

five Olivetti showrooms with English accents

GURKIN ANDREWS, DESIGNER

NOTTINGHAM



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photos by Alfred Crocknell

In almost every case, Gordon Andrews, F.S.I.A., was confronted with smallness and dilapidation in the five British buildings into which he was to put showrooms for the British Olivetti, Ltd., and the interiors had to be resolved in conformance with Britain's materials shortages, which would not allow nearly as much architectural revision as the designer would have liked. The gaiety of the present showrooms belies their pasts, though evidence sometimes shows where hideousities may lurk, such as quite offensive beams behind the undulating ceiling of the Nottingham

branch and the scalloped one at Leicester. While blithe, elongated triangles are Andrews' most frequent decorative shapes—appearing in wall designs and profusely in table, chair, and lamp construction—he is unabashed in introducing wavy surfaces, as in the Nottingham ceiling and in a veneered wall at Berkeley Square; and bold, colored squares and rectangles occur in wall panels and display fixtures—all contributing, together with fabrics and wallpapers in small areas, to a freedom of design unusual in such close quarters. What keeps this laxity from

squeezing a sensitive person out is that the quarters do not *look* so close, but as if they had room for everything, because the elements are always on the periphery and nothing blocks the floor sweep. Wall treatments are often contrived to suggest greater area; non-ceiling-height panels separate showrooms and offices and yet let space flow above and around the sides; and patterns or textures often temper the press of a flat wall. Space is also preserved by the spare stands, showing one Olivetti machine apiece, cantilevered from walls on iron rods.—J.A.



The Berkeley Square showroom was extremely restricted in the amount of architectural revisions, so that Andrews could only put up screen walls to hide unsightly elements, like old glass brick behind the undulating veneered wall at left, and a column behind the brightly colored panel at left of bottom left photo.

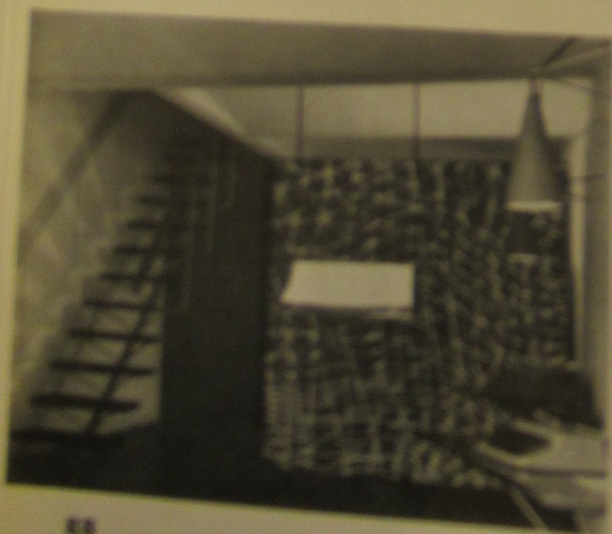


BERKELEY SQUARE, LONDON



A display feature in squares, above, is a pleasing change from the usual sharp triangles Andrews uses in wall designs, chair and table legs, wall lamps. Fabric on bird-like chair is by Jacqueline Grogg, F.S.I.A., designer of last February's cover for Interiors.

KINGSWAY, LONDON



Designs on the wall in clear, strong colors at the Watford showroom tell no tales of the workshop behind. Screen at left hides an office. An existing niche in the wall was outfitted with a cabinet for literature and the receptionist's utilities. Opposite page, top two photos: Shots of the Kingsway showroom. A photographic mural with drawings and rectangles of orange, turquoise, and lime conceals a heavy balustrade, while an old circular staircase is barely visible behind handsome, linear display shelving. The glass-topped window display table stands on black iron legs that crisscross from each corner of the slab. Bottom photo, opposite page: The Leicester showroom is in the oldest building—300 years of age—whose original spatial layout could not be drastically changed. The prefabricated stairs leading to the service department replace an old stairway. New ceiling surfaces cover old beams, and are scalloped to provide recesses for lighting.

WATFORD



