

Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300

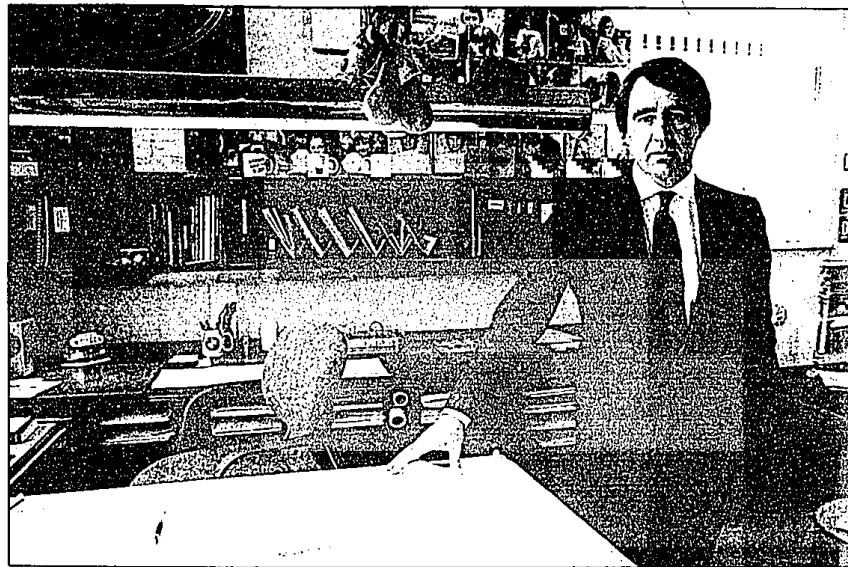


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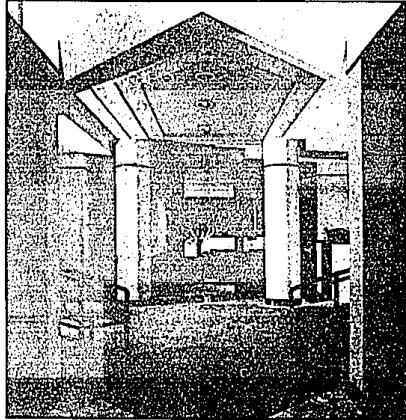
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'What influenced me to some degree was Chicago. It is 5-10 years ahead of us in the architectural market. I carved out a niche because I saw some things that were not being done well.'

— Tom Catallo



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer



The Catallo-designed sales office for Gencorp of Farmington Hills was recently completed.

Company president Tom Catallo enjoys his family as much as his steadily growing business as evidenced by the pictures and mementos in his office.

One decade later Contract design firm moves into national arena

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

IN ABOUT 10 YEARS Catallo Associates, architectural interior designers, has grown from one person (Tom Catallo) working in a one-room studio with three clients to a 43-member firm currently working on more than 2 million square feet of space for a large number of clients.

It would be easy to say that Catallo was in a new profession at the right time. True, but overly simplistic. From that one room studio on the second floor of a house in downtown Birmingham, Catallo Associates moved to 555 S. Woodward and just a few months ago to a much larger suite of offices at 2100 E. Maple. There's also a branch office in Chicago.

Interior design firms working with commercial and retail clients are often called contract designers. "The contract business is the business of today, didn't exist before World War II," Catallo said. "The most complicated piece of equipment in the office was a telephone — may be a typewriter."

He said when he started his firm in 1978, "There weren't any firms like mine here then — Ford & Earl was the one exception. What influenced me to some degree was Chi-

cago. It is 5-10 years ahead of us in the architectural market. I carved out a niche because I saw some things that were not being done well."

EVEN WITH THAT KIND OF insight, it wasn't easy. "Our first year, 1978-79, was the start of the great depression in Detroit. We grew and survived in the toughest market in the country," Catallo said. "We really hustled. We did a lot of renovation — there wasn't much new construction. I always knew that if we survived, we'd come out stronger than ever."

The point he makes in many different ways is that contract design is much more than picking out and arranging office furniture and equipment. "You have to look at the total system of the building — lighting, acoustics, glare, wiring."

And before any of that can be considered, he said, the client must be interviewed in depth to see how the business works, to tune into the emotional and physical needs of the employees — to create a total environment.

"It goes way beyond decorating," Catallo said.

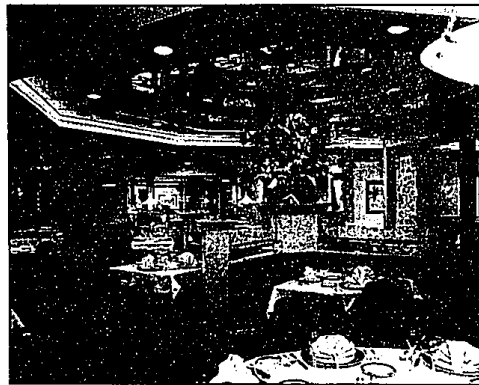
One of the most challenging commissions was to design offices for the merger of four law firms into one. It was up to Catallo Associates to come up with a space plan to meet the needs of all the people

involved in the merger, to understand the systems of the day-to-day operation and to meld all of the firms into an efficient, cohesive unit.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS why a company may call a firm such as Catallo Associates. The rapid changes in technology in the workplace are certainly a factor, plus there's a higher level of awareness of the work environment and the effect that it has on production and efficiency than there used to be. Many firms, Catallo reported, find they are "getting killed in the recruitment battle." If they have a dismal look and an outdated atmosphere they may lose the top candidates to firms that have more appealing surroundings and an upbeat image.

