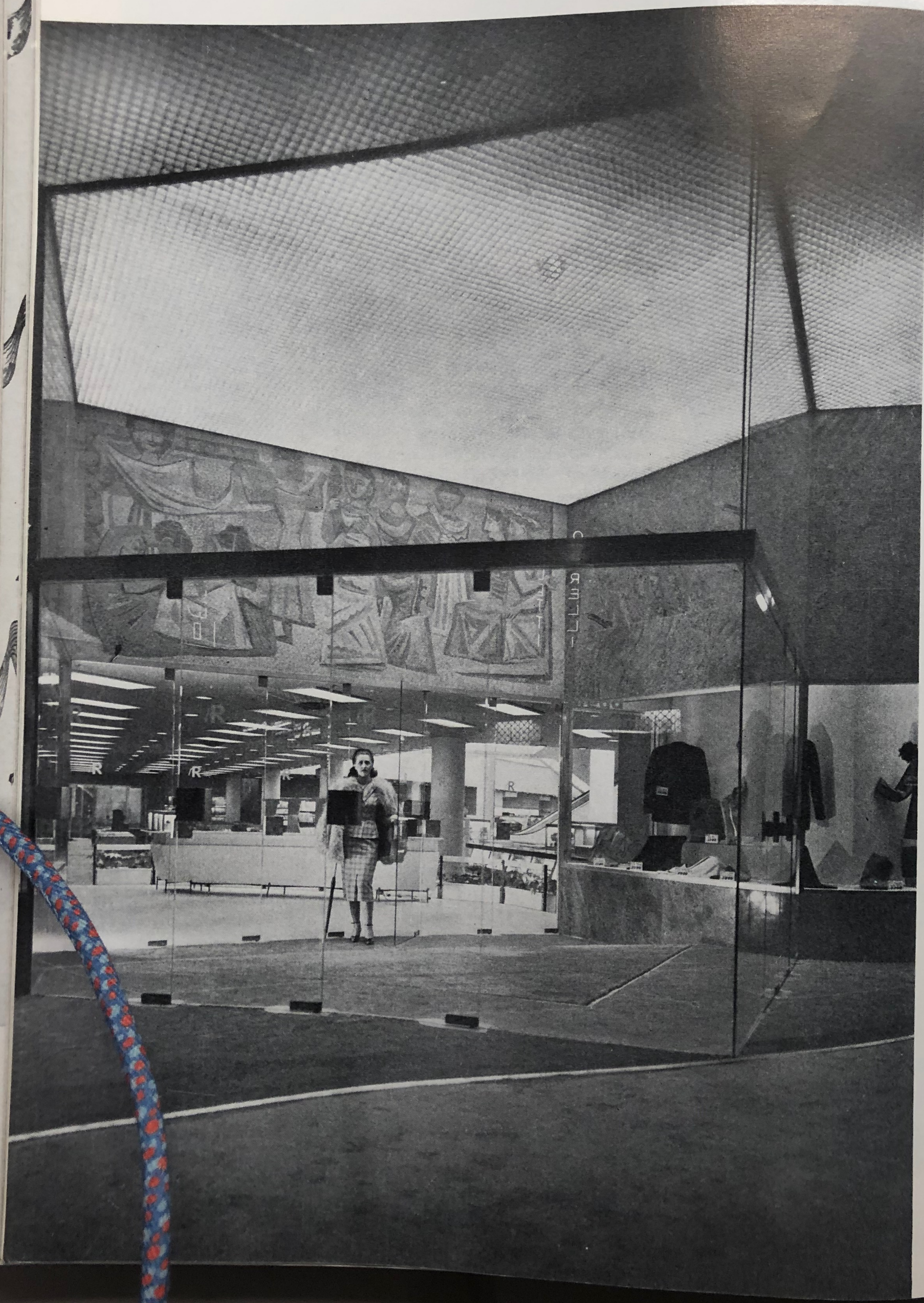


mechanization takes milan



Sing
obje
mo,
may
the
of
heav
stric
Mila
caus
the
Wit
ente
inec
devi
tion
of
cutt
scis
bou
to
reac
col
bet
whi
from
refr
But
pro
Am
ian
spa
con
for
rior
sign
cal
sch
goo
the
des
The
mo
sha
reg
res
nee
of
by
mo
Pa
tow
be
lea
oth
for
of

