



Mauboussin's New York flagship by David Rockwell sparkles like a jewel

text: *jen renzi*
photography: *bärbel miebach*

time to shine

David Rockwell hates shopping. "Yuck! I like to get in and out of stores fast," the architect proclaims. Perhaps that's why, despite designing prolifically in every other genre, from transportation to theater, the Rockwell Group has largely shunned retail. "It's been a while since we've done a boutique," he admits. "They usually don't excite me."

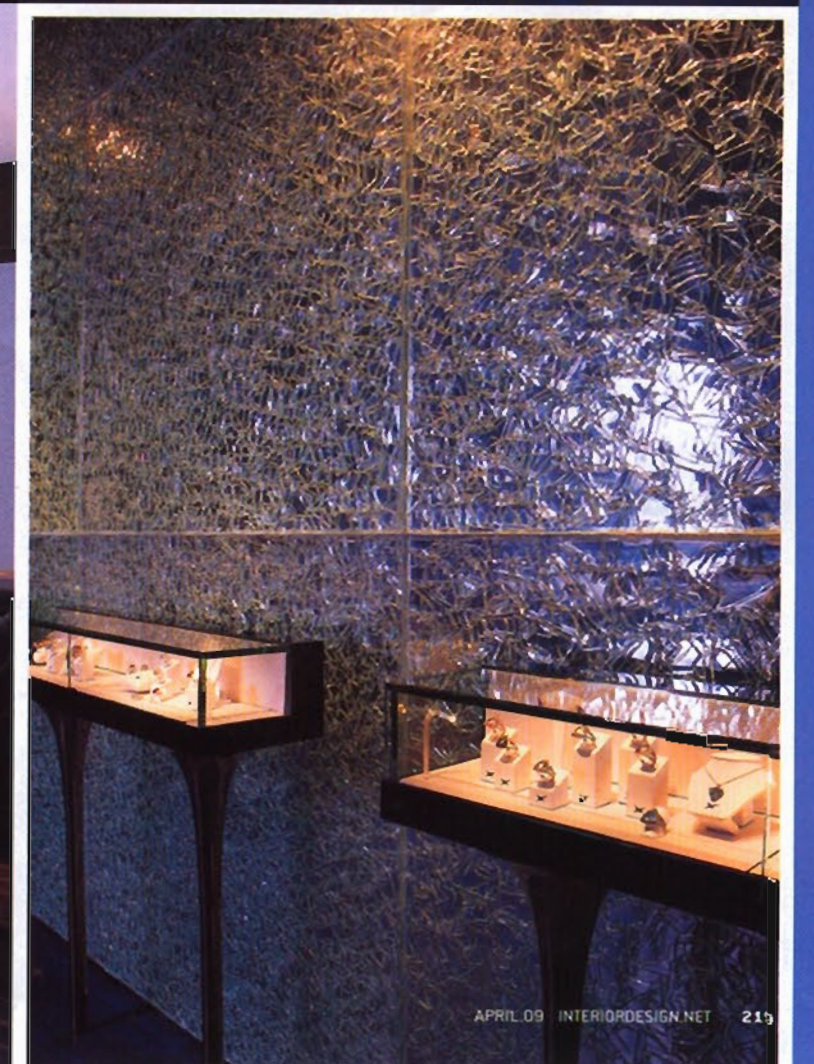
What did, however, was the opportunity to envision a U.S. flagship for Mauboussin. Rockwell was intrigued by the 182-year-old French jeweler's commit-

ized facade that defers to flashier neighbors such as Jimmy Choo and Roberto Cavalli. Subverting any expectations of Upper East Side stuffiness, the security guard coaxes visitors with a smile. "Come on in. It's like a nightclub in here," he whispers conspiratorially. Rockwell adds, "The building blends quietly into its surroundings, so visitors are completely surprised by what's inside."

Surprised, indeed. The moody foyer centers on a giant "bouquet" of clear resin flowers based on Mauboussin's

Previous spread: On the ground level of Mauboussin's New York flagship by the Rockwell Group, mirror-shard panels back custom display cases in low-iron glass, lacquered wood, and copper-finished aluminum.

