears in honed and polished finishes for floor and reception desk, respectively. Ceiling slats further define this second reception zone. Reiterating the tone of ground-floor furniture, the third-floor group is also a mix of pieces that are welcoming, stylish, comfortable, and refreshingly free of label or lineage. As Revolution's main work floor, this story required both articulation and accommodation for about 50. Columns and soffits, aligned with structure, are expressed with tinted plaster to create bays. Within these divisions, aluminum and laminated-glass partitions front private offices ranging from 112 to 550 square feet. The solution, which is repeated to enclose the two conference rooms, addresses age-old issues of privacy, translucency, and shared daylight.

Roth's inner sanctum, past another living-room-style lounge and a collection of black-and-white photography assembled by →





- 1 PRODUCTION
- 2 EDIT BAY
- 3 SCREENING ROOM
- 4 RECEPTION
- 5 LOBBY
- 6 CONFERENCE ROOM

0 10 20 40





*Previous spread: Pervasive Douglas fir detailing continues in the compact screening room, which seats 16 in custom leather chairs.*

*Opposite: Unassuming for a high-powered filmmaker, Joe Roth's 500-square-foot office features a 1940s French desk, lounge seating, and a side table designed by Smith. A conference area is not shown.*

*Above: Gensler customized production-line workstations with stained-walnut veneers and glass transaction surfaces. The enclosures range from 70 to 100 square feet.*

Smith's office, is frankly a surprise. Roth may be at the top of his game, but his office is not in the least intimidating. There's a French desk from the 1940s, an English center table cut to coffee-table height, and a sofa reincarnated from a previous life at Disney. Melding ancient artistry and state-of-the-art technology, Smith mounted Roth's plasma screen on a Tansu chest.

But what would a studio be without a screening room? Because of proportion, rake, and dimension, the original design would have involved demolishing part of either the second or first-floor slab. If Revolution later moved, the space would have to be restored to its original state. So Gensler opted for pragmatism, not a style statement. At 1,000 square feet, with leather-upholstered armchairs and two-toned zebrawood tables, Revolution's screening room looks less like that of a prosperous production house, more like a home theater.

—Edie Cohen

PROJECT TEAM (GENSLER): **ROBERT JERNIGAN; TODD DUNDON; KAZ BABA; KEVIN SOUTHERLAND; JOHN WIEDNER; ANDREW LINDLEY; DENISE ZACKY.**

FABRICS (UPHOLSTERY): **MANUEL CANOVAS; JACK LENOR LARSEN; ROGERS & GOFFIGON.** LIMESTONE (FLOORING): **JB MARBLE.** LOW-VOLTAGE STRIP LIGHTING (LOBBY): **TOKISTAR.** RECEPTION DESK, CONFERENCE TABLE (FABRICATION): **ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORKING COMPANY.** RUGS (THIRD-FLOOR RECEPTION, ROTH OFFICE): **MICHAELIAN & KOHLBERG.** LOUNGE CHAIRS, WOOD-FRAMED CHAIR (THIRD-FLOOR RECEPTION), NESTING TABLES (ROTH OFFICE): **MICHAEL BERMAN THROUGH THE BRADBURY COLLECTION.** LEATHER (UPHOLSTERY): **ASHBURY HIDES** (ROTH OFFICE); **CALDELLE LEATHER** (THIRD-FLOOR RECEPTION, SCREENING ROOM). STOOLS (THIRD-FLOOR RECEPTION): **RALPH PUCCI INTERNATIONAL.** RECTANGULAR COFFEE TABLE: **RUSSEL SIMPSON.** ALUMINUM FRAMING: **WESTERN INTEGRATED.** FLOOR LAMP (THIRD-FLOOR RECEPTION), TABLE (SCREENING ROOM): **CITY STUDIO.** CHAIRS (CONFERENCE ROOM): **HERMAN MILLER THROUGH JULES SELTZER.** LIGHTING: **BRUCK LIGHTING SYSTEMS** (CONFERENCE ROOM, SCREENING ROOM); **TAKO** (FIXTURES). GLASSWARE: **OK.** TABLE LAMP: **J.F. CHEN.** OAK FLOORING: **SYLVAKET.** WOOD BLINDS: **CONCORD SHADING SYSTEMS.** WORKSTATIONS, FILES: **CLEATOR.** CARPET: **CONSTANTINE COMMERCIAL THROUGH RENEGADE FLOORING.** LIGHTING: **ZUMTOBEL.** MEP: **SYSKA HENNESSY GROUP.** ACOUSTICAL ENGINEER: **MARTIN NEWSON & ASSOCIATES.** GENERAL CONTRACTOR: **TASLIMI CONSTRUCTION COMPANY.**