

Gwathmey Siegel Rewrites Library Rules
Morris Lapidus: Cool Again
How Firms Change to Beat Competitors



A Place to Scrub, Rub, Oil, Wax, Massage, Trim, Cleanse, Pamper

A hidden oasis always surprises, and there is nothing on the outside of the generic 1970s-era pitched-roof mall to prepare a visitor for the Don and Sylvia Shaw Salon and Spa located inside. It is serene, meditative, and douses the visitor with space and light.

Owner Shaw and his wife know their customers' needs. "We've been in the salon business for 35 years," he says. "People are trying to take control of their lives. We give them a day of pampering." The actual spa footprint is tiny, only 2,050 sq ft on two floors. "We had to squeeze a large program into a tiny space," says Elam. The spa, located adjacent to the Shaws' popular salon, has dual offerings: watery ablutions, including steam baths and full body massage on the first level; a "Spa Express" on the second for quick trips, facials, and manicures.

The doors inside the spa are sealed and the mood is meditative and solitary. Elam cites the customer's perceived vulnerability during the spa experience. Don Shaw is more direct. He expected private spaces that would insulate noise from the massage and active bathrooms. "I didn't want any gyp board walls there."

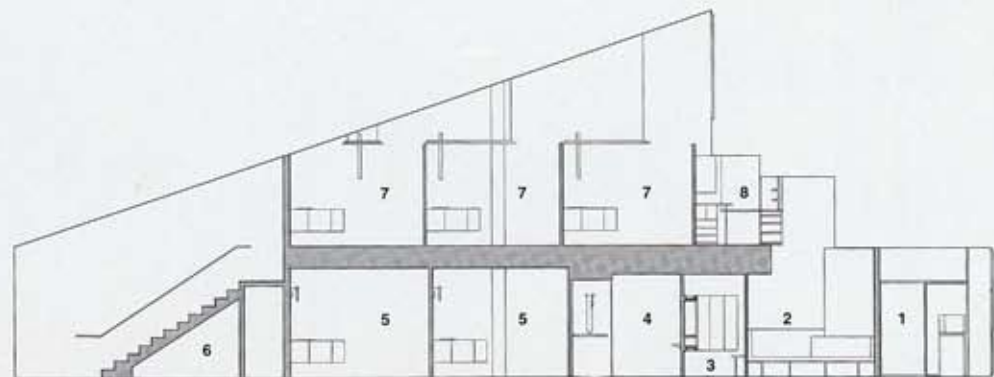
Stepped glazing, the interlocking geometry of floors, and walls, and ceiling, glazing and lighting effects combine in a spatial tour-de-force, an essay in which technique conquers limitations by raising questions. What lies behind a translucent wall? What lies upstairs? Textures and materials carry the formal interplay further. Materials like concrete are rough; ceramic tile, smooth; multiple-layered plywood doors, warm; steel rails and struc-



A skeletal metal system outlines the stair rail with raw structure, and etched acrylic and plywood panels line opposing walls (right). The entrance to the spa through the salon (top) leads to the translucent reception area (above).



1. Reception
2. Parlor
3. Lockers
4. Steam/shower
5. Spa room
6. Laundry/exit stair
7. Facial
8. Make-up/manicure



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tural accents, cool. In a small space, the small details count. Continuous piano hinges on open doors offer structural stability and a ribbon of texture to open doors. Exposed plywood layers of walls and doors can be counted like rings on a felled tree. Capped bolts add rhythmic bumps to interior walls. Joints between interior panels are exposed; joinery shows.

Some effects were experimental. Frosty walls resulted when the architects sanded acrylic panels into a blurred opalescence. Achieved on a tight budget, the spa strains in certain spots. Despite admitted shortcomings such as concrete finishes, the spa seems expansive beyond its true size, augmented by light and space. Owner Shaw is pleased. "You'd think it was 3,000 or 4,000 square feet," he exults.

