





clean, white, and bright

That was Robert D. Henry's prescription for the Obagi Skin Health Institute in Los Angeles

text: edie cohen
photography: art gray

Skin is in. And probably nowhere more so than Beverly Hills. Here, “name” dermatologists pull rank in the star system, facialist visits are as routine as trips to Whole Foods, and the “medical spa” couples physician treatments with a panoply of seductive beauty products for sale.

After buying a mid-century mid-rise building—prime corner real estate—Los Angeles dermatologist Zein Obagi asked Robert D. Henry Architects to turn the 5,000-square-foot ground level and 1,000-square-foot basement →

Opposite: Lettering in sandblasted acrylic and a pool lined with Calacatta marble mark the entry to the spa side.

Above: A new oculus punctuates the stucco canopy of the 1955 building.



Top left: The basement conference room's simulated skylight of sandblasted glass is reflected in the pear-wood veneer of the custom tabletop.

Top right: Millwork veneered in pear wood distinguishes the boutique.

Bottom: Behind the cash-wrap desk, painted-aluminum letters spell out the doctor's name. The bench cushions are upholstered in faux suede.

Opposite: The steel-framed glass consultation "room" houses leather-covered Hannes Wettstein armchairs, an aluminum Piero Lissoni table, a custom Angela Adams wool rug, and handblown glass pendant fixtures on nickel-finished rods.



into one of these increasingly popular hybrid facilities. The ground level is roughly divided in half, each side with its own reception area. Medical procedures take place behind closed doors in six treatment rooms; there's also a lab and an office for Obagi. Meanwhile, the spa has three other treatment rooms, plus a boutique. Below, administrative offices share the basement with a conference room for Obagi's educational lectures.

"Clean and clinical, not a froufrou spa," architect Robert D. Henry recalls of Obagi's request. The transformation begins out front, where an oculus incised in the existing white stucco canopy "suggests the client's initial," Henry says. The same goes for the circle of sunlight projected onto the sidewalk below during afternoon hours.

He gave the facade itself new bone structure in the form of white Calacatta marble: A plinth and vertical columns divide the front elevation into five boxes. The box on the spa side frames 18-inch-tall letters of sandblasted acrylic, spelling out Obagi's name. Actually supported by stainless-steel rods bolted to the canopy, the letters seem to be held aloft by water jets from the fountain below. This unmistakable branding element embodies Henry's motto of "health through water" or, as he puts it, "*salus per aqua*."

As an inducement for passersby to test those waters, three of the facade's other boxes hold glass display shelves suspended from braided stainless-steel wire. Come twilight, motorized screens descend behind the rows of product, showing video loops of a woman with flawless skin. The subliminal message: It's high time to prep for a close-up. →







As if that didn't present enough inspiration for a perfect complexion, the interior walls and floor are also clad in Calacatta marble. The pristine, sparkling stone, with its connotations of luxury, was right for Beverly Hills, but the resulting environment needed softening. At least Henry thought so. Hence the pear-wood cabinetry in the boutique and paneling at key circulation points, including the long central corridor that connects the two zones.

Wood, stone, glass, and steel—that's virtually all there is to the materials palette. Color is more limited still: just the powder blue of the faux suede covering cushions on several banquettes and the ledge of the square reflecting pool on the boutique side.

Just steps from the pool, customers in search of vitamin C serums or foaming gel cleansers can seek advice from sales reps in an unusual kind of consultation "room." Another subtle "O" reference, it's a clear glass cylinder 8 feet tall and 6 feet across—just large enough to encircle a pair of white leather-covered Hannes Wettstein chairs and a razor-sharp aluminum Piero Lissoni side table. Beam me up to better skin. 📺

PROJECT MANAGER: NICOLE MIGEON. PROJECT TEAM: HARRIS LEVY, PAULA SACO, REBECCA WU, GARY YEN.

Top left: A 60-foot-long central corridor connects the spa and medical facility.

Top right: The renovation included a new facade, conceived as a series of marble boxes. **Bottom:** In one of the boxes, an inspirational video backs glass display shelves suspended on braided stainless-steel wire.

Opposite: In the medical waiting area, a Wettstein chair sits beneath a custom pendant fixture with a brushed-aluminum chain and a silk shade.

CHAIRS (CONFERENCE ROOM): SOURCE INTERNATIONAL. CUSTOM TABLE: PAMPA FURNITURE. RECESSED TRACK LIGHTING (BOUTIQUE): JUNO LIGHTING. CUSHION UPHOLSTERY (BOUTIQUE, RECEPTION, WAITING AREA): AMERICAN SILK MILLS. PENDANT FIXTURES (CONSULTATION): GRUPO T DIFFUSION. RECESSED FLOOR FIXTURES: SISTEMALUX. CUSTOM RUG: ANGELA ADAMS. CHAIRS, TABLE (CONSULTATION), CHAIR (WAITING AREA): CASSINA. CUSTOM PENDANT FIXTURE (WAITING AREA): LANTERN MASTERS. PAINT: BENJAMIN MOORE & CO. MILLWORK: DHK SOLUTIONS. CUSTOM SIGNAGE: SIGN MANAGEMENT. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: REISS-BROWN-EKMEKJI. MEP: MIKLOS LICHTER & ASSOCIATES.



A modern interior space featuring a wall of horizontal red wood slats. In the foreground, a white leather armchair with a dark metal base sits on a light-colored tiled floor. To the right, a blue cushioned bench is visible. A table with a thick, light-colored marble top and a dark metal leg stands in the foreground. A white rectangular pendant light hangs from the ceiling on the left. The overall aesthetic is clean and minimalist, emphasizing natural materials.

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