

**rereadings2** is a companion book to *rereadings*, originally published in 2004. This second volume is testament to the growing interest and demand for clarification of the re-modelling, adaptation and transformation processes within the existing built environment. With increased interest in the sustainability and heritage agenda, and emerging interest from non European-centric areas of the world in this type of work, this book explores how the re-modelling of existing buildings is a sustainable and viable alternative to the construction of new buildings.

Throughout this highly illustrated book, drawings and photos of various projects from around the world showcase how the new fits into the existing. Case studies are analysed holistically, and include information on the practical issues and challenges of individual projects.

“The rereading, remodelling (or as I call it: Interior Design) of interiors in existing buildings affects all of our daily lives. This discipline and its examination by Graeme and Sally is the most relevant and important survey of what has been happening to the inside of existing buildings worldwide. It is compelling and compulsory reading for all students, practitioners and anyone who cares about the quality and integrity of the Interiors in which we live, work and play. To quote Marcel Duchamp: ‘Anything can be beautiful’.”

**Ben Kelly, Ben Kelly Design**

“*rereadings2* by Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone is an invaluable counterpoint to the story of modern architecture and design. The volume, richly illustrated in case studies of alterations, adaptations and renovations of existing structures, is a plural history par excellence of the many tales of the built environment.”

**George Ranalli, Architect FAIA**



**rereadings2**

Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone

**Graeme Brooker  
and Sally Stone**

# rereadings2

**interior architecture  
and the design principles  
of remodelling  
existing buildings**

**RIBA  Publishing**

Graeme Brooker  
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# rereadings 2

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## Fashion Center Building

**Location**  
New York, USA

**Remodelled**  
1990

**Designer**  
George Ranalli



**Figure 3.69** The original portico entrance was exposed in the renovations. Existing elements were repaired and cleaned.

The transition from an exterior to the interior will often be marked by a significant threshold, one that in some cases will announce the particular character and atmosphere of the inside space the visitor is stepping into. Once the threshold is

traversed, there will often be a holding space, an entrance such as a porch, hall, foyer or lobby. This is usually a space where the visitor can take stock of their surroundings, maybe visit a reception desk if they need to, or take off their coat

and leave an umbrella in a stand. Whilst of all these activities are taking place, this sequence of spaces will be introducing the visitor to the interior. Through the particular treatment of space and surface the next sequence of interiors will be signalled to the occupant of the building.

The Fashion Center, a 23-storey Romanesque Revival structure in New York's historic Garment District, was originally designed by the American Architect, Henry Ives Cobb. Designed in 1924, the structure had undergone a number of changes throughout its existence, and had subsequently had many of its features and details removed – a fate that had befallen many of the buildings in the Garment District throughout the 20th century. In particular the lobby space's terracotta details and plaster ornamentation had been removed or damaged beyond recognition in their covering up with false suspended ceilings and fake screen walls.

Instead of selling the building in the early 1990s, the owners decided that, along with reconfiguring some of the floors for a change of use to apartments, they would restore the former glory of this enigmatic entrance space. George Ranalli was commissioned and, rather than start from scratch, he began the project by undertaking a forensic review of the lobby. Much like a detective would examine a case, he set about locating the details of the lost fragments of the interior. Ranalli also undertook a detailed examination of what had survived, piecing together details of reliefs and surfaces and cataloguing their condition through a series of highly detailed drawings. Once the analysis of the space and its fragments was determined, then the evidence could be submitted and used to inform the new restoration.

One of the first interventions that Ranalli undertook on the building was the removal of the front doors. He did this in order to reinstate the original portico, in the past

**Figure 3.70** New lighting was carefully considered and discretely hidden in the cornice in order to illuminate the impressive existing ceiling.



**Figure 3.71** The edge of gold leaf on the new plaster columns was subtly picked out with the new lighting.



sealed off and hidden behind earlier works to the façade. Drawing on influences derived from the previous surfaces of the space, new terrazzo flooring was laid. Existing and previously hidden terracotta details, including a frieze of animals, were exposed, cleaned, repaired, and where appropriate copied for new pieces to be made and inserted to replace elements of the existing portico that had been lost or removed. Existing columns and capitals were also repaired or restored. A wrought iron grill, in the arch of the portico, was cleaned and repainted. Subtle lighting, set into the new floor, guided the visitor towards a new set of bronze entry doors, and into the main hall.

In the lobby, modern lighting was hidden inside original fixtures that illuminated the dramatic beauty of the recreated floral plaster cast ceiling. New ornamental paired plaster columns were made, and set upon a subtly lit existing frieze. Each column was topped with an architrave edged in gold leaf. The pale ceiling surfaces were contrasted with restored cream and purple marble walls, accented with delicate gold and black edges. A new bronze reception desk, positioned alongside a set of restored bronze window frames, heating grilles, and elevator doors, introduced a striking contemporary element to the old lobby. These elements clearly articulated how the past had influenced the new contemporary intervention.

In this project, the reuse of the building has led to the designer researching its past and seeking out inspiration from the lost surfaces of its change through various renovations. Surface has provided an inspiration for the revitalisation of an ordinary entrance space returning some grandeur to the act of journeying from outside in a busy city to the relative calm of the interior lobby room.