



Some design elements are so obvious that it's easy to look past them, and in doing so you can miss out on the power of their function and form. Need an example? . . .

. . . **Look up.** Have you tapped the potential of your ceilings as a practical and aesthetic design component? Ceilings, now more than merely a lid on a box, give us a whole new way to define our spaces.

For hundreds of years, boxes have been the standard shape for our rooms, and flat has been the shape of our ceilings. Current marketplace trends led USG Interiors, Chicago, to break out of the flat box, or at least change its parameters.

The ceiling systems 36 grid segments can be combined into an infinite number of designs. The infill panels are available in perforated metal, unperforated metal, woven wire mesh and translucent fiberglass-reinforced plastic. An optional lay-in, fiberglass (poly-bagged) batt provides for localized acoustic control. The curves of the system can be used to draw attention to a small area of a larger room, to create a pathway, to accent or de-emphasize certain aspects of a space, to change the lighting dynamics or simply to introduce a creative element.

Setting the Curve

There are several influencing trends. People are getting back to nature, replacing harsh, predictable angles with graceful curves and three-dimensional perspectives. There is a new focus on natural light and its interplay with shapes and space. Simplicity of application comes into play too—creative building design must be functional, workable and cost-efficient.

USG's answer, introduced just over one year ago, was the CURVATURA ceiling system. It consists of a kit of parts that allows virtually infinite customization, yet remains grounded in standard ceiling system specifications.

Denise Miller-Clark, museum director, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, used CURVATURA ceilings to achieve a very specific effect. "We were trying to create an environment for the Target Market! Exhibit, similar to a polished, sophisticated advertising agency—a very creative-looking room. CURVATURA was the perfect product. It's provocative looking and sensuous. We liked the sinuous, dramatic effect, the wide range of colors and finishes, and the fact that the panels could be combined with special lighting."

Others have used the system to draw attention to a challeng-

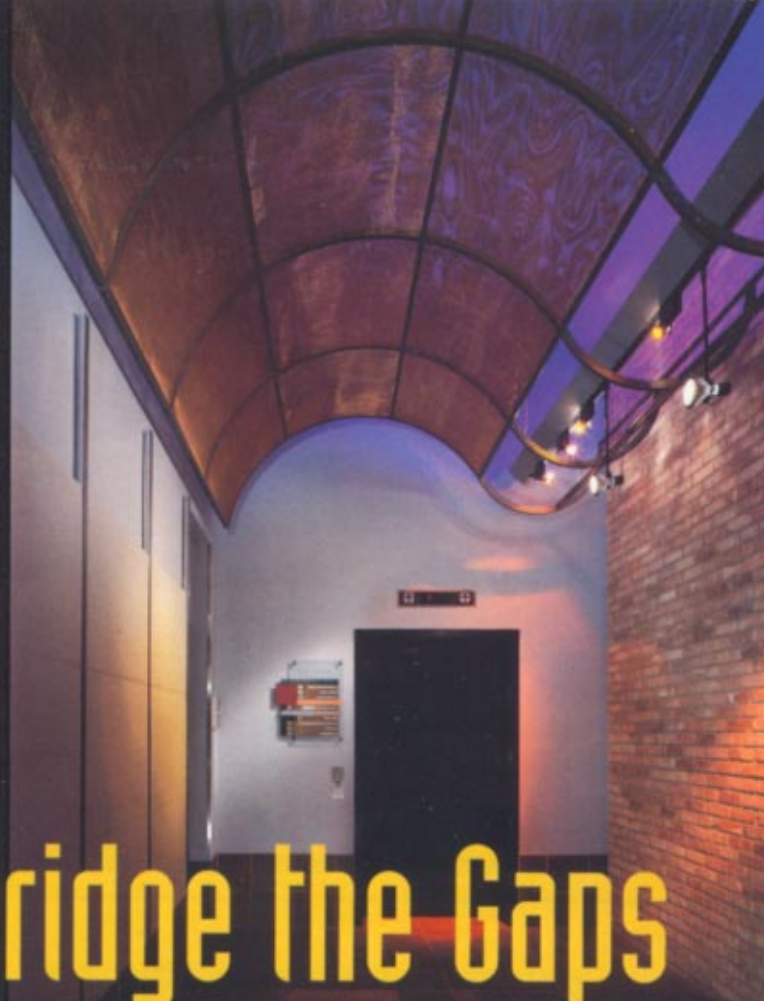
OPPOSITE PAGE

Top Left — Museum hall: A combination of wide, flowing curves and smaller, angled panels serves multiple functions. The art is individually highlighted, while the wavy upper ceiling forms a path to connect the collection. The panels also work with the lighting to strike a soft sophisticated balance.

