





Photos: © Ezra Stoller

*Lavish, unrestrained  
and straight from Italy, this*

## TYPEWRITER PALAZZO IN NEW YORK

*is blowing up  
a summer storm  
among designers*

L. B. BELGIOJOSO, E. PERESSUTTI,  
E. N. ROGERS, Milan, architects  
MURPHY-BRINKWORTH, general contractor  
CONSTANTINO NIVOLA, sculptor

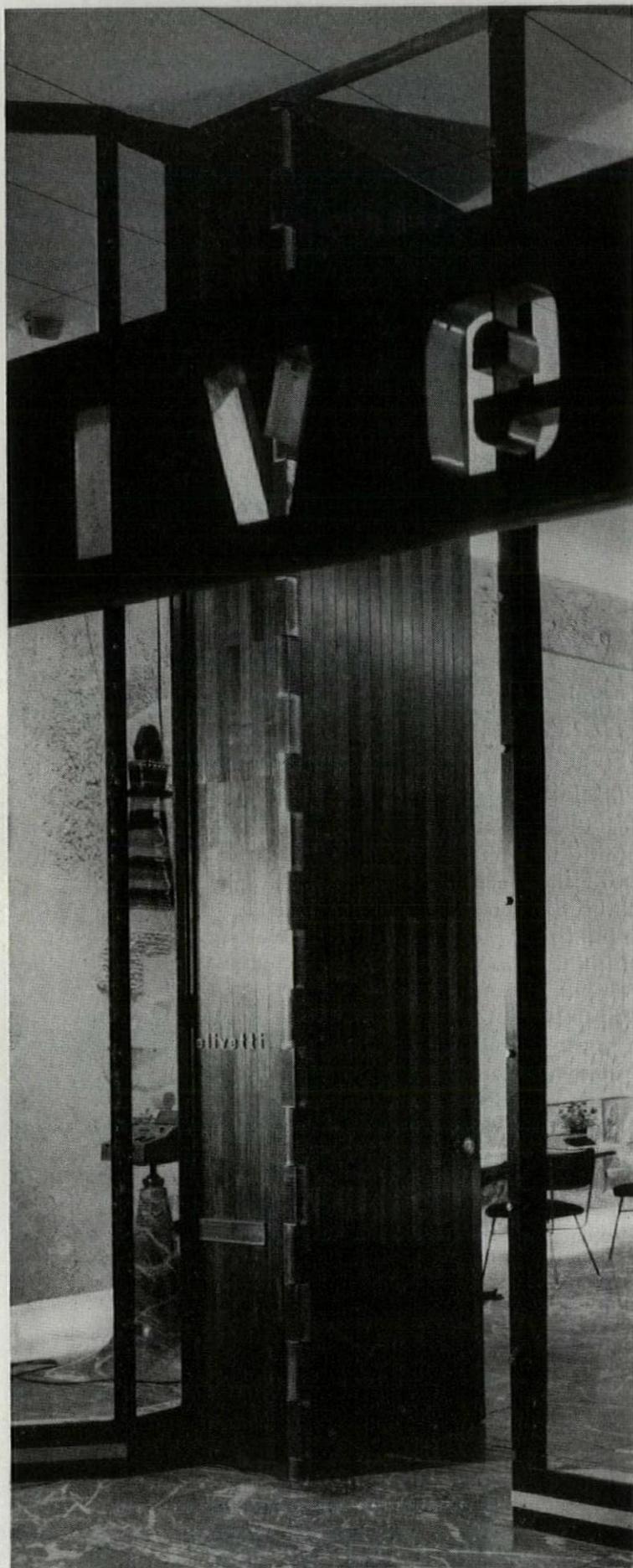
The new Italian Renaissance, unlike some wistful Italian wines, travels well. The latest importation is an intoxicating showroom for typewriters and calculating machines on upper Fifth Ave., a store interior and facade which (except for one sculptured wall) were designed in Italy by a leading architectural firm, made there piece by piece and transported here for assembly as a proud symbol of reconstructed Italian industry. The big display room is also a calculated commercial symbol for manufacturer Olivetti, for it has already proved to be box office along the world's Broadway of merchandise, Fifth Ave. And as in his company's other designs (AF, Nov. '52) Olivetti here attains popular success not by going down to the mythical infantile level of public taste, but by attracting the public up to a professional design level.

