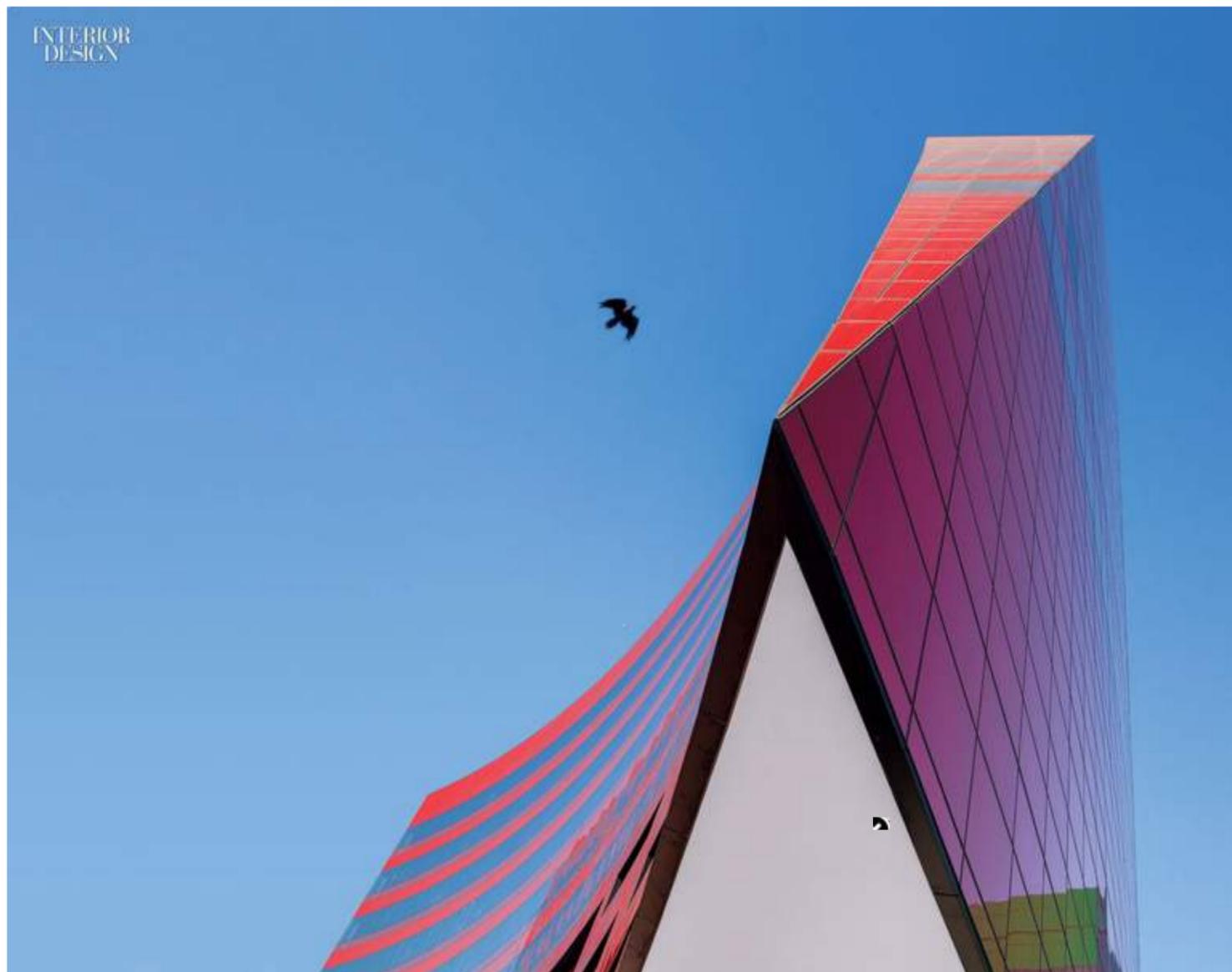


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# An Epic Trilogy: Pacific Design Center’s Final Building Opens in LA

June 30, 2014  
By Edie Cohen

VIEW SLIDESHOW (/SLIDESHOWS/DETAIL/8105-AN-EPIC-TRILOGY-STARRING-CESAR-PELLI-WITH-AREA-THE/)



(/slideshows/detail/8105-an-epic-trilogy-starring-

cesar-pelli-with-area-the/)

Los Angeles is urban sprawl with no center, right? Not really. The city is its neighborhoods, each with its own landmarks. In West Hollywood, that landmark is the Pacific Design Center’s (<http://www.pacificdesigncenter.com/>) trio of colorful, glistening glass buildings rising on a 14-acre campus. Cesar Pelli (<articles/8823-cesar-pelli-faia-riba/>), who spent more than four decades on the PDC’s design and construction, takes the point even further, in fact: “As a gathering place, it created the environment for West Hollywood to happen.”

