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Showcase Interiors

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PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL STRAUSS

In this issue, we feature four elegant retail interiors that present an elevated, worldly view of retail design for fashionable brands. The Miu Miu store in Tokyo (page 48) builds upon the Prada brand with architecture and interiors by Herzog & de Meuron. Callison designed a refined interior for timepiece connoisseurs in London with the new Watches of Switzerland store (page 56). As British clothier E. Tautz (page 62) presents itself as a brand for the modern man, Daniel Sanderson designed a minimal interior to welcome that clientele. And in Miami, Rene Gonzalez crafted a gem of an interior to showcase the jewelry offered by Alchemist (this page, and page 66).

Elegant Retail

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RETAIL

The rhythmic composition of granite wall panels and their textures change further within the interior, from a predominance of honed and polished surfaces to bush-hammered panels.





Alchemist

By Michael Webb
Photography by
Michael Stavaridis

Rene Gonzalez transforms a raw Miami storefront into the Alchemist boutique

Architect Rene Gonzalez has transformed a narrow storefront in Miami's Design District into a cave of wonders for the Alchemist boutique. Precious gems are displayed in glass and onyx vitrines set into walls of Costa Esmeralda granite.

"The space had to be sensual and tactile, for fine jewelry must be handled and tried on at leisure," Alchemist owner Roma Cohen says. "It's not a product you should order online."

This is the third Alchemist boutique Cohen has commissioned from Gonzalez, and each venture was a collaboration. The architect was born in Cuba, grew up in south Florida, absorbed the innovative spirit of Los Angeles in the 1980s, and launched his Miami practice in 1997. He is best known for high-end residences and hotels, but his office has also designed museum installations, a restaurant, and a community center. "We try to dissolve the boundaries between buildings and the environment, creating memorable moments that resonate with the users," he says.

Those goals are evident in all three Alchemist boutiques, Gonzalez's only retail projects. The first, selling designer clothes, was located within an out-of-the-way spot on the fifth level of the Lincoln Road parking structure designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron. Inside, angled mirrors reflected vignettes of the sky. Alchemist then transferred its stock to a larger store on the bustling Lincoln Road pedestrian street at the base of the garage,

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Key Design Highlights

The store's mostly mirrored-glass storefront is framed by a clear ribbon of glass, offering glimpses of the displays within.

Onyx and glass vitrines showcase jewels against granite walls that transition from honed and polished to bush-hammered.

The store's interior tapers from 20 feet wide at the entrance to eight feet wide at the rear.

Rose-gold mirrored panels at the rear are set at angles to offer multiple and partial reflections of the space.



Floor Plan

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Display cases
- 3 Mirrored planes

Jewelry is displayed in glass and onyx vitrines set into Costa Esmeralda granite walls. The narrow storefront (above two), located in a building designed by Sou Fujimoto, is primarily reflective glass framed by clear glass.





The space tapers significantly from the entrance, where the mirrored glass gives the illusion of an interior that is double its size.

Alchemist

Architect **Rene Gonzalez**

Architect

Client **Roma Cohen and Erika Sussman**

Where **Miami**

What **1,000 square feet on one floor**

Cost/af **Withheld at client's request**

For a full project source list, see page 90 or visit contractdesign.com.

transporting its customers to the ocean with videos of sunsets over the water, and styrofoam-clad walls inspired by beach coolers.

"In contrast, the new Alchemist has less to do with site [an upscale mall] than materiality, burrowing into the rocks from which gold and precious stones are extracted," Gonzalez explains.

The latest Alchemist is located in a crisply detailed glass-and-steel structure—with 20 boutiques on two levels—by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto. "Most [of the neighboring stores] are luxury brands, and we wanted to stand out from those familiar names and conventional storefronts," Cohen says. Alchemist is approached along a pedestrian axis, and the entire facade is mirrored except for a proscenium arch of clear glass.

"The combination of transparent and reflective dematerializes the facade," Gonzalez says. "You wonder, 'where is the boundary?' And that's intriguing." Shoppers see themselves against a backdrop of trees as they approach, and catch a glimpse of the display through the clear glass. Curiosity draws them inside, like Alice passing through the looking glass.

Forced perspective

The store's interior is tapered—from 20 feet wide at the entry to eight feet at the rear, forcing the perspective. Inside this boutique, a taut ceiling canopy of white latex is overhead, and the soft gray-green carpet absorbs sound while cushioning objects

that might be dropped. Rose-gold mirrors at either end create the illusion of infinity. Cases are top lit, from LED pin spots recessed into the border of the ceiling and the tops of the inset vitrines. The jewelry sparkles atop panels of subtly veined white onyx, a kind of surrogate skin. Tapered walls conceal storage, a bathroom, and an office in the wedges of space behind the displays.

Textures of the granite walls change further within the interior, from a predominance of honed and polished surfaces to bush-hammered panels, suggesting one is moving deeper into the earth. Finishes vary in tone as they refract the light, and granite panels of varying widths alternate with insets of rose-gold mirror to add sparkle. This rhythmic composition seems to speed up toward the end, as though for a musical finale.