But professionally, the new showroom has cast a chunk of richly veined Italian marble into the recently placid surface of New York advanced design. There are arguments at cocktail parties and in drafting rooms about this design, not because of the mastery of its execution, uniformly applauded, but just because of its own bold basic esthetic. Against the current preference for sharp, staccato, surfacey, angular shop design, emphasizing lightness and transience, this new Olivetti showroom opposes weight and hearty exuberant voluptuousness. It has deliberate excesses: a door 16' tall, only 41" wide, solid walnut, in the otherwise glass front of the shop; a floor of beautiful marble which seems to have been pulled up like taffy to form display mounts for typewriters and calculators. Other boisterous touches (see next two pages) have combined to cause something of a turmoil of conscience in the profession. Some would like to dismiss this finished design as a baroque retrogression, but they cannot. For this showroom, bold, intricate and exciting, clearly is a step, perhaps a leading one, into the uncertain future of US shop design, which must always keep changing to keep the customers interested.

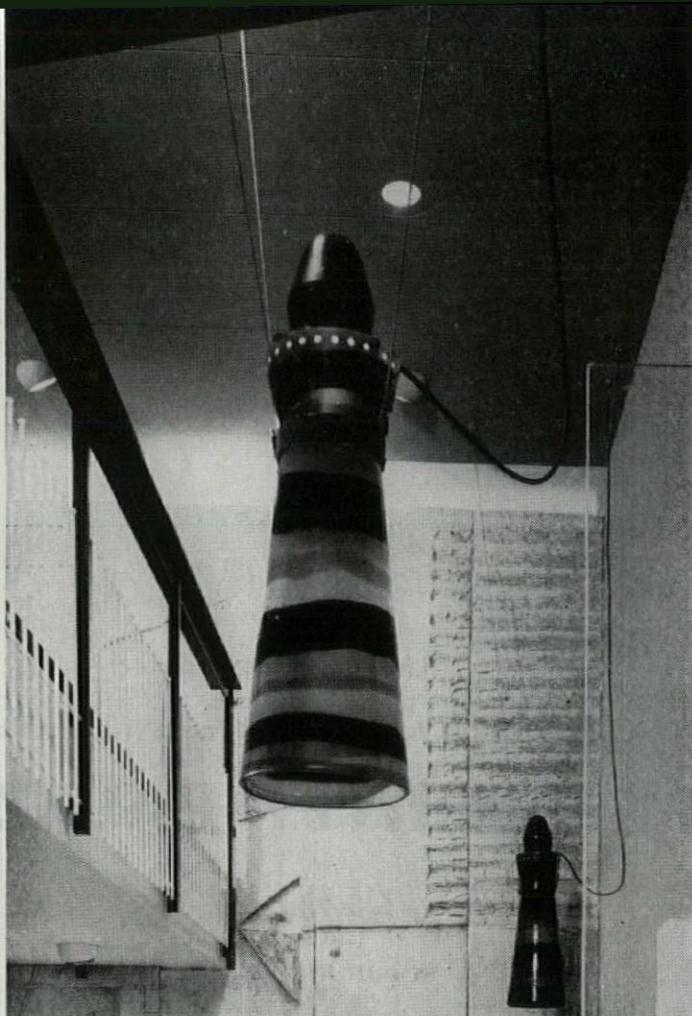


**Plaster "sand sculpture"** by Nivola extends the full 70' length of one inside wall. A semi abstract expression of hospitality, the handsome relief was cast in sections in sculptured sand molds, so it still bears the texture of Nivola's playful proddings into the Long Island beach.