The time line, intertwined with economic vicissitudes, starts in 1971. Pelli, then at Gruen Associates, was commissioned to design the blue building as a showroom center. Opening in 1975, it came to be affectionately known to everyone, near and far, as the Blue Whale, thanks to its “long horizontal extraction,” he says, and prodigious size—putting 750,000 loftlike square feet at the design industry’s disposal. As for that blue? He went through a dozen shades before opting for the brightest fritted glass he could find. He also had to assuage the client consortium’s doubts. “First they asked for two models,” he says, “one in blue and one in beige.” Can you imagine?

The blue building was always meant as the first of a tripartite composition. Next came the green building, commissioned in the mid-’80’s. Vertically oriented with chamfered edges, the nine-story structure is “like a pinwheel,” he notes. Opening day was in 1988—we all know the ensuing fiscal news. An all-showroom scheme no longer viable, the green building transitioned to a hybrid with 200,000 of the 450,000 square feet dedicated to Class A office space.

Fast-forward a decade. The Cohen Brothers Realty Corporation, a specialist in design centers, purchased the entire PDC for \$157 million with the goal to push the complex forward. To renovate public spaces in the blue and green buildings, Cohen Brothers owner, president, and CEO Charles S. Cohen chose Area Architecture (<http://www.areaarchitecture.com>) after reading a New Yorker profile on principals Henry Goldston and Walt Thomas. Then Cohen turned to Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects (<http://pcparch.com/>) for the final piece of the puzzle, the red building.

PROJECT NAME	Pacific Design Center
LOCATION	Los Angeles
FIRM	Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects; Area Architecture
SQ. FT.	750,000 SQF

