



# Mood indigo

Footwear merchant Capezio brings a blast of color and form to Toronto's fashion-forward Bloor Street

By Alison Embrey Medina, Managing Editor

Shoppers passing by the nearly 20-ft.-tall, all-glass entry façade at 70 Bloor St. in Toronto's Yorkville district might think a new retailer has moved into town. Capezio, a Toronto-based footwear, handbag and accessories merchant, however, has been residing in the posh location for more than 30 years—but with a dramatic gutting and renovation by Toronto-based burdiflek, you'd never know it.

Operated by Markio Designs Inc., a family-owned business run by the Markowitz family, the Bloor Street location is one of six Capezio stores in the Toronto area, in addition to the family's three more upscale DAVIDS footwear boutiques. The Capezio store carries more than 500 SKUs by upwards of 35 designers in the space. In addition to attempting to attract a younger, more fashion-aware clientele with the renovation, the store needed a better layout and more linear space to display the mass quantities of product. "Primarily, we were looking for an evolution from our previous design and looking to take it to another level," says David Markowitz, CEO and president, Markio Designs Inc. "We also wanted a lot of flexibility within the space so that we are not pigeon-holed into one type of space—we wanted to be able to move it around for seasonal and display changes."

The architecturally driven design concept was largely conceived as a spatial solution to an extremely challenging blueprint. The space was awkward and small at only 1,075 sq. ft., consisting of drastically different ceiling heights. In the first 20 ft. of the store, the ceiling soars 18 ft. high, then drops down dramatically to 7 ft. in the rear of the space. "We were trying to create more of a sculptural space, so we brought this origami-type form into the scenario," says Diego Burdi, creative partner, burdiflek. "We played with 3-D model forms and even paper to create this sculptural form and contend with

the ceiling elements." Crafted of drywall and white MDF, the geometric architectural elements around the perimeter of the store not only provided the company with avant-garde cove cut-ins needed to display product, but also added a dynamic architectural statement merging walls, ceilings and floors—clearly visible from outside. PAR halogen lights are cut into groves in the ceiling, and simple fluorescents are used to backlight the shelving units where the shoes are displayed.

The 100 percent wool carpet and custom-upholstered seating elements—amoeba-like organic pods that cluster together in the center of the store—are rendered in a modern "Tokyo purple," a deep lavender richened with a hint of blue. "We wanted something that created a point of memory that people will talk about after they leave," Burdi notes. "We wanted a color that was still feminine in nature, but created a branded identity for the company." Small, circular display tables in the center seating area are laminated glass with a complementary lavender emulsion inside them.

Lavender, while a dramatic statement in the Bloor Street store, is not a color that Capezio is married to in future store designs. A second store recently opened in Toronto's Sherway Gardens Mall featuring the same structural design aesthetic—only the accent color was a bright fuchsia. "We might do the next one Kelly green," Markowitz says. "The idea is that we'll keep the same structure, but we might change our color every time just to give each store a new, bright identity."

The Bloor Street Capezio, historically one of the company's strongest-performing locations, exceeds sales of \$1,200 per sq. ft. "Ever since the renovation, we've had double-digit increases," Markowitz states. "For a store that has been there for 30 years and was really a No. 1 performing store, the new design has taken us to an even higher level."

Opposite page: Cove cut-outs in the architectural perimeter wall allow more linear space for displaying product.

Right: Geometric shapes extend from the unique ceiling treatment to the amoeba-shaped seating units.



Photo: Ben Rubin, A Frame Inc., Toronto

Markio Designs has plans to open four to five additional Capezio stores in the next five years, and is contemplating whether to take growth to a much more aggressive level across Canada and internationally. As the design rolls out, each space will be retrofitted with the new design aesthetic, molding the various blueprints to fit the architectural requirements. As with most design projects, it was a matter of circumstance that gave birth to design inspiration. Sums up Burdi: "The awkwardness of the space forced us into this design language—it was very serendipitous." ■

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## project file

<b>Capezio</b> 70 Bloor St. W Toronto	<b>STRUCTURAL</b> Blockwell Bowick Toronto
<b>OWNER</b> Markio Designs Inc. Toronto David Markowitz, president and CEO	<b>AUDIO/VIDEO</b> Ray Bloor Radio Toronto
<b>CONTRACT DESIGN TEAM</b> burdiflek Toronto Diego Burdi, design director Paul Filek, managing partner Jeremy Mendonca, senior designer Mario Kokoranta, senior cad Janice Kee-son, junior designer Alison Piestman, intermediate designer Yuk Wu, junior designer (model) Tom Yip, project manager	<b>METAL WORK</b> CB Metal Toronto
<b>CONSULTING ARCHITECT</b> William Dewson Architect Toronto	<b>UPHOLSTERY FABRIC</b> Maharam Toronto
<b>GENERAL CONTRACTOR</b> Structure Corp. Toronto	<b>MILLWORK</b> Luxe Quebec, Canada
<b>MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL</b> MCW Consultants Toronto	<b>FLOORING - CARPET</b> Sullivan Source Toronto
	<b>LIGHTING</b> Litemore Toronto
	<b>CUSTOM UPHOLSTERY</b> Creative Custom Toronto
	<b>CUSTOM GLASS TABLES</b> Unique Store Fixtures Toronto
	<small>Information in the Project file is provided by the retailer and/or design firm.</small>



### ■ Success Obliges

Admittedly, Davids Footwear store in Toronto is not easily accessible for all shoe fetishists. But any cosmopolitan would undoubtedly be pleased to discover a new source. Davids was founded in 1951 by Louis and Julia Markowitz. 56 years later, it is still family owned and operated. Davids is Canada's largest independent shoe emporium, setting trends and defining fashion, offering its clients unparalleled service and carrying all the major designers of luxury shoes. From Christian Louboutin to Giuseppe Zanotti, Renè Caovilla, Taryn Rose, Lorenzo Benfi plus many other leading names – all are united under one roof. The flagship store on Bloor Street in downtown Toronto was recently completely refurbished. The new store layout and design provide ample evidence that, even after so many successful years, the élan discovering new horizons has not diminished. Noblesse oblige!

Capezio, also founded by the Markowitz family, is another well-known name in shoe design. Capezio shoes are sold in 6 locations across the Toronto area.

DESIGN Burdijflek, Toronto, Canada  
PHOTOGRAPHY Ben Rahn/A-frame Inc., Toronto

The entrance area is not only transparent but also stylish.

Der Eingangsbereich ist sowohl transparent als auch stilvoll.

