



John Mclean Architect
architecture & industrial design

White Plains, NY 10601

914 285 9365

johnmcleanra@juno.com

www.JohnMcleanArchitect.com

The following interview appears on pages 157 through 159 in *Becoming an Interior Designer*, by Christine Piotrowski, ASID, IIDA

1. What is your interior design specialty?

My interior design specialty is retail design. My approach to interior design in retail environments is to allow the interior to reflect an architectural/sculptural point of view, which produces a feeling of space. These designs, built into the environment, meet the needs of the client and produce a very elegant solution. This is always my first choice whether I am designing for retail, residential or industrial purposes.

2. Why did you become an interior designer?

It is a natural outgrowth of my architecture and industrial design practice. I view projects holistically. This type of design is best called comprehensive design. The comprehensive design approach gives all aspects of the space program the look of a natural flow and fit, that is, from the architecture, to the interior design, to the landscaping.

3. What have been your greatest challenges as an interior designer?

Retail design is a challenge because it involves skill and talent in three primary areas of human endeavor: *Quality, Cost and Schedule*. Retail design is programmatically comprehensive. It involves the integration of architecture, spatial composition, lighting, display and store fixture design, point-of-sale graphics, and graphic and store signage design.

Because I am also an Industrial Designer, I am educated to design and think in terms of mass production/prototypical design solutions. These design solutions often are then related to a variety of sites, such as, shopping malls, strip malls, small town/urban storefronts, and boutiques. Keeping this variety in mind, a dynamic frame is created, through which I enter to meet these challenges.

4. What lead you to enter your design specialty?

Store design has been part of my psyche since childhood. The purpose of retail design is to entice or seduce a person to enter the store, and then to create an atmosphere conducive to "yes" in making a purchase.

I remembered the Bohack supermarket storefront design of my childhood. The façade was constructed of cream-colored porcelain enamel metal panels with the name Bohack, in red, raised in relief, on the panels. Of historic note, is the fact that Gordon Bunshaft of SOM fame designed this store.

Supermarkets did not have a general reputation for design quality prior to the 1980's. Therefore, when the opportunity arose for the office I was formerly associated with to design a supermarket, I was already primed to meet the challenge. I am proud to be credited with heading up this design team.

5. What are your primary responsibilities and duties in your position?

I am the Principal-in-Charge and the Director of Design.

6. What is the most satisfying part of your job? The least?

The most satisfying part of my professional life is having the opportunity to use the creative talents for which I have been trained. Being able to successfully meet the challenge presented by a project is a great reward.

The least? The best way to answer this part of the question is to acknowledge that good design has to be supported by economic viability.

It is very important, therefore, for a professional to treat his/her practice as if it is an on-going design project where the parameters of Quality, Schedule and Cost are balanced.

7. What is the most important quality or skill of a designer in your specialty?

The most important quality and skill expressed by a designer should be to constantly strive to bring a fresh point of view to each project. Prototypical design can translate into "variations on a theme" rather than static repetition. This was the practice I followed in creating The Electronics Boutique stores. The result was distinct, but recognizable, store designs.

8. What advice would you give to someone who wants to be an interior designer?

Entering the area of interior design through becoming an Architect and specializing in Interior Design would lead to a best practice scenario. Then, plan on a life of continuing education.

9. Who or what experience has been a major influence in your career?

Frank Lloyd Wright, who taught that design matters in the life of a person and community.

Mies van der Rohe, who practiced as a comprehensive designer of commercial environments, and brought the esthetics of architecture and design to the corporate world.

Eero Saarinen, who kept the principles of the modern movement alive and showed that there is more than styling in linking architecture and design.

Louis Kahn, for his poetic approach to design.