Below: Upholstery on the custom wing-backs changes from level to level; the ones downstairs are leather-covered. Likewise, the oak flooring is cerused in different colors throughout.



ment to the visual and culinary arts, which translated into a multidisciplinary brief for a combination shop, patisserie, and event space. "As an artistic jeweler, we were looking for a store that would express emotion and allow clients to dream," Mauboussin CEO Alain Nemaq explains. That was music to Rockwell's ears. "We could take our interest in storytelling and ritual and apply it to a category we hadn't really explored," he says.

The 7,500-square-foot boutique fills a 19th-century town house with a modern-

logo—each proffering a sparkling gem in a bubble at the center of the four petals. "These surreal installations play with scale and proportion. It's a cheeky commentary on the small size of the objects displayed," Rockwell explains. (Surely he's not referring to the 6-carat diamond showcased in the bridal salon on the third story.)

The ground-level sales floor has a residential vibe. "It's an environment that inspires customers to linger," Nemaq says. There's no hard sell, just an array of

Opposite top, from left: Walls on the second story are surfaced in graphite plaster, etched to mimic paneling. Mauboussin's logo inspired the foyer's cast-resin flowers, which all display a piece of jewelry in a removable bubble at the center.

Opposite bottom, from left: On the second story, glass-beaded wallpaper wraps a lamp shade and lines parts of the wall and ceiling. The mirror panels measure 4 feet square.



Opposite top, from left: The bridal salon has front and back sales areas. Chair backs are covered in cotton corduroy.

Opposite bottom, from left: A track-mounted magnifying glass slides over a display of loose diamonds. Antiqued mirror alternates with panels of faux feathers.

Below: Tulle descends from cutouts in the ceiling. On the walls, the molding and panels are actually lace and padded satin.



covetable emerald rings and sapphire bracelets displayed under glass, in black lacquered boxes poised on elegantly tapered copper-finished legs. Transactions are conducted from the comfort of over-size wingbacks upholstered in complementary colors of leather, bronze on the front and black on the button-tufted back.

Precious and semiprecious stones glisten against a backdrop of blue-cerused oak floorboards and a textured charcoal-gray wall covering, it's stitched with copper wire that traces the outline of mold-

shades of pendant fixtures. Colors and finishes, however, change to reflect different merchandise. The second-story diamond salon, for instance, has gun-metal upholstery, etched graphite walls inset with antiqued mirror, and silver-cerused floorboards.

Appropriately, the bridal salon is all white. "Straight out of a Fellini movie," Rockwell says. Strips of lace imitate picture moldings, framing panels of padded satin; gatherings of tulle descend from ceiling cutouts like the bottom of a skirt;



ings, a nod to the building's former life as a house. The stitching is incomplete, as if worn by the passing of time.

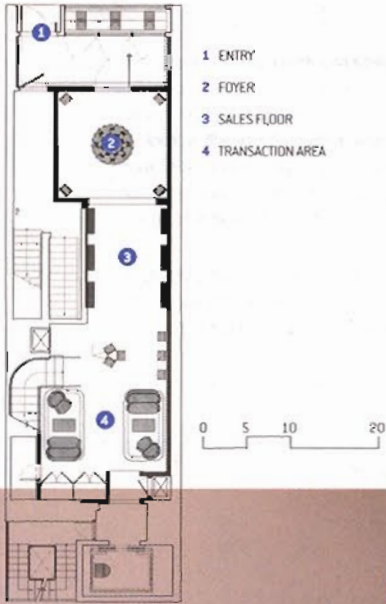
A swath of mirror-shard panels rises through apertures to unify the lower three stories—it's like walking up to a 30-foot-tall diamond. Other repeated elements instill cohesion, too. In addition to the wingbacks, display cases, faux moldings and paneling, and heavily grained oak planks, the same glass-beaded wallpaper embellishes sections of walls