... its display devices are rich and bold

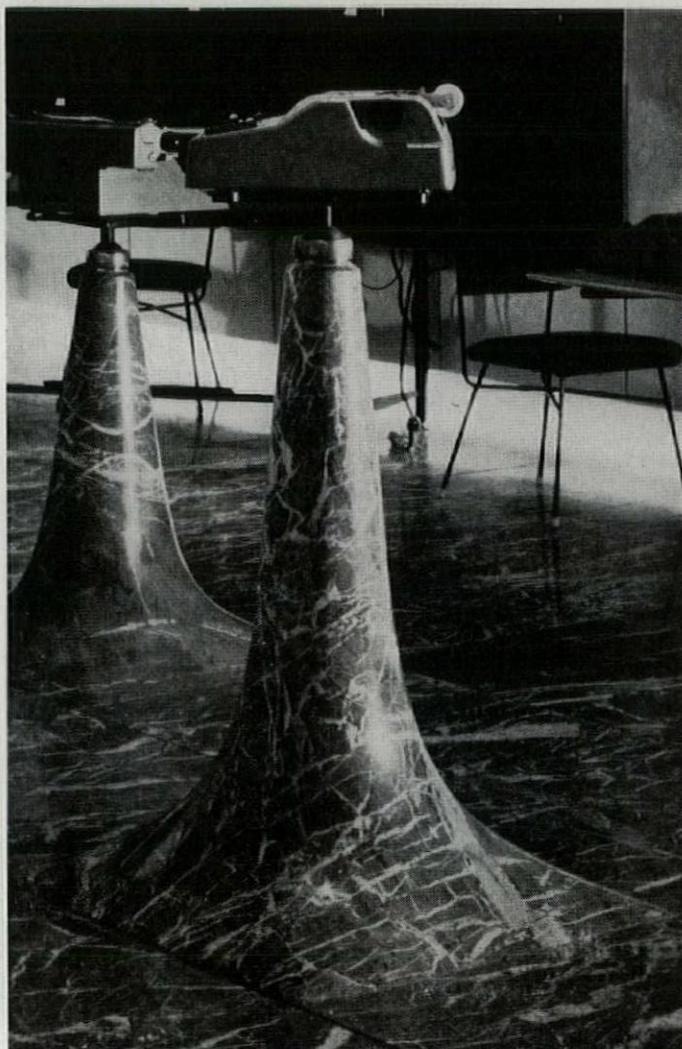


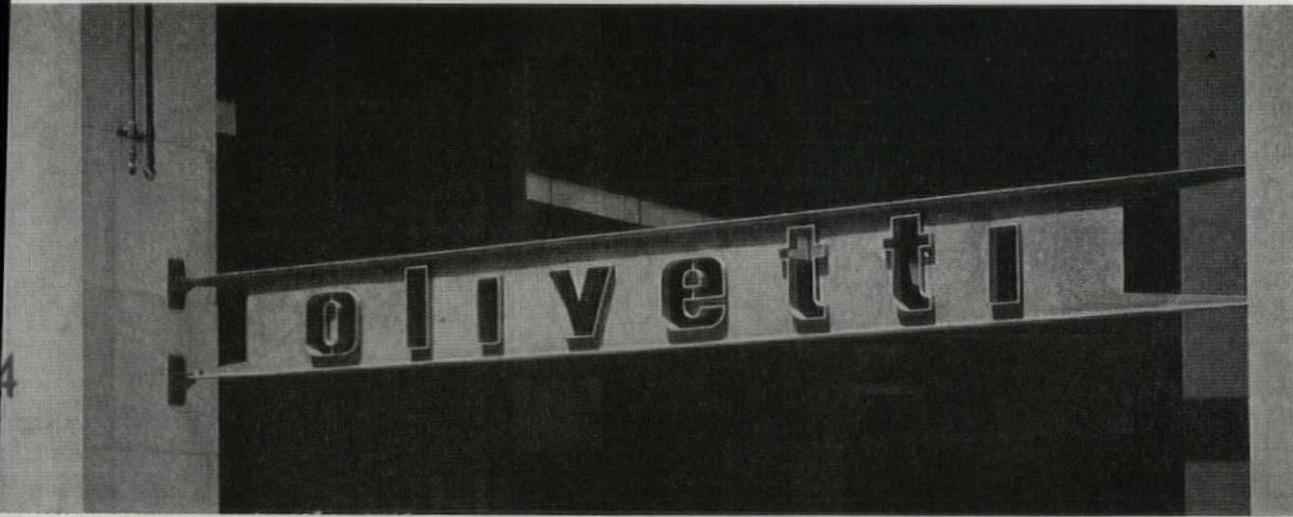
The great door, 16' x 3'-5", of matched walnut sections, has continuous brass hinge, can easily be hand operated, but is hard to keep quietly lubricated in New York's damp summer weather.



Suspended lighting fixtures are Venetian blown glass in spiraled colors, made by Venini of Murano. Spotlights are set in their tops, aimed at display stands below.

