

S&P 500	1,204.99	↗	10.55
Dow industrials	10,371.80	↗	68.36
Nasdaq composite	2,078.75	↗	21.38
10-yr. Treasury yield	4.11%	↗	0.06
The euro	\$1.1914	↗	0.0017

Square Feet

A Space With Light and Shade

For Robert Marc, the eyewear company, the redesign of a space in the meatpacking district, was a work in shades of light and dark. C7



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The New York Times

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2005

SQUARE FEET

BLUEPRINTS

A Wall to Enlighten, Not Obstruct

By TERI KARUSH ROGERS

When Robert Marc first toured the raw space in Manhattan's trendy meatpacking district that he was considering for an office, he certainly didn't need sunglasses. The 6,000 square feet in the artsy Milk Studios building resembled an industrial cave.

Mr. Marc, the president and chief creative officer of the designer eyewear company Robert Marc, found its 13-foot ceilings, exposed ductwork and concrete floors desirably gritty, but six windows, out of a paltry eight, were clumped along the short end of an awkward L-shaped layout, essentially depriving a third of the space of natural light.

Yet Mr. Marc saw that the orphaned section would suit a warehouse and customer service area, which could function as well or better under controlled lighting. The rest of the space could be freed for the administrative and executive functions of the company, which creates, distributes and also sells eyewear.

But it wouldn't be easy. He would have to maximize the scanty natural light and organize mundane business functions in a space that could double as a stylish and provocative showroom, and accommodate a visiting sales force, all on a lean budget of \$100 a square foot.

Accustomed to working out details in the aftermath of inspiration, Mr. Marc signed the lease in March 2004 and hired Michael Haverland, an assistant professor of architecture at Yale whose residential work Mr. Marc had admired in East Hampton for its innovative form, texture and function.

Mr. Haverland, who had never designed an office, worked toward balancing the needs of the company's distribution and retail businesses. In the company's Madison Avenue location, those business functions were haphazardly strung together in 3,500 square feet of space, and suffered from low ceilings and being spread out on three floors.

In the new quarters, Mr. Haverland said, "it was about dividing a layout in a way that allowed each company to be separate where they wanted to be separate, and adjacent where they wanted to be adjacent."

By the time the 25 on-site employees moved in last November, three



Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times

The architect Michael Haverland at Robert Marc, where an undulating wall leads to the executive wing.

zones had emerged: warehouse and customer service in the rear third of the space; administrative areas in the middle; and an executive wing nearest the six-windowed southern wall.

The thoughtfully designed but basic single-room warehouse, with its rows of metal utility shelves loaded with color-coded storage bins, requires a key code to enter, as does the customer service room it opens onto. But security concerns bow to aesthetic ones in the headquarters' administrative midsection.

There, a minimalist glass-and-chrome window system laid out in an L-shape fronts the handful of single offices reserved for employees like accountants whose jobs demand discretion. A smaller L-shaped area of white chest-high walls, less costly than office partitions, rise like austere hedgerows from caramel-tinted concrete floors, partly shielding the desks of workers who need some privacy while allowing for easy collaboration.

Inexpensive glass pendant lights drop from a ceiling defined by a third L-shape of meticulously arrayed ductwork with a galvanized steel fin-

ish that coordinates with the chrome and stainless steel accents below.

Upbeat lounge music, piped through a sound system, aurally reinforces the casual yet precise, commercial yet sensual vibe, in which Mr. Marc's genial black terriers, Killer and Louy, follow a lazy social circuit or gnaw on toys that include a stuffed "Chewy Vuitton" handbag.

Dividing the administrative zone from the executive wing and conference room is a long undulating "lens wall" akin to an art installation. Spare despite its complex engineering, it is a double series of plexiglass panels stretched by pulleys and tension cables into convex and concave shapes. The "lenses" reflect and refract light into the administrative area, and funnel visitors from a dark reception area toward the light-endowed executive wing.

As the focal point, the wall both symbolizes Mr. Marc's business and inspires it. Like his eyewear, Mr. Marc said, the wall "has to be balanced and fit right and function."

"It speaks to my business and what I do, but it also quite honestly elevates me, and I hope it elevates my staff, to think about design."

Across the way, a freestanding wall, made of inexpensive particle board and finished in warm amber, curves gracefully to the right. Six desktops unfold Murphy-bed style, ideal for showing glasses to vendors but also laptop-ready with Ethernet and electric outlets for the traveling sales force.

Doors sunk into the curved expanse lead to a tech-savvy conference room furnished with a vintage Florence Knoll conference table and Charles Pollack chairs reupholstered in white leather.

With all four doors opened, the music notched up and the lights edged down (dimmers enable fingertip transition from computer-friendly dusk to showroom starkness to moody nighttime glow), the space is cocktail-party ready.

"I think the office has an identity now," said Mr. Marc, wearing a cotton-candy-pink polo shirt whose cartoon graffiti telegraphed its status as a cult fashion item. "We're creating unique and special designs that make people feel really good. It's very important that we're always reminded of that, and our environment helps."

Gulf Storm Worries Market; Oil Revisits \$60 and Backs Off

WASHINGTON, July 5 (AP) — Oil prices climbed on Tuesday, briefly exceeding \$60 a barrel — a level economists describe as worrisome for global growth. Energy traders said a tropical storm in the Gulf of Mexico was the leading factor behind the rally.

After reaching as high as \$60.10 a barrel, light crude oil for August delivery settled 84 cents higher, at \$59.59 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The storm, code-named Cindy, is not expected to disrupt supply significantly or do any damage, but general anxiety about the hurricane season is "causing a little bit of pressure in the market," said Carl Larry, an oil analyst at Barclays Capital in New York.

Another reason that crude oil prices are moving higher at the start of the third quarter, Mr. Larry said, is that institutional investors who had taken profits in May and June are now buying energy futures again. "That's the speculative interest in the market," he said.

In spite of traders' nervousness about potential supply disruptions, analysts and brokers say there is plenty of oil and gasoline to meet demand for the time being.

The Minerals Management Service said Tuesday that an evacuation of some rigs and platforms in the Gulf of Mexico had resulted in the loss of almost 50,000 barrels of oil a day, roughly 3 percent of daily production of 1.5 million barrels.

Mark Bugg, scheduling manager at the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port said strong waves and wind suspended the offloading of a tanker offshore, but that its onshore terminals continued to supply refineries with petroleum. Mr. Bugg said that based on current weather forecasts, he expected the offshore installation to be up and running by late Wednesday.

Crude oil futures are almost 50 percent above the level a year ago. The average retail price of regular gasoline in the United States is now \$2.23 a gallon, and consumption is continuing to rise.

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