

# VAULTED BOUTIQUE

SHOP FOR ABOLAFFIO • GENOA, ITALY •  
GIANFRANCO FRATTINI AND FRANCO  
BETTONICA, ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS

Of all the interior spaces that receive careful design consideration in this country, our restaurants, bars, and shops are least often strong statements. One cause of this must be that the required "corporate image" is usually based on only the faintest ephemera. Resulting designs therefore seem thin and brittle—merely meretricious technical flourishes that have no relation to reality and seem detached from everything but the strained desire to be sensational. The Italian shop shown on these pages has panache, but despite its surrealistic effects it also has design reality. This is due to the architects' strict adherence to the program and to their using the building exterior as the point of departure for the design.

When the clients planned to expand the range of their de luxe womens' merchandise, a radical remodeling of their space was necessary to accommodate the new items.

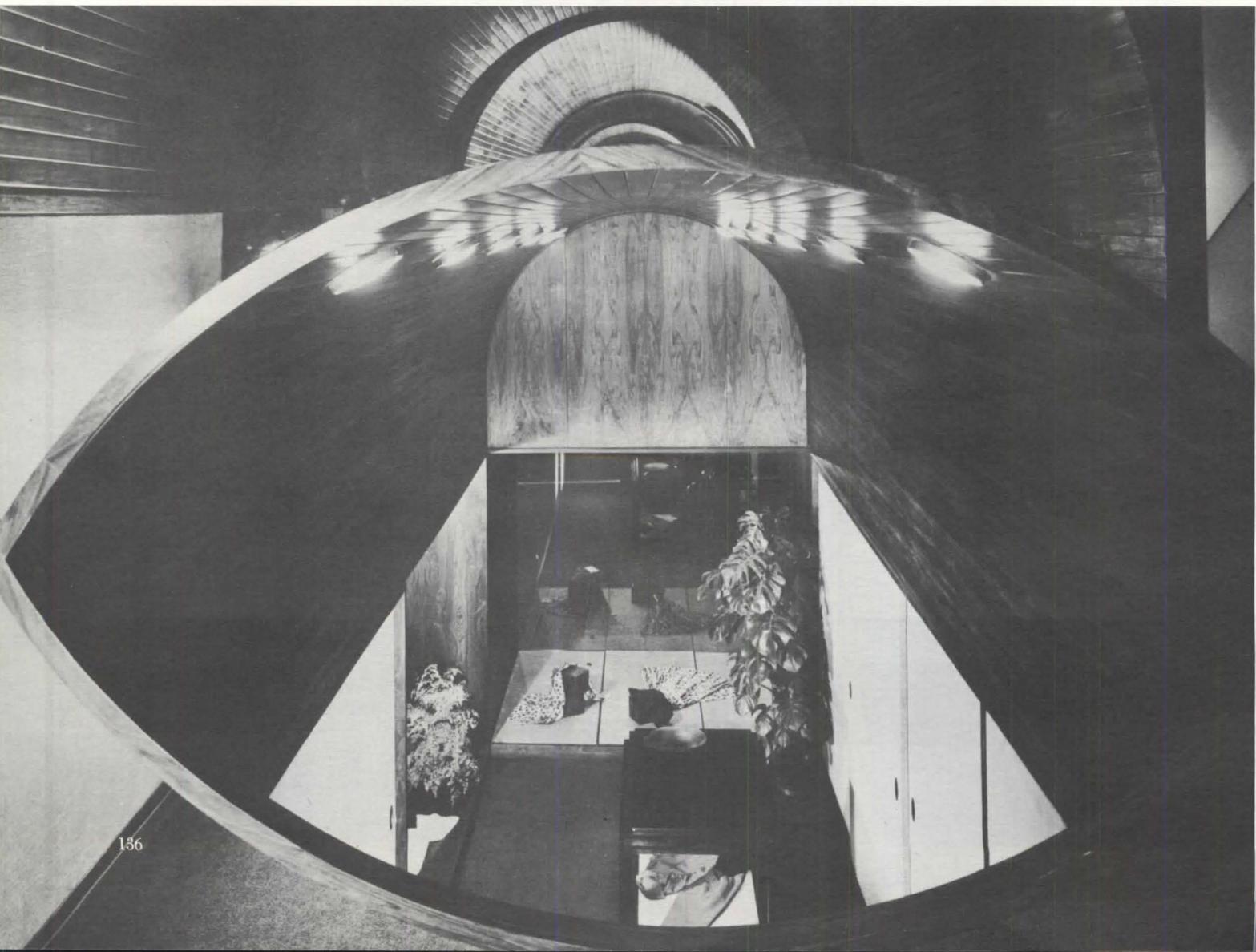
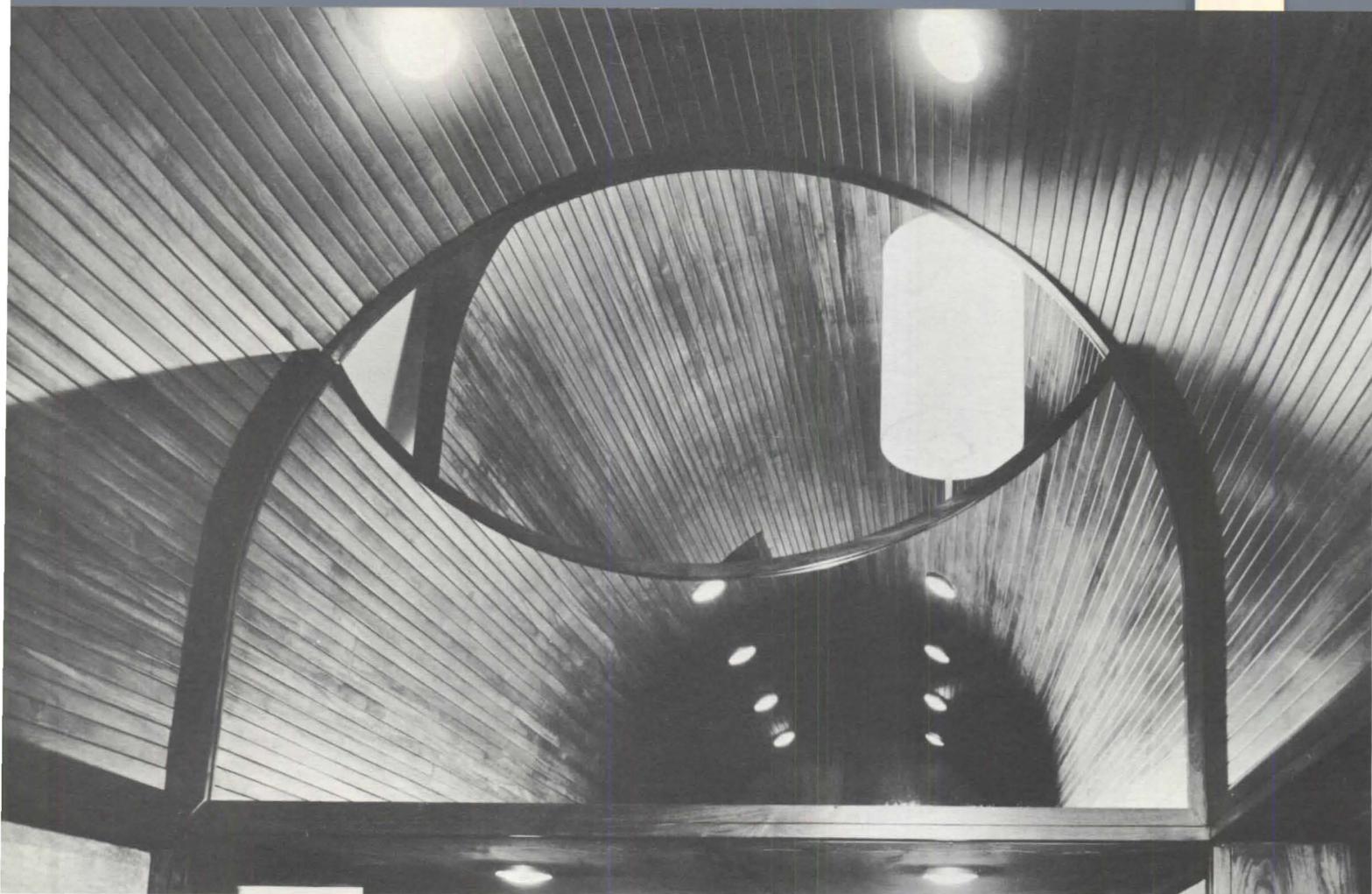
Before remodeling, the selling area was limited to the ground floor. The architects moved the second-floor workshop to the basement and created a new sales area in its place. They replaced a circular stair by straight flights along the inside wall and exploited the high ceiling of the main floor to create a mezzanine over the rear half of the space at the stair landing. This provides an additional sales area.