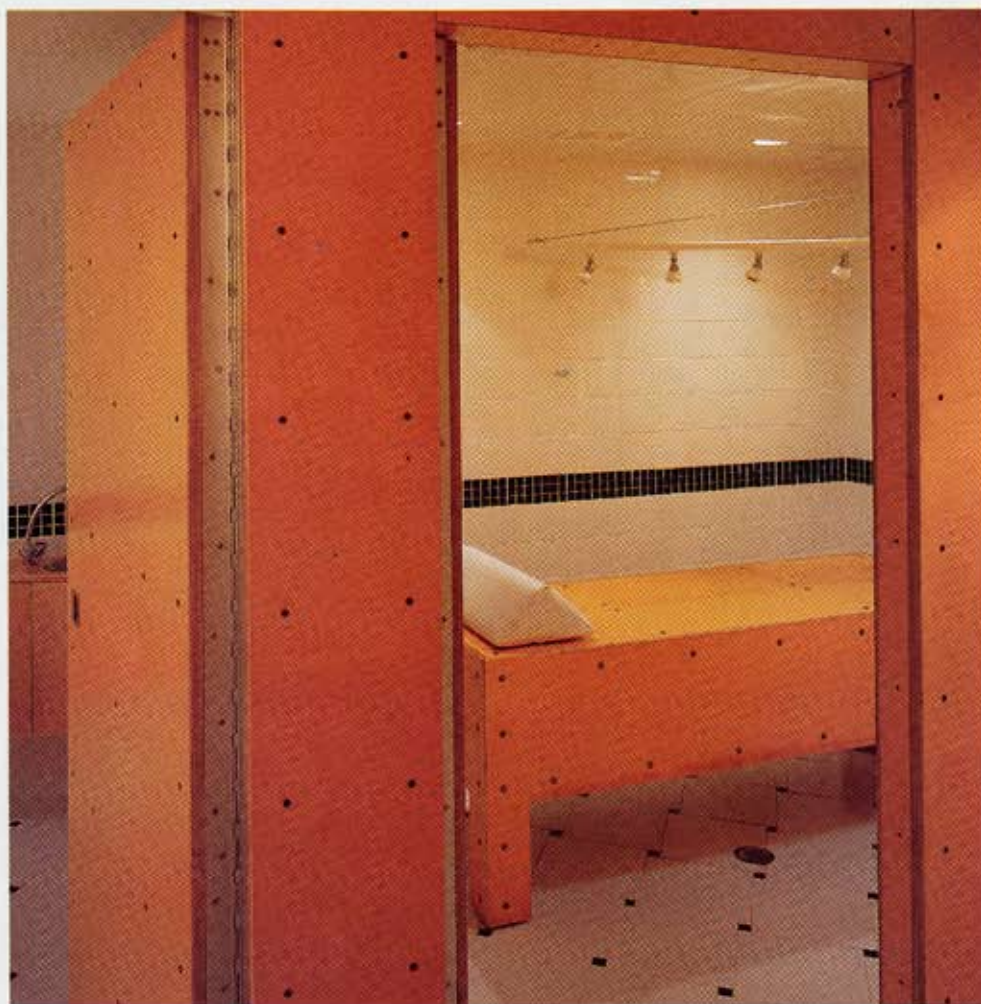
Credits

Don and Sylvia Shaw Salon & Spa
Dunwoody, Georgia

Architect: *Scogin Elam and Bray Architects, Inc.—Mack Scogin, Merrill Elam, and Lloyd Bray with Martha Henderson Bennett, Kathy Wright, Elizabeth Morris, and Dustin Lindblad*

Engineers: *Palmer Engineering Company (structural); Ramon Luminance Design (lighting)*

General Contractor: *Farrar and Associates; Dowlen Lloyd (Cabinetwork)*



Plywood doors and walls in the ceramic-tiled-spa area are protected by phenolic resin-impregnated film (above and right). Stairs are sealed, pigmented concrete, exposed to the first-floor corridor (opposite).

