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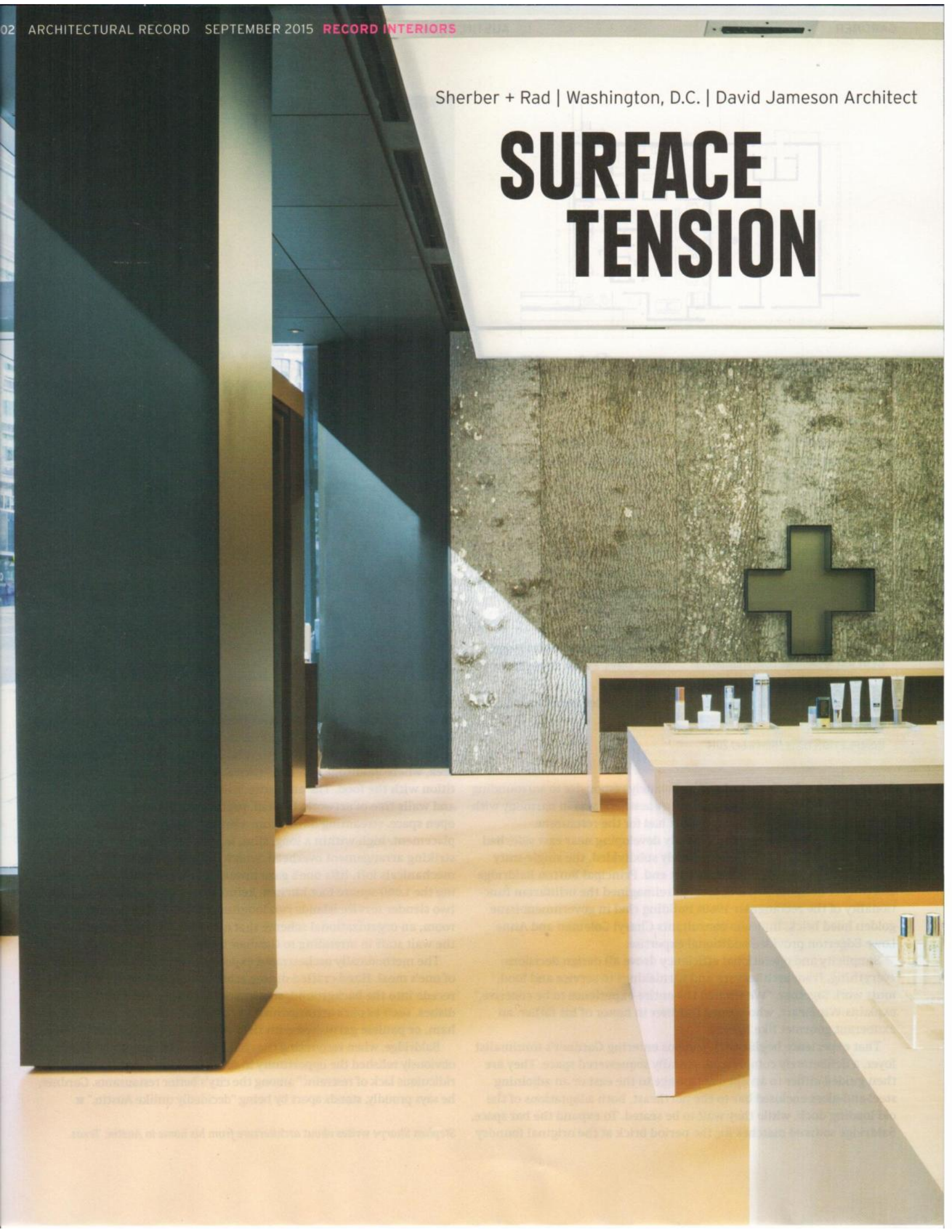


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Sherber + Rad | Washington, D.C. | David Jameson Architect

# SURFACE TENSION





A progression of materials—from rough poplar bark to smooth bronze panels—takes clients through a storefront shop to the inner sanctum of a dermatologist and a plastic surgeon.

BY CLIFFORD A. PEARSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL WARCHOL

**B**eauty may be skin-deep, but David Jameson's design for the offices of a dermatologist and a plastic surgeon reaches beneath the surface, peeling back layers of intrigue. Inspired by the structure of a tree—with its rough bark on the outside and smoother rings closer to the core—the Washington, D.C.-based architect organized the 3,770-square-foot facility as a progression of spaces wrapped in increasingly refined materials. The sequence evokes the dermatological procedure of removing dry skin to reveal the softer tissue below.