When it came to design details, the architects capitalized on the masonry arches of the building and restated them on the interior in vaulted ceilings of palisander, which are the dominant motif of the design. On the main floor, the barrel vault over the new mezzanine was left at nearly the height of the original space;



BALLO





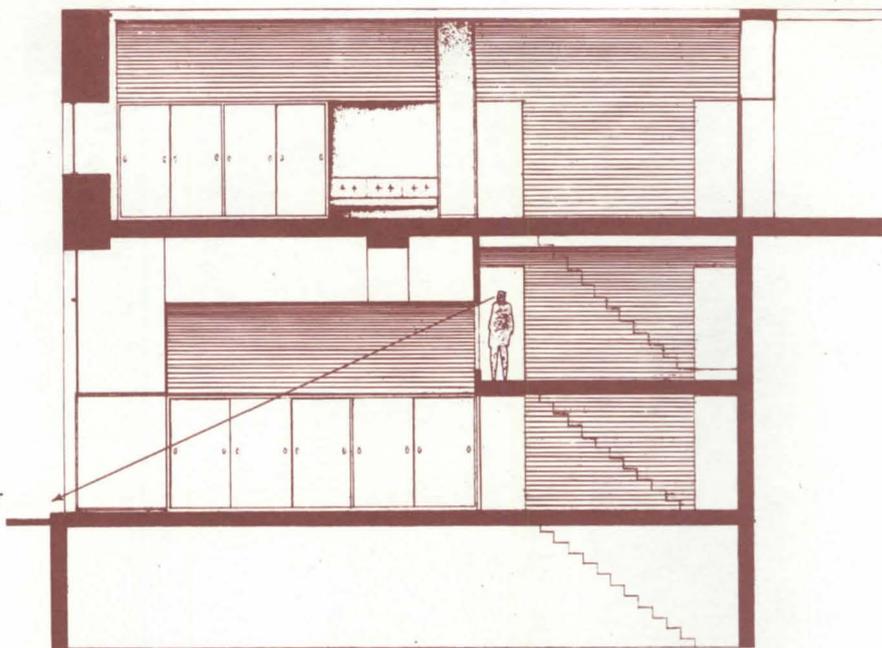


second floor

mezzanine

ground floor

basement

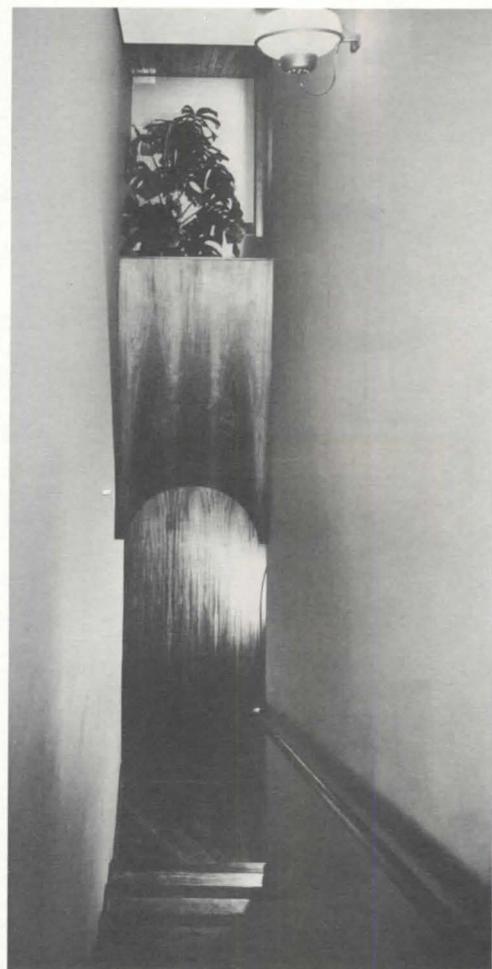


graph at top of facing  
 a detail of that at  
 n which a woman  
 mezzanine is seen'  
 he main floor. In  
 ews, a lamp is vis-  
 rough the elliptic  
 . Below the opening  
 irror that reflects  
 ver, front vault.  
 the woman turn  
 her view through  
 opening onto the  
 oor would approxi-  
 hat at bottom of  
 page; surrounding  
