

TRENDS®

AS FEATURED IN COMMERCIAL TRENDS VOL. 22 NO. 9





Embraced by the future

Whether for consultation or a new set of braces, visitors to this orthodontic practice experience an open, curvaceous environment that puts them at their ease

Gone are the days when a trip to the orthodontist was a cause for trepidation. Today's dental practices make for a stress-free experience. However, beyond modern orthodontic techniques, a thoughtful practitioner will ensure that even the architecture contributes to a patient's sense of serenity and wellbeing.

The practice shown here is a case in point. The female practitioner asked architectural firm Forma Design to create a serene, light-filled environment that would be soft and feminine. Project designer Andreas Charalambous explains various elements that contribute to the resulting space.

"An appropriate analogy for this design is the effect of being up amongst the clouds," he says. "Soft curves, overlapping layers, and levels of translucency help achieve this effect. The orthodontic practice is also on the 12th floor of the building, literally set amongst the clouds."

While the soft curves allude to the shape of clouds, they also evoke the touch of femininity that the dentist desired.

"The majority of the space is a white shell, allowing light and shadow to emphasize the curves and to serve as a neutral backdrop to strategic areas of color that animate the space," he says.

Facing page, top: A blue-tinted glass door signals the entrance to this futuristic orthodontic practice designed by Forma Design.

Facing page, lower: Colorful ceiling panels evoke a feeling of being in the clouds, appropriate to the 12th-floor situation.

Above: Pale hues and soft curves give a sense of femininity to the female-run practice.



Above: Glass walls allow light to flood through the space, while frosted panels break views into the treatment bays, avoiding a goldfish-bowl feel for patients.

Right: Heavy glass doors are on slow-closing mechanisms to protect children's fingers. The frosted shapes further the cloud-like motif running through the practice. The office to the right is the only semi-private space.



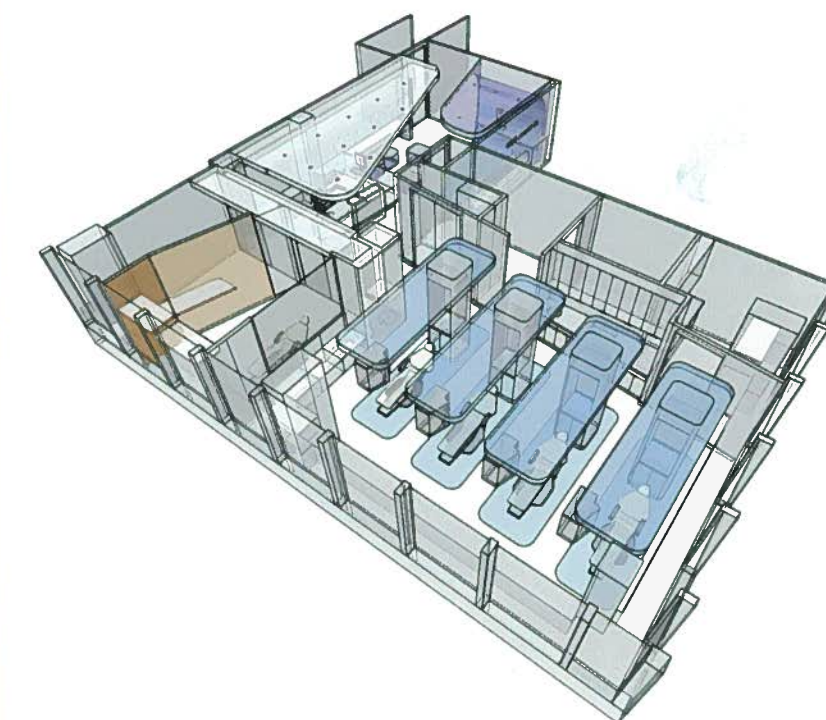
The white tones contribute to a serene feel and also fulfil another of the client's requirements – to bring a sense of spaciousness to the modestly sized 460sq ft interior.

The layout consists of a reception area that looks through to the four treatment bays, all occupying the same open-plan space. Across the open corridor from the treatment bays, through glass walls, are ancillary storage and sterilization rooms. The other two spaces are a small office – the only completely private area – and a consultation room. This room also has a glass wall so the practitioner can look through to her clinical staff and their patients.

The open-plan design, along with the use of transparent walls, means the entire space, apart from the office, is visually open.

"This adds to the feeling of roominess and also literally frees up floor space that might have been consumed by solid interior walls and closed corridors," says the architect. "The design allows light to flood from the exterior glazing right through to the reception desk. The openness and light combine to enhance a reassuring feel for patients."

A relaxing ambience was central to the clinic's design and is addressed in another way, too. The minute people enter the reception areas they



encounter colorful, layered ceiling panels, which create a playful, lively, but not cartoonish, feel.

"In a subtle way, these color panels also direct the flow of the space," says Charalambous. "A blue panel curves over the reception area, while another flows overhead above the waiting area – between the two lies the path to the treatment bays."

Many visitors to the practice are children, so small stools are dotted around the reception and treatment bays to allow either a child or a parent to perch on them. In the reception area there is also a low-set bench and drawing materials.

At the heart of the practice lie the treatment

Above: This diagram shows the practice from above, showing how the treatment bays are open to the reception areas. In the far left corner, behind an orange feature wall, the orthodontist's office is the only closed-off space in the layout. The practice is situated on an outer corner of a building, enabling the architect to achieve a light-filled interior.



Top: The consultation room looks out across the treatment bays. Tucked away to the left is a washing station and mirror. Mirrors are used throughout, partly to further maximize light.

Above: Orientation of the treatment chairs encourages occupants to enjoy the views. At night, with no curtaining or need for privacy, the interior light turns these windows into giant light-reflecting mirrors.

bays. While together in one space, they are visually separated by more cloud-like overhead panels. These forms are echoed by blue panel inlays in the rubber flooring. Equipment tables are on wheels, allowing for speedy access to orthodontic tools.

An ergonomic layout ensures treatment times are minimized, but patient serenity is paramount.

"The views, on a clear or cloudy day, are spectacular and the layout, right down to the direction of treatment chairs, maximizes this," he says. "Space, light and splashes of color make older patients feel as relaxed as the younger ones. The design gives new meaning to the phrase 'open wide'."

Location: Jill Bruno Orthodontics, Bethesda, USA
Architect: Forma Design (Washington DC). Design team – Andreas Charalambous, AIA, IIDA, Laurence Koehrsen
Main contractor: Kfoury Construction Group
Mechanical and electrical engineer: Allen & Shariff
Lighting designer: D Gilmore, Lighting Design
Lighting: Lightolier; Plexneon iLight from Alger Equipment
Door hardware: Hiawatha; Schlage
Tiling: Keystones floor tile from Daltile
Flooring: Johnsonite Roundel rubber tile
Ceiling: Grid-USG; Donn Fineline; Tile-USG; Olympia Micro Clima Plus
Laminates: Nevamar
Solid surfacing: DuPont Corian
Paints: Duron
Bathrooms: Kohler
Graphic design: Glass Film graphics by Forma Design
Dental equipment: Benco Dental
Reception seating: Custom millwork; upholstery from Design Tex

Photography by Geoffrey Hodgdon

Left: Overhead panels delineate the four treatment stations, and these are echoed by colored panels set into the utilitarian rubber flooring. Ergonomics are an important part of the fit-out, with mobile orthodontic trays and sterilization points kept near to the orthodontists' reach. A colored wall in the consultation room is one of the splashes of color that animate the soft-toned interior.