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Designed To Sell

Photos: [Magda Biernat](#) / Branding dances with design in two New York storefronts by Italian architect [Giorgio Borroso](#)

By Matt Alderton

At its best, shopping isn't transactional—it's transform-ational. That's the credo of Italian-born architect Giorgio Borroso, whose Los Angeles-based firm, Giorgio Borroso Design, specializes in retail design for international brands. In an age of e-commerce, he says, it's no longer enough to put products on shelves near cash registers. To make an impact—and a sale—retailers must stop building spaces and start building stories.

"In a time where we can all shop from home, sitting in a comfortable chair, brands are paying more attention to the physical environment," Borroso says. "When they go into a store to buy a product, the public wants to be engaged; if you don't have a good story to tell, you can't be engaging."

Borruso's passion for engaging retail environments is evident in everything he touches. In particular, however, it's present in two New York storefronts that he recently completed for Italian luxury brands Snaidero and Carlo Pazolini.

The answer was geometry. At the center of the space is a display of horizontal panels—built

by T. Alongi, a Canadian woodworking firm—that reach out from the wall like fingers, each displaying a colorful kitchen cabinet swatch. From there emanate black and orange lines in the pristine white ceramic floor. Mirrored in the black light fixtures on the white ceiling above, those lines extend outward through the space like the spokes of a wheel.

"There's a focal point where all the lines converge," Borroso says. "This produces an incredible push-and-pull effect on the space, drawing you towards the point of origin [the cabinet-swatch display]."

The showroom's black-and-white color story adds to the "gallery" feel by making Snaidero's kitchens—in bold primary colors—pop. "When you play with a strong contrast between black and white, it makes the space look much bigger," Borroso says.

Following the lines in the showroom, customers can easily navigate the space. And, more importantly, interact with it, as T. Alongi installed black paneled walls that customers are encouraged to use as chalkboards. The result, according to Borroso, is a showroom that "tells" just as much as "shows."

Project Credits:

General Contractor: [The OMARA Organization Inc.](#)

Lighting: [Pyramid Lighting Group Inc.](#)

Millwork: [T. Alongi](#)

Fireplaces: [EcoSmart Fire](#)

Carlo Pazolini SoHo



At Carlo Pazolini's first North American retail store, which opened in 2011 in Manhattan's trendy SoHo neighborhood, the challenge wasn't the size of the product, it was the size of the space. Or rather, the perceived size: although quite large, its layout is very deep and exceedingly narrow, making it feel small.

Still, location was everything for the high-end Italian shoemaker. "It was very important for them to be in SoHo," Borroso explains. "The problem is,

they're not the only ones who wanted to be there. So, it was very difficult to find a space."

So when they finally found one, Borroso had to make it work. To counter the storefront's inherently claustrophobic nature, he again embraced a black-and-white design. This time, however, the white captures natural light from the store's lone window and projects it back into the rear of the space. A mirrored wall on one side of the space further enhances the effect.

Again, lines are featured prominently. Taking the form of black recessions in the ceiling and dark slats of wood on the mirrored wall—some of which extend out to create shelves—the lines crawl through the space from the front of the store to the back, ultimately colliding with another mirrored wall that extends them on until infinity.

"It looks like the space goes on forever because the back wall is all mirror and the lines in the ceiling and walls guide there," Borroso says. "All of these lines play with perspective. If you're walking by outside, they suck you into the space. Your body pushes you to go inside and follow it, deeper, towards the end."

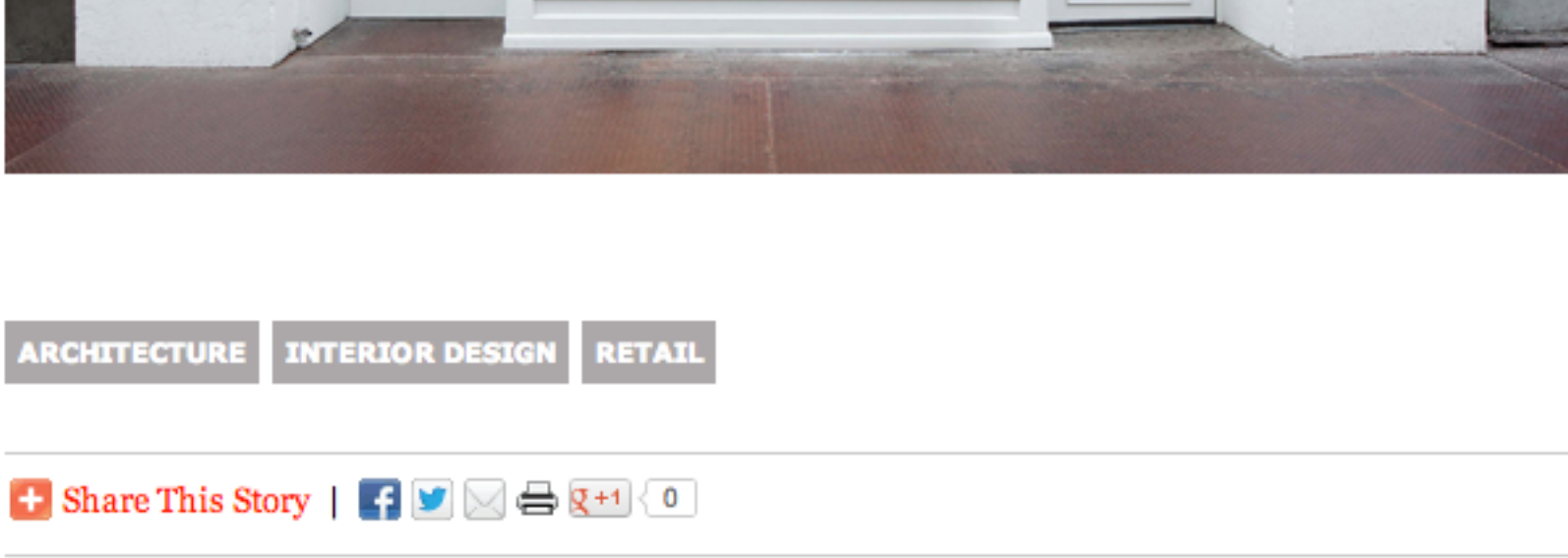
If the lines don't draw you in, the store's signature shelving will. Custom-made for Carlo Pazolini, each shelf features an amorphous design that's based loosely on the shape of a newborn's foot. Made of wool that's been bonded to a special polymeric material, allowing it to retain its softness while also being stiff enough to hold products, each shelf is attached to the wall by a single steel arm. The result is a layering effect that gives the wall color and texture. The shelves, replicated in adjacent seating, are bright green and orange, which makes it easy to see them from far away, again pulling passersby inside.

Project Credits:

General Contractor: [CORCON Construction](#)

Lighting: [Targetti](#)

Millwork and Fixtures: [Chiavari](#)



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