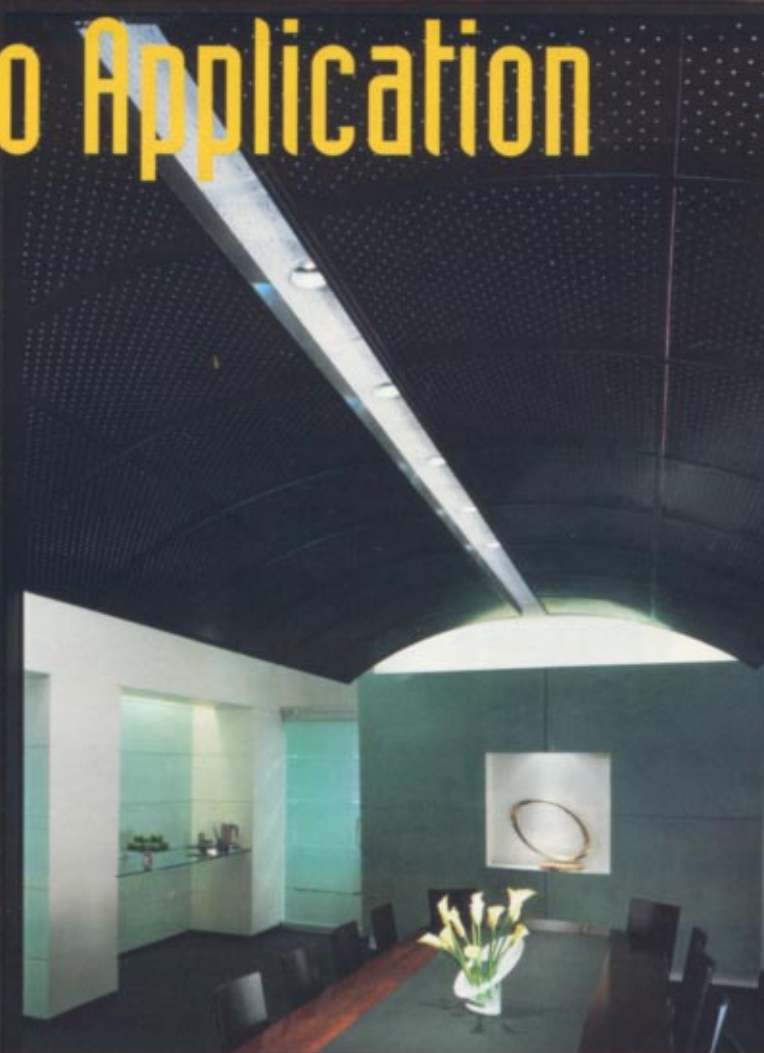
Top Right — Elevator lobby: Using the right ceiling panels can make a tall, overbearing space feel more intimate and comfortable, and draw visitors into this loft-style room.

Bottom Left — California Pizza Kitchen restaurant: Stainless steel mesh panels of the Curvatura ceiling system allow light from above to shine through. "The system is designed with wavy, S-shaped main tees. The contour adds a light, airy feeling to the room. We enhanced that by adding an S-shape form in the plan," explains Doug Middleton, vice president, architecture and design, California Pizza Kitchen, Boston.

Bottom Right — Conference room: A simple island in a conference room presents a polished, upscale look without overwhelming the space.



New Ceilings Bridge the Gaps from Design to Application



ing area. Chicago's Merchandise Mart is big and busy. It houses exhibits of more than 70 franchisers, all vying for the interest of potential franchisees in a continuous flow of foot traffic.

Marla L. Fisher, vice president, director of design, Franchising & Licensing World Center, explains: "We wanted to give the reception area and theater, which are visible from the outside mall area, a special look to attract attention . . . People see a side view of the curves from the mall area and are very intrigued. It definitely draws people in."

USG had contractors in mind along with designers in creating the CURVATURA system. "We specifically engineered application and transitional details into the product," explained Greg Ahren, specialty product manager, USG Interiors. "Because it is predicated on standard T-grid and 2-foot by 2-foot panels, the system virtually assures success."

Product Design Manager David Stover, USG Interiors, Chicago, adds that hanging a curved, wavy or angled ceiling is actually easier than hanging a flat ceiling. "There is no need to make it level, and the hold-down tabs entrap the panels, conforming them to the curve. The product design actually does the work for you."

In addition to the grid and panels, the kit includes tools to aid in the design stage. A design selector provides 100 standard traceable wave designs. A template allows creation of unique ceiling designs by drawing and connecting discrete curved main tee segments.

"The three-dimensional nature of these ceilings convey movement, grace and energy," Stover said. "The infinite combinations of shape, texture and lighting can change the way we look at ceilings, and even the way we look at the space under and around them." □