



even the name is new

WHEN A.F. SUPPLY CORP., A MAINstay for bathroom plumbing and hardware, evolved into AF New York, the name change called for an interior to match. Think big picture—with a mind-boggling array of designers, styles, and attitudes. In the hands of H.T. Chang, the 10,000-square-foot showroom has morphed into a Barneys for the bath. After all, when Antonio Citterio, Norman Foster, Philippe Starck, et al., come to town to launch a tub, the venue has to be suitably chic.

Besides executive and management offices, a conference →



Clockwise from top: At AF New York, a tub with whirlpool and air systems stands on the bluestone platform in the demonstration rotunda, where 103 showerheads from international manufacturers can be operated by the switches of a control panel. Along the rear corridor, motorized shades reveal or conceal bath accessories. Chrome-plated brass showerheads demonstrate their capabilities. The entry door pivots open to reception's custom acrylic bench.



room, and an open sales area, the architect's program included product-display space, five bath vignettes, an archive, an art gallery, and an impressive demonstration rotunda where 103 showerheads can be activated sequentially by the switches of a control panel. A luminous world of acid-washed glass, white acrylic, stainless steel, and

aluminum, all this awaits behind an impressive entry, a pivoting aluminum-clad door panel 6 feet wide and 10 feet high.

Running from front to back, a pathway of brushed aluminum marks the boundary between the display space and vignettes on one side, the sales area's row of nine oval desks on the other. Chang generally left the interior

open. To separate the sales area from executive offices, however, he added drywall partitions featuring clever square and rectangular stainless-steel mesh inserts, which allow light to pass through. "As much as possible," explains Chang, "I used the elements of air, light, and water, literally and metaphorically."

Complex though this may sound, it was a snap compared to the question of inventory. In the course of 15 trips a year to Europe—absorbing the zeitgeist and sourcing merchandise—AF New York director Bennett Friedman had built up a stock of 400,000 items. This selection of furniture, fixtures, fittings, cabinet hardware, tiles, accessories, and more demanded vast presentation and archive capabilities, so Chang designed two walls of cabinets. At 4 feet deep and 8 feet high, all 39 slide out to reveal fittings and hardware as well as color, finish, and materials samples. The objects are attached to double surfaces of removable panels, a solution that effectively hides thousands of pieces while making them •



Clockwise from top left: Backlit shadow boxes line the main aisle in the display space. One of the conference room's custom aquariums houses a Siamese fighting fish. The aquariums are built into the room's pivoting walls. Aluminum grating and melamine panels support merchandise in the display space.



easily accessible in a visually pleasing way.

Every one displayed on the showroom floor represents three or four that remain in the AF New York warehouse. For those that make the cut, mobility is critical. Even bathtubs, pedestal sinks, and vanities move, swivel, and slide. "We were influenced by the fashion industry, where re-merchandising occurs on an ongoing basis," explains Friedman. Expect to see Cristal et Bronze's classically fluted sink fittings treated like sculpture or jewelry, presented in a backlit shadow box. "A faucet is a faucet," Friedman concedes. "But a \$100 faucet is not the same as a \$2,000 faucet." —Donna Paul

PLATFORM STONE (ROTUNDA); WILLIAMS & SONS SLATE & TILE, CUSTOM WALL PANELS (ROTUNDA); FLOOR PLATES (WALKWAY); CUSTOM DESKS (SALES AREA); NELSON INDUSTRIAL, SHADES (REAR CORRIDOR); DFB SALES, PARTITION ACRYLIC (REAR CORRIDOR); BENCH ACRYLIC (RECEPTION); THYSSENKRUPP MATERIALS, CHROME-PLATED SHOWERHEADS (ROTUNDA); HANS-GROHE DEUTSCHLAND VERTRIEBS, CUSTOM AQUARIUMS (CONFERENCE ROOM); CAMAL PLASTIC CENTER, WALL GRATING (DISPLAY SPACE); DHD GRATINGS, WALL-PANEL, SHELVING MELAMINE; PANOLAM INDUSTRIES, ACID-WASHED GLASS; FLORAL GLASS, GENERAL CONTRACTOR, S.W.R. CONTRACTING.

From top: Located at the end of a corridor, the art gallery is currently showing photography. A brushed-aluminum walkway extends 70 feet down the center of the showroom, separating the display space from the sales area's custom steel desks topped in acid-washed glass over mirror.

STYCE LAMAR/EL