"The project is about layering—both spatially and in terms of textures and materials," says Jameson. Most visitors enter through a storefront retail space where they can buy skin-care products and speak with employees who can explain the items or set up appointments with either Dr. Noëlle Sherber, the dermatologist, or her husband, Dr. Ariel Rad, the plastic surgeon. Jameson lined the walls

here with the thick bark of 40 poplar trees, unrolled vertically to create the impression of a flattened forest. Variations in color, texture, and width show that nature is not uniform and enhance the visual appeal of the space. Some of the bark still has lichen attached or knots where branches had been. Because bark is an inert material, it does not have to be treated or sealed.

Bronze-colored glass shelves with mirror-glass backs are attached to two walls in a crisp pattern of horizontal bands and vertical stripes. "I like the tension between the precision of the glass shelves and the irregularity of the bark," says Jameson. On a third wall, a cross or plus sign composed of the same materials serves as a logo for Sherber + Rad and draws customers to a reception table. For flooring, Jameson used a synthetic epoxy often found on ships because it is seamless and resists germs and organic compounds. The ceiling is a stretched, translucent PVC fabric with LEDs above, so it creates an even glow across the entire room. Recessed LEDs around three sides of the ceiling make it



**INSIDE JOB** The retail space occupies a storefront in a Brutalist office building designed in the 1960s by the Weihe Partnership (left). Jameson wrapped existing columns with black-painted wood to create a transition zone between the street and the shop (opposite). A "curated" approach to merchandising minimizes products on display and reinforces the shop's modern aesthetic.

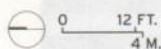


## HALLS OF POWER

A corridor lined with bleached-cypress panels and doors (right) takes clients to individual waiting rooms or "cabanas." A parallel corridor wrapped with bronze-backed glass panels (far right) leads to treatment rooms. The precision of glass shelves in the store serves as a counterpoint to the irregularity of the bark wall treatment (opposite).



GROUND FLOOR



- 1 MAIN ENTRY
- 2 RECEPTION
- 3 RETAIL
- 4 GALLERY
- 5 CABANA
- 6 VIP CABANA
- 7 TREATMENT
- 8 VIP ENTRY
- 9 OFFICE
- 10 LOUNGE
- 11 TREATMENT PREP
- 12 KITCHENETTE/  
CONFERENCE

## credits

**ARCHITECT:** David Jameson Architect – David Jameson, principal; Frank Curtis, project manager, Oscar Maradiaga, project architect

**ENGINEER:** Greenman-Pedersen (m/e/p)

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** DKT Lighting

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Madden CCI

**SIZE:** 3,770 square feet

**COST:** withheld

**COMPLETION DATE:** June 2015

## SOURCES

**BARK PANELS:** Barkhouse

**DOOR PULLS:** Custom by Metal Specialties

**SYNTHETIC EPOXY FLOORING:** Boliddt

**CUSTOM MILLWORK:** Potomac Woodworking

**GLASS SURFACING:** Galaxy Glass

**STRETCH CEILING:** Barrisol

appear to float, independent of the walls. Bleached-cypress tables—40 inches wide and 12 feet long—align with the shelves and maintain the geometric rhythm of the room.

To get to the medical area, visitors open a door in the back of the boutique—camouflaged because it's covered in bark, like the rest of the wall. Only a small bronze door handle reveals its function. "Washington is a city that emphasizes discretion," says Sherber, "so we wanted to create a place where a politician or a television personality could come, browse the merchandise, and no one would know he is getting treatment." For very special people, there's a private entry off the building lobby that leads directly to a VIP treatment suite.

Off a short gallery displaying artworks made with encaustics is a pair of parallel corridors, the first one surfaced in bleached cypress and the second in glass panels backed with bronze. The cypress corridor takes patients to individual waiting rooms—or "cabanas"—each one outfitted with wood-clad walls and an Eero Saarinen womb chair, where they can relax during the 30 minutes it takes for numbing cream to prepare them for Botox or other procedures. Then they proceed to the treatment rooms behind the bronze-backed-glass doors. "The combination of organic and high-tech elements reflects our approach to our work," states Rad.

Set in a mid-1960s Brutalist concrete office building in a part of downtown Washington where many lobbyists work, Sherber + Rad is embedded in the city's peculiar culture of power and appearance. And with its sophisticated retail front and high design, it challenges the traditional model of a medical practice. Come in for a look at the fancy skin creams, and you might end up with a nip-and-tuck to tighten that beautiful-but-aging face of yours. ■



