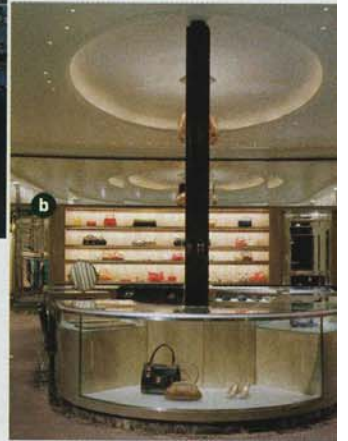




Marc's the Spot

BY VICTORIA C. ROWAN NEW YORK EDITOR



a The Marc by Marc Jacobs interior features accessory “bars” for men’s and women’s accessories, cosmetics and an idiosyncratic selection of books. The blue-tinted skylight insures that the interior always has a sunny disposition. **b** The luxe inside of the Marc Jacobs Collection store houses greenish sycamore veneered millwork and fluted shiny lacquered ebony columns.

Marc Jacobs marches into La-La Land bearing roses

THE MARC JACOBS LABEL HAS ALWAYS BEEN identified with the designer’s particular New York City edge.

Jacobs is the golden-thimble-winning graduate of New York-area schools (High School of Art and Design and then Parsons) who then spawned, along with his longstanding business partner, Robert Duffy (president of Marc Jacobs Intl.), a fashion fiefdom in the bohemian chic West Village.

So when the company decided to open new stores in Los Angeles, it faced the challenge that dogs all brand extensions: how to appeal to the locals while still honoring its roots.

Not that there isn’t a natural Marc Jacobs connection in Lotus Land. His materials are luxe and the price tags easily reach four figures. Marc Jacobs has always been unapologetically high-end and, as the brand has expanded to accessories and the (still dearly priced) Marc line, it has opted to celebrate the unique character of each category in its own intimate stores, such as his three-boutique colonization of

Bleecker Street in the West Village and his flagship on Mercer Street in SoHo.

The new Los Angeles arrangement is a loose compound comprised of the Collection couture store on Melrose Place, a Marc by Marc

Jacobs store on Melrose Avenue and a third building for the home collection across the street on Melrose Place. The opening of these locations represents the latest in the 20-plus world-wide store collaboration – from Vegas to Shanghai to Dubai to Seoul – between Marc Jacobs and New York designer/architect Stephan Jaklitsch of Stephan Jaklitsch Design.

Appropriately, the Marc Jacobs Collection boutique is a nod to vintage Hollywood, particularly such icons as the Bull-ocks Wilshire department store and the Bel Air and Beverly Hills hotels. It has sumptuous curves, materials and a splash of glitter. Previously a restaurant and then an antique store, the triangular 2300-square-foot space was completely gutted. The original façade, covered with creeping fig, is the only surviving original element. Unlike Jaklitsch’s first California Marc Jacobs store in San Francisco, “this was not to feel like a relocated New York industrial loft,” the designer says. “Here, we wanted to raise the bar on the level of luxury.”

The ivy and the high ceilings suggest the faux-humble carriage house conversions popular in the early 20th Century. The recessed entrance is flanked by two sentinel conical juniper trees in Gladys McBean planters. The grand windows were redesigned by Jaklitsch with bigger panes that feel retro and aren’t as stark as plate glass. The mullions are softened with paint matched to the same taupe as the ivy’s stems.

Landscaping is a key component of Marc Jacobs’ new L.A. compound on Melrose Place. The parking lot entrance for Marc by Marc Jacobs (top) features colorful flora and a yard of hand-laid pebbles, evoking a residential hidden garden. The Marc Jacobs Collection store (bottom) is housed in a bull-nosed triangular store completely covered with dense ivy.

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a Marc by Marc Jacobs packs in the whimsy with the fashion: Goofy animal pencil sharpeners, self-consciously tacky barrettes and edgy fiction are sold at various "bars" as must-have geek-chic accessories. **b** The space's previous occupant was a nondescript dry cleaner, so the whole building was rebuilt. The ship-hull, cats-cradle-beamed ceiling provides an open, airy feel.