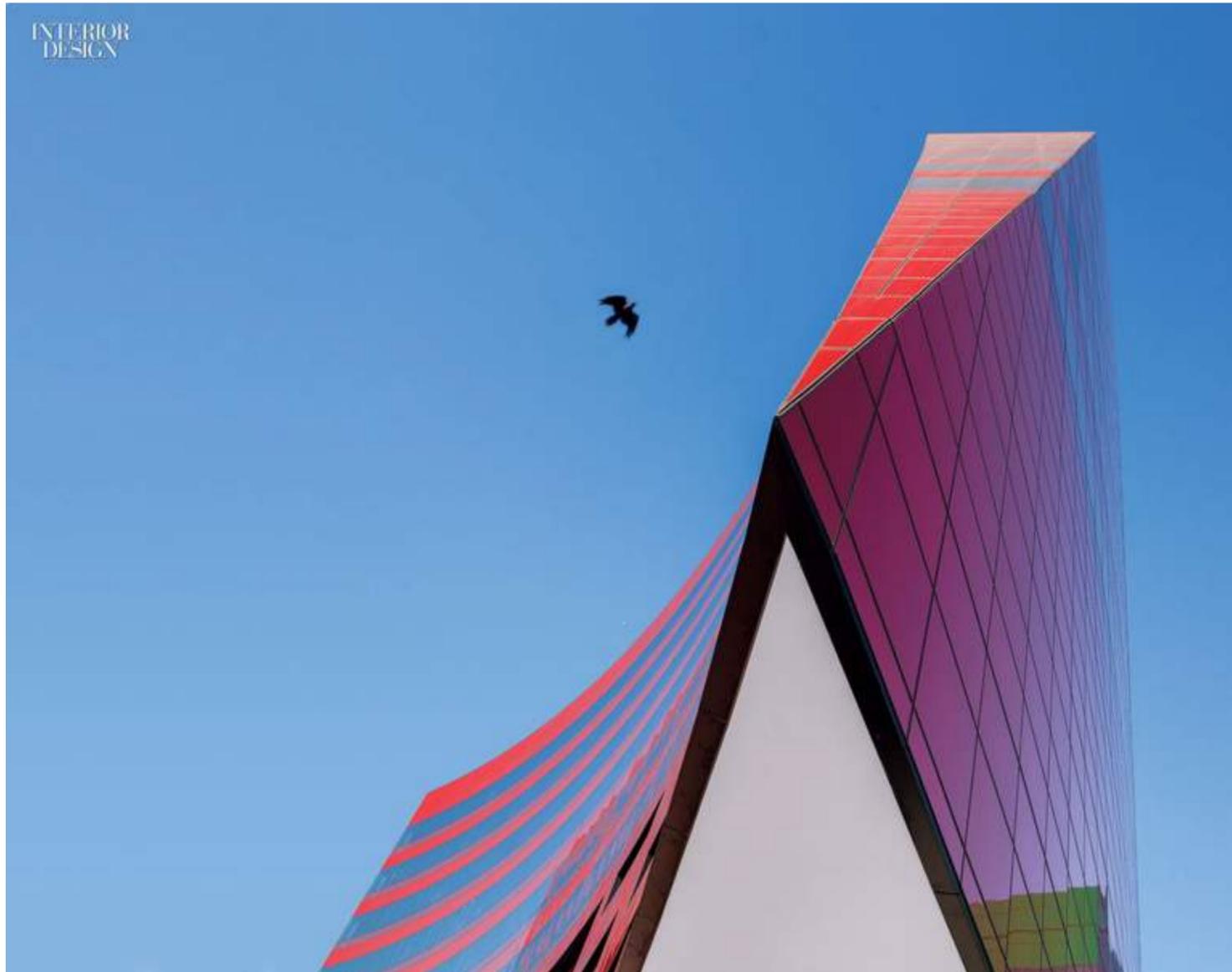


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Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects has completed the third and final building at the Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, with Area Architecture. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



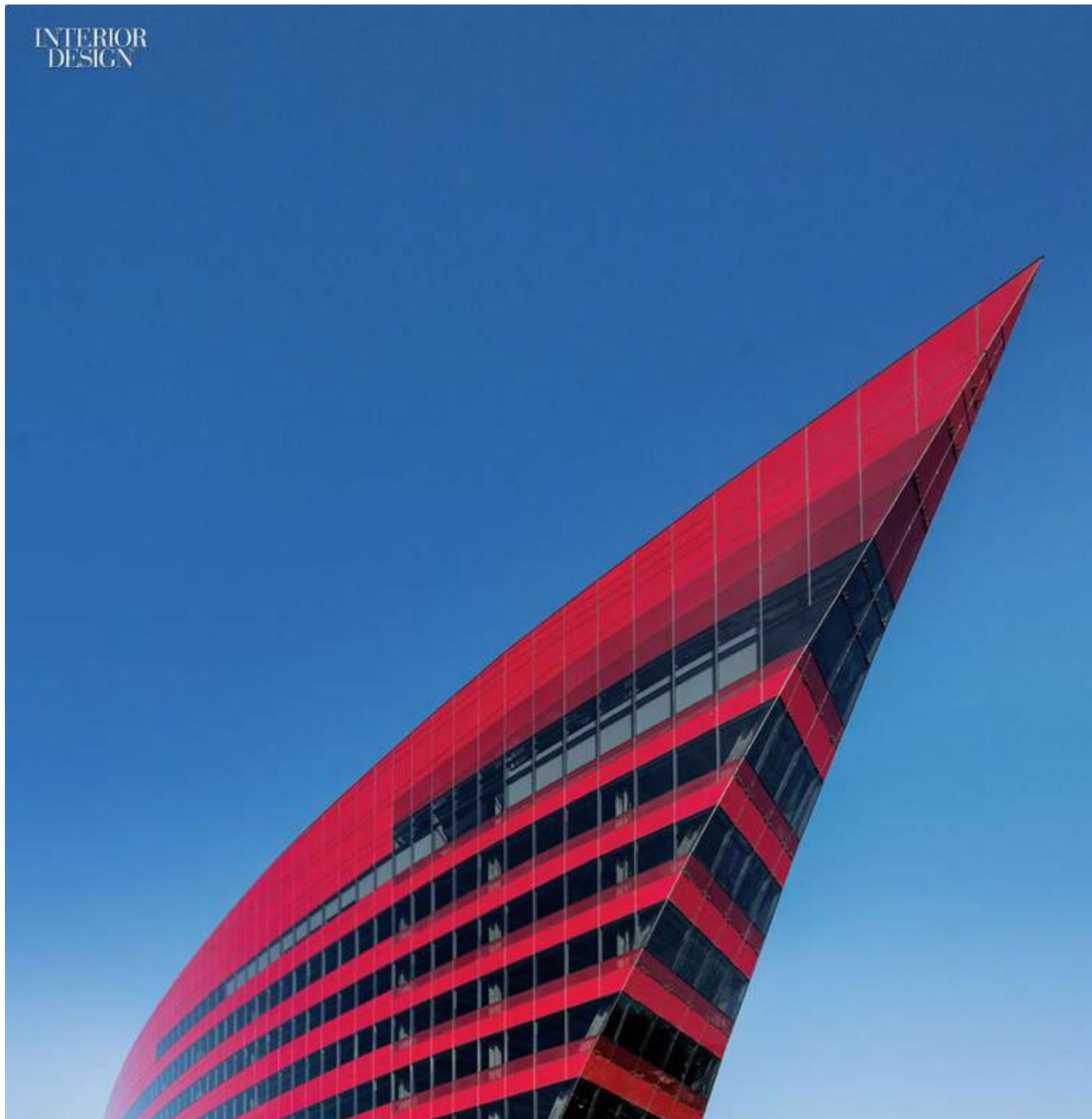
The campus is 14 acres. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Nylon carpet flows through this office area at the Cohen Brothers Realty Corporation. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



In its reception area, a sculpture by Daniel Firman and a boxwood-veneered column flank a desk in walnut veneer and granite . Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.