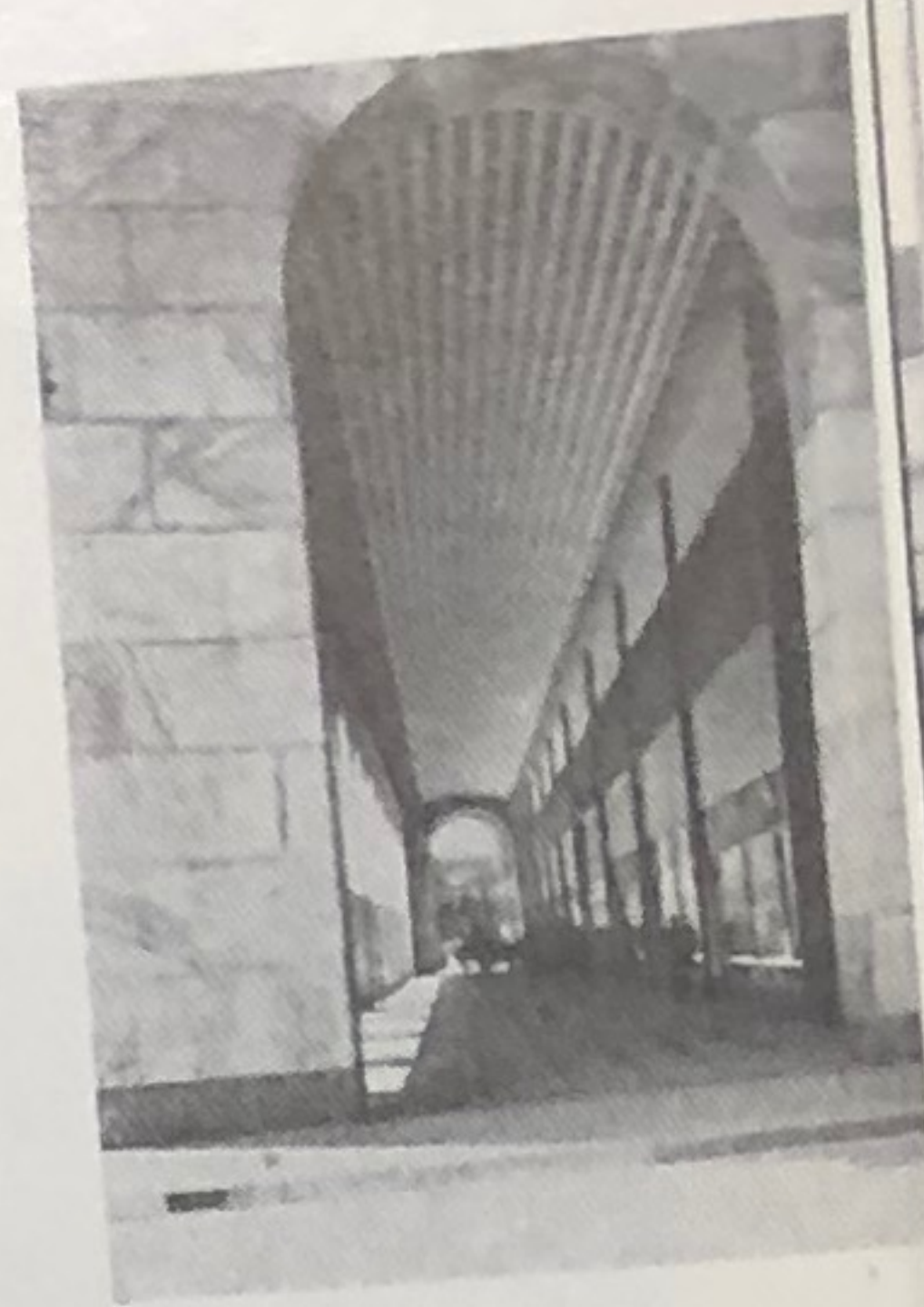
DEPARTMENT STORE UNDER THE DUOMO

Since a cathedral has been the traditional object of scrutiny in the Piazza del Duomo, the Herald Square of Milan, 1951 may go down as the year an upstart stole the architectural spotlight. Beneath one of the arcades facing old Duomo's heaven-bent arches, there now stretch the strict horizontal lines of *La Rinascente*, Milan's first *grande magazzino* and the cause of tilting matches in cafés around the Square.

With no local precedent for such a vast enterprise, architect Carlo Pagani examined many American stores with their devices that always pay off. His adaptation unquestionably has the landmarks of On-the-Square, U. S. A. Escalators cutting through every floor like giant scissors, the calculated traffic flow which bounces customers from one attraction to the next and dangles goods within reach of impulsive fingers, the smooth color schemes and seductive lighting all betray that emphasis on Sales Appeal which has spread like the common cold from Gimbels to Bon Marché, with the refreshing exception of Brooks Brothers. But *La Rinascente* puts one over on its prototypes when it translates lower case American efficiency into upper case Italian flair. Pagani infuses an inventive spark into some rather antiseptic sales concepts. No detail or nook is too small for attention; facades, cash registers, mirrors, and signs are all meticulously designed. Every item from mops to classical records is given a tasteful place in the scheme—a very sensitive device by which goods cease to be sloppy opponents to the décor and become features of the design.

The most simple display structures of movable pipe offset a neat array of low, shapely sales cases, bringing about an unregimented, highly flexible order which respects the architecture and the human need for visual fresh air. The best news of all is the sprinkling of bright murals by Italy's top artists, such as Campigli's mosaic warming one glassy entrance.

Pagani has aimed some pointed arrows toward better store design. It remains to be seen if they strike his American colleagues in the proper places and, on the other hand, if Signore e Signora will go for the super-mechanized shopping habits of Mr. and Mrs.—J.F.



