

Haaz



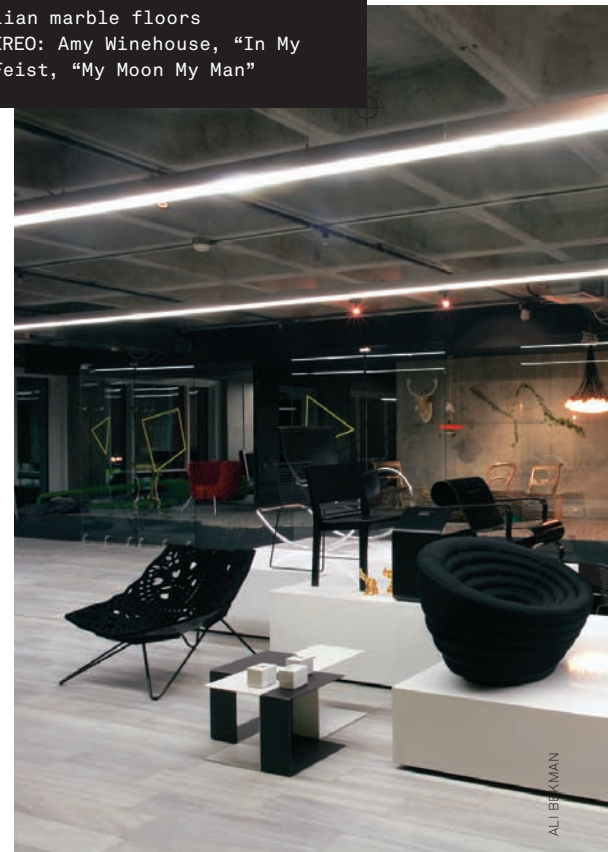
GRAPHIC DESIGN FIRM,
MAGAZINE, AND SHOP
ISTANBUL
SQUARE FOOTAGE: 14,000
NUMBER OF WORKERS: 46

“There’s something going on in Istanbul,” says Selin Sonmez, brand manager of the year-old design and art gallery Haaz. There’s something going on under Istanbul, too. Five floors below street level, beneath a glassy corporate tower in the city’s business district, Haaz showcases a revolving collection of furniture by the likes of Edra, Droog, and Qubus, feeding the city’s burgeoning appetite for international design.

Haaz shares its cavernous space, originally meant to house a gym and indoor swimming pool, with offices for the ad agency Republica and the three-year-old East-meets-West lifestyle and design magazine 34, all founded by creative director Murat Patavi. Patavi designed the partition-less showroom, which opened in May 2006, with Californian designer Sami Hayek, leaving the cement surfaces and structural columns raw while introducing regional elements, such as blue Turkish tiles, Anatolian marble floors, and mirrored paneling. Video art flickers on the 27-foot-high white perimeter walls of the gallery, while the low-ceilinged office area opens onto a courtyard that has served as a catwalk for local fashion shows sponsored by the magazine. “We didn’t want to divide or identify parts of the space with respect to function, and many times, these boundaries are crossed,” says Patavi. “Each discipline motivates and inspires the other in ways that are difficult to describe, but you sense that creativity is in the air.”

The lack of interior walls means that the 46 employees are in constant communication. The businesses share clientele and sometimes act as clients to one another. Haaz’s

DECOR ELEMENT THAT SAYS IT ALL:
The Anatolian marble floors
ON THE STEREO: Amy Winehouse, “In My Bed” and Feist, “My Moon My Man”





FIRST THING TO BE RESCUED IN A FIRE:
Favela Chair by the Campana brothers, the
gallery's huge (and expensive) centerpiece



*clockwise from opposite
left Republic and
34's offices; the
main gallery space,
originally built
to hold a swimming
pool; reception area;
balconies overlooking
the showroom; Haaz's
collection, greatest
hits of international
furnishings*

corporate identity was developed by Republica, for instance, which devotes an account executive to the gallery. To produce an upcoming community-building event called BLOCK, each team will play a role in bringing local and international designers together. (The gallery is expected to begin stocking local work in the near future.) The interaction among the three staffs penetrates even the beehive of partitioned rooms upstairs: Employees cook and share communal meals at a long table in the second-floor kitchen. A wrought-iron staircase spirals upstairs to the kitchen, meeting rooms, and Patavi's office, between which the walls are canted, lending the halls an intentional drama that's amplified by the baroque chandeliers and balconies overlooking the showroom. "Each item in the Haaz collection is like a showpiece," says Patavi, "and together they create a narrative."

Visitors can sense that the narrative unfolding in this underground gallery is not actually a story about objects; it's the exposure of Turks to international design. If the graceful synthesis of East and West and the productive blur of disciplines among Haaz and its sister companies describes the changing relationship of Turkey's designers to one another and to the rest of the world, it might also suggest a way for all of us to approach the complexities of our shrinking globe. The moral of the story? Tear down the walls.

www.haaz.info — BARBARA MURDOCH