The glass derives its red from an organic compound instead of lead. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Aluminum frames the curtain walls of all three buildings. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



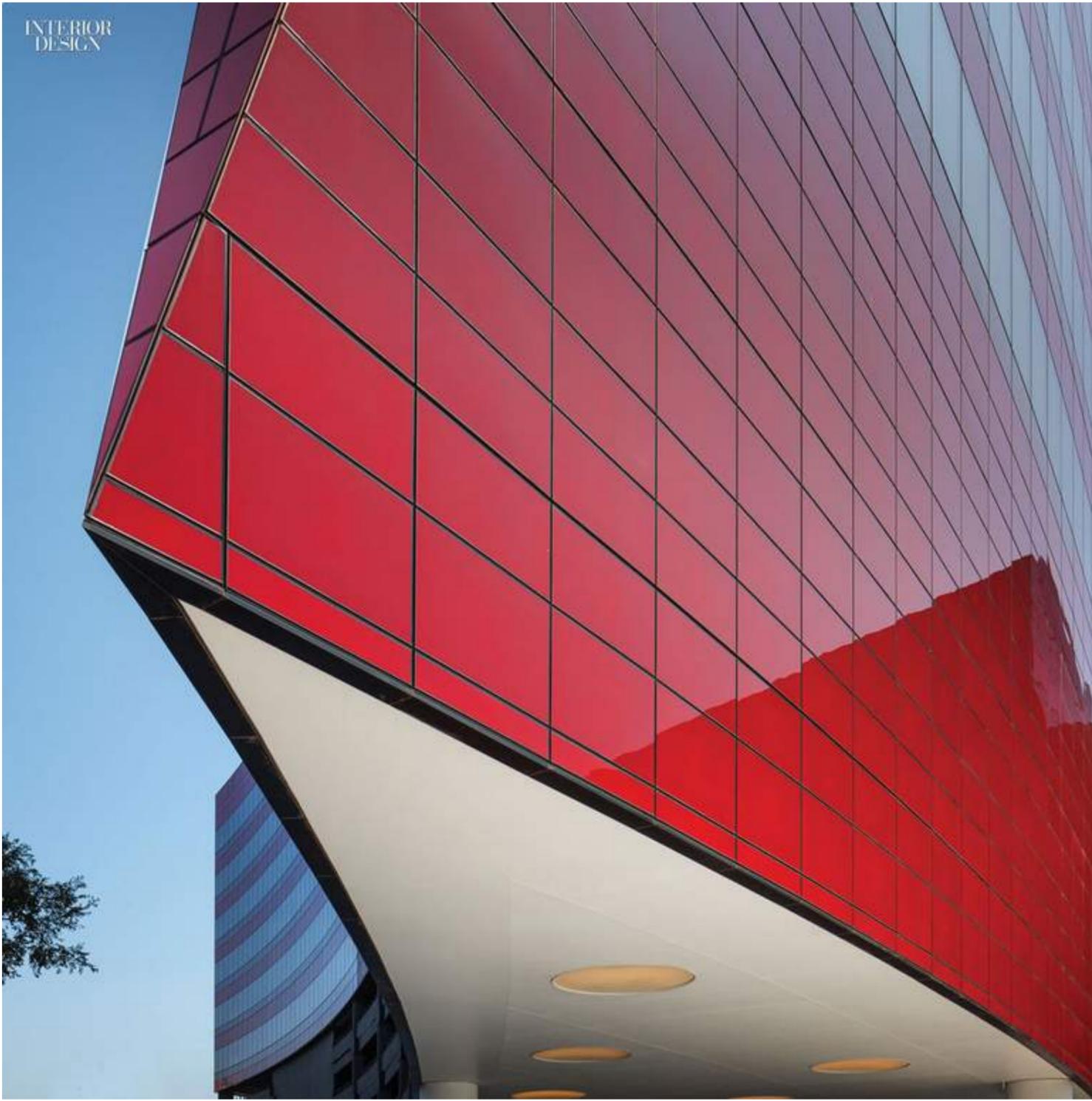
An LED sculpture by Erwin Redl in one of the red building's two lobbies. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