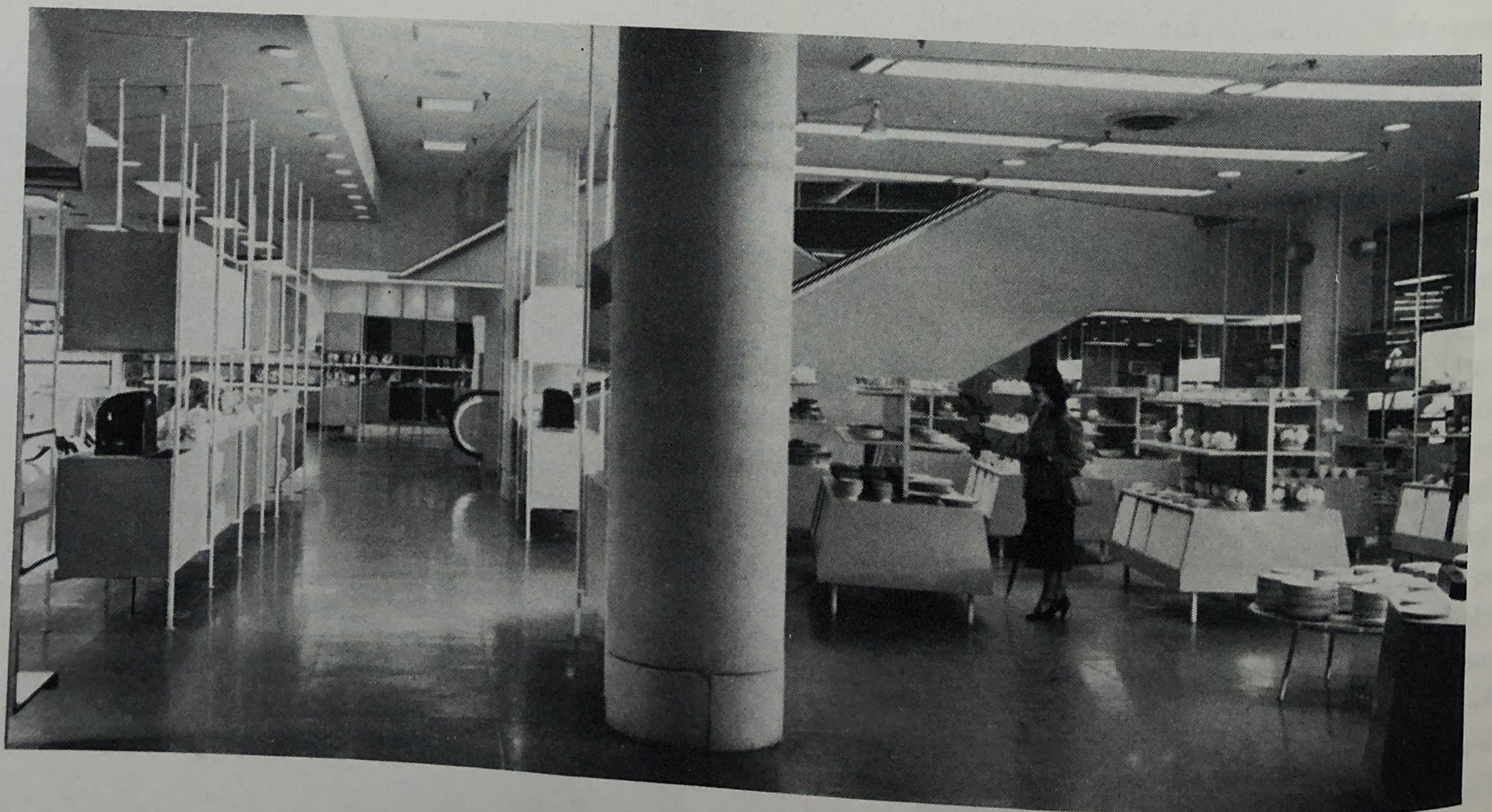
Ancient portici flank Milan's vast Cathedral Square, sheltering shoppers and cafe hoppers. *La Rinascente's* main facade, an expanse of show windows, is brightened by overhead lighting strips.