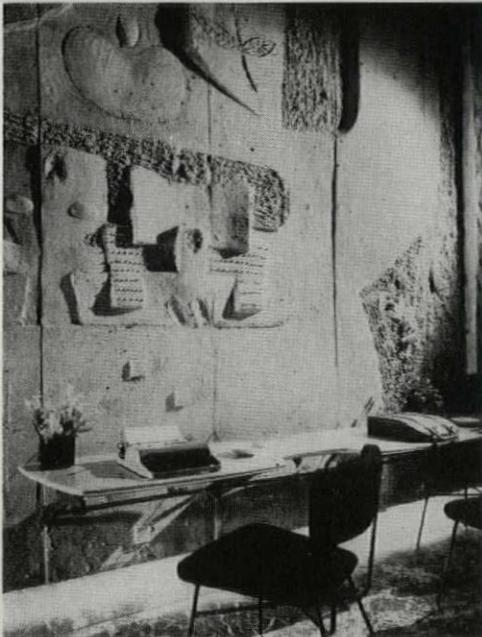
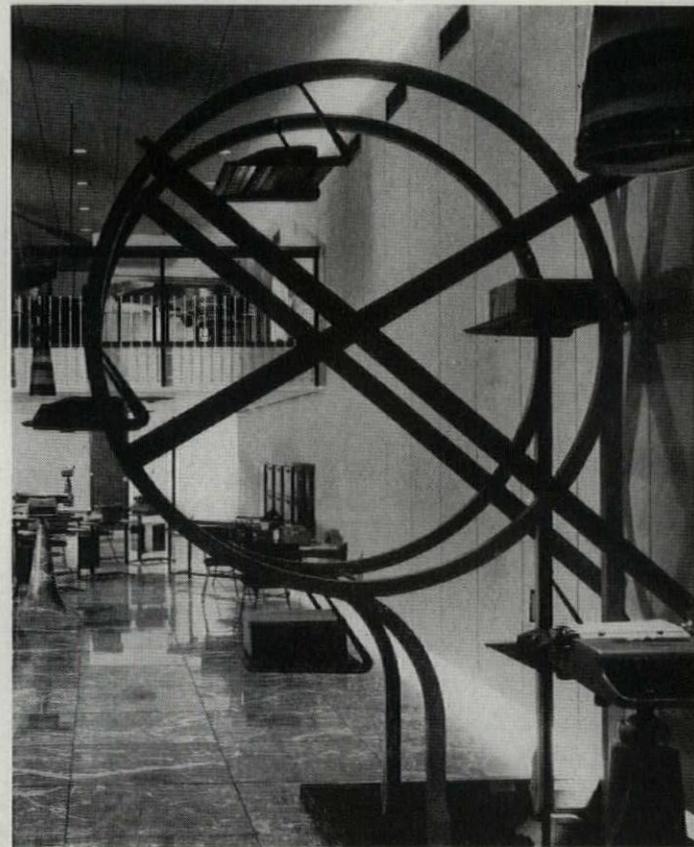
Display stands for machines are spotted around store (with one outside the glass wall near the sidewalk). Continuations upward of the floor, they are a rare malachite-green marble, quarried in a cave near Ivrea, the Italian headquarters of Olivetti.



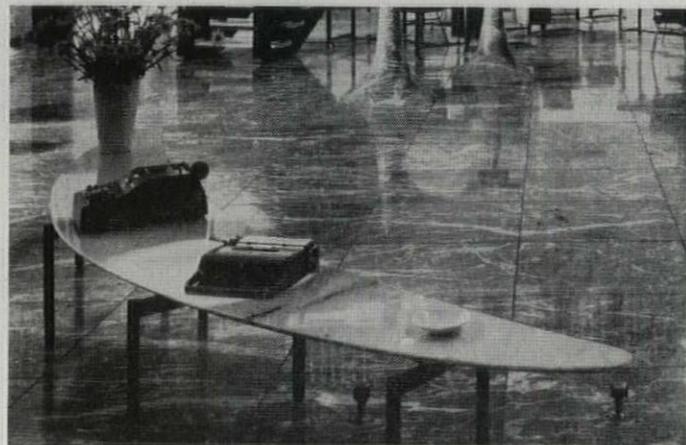


**Exterior sign** comes close to qualifying as sculpture in both design and execution. Brass, inset into green bronze, it spans one of two bays of the building front.

**Continuous conveyor** revolving around wheel was intended to deliver typewriters up from storeroom below, but New York building laws prohibited the hole in the floor. The "paternoster" has become a display.

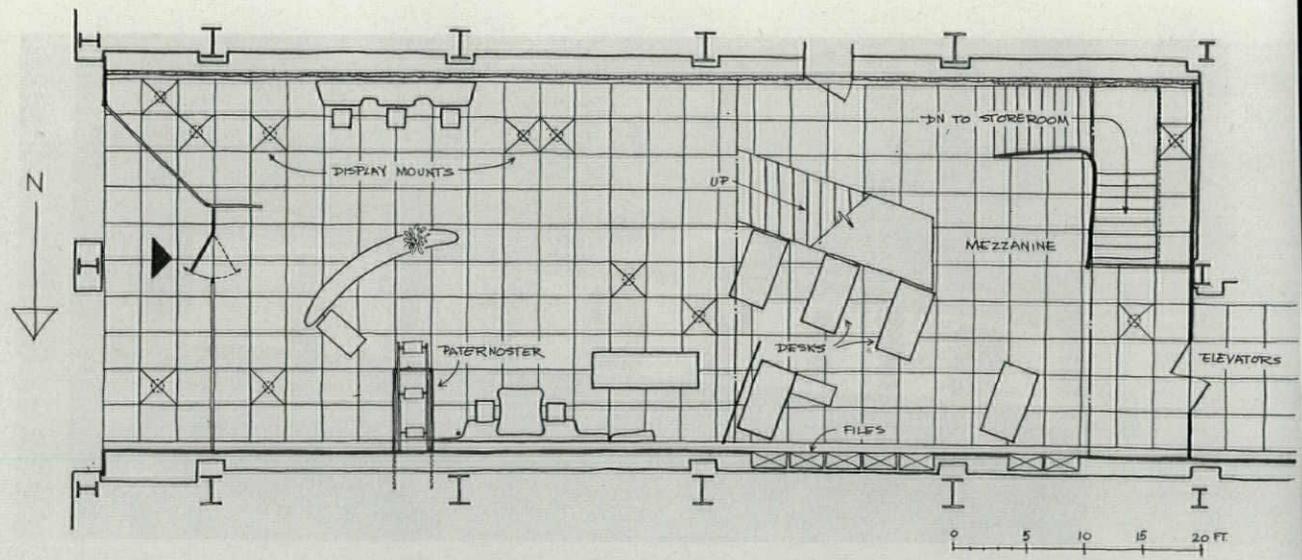


**Furniture** was designed by architects. Cove lighting both above and below the "Sand Wall" gives its bland color a margin against the forceful colors of the materials which surround it.



**Pale pink Candoglia marble** is used for tabletops like the crescent above and the wall table (above left). Edges are tapered delicately.





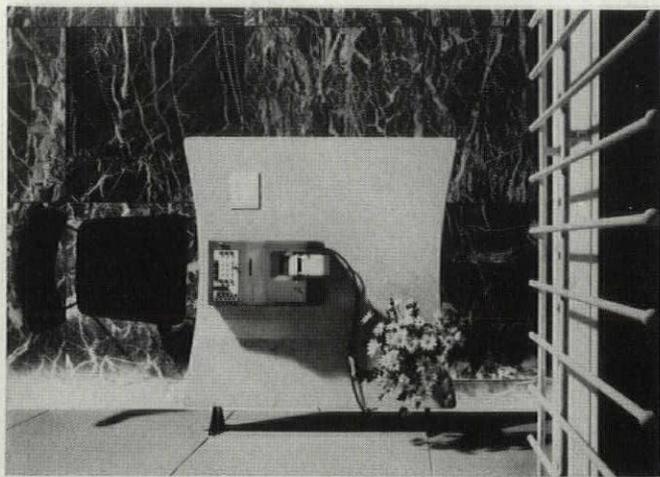
... its plan is simplicity itself: a single big room with a floating mezzanine



The big room, viewed from under front of mezzanine. Except for the very tall walnut door, the front is glass.



**Mezzanine** for office workers hangs toward back of store. Ceiling is a lively blue. Wall at right is painted sand color, has files set into it. Note lighting cove at top and bottom of this wall.



**Looking down from mezzanine** on pink marble table against green marble floor. The table is "modern," but of poetic shape as well as material, and capsules the spirit of the whole design.



**Stairway** under rear of mezzanine leads to storeroom in basement. Beyond right wall are private elevators to Olivetti offices upstairs.