The 1988 green building. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Terrazzo flooring in the valet-parking station for the red building. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



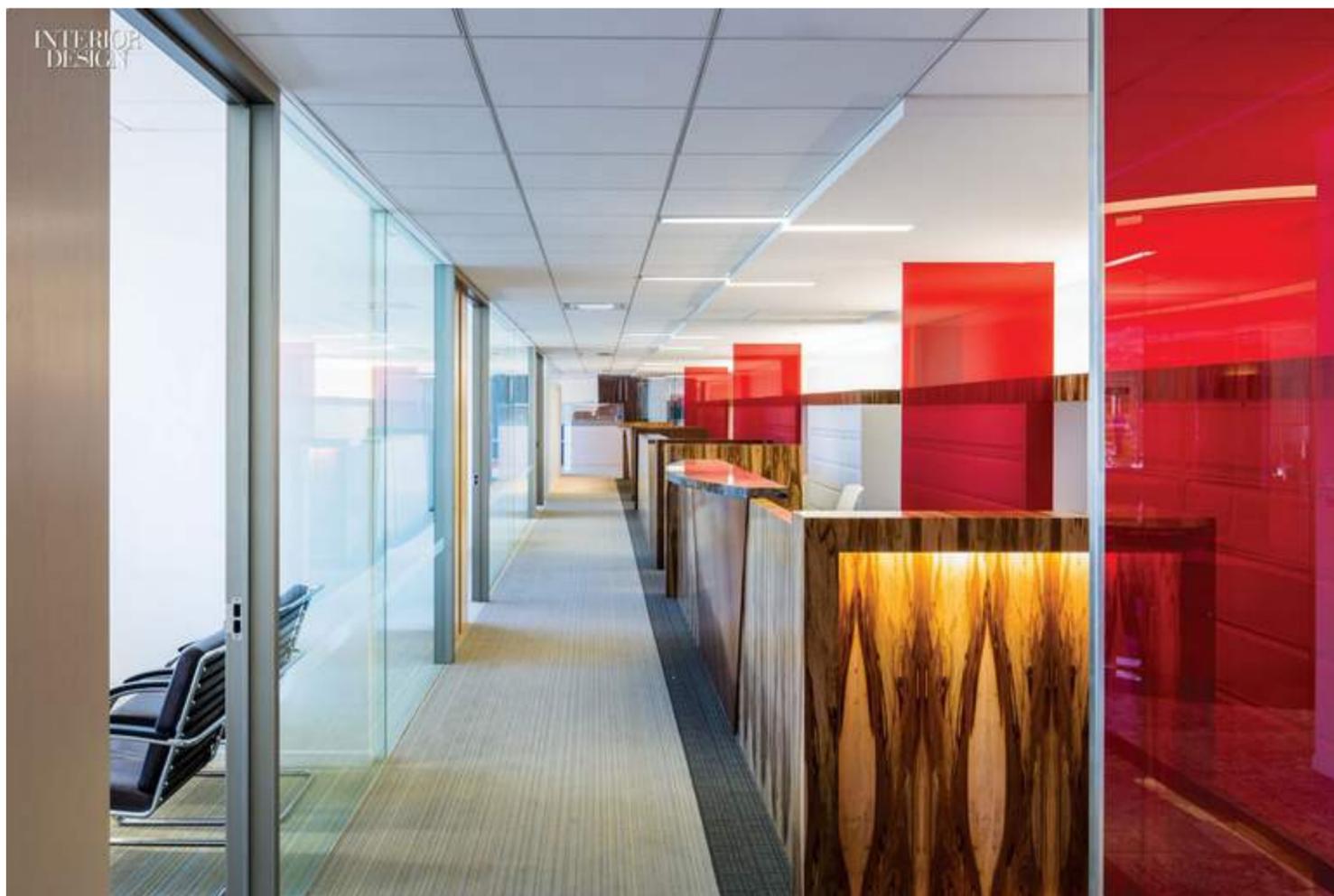
Sheltering the entry to the garage. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Tinted windows . Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Walnut paneling in the other lobby. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.





Custom workstations are veneered in four species of wood. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Redl also created light sculptures for the motor court between the two wings of the red building. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



Its garage podium holds 1,500 cars. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



In the CEO's office, suede-upholstered guest chairs and a custom desk, veneered in Caribbean rosewood, gather beneath Xavier Veilhan's mobile in resin, aluminum, carbon, and stainless steel. Photography by Scott Frances/Otto.



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