Catallo Associates still has its original clients in the long and growing list of current ones. Heide's Salon was one of the early clients and to date, Catallo Associates has designed 30 more salons all over the United States for the same client.

Two local Catallo projects that many people will see and enjoy are the new Opus One and Pegasus (in the Fisher Building) restaurants in Detroit. Among the corporate headquarters the firm has done are Libby, McNeill & Libby of Chicago, Cross & Trecker of Bloomfield



Hills, Borg Warner of Chicago and First National Monetary of Southfield.

Advertising firms including J. Walter Thompson, Detroit, Ross Roy Detroit, McCann-Erickson of Troy, Young & Rubicam, Detroit and W. B. Doner of Southfield have used Catallo's services. Among the

other clients are some 16 law firms and banking institutions, as well as medical facilities and offices for nationally known developers and businesses.

"You can't ever be a little lazy. 'You're as good as your last deal' really applies to our business," Catallo said. "We are constantly striv-

ing up the pot — not being satisfied. Our clients drive us that way too, once you raise the level of expectation."

As a kind of "amen" to his thoughts, he added, "Design, in its purist sense, is a problem solving process."

Maestro proud of musicians' determination

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

Maestro Gunther Herbig of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra displayed a refreshing sense of humor as he spoke at the Festival West series at Temple Beth Ed, sponsored by the Symphony's Women's Association.

He said he had been asked to speak about how orchestras are funded and programming. And as he covered each in an interesting, well-detailed style, it became clear how closely the two are related, particularly in the United States, where motivating people to buy tickets is a major concern.

Saying that the differences in sound and approach to music between American and European orchestras have diminished as communication, recordings and travel have increased, he said the major difference today is "hidden in the background — a significant and very, very interesting economic base on which an orchestra lives and works."

The European tradition began in the Middle Ages, when musicians were on the payroll of royal households as servants. "At the end of World War I, government stepped into the role of sponsor and court orchestras became state orchestras, Great

Britain being the exception."

But he said the people who came to America "wanted to get rid of authority — they wanted to form a free society, a government of free individuals."

THE MOVE AWAY from the security of a state supported orchestra, he said, gives an additional incentive to American musicians "to be as good as possible" which he compared to many middle class orchestra musicians in Europe who have the "we're just doing out job" attitude.

"In this country you have to convince them (the audience) every night to come back again. In Europe there is such a tradition for going to concerts you never have to care about selling a subscription season. People wait for years and years to get a subscription ticket."

He gave some examples. Toronto (where he is artistic director for the 1988-89 season) has a subscriber base of 44,000 people. Israel, with a population comparable to Detroit, has a 38,000 base. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra has a 19,000 subscriber base with room for about twice that many.

"I conducted the same program in Israel eight times and there were enough people to fill the hall," he said.

Because programming changes are far

more frequent here than in other countries, Herbig said, "Here, people in the orchestra work much quicker than in Europe — and they have to be very, very good."

He said the Detroit Symphony is still struggling to get over the aftermath of the strike, "What makes it easy for me is the determination of the musicians to be as good as possible."

THE DETROIT SYMPHONY, he said, receives a third of its budget from ticket sales, a third from government sources, particularly city and state and a third from private contributors and big corporations.

As to the role of music director in programming, he said there's a responsibility to the large number of music lovers and music enthusiasts to perform the pieces they like, many of which are classified as old warhorses. But, he said, "We can't close our ears to what is happening in our time."

Herbig obviously feels a responsibility on both counts, but new music presents some problems. "Whenever I conduct new music, I always receive a handful of angry letters."

He told his audiences that some 10,000 symphonies were written between 1800 and 1810. And after a long filtering process, only a small number are still being played. "There's been

no time filter yet for contemporary music."

Then he gave an impassioned plea for listeners to be more open and willing to listen to contemporary music.

"Artists today express the feelings and emotions of our time. They can lead our emotions and widen our horizons . . . listening to music is like being taken by the hand by one of the great spirits of mankind and going through his emotions — that is why music is so important . . . I think you just should open your ears and be willing to listen — be willing to be shocked."

He said with a mischievous smile that when he had a sure-fire draw on his program such as a Pinchas Zukerman or Jessye Norman, he would often put an unknown piece on the program.

And while he finds giving the audience a bit of background on a new piece before it is played disconcerting personally, there is a definite increase in the length of applause when he does, "People were obviously prepared to listen — obviously with an open mind."

The next festival for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra which he will conduct will be on Brahms. Herbig's contract with the orchestra has been extended through 1990.



Maestro Gunther Herbig