

Maiden Voyage

Stephan Jaklitsch interprets an East Coast paradigm for Marc Jacobs' first

West Coast shop on Maiden Lane in San Francisco.

MARC JACOBS' SPECIAL BRAND OF luxury—breezy and discreet—is deservedly renowned in the fashion demimonde. Transcending the uptown/downtown fashion divide, his label has legions of fans, seemingly immune to sticker-shock prices, clamoring for 16-ply cashmere sweaters. Jacobs' status on the fashion and celebrity circuits, along with his LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy) alliance, proved natural catalysts for opening independent stores. The first freestanding operation, designed by Jacobs' in-house staff with furniture by Christian Liaigre, opened in a former Soho garage in lower Manhattan in 1997. Next on the agenda came a pair of shops—another in New York on Bleecker Street and one in San Francisco—slated for simultaneous development. The fashion designer and his partner Robert Duffy, president of Marc Jacobs International, commissioned Stephan Jaklitsch to take charge of the architecture and again work with Liaigre on the furnishings.

The idea behind the illustrated West Coast installation was simple enough: Take the store's prototypical icons and transport →

Right: Men's and women's sectors, each occupying about half of the selling space, are divided by a central seating group composed of furniture designed by Christian Liaigre.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WARCHOL







them. Jaklitsch thus reiterated an established vocabulary of white walls, ebonized flooring, rolling rack fixtures, and focal wood wall. "We wanted," he remarks, "to take the Soho loft to 125 Maiden Lane," where neighbors include Jil Sander and Chanel.

In addition to the charm of Maiden Lane, the site's existing attributes strengthened the East Coast/West Coast connection. Most important were sheer size and volume. With a rectangular configuration of 3,000 sq. ft. (1,800 sq. ft. devoted to selling space) and an 18-ft.-high ceiling, the San Francisco location possessed certain characteristics in keeping with New York's loft vernacular. In addition, the building's owner had already tended to some of the site's more problematic aspects. He had demolished an ungainly mezzanine and leveled the store to conform with the street's notorious sloping condition. The property was delivered ready for Jaklitsch's clear-cut solution.

The architect began at the façade by adding a new gridded storefront of black-painted steel and dark gray wood on a base of honed black granite. "This is one of the few spaces on the street where you can see all the way through to the rear. The grid humanizes the scale and relates back to the roll-up



garage door of Mercer Street," Jaklitsch says of the treatment.

He made his second significant move at the rear elevation with a wood wall capped by a steel and etched glass clerestory to recall the skylight of the earlier New York installation. Daylight helps draw attention to the focal wall below, executed here in walnut, which separates a trio of generous dressing rooms from the selling floor.

The store's open expanse has roughly half its area devoted to women's wear, the other half to men's. In both cases, there are custom stainless-steel rolling racks for hanging garments and white-lacquered shelving—backlit with fluorescent strips and divided with ->

Opposite: The walnut focal wall, below a steel and etched glass clerestory, fronts three dressing rooms and measures 28-ft. wide by ten-ft. high.

Above: The lacquered cash/wrap unit incorporates starfire glass display boxes to spotlight individual items. Steel structural columns were stripped.

blocks of walnut—for accessories and folded goods. Additional fixture options include a tiered maple platform at the front window wall, the central cash/wrap station with glassed-in display boxes, and a few steel/glass/maple vitrines encasing individual items as if they were precious jewels.

Christian Liaigre's furniture, entirely simpatico with the Jacobs aesthetic, comprises settees of cream leather on steel frames, walnut coffee tables, and benches upholstered in pale blue leather. All lend a relaxing quality to an otherwise austere interior.

Lighting sources are basically hidden from view. Jaklitsch installed two floating ceiling panels to anchor a mix of incandescent and fluorescent sources; other lamps are concealed within the building's structure and integrated into the shelving.

"Quiet luxury" is Duffy's description of Marc Jacobs—both the merchandise and the retail environments. It's a phrase we've heard often, but in this case, we're at a loss for a more apt alternative. In Jaklitsch's words, the project was "more about evolution than creating an image from scratch." Eight months

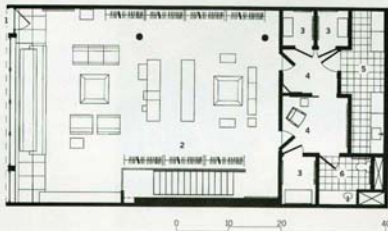


in completion, including offices and an alterations area below grade, the installation is a precursor to a worldwide expansion program. The next opening is slated for Boston; sites are being scouted in Paris and Japan as well. Stephan Jaklitsch shares credit with project manager Sascha Hoepfner, and design team members Takeshi Kamiya and Peter Chan. Brand+Allen, the local architect, was represented by principal in charge Chris Harrelson, Nichol Long, and Rose Mina.

—Edie Cohen

Above and opposite: A gridded storefront is "appropriate to the rhythm of the street" and filters store-through views. Tiered platform is of maple.

STOREFRONT: B METALS (STEEL AND WOOD); SKYLINE CONTRACT GLASS (GLAZING); GINO RINALDI (GRANITE BASE); WALNUT WALL; TAMALPAIS COMMERCIAL CABINETRY; GLASS AND STEEL CLERESTORY; ROMAX IRON WORKS; ETCHED GLASS; BENDHEIM; EBONIZED OAK FLOORING; TOWN AND COUNTRY HARDWOOD FLOORS; ROLLING RACKS; WAINLAND'S; LIGHTING: BARTCO; LITHONIA; LIGHT LAB; LIGHTING DESIGN: DAVID APPEL; STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: JOHN BUTIGLIANO; MEP ENGINEER: BALTES VALENTINO; CALIFORNIA; CONTRACTOR: CRANE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY WEST.



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