

In today's climate, businesses linked to the financial sector are faced with a balancing act when it comes to redesigning their offices. Companies do not want to be seen to be wasting money on opulent designs in times when the repercussions of the worldwide economic crisis are still being strongly felt. Yet it is, now more than ever, vital that the workplace communicates a sense of solidity and reliability to clients and staff alike. For the finance industry the workplace is once again becoming synonymous with image.

The Israel office of financial services firm Global Factoring needed a refurbishment, and this was the ideal opportunity to portray the company's ethos in its environment: the brief to Tel Aviv-based architects Axelrod was to create a space that would convey strength in a subtle way. In response to that brief, Axelrod built a clean and focused environment, one that would be sensitive to the pressures of the business. Many features of the office, such as the dark wood and austere furniture, echo the past style of this conservative sector. The result is a modernist interpretation of the traditional financial space: here the wooden walls communicate solidity, the clean lines of the lights and the sleek furniture consistency. The furniture is lightweight, the masculinity commonly associated with the chosen colours is softened by the light slots that break up the spaces; the indirect lighting warms the atmosphere, giving the office a relaxed feel.

The architectural expression and attention to detail echo the precision so vital in the client's business transactions. Clean cuts, straight lines and solid surfaces dominate throughout. Axelrod used customized light fixtures to create niches and alcoves that help subtly to define the boundaries between private and public spaces. Walls appear elevated because of a backlit strip located at the bottom of the wall, bringing lightness to the mood and relieving pressure. Glass partitions, decorated with purpose-designed graphics, create physical separation yet maintain visual connections within the workspace and open up the floor. Furniture is deliberately unobtrusive - low sideboards and few chairs - to complement new ideas around transparency in the financial sector.

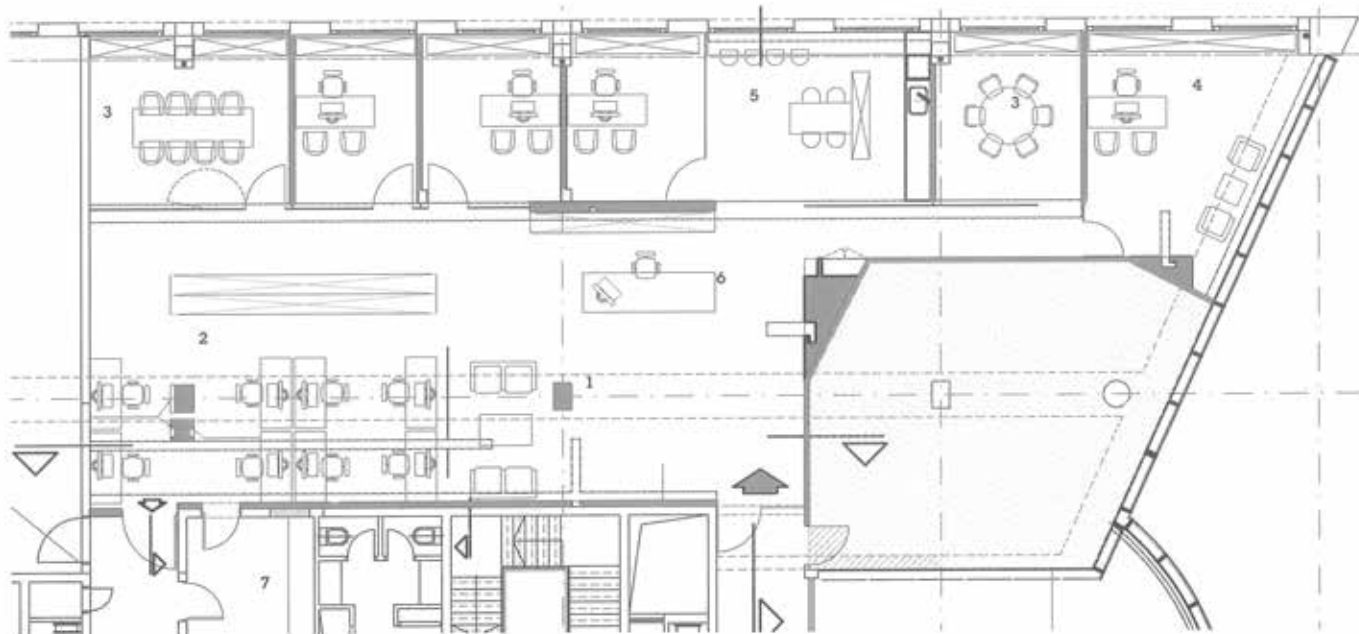
The architects' aim was to create a modernist aesthetic. The sealed concrete floor, glass walls, and minimalist furnishing and lighting still say 'banking', but the efficient reuse of the pre-existing shell demonstrates an economic design. Axelrod admit that by painting the walls remaining from the existing structure and using inexpensive wall

decals (transfers), a cheap yet effective upgrade was achieved. They also focused on maximizing the use of natural light by partitioning the space with glass, and adopted energy-efficient lighting inside light slots, which have the incidental advantage of bringing strong linear accents to the room.

GLOBAL FACTORING OFFICE

Architect: **Axelrod Architects**
Client: **Global Factoring**
Location: **Herzliya, Israel**
Completed: **July 2007**
Size: **250 sq m (2,690 sq ft)**
Budget: **undisclosed**





floor plan

- 1 lobby
- 2 trading floor
- 3 conference room
- 4 executive room
- 5 kitchen
- 6 reception
- 7 archive

Page 58: The linearity of the design is key to a visual representation of solid financial reliability; the brief was to create a space that subtly conveyed a feeling of strength.

Opposite: The recurring light features create tracks to guide workers and visitors alike through the space.

Above: The floor plan shows a conventional office layout, with open-plan space in the middle and a series of meeting rooms along one side. **Right:** Simple tables provide extra desk space to accommodate occasional workers.