photos: tortunati



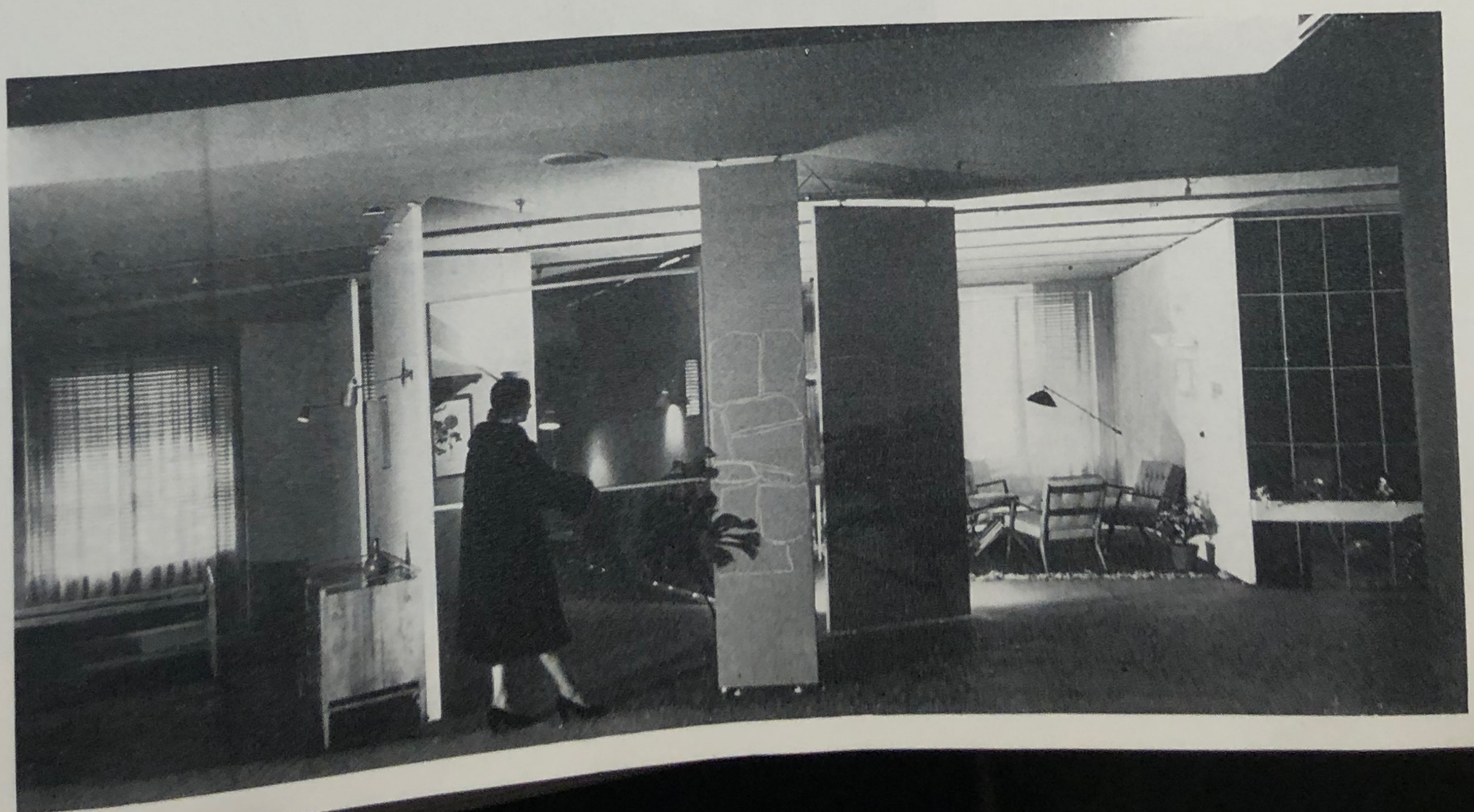
Display cases do a snake dance in front of a mural of shells and amoebic sea forms, representing artist Piero Fornasetti's concept of primitive life and inspired by the fact that this section is devoted to the bambini.