The only problem with the stunning windows was that there were too many of them, leaving too little wall space for mounting racks and shelving for the merchandise, according to Jaklitsch. So he created what he calls "display pockets" to showcase mannequins in the four windows facing Melrose Avenue and two facing Melrose Place. Inside the store, the window boxes are obscured by cinema-scale, floor-to-18-foot-ceiling pewter velvet curtains, backdrops to the interior millwork display racks that are framed by curved shelving bedecked with accessories. All of the millwork is in greenish sycamore, a rare and ritzy wood.

The glam factor is further enhanced by brown-veined Emperor marble, mauve silk-and-wool carpeting and fluted shiny lacquered ebony columns. Flanking the back of the space are two curved sofas by French furniture designer Christian Liaigre, whose work also appears in Marc Jacobs' other stores.

The crowning whimsical sparkle to all this sumptuousness is provided by a stunning 1950s Venini chandelier in flutes of mauve and brown tinted glass.

At the Marc by Marc Jacobs store, "the mood is completely different," explains Jaklitsch. "The traffic on Melrose Avenue is literally faster and that goes with the sporty youthfulness of the Marc line." The building dates from the 1960s and, for seismic reasons, had to be completely rebuilt. In the process, Jaklitsch added another 500 square feet to the interior.

Formerly a nondescript dry cleaners, the building had no heritage to preserve, so Jaklitsch replaced the front wall with a plate glass window "screen" that 20 to 30 mannequins can vogue in at once. The taupe stucco façade is a clean-cut, neutral frame offsetting the bright clothes.

The interior is a mélange of blues. The ceiling looks like the curved hull of a ship, pierced by blue-tinted skylights so it's always a sunny day. The cat's-cradle patterns of the joists are painted a "Marc Jacobs" gray-blue. Liaigre made inviting stools with blue-leather cushions with stainless-steel studs to encourage loitering by the "bar" tables of books, cosmetics and men's and women's accessories.



Christian Liaigre, the French furniture maker, created the seating pieces for all Marc Jacobs stores. The movie-theater-scale pewter curtains in the Marc Jacobs Collection store allow the enormous windows to be used for mannequin display and backdrops – and to hide the racks within from outside view.

Unlike Marc Jacobs' other urban stores, the landscaping here is a key element of the entire compound. For both stores, a team led by Judy Kameon of Elysian Landscapes was directed to give a residential feel, though clearly differentiated for each line. "These were my first retail projects," says Kameon, who had previously landscaped movie director Sophia Coppola's home, "and usually my clients want privacy. Here, the demand was the opposite: how to use plants as a beacon, an invitation for people to come in."

For the more modern Marc by Marc Jacobs store, Kameon found inspiration in the area's post-war Case Study Project

buildings, Huntington Gardens and Garrett Eckbo's landscapes for Richard Neutra houses. Here, she created a colorfully exuberant palette of structural succulents, orchids in oranges and reds and silver and blue foliage. The parking lot area is hand-laid with stones and has a lush home-patio atmosphere. Blue stone was used to create the parking stripes.

As Marc Jacobs expands, the brand's sensibility seems to be softening a bit to embrace the world beyond Manhattan. The national club houses are finding their own in the local idioms. True to his penchant for mining vintage icons, Marc Jacobs' spring 2006 fashion show opened with the Penn State University marching band and an acrobatic baton twirler. The crowd of international fashionistas went nuts. Right now, the fashion world is marching in step with each new Marc Jacobs stunt. ☺

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

CLIENT
Marc Jacobs Intl. Co. LLC, New York

DESIGN
Stephan Jaklitsch Design, New York

ARCHITECT
Brand + Allen Architects Inc., San Francisco

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Illig Construction Co., Los Angeles

OUTSIDE DESIGN CONSULTANTS
Elysian Landscapes, Los Angeles (landscaping)
Cooley Monato Studio, New York (lighting)
Christian Liaigre, Paris (seating)

Miklos Lichter & Associates, Calabasas, Calif. [electrical engineer]
WHL Consulting Engineers, Los Angeles [structural engineer]

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Wavell-Huber Wood Products, North Salt Lake, Utah

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