 iptic opening are  
 that reflect the  
 f the mezzanine.

front of the shop, however, the  
 lowered to give the narrow space  
 portions.

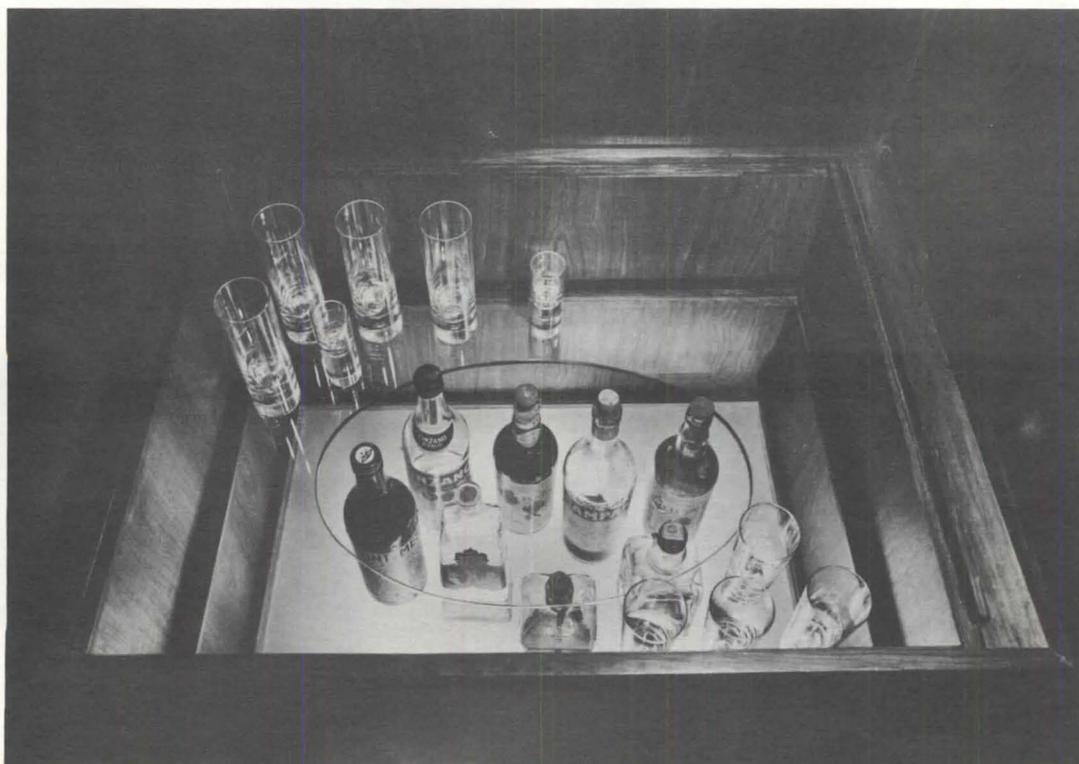
the two unequal vaults meet at  
 nine, an elliptic opening has  
 ed by continuing the circle of  
 nine vault downward into the  
 railing. The divertimento of  
 es and semicircles is reflected in  
 n both sides of the mezzanine  
 d, on the mezzanine side, above  
 g in the space between the two  
 vaults. Whether the mirrors here  
 rear of each level actually  
 he apparent size of the space, as  
 claimed, or whether they de-  
 by filling the planes with re-  
 rear pattern could be debated.  
 ition and the vault motif never-  
 ke a strong statement of what  
 tedly the most imaginative shop  
 r.

