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Esthetics clinic  
Florence

Hong Kong-based designers Michael Young and Katrin Olina dialogue with 12th-century architectural remnants for an interior that's all about renewal

By David Sokol  
Photography by Carlo Lavatori

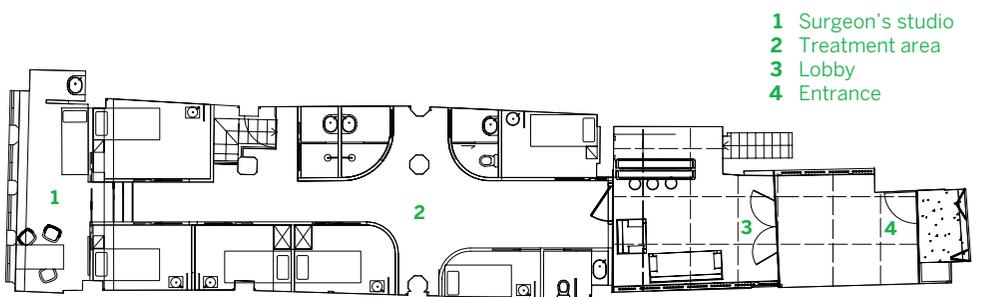
# A new skin

Modern Florentines of means have reinterpreted the Medici legacy. Instead of inviting talents to create buildings or monuments to withstand the ages, they're begging cosmetic surgeons like Dr. Jorgos Foukis to sculpt bodily changes that defy birthdate or genetic endowment. Skin, the new clinic Foukis commissioned from Hong Kong-based designers Michael Young and Katrin Olina, reminds patients that they're paying for a work of art.

Young and Olina – he, a renowned industrial designer, and she, a graphic artist – have been collaborating for the past seven years of their 11-year marriage. For Skin, they divvied responsibilities: Young developed the spatial



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- 1 Surgeon's studio
- 2 Treatment area
- 3 Lobby
- 4 Entrance

**Above** The Nolan sofa and armchair, designed by Michael Young for MK Maeda of Japan, accommodate patients waiting in the lobby for consultation or treatment. A mirrored wall contains a door leading to the treatment rooms and reflects the iron gate separating the lobby from the entrance area. Inscribed patterns on the walls and the floral motif on the floor were designed by Katrin Olina.

**Right** Olina's pentagonal pattern for the backlit Corian walls evokes both the pre-existing gate and the golden proportion.

concept and handled fabrication of the CNC-routed Corian walls, and of the DuPont SGX floors, in which digitally printed plastic film is laminated between two sheets of glass. Olina created the graphic pattern for the walls and the floral artwork for the floor, both of which decorate surfaces in the vestibule and waiting area. The overall goal, Young says, was "to make something as beautiful as a perfume bottle," adding, "we needed to make it warm and passionate, to match the Italian sensibilities."

The 250-square-metre space is housed within a 12th-century building near the Ponte Vecchio, and Young generated warmth by retaining traces of the past, a departure for him,

since he normally designs from scratch. "There's no way in the world I'm going to take away things like this," he says of Skin's iron gate, exposed brick wall, stone niche and barrel-vaulted ceilings.

Olina's incisions in the backlit Corian walls are based on a pentagon module that evokes the quatrefoil pattern of the iron gate, and overlap to create floral shapes. She notes, too, that the five-sided shape "essentially refers to our five senses and our extremities, and, perhaps most important for the clinic context, it refers to the golden proportion." In contrast to the geometric wall design, the larger-scale flowers sandwiched between the glass underfoot sport soft

**Below** Michael Young, known for his über-modern esthetic, retained the exposed brick wall and barrel-vaulted ceilings in the building, which dates back to the 12th century. The entrance, dominated by the quatrefoil-patterned iron gate, is softened by the floral pattern embedded in the glass floor.

**Right** The curved walls in the all-white treatment area echo the barrel-vaulted ceiling. The Sticklight fixture, designed by Michael Young in 1997, is now produced by Innermost in the U.K.

edges and a palette of pinks, greens and, appropriately, flesh tones.

Skin's long, narrow volume is segmented into entry and treatment zones, and esthetic choices are analogs for the resurrections Foukis performs every day. Olina's illuminated Corian cut-outs intimate brighter teeth, Young's placement of mirrored walls between zones suggest a new patient's self-scrutiny, and the all-white treatment area signifies the fresh start after the bandages come off. And like a good rhinoplasty, Skin's completion has garnered the industrial and graphic designers more dates, with several skin care companies approaching them to redesign their packaging, logos and stores. **AZ**

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