At the rear of the store, two mirrored planes are set at angles, offering multiple and partial reflections in contrast to the panoramic view of the expansive mirror at the front. This, in effect, creates a feeling of ambiguity. "I wanted the interior to be experiential, even to keep you a little on edge," Gonzalez explains. "But it's not meant to be too overt and knock you over the head. Rather, you should go away as you do from a good movie, reconstructing it in your head."

Gonzalez's artful manipulation of space, materials, and finishes provides an ideal environment in which to seduce shoppers and build an attachment to precious things. **c**

sources

Miu Miu Aoyama (page 48)

who Architect: Herzog & de Meuron. Architecture project team: Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Stefan Marbach, partner-in-charge; Iva Smrka Kröger, project director, associate; Yoko Hirano, project manager; Castano Braga da Costa de Bragança, project architect; Dama Erik Lindroos, project architect; Cristina Geneva, Carlotta Gorgetti, Yuki Hamura, Ryuhei Ichikura, Christina Lian, animators; Aron Löfrenz, visualizations; Roman Aebi, Keisuke Ota, Günter Schweb, workshop; Mariana Vilela, Tiffany Way, executive architect. Takenaka Corp. Engineering. Takenaka Corp., electrical, HVAC, mechanical, plumbing, structural. Schnitzer Puskas Ingenieure AG, structural. Eimmer Pfenninger Partner AG, facade. Lighting consultant: Sirius lighting Office Inc. Landscape: Vogt Landschaftsarchitekten. Contractor: Takenaka Corp. design/build; Walo Bertschinger Zürich AG, showa votal, flooring/subflooring; Kikkawa Kagyo Co. Ltd., facade; Della Camera Arredamenti SRL, furniture; Permatoseisa Japan KK, glass facade; Ishimaru Co. Ltd., interior.

Watches of Switzerland (page 56)

who Architect and interior designer: Callison Architecture and interior design project team: Gerald Allbury, principal; Tom Pulk, director; Christoph von Bruchhausen, director; Joan Insel, director; Jules Gim, associate principal; Leslie Ann Chau, associate; Lynda Murray, associate; Trevor Holmes, associate. Contractor: BECK Interiors Ltd. Consultants: The Robinson White Partnership Ltd., contractor administration, quantity survey; CDM

coordinator; Box Technologies, audiovisual; Lighting Callison Engineering, Waterman Group, structural; Thomasons, structural; E & M Technica LLP, mechanical and electrical. **what** Wallcoverings: Mundy Veneer Ltd. Decorative lighting: Raaco, LED signage and illuminated ceiling. Luceint, LED recessed ceiling accent lights; Eklipta, LED linear wall grazers; Visual Lighting Technologies, LED linear strip lighting. Decorative glass panels/partitions: GBH Design GmbH, glass elevator. Lounge/reception seating: Minotti. Upholstery: Cortina. Architectural/custom woodworking: BECK Interiors Ltd. Signage: John Anthony Signs.

E.Tautz (page 62)

who Architect and interior designer: Sanderson Studios. Contractor: Sanderson Studios and subcontractors. Lighting: Iguzzini Graphics; Sanderson Studios, branding. **what** Wallcoverings: brass-edged Sapele hardwood panels. Drywall/plasterboard: Masonry wall painted white. Hard flooring: concrete, concrete tile. Carpet/carpet tile: Brintons, True Velvet. Ceiling: bespoke; Sapele waffle. Recessed/track lighting: Iguzzini. Hardware, door handles made from an original Norton & Sons brass tie rack. Door: Sapele, pivot hinged. Window treatments: handwritten gilded signage. Lounge/reception seating: Hans Peter Pirelli sofas. Other seating: Müller chairs. Reception desk: Günni Omann desk. Architectural/custom woodworking: bespoke. Signage: Signboard Systems. Textile treatments/finishes: AW Hainsworth & Sons Ltd., felt curtains.

Alchemist (page 66)

who Architect and interior designer: René González. Architect, Architecture and interior design project team: René González, principal; Monica

Vazquez, associate; Kevin Regalado, project director; Joshua Sperout-Figueroa, assistant project director. Contractor: Aaron Builders, LLC. Lighting: Henry Blum brand lighting. Engineering: Optimus Engineering, structural; Vidal & Associates, MEP. Windows and facade glazing: Coconut Grove Glass. Metalwork: Bohnett Sheet Metal. Jewelry case fabricator: Rick Tavares, Marine Design. Metal supplier: Ed Peliez. Forms/Surfaces: Interior glass and mirror: Wynwood Glass. **what** Wallcoverings/stone: Costa Esmeralda Granite leather finish, light bush hammer, heavy bush hammer. Mirror: rose-gold mirror and clear mirror. Carpet/carpet tile: gray silk. Ceiling: Barriol. Stretched Ceiling System: Blanc Venus. Recessed lighting: Contrast Lighting, T-4000. Track lighting: Nora Lighting, NTH-107. Fluorescent/industrial: Juno T-8. Other decorative: jewelry case, Blumini 1 LED. Exterior lighting: Futura Lighting, LED Ribbon Tracks. Hardware: CR Laurence, Stainless Steel Ladder Pull. Door: US, Aluminum DH-350. Architectural glass/glazing: clear laminated glass. Signage: Coconut Grove Glass. Plumbing fixtures/fittings: Kohler. Textile treatments/finishes: Ceiling: Barriol. Stretched Latax: Blanc Venus.