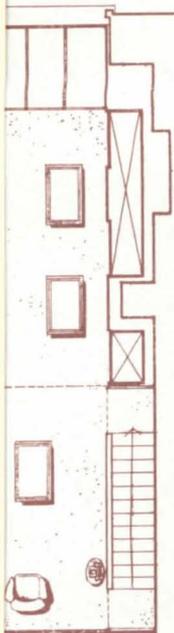




*The semicircle and the elliptic shape recur throughout, as in the new stair (above), a bar (below), and drawer pulls (facing page, left).*

*The second floor, formerly a workshop, has been made into a sales space (above and facing page, right). A vaulted ceiling is interrupted in the middle by a floor-to-ceiling showcase; a narrow, vaulted passageway through the showcase restates the theme of vaults set at different heights. A small dressing room has been formed with a drapery on a semicircular track (above).*

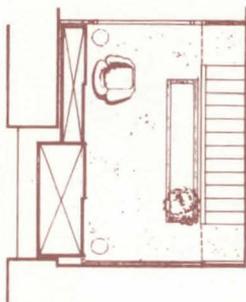




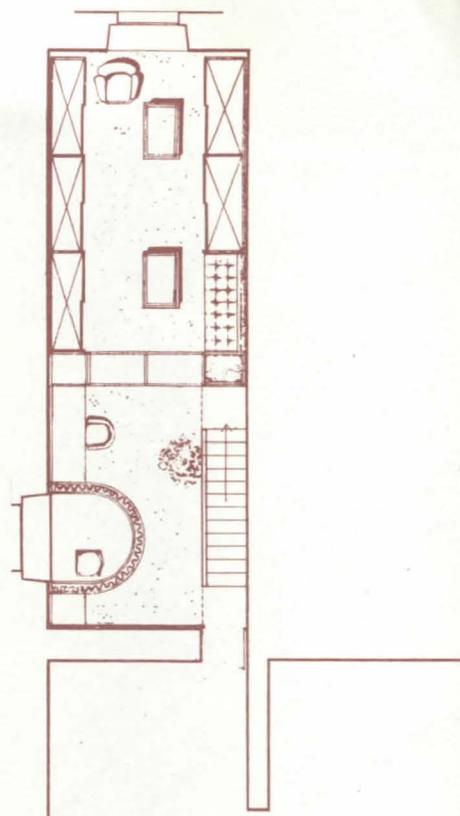
ground floor

One enters the shop on the long side of the main floor, between two show windows (plan left). The space is made to seem large by the show window on the narrow side and by a mirrored panel at the opposite end of the floor. Mirrors are repeated on the rear wall of the mezzanine (plan

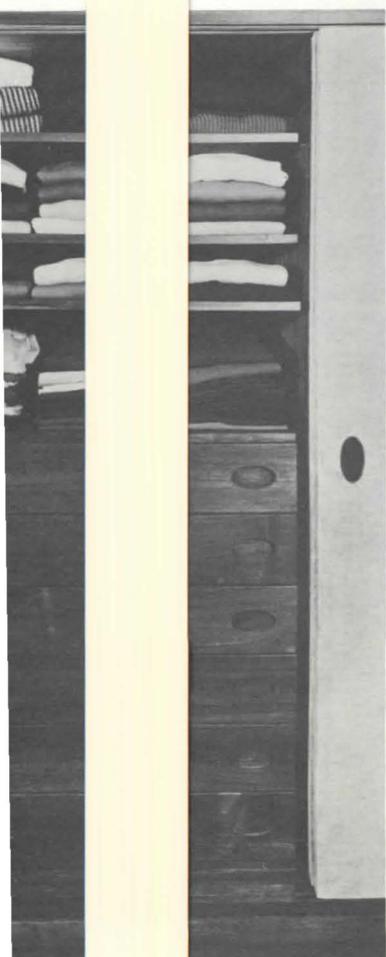
below) and on the rear wall of the second floor (plan right), behind the curtained dressing room. The new stairway has been located toward the back of the shop on the inside long wall. Storage cabinets are lined up on the long sides, their doors flush with the spring of the vaults.



mezzanine



second floor





*The labyrinthine impression created by reflections to infinity is at its most surreal in this view of the mezzanine. The elliptical opening is behind the flowers.*