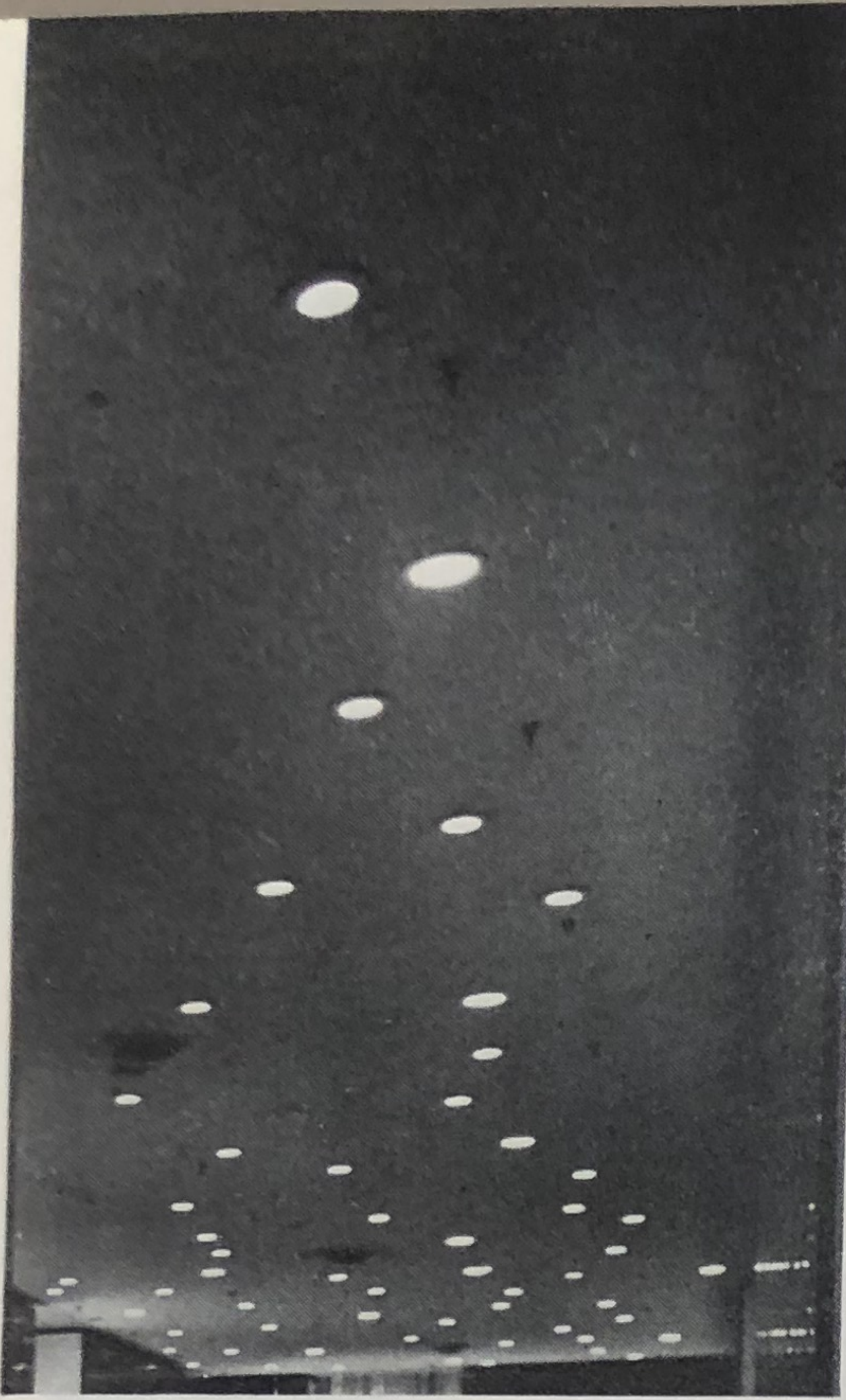
shades of violet and pink. The architect's
capital crime of lifting all display cases from the floor,
defying the cleaning problem to achieve buoyant design.



A feature of the home furnishings section is the ring of model rooms arranged apartment-style around the central furniture arena—accessible, visible, fashionable, flexible. All the room partitions may be removed or re-oriented.



On an elongated closet between two dress departments, Fornasetti has composed an abstract pattern from vivid swatches. Myriads of spotlights romanticize the sales areas like small Mediterranean moons.

