06

Regional Cues

Year
2015

Client
Yelp

City
San Francisco

Size
68,000 sqft

Team
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Yelp

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Because regional references in space design can be easily overdone, O+A's use of iconic marketplaces as inspiration for Yelp's new multi-floor office in San Francisco took an abstract approach to cultural interpretation. If there is nothing particularly Turkish about the space inspired by Istanbul's Grand Bazaar or recognizably Japanese about the floor based on Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market, that ambiguity is part of the plan. Beginning with the notion of Yelp as an international online market, O+A translated the regional specificities of four cities in which Yelp has
a significant presence into spatial and chromatic code.

Yelp 55 Hawthorne demonstrates the kind of narrative abstraction that increasingly informs modern workplace design. Using this technique designers arrive at abstract forms and graphic compositions by way of a literal narrative, a hidden backstory that gives meaning to the shapes and colors in the space. For example, the Yelp office based on Istanbul takes the copper that has been sold at the Grand Bazaar for over 600 years and puts it into the shades of modern pendant lighting. Patterned pillows suggest a rug merchant's window. Blue walls border the space as blue waters border Istanbul. Every detail links in some way to an Istanbul source, but none are explicitly, identifiably Turkish.

The result, at 55 Hawthorne, is a series of casual work environments, each distinct from the other, but all four linked by a common subtext. The Tokyo space celebrates the craftsmanship of Japanese textiles and woodwork. The Amsterdam space plays with the geometry of Dutch tulip fields. The London space reflects the repurposed culture of East End revival. In every instance the underlying story is refined to a visual and spatial essence that gives each floor depth despite its weightless design.