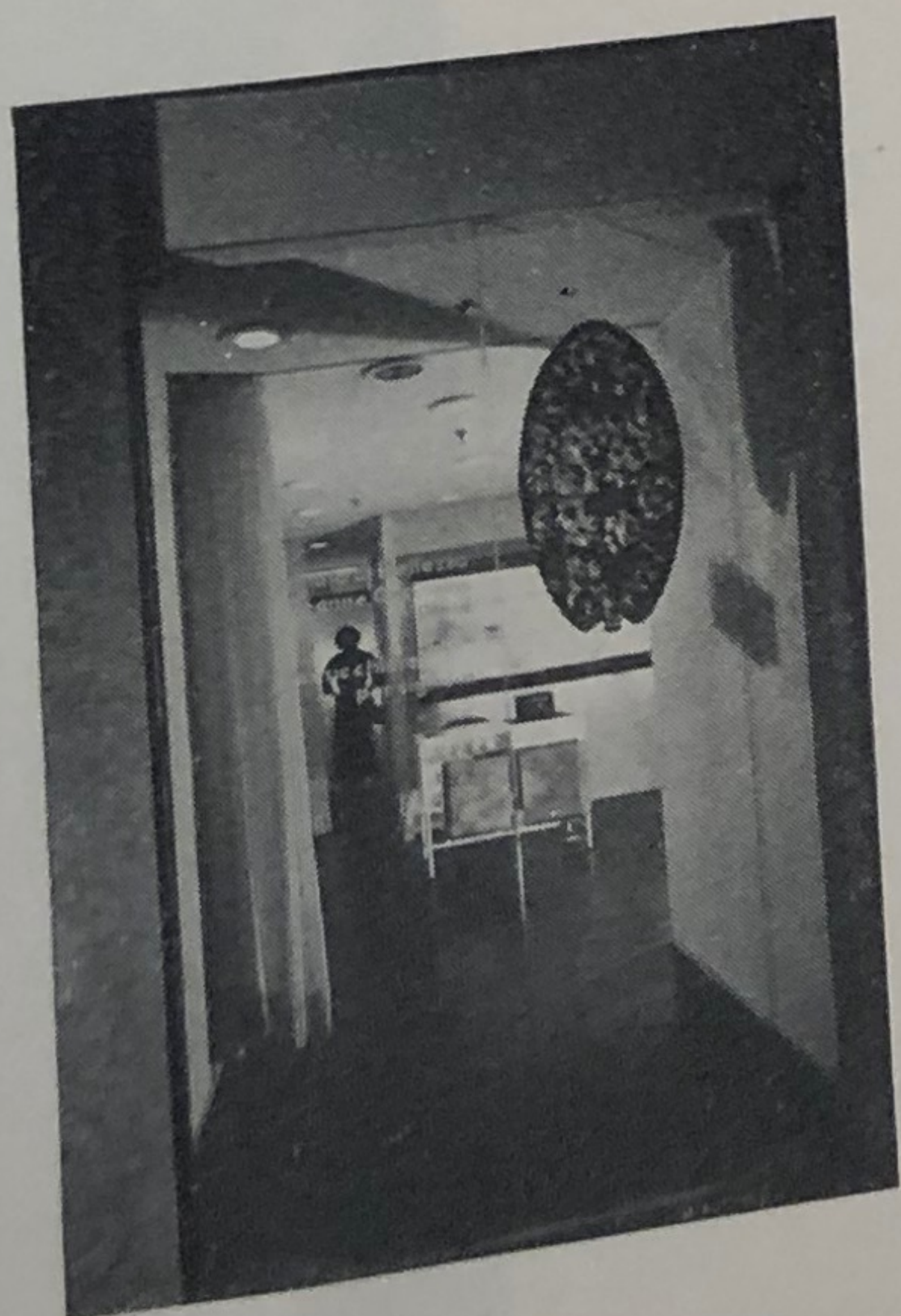


Carved metal appliques from an 18th century church adorn the doors between tearoom and bar. On the wall, sculptured figures from the Hellenistic period lend an air of antiquity to this end of the fashion floor.



Beyond the double door lies the bewitchment of the Istituto di Bellezza, its charms announced by an applique in delicate flower basket shades. Anyone who needs a bracer before entering the Beauty Parlor. . . .

. . . will find that perspicacious planning provides the companionship of a Steinberg mural behind the bar. A few antiques are scattered about with a notable restraint which makes them seem important and tasteful.





Under a battery of incandescent and fluorescent lights, more white pipes elevate ladies' footwear to eye level (above) and support partitions (center).



Objets d'art are given special attention in a two-faced metal cage which changes contents as the customer changes sides.



New Millinery maneuvers may be launched in the privacy of booths, below. Benches for burdened and footsore shoppers are placed strategically near escalators on every floor, (above, right).



Among La Rinascente's rolling stock are looking glasses like this one, slanted to reflect the whole figure from a lower level. The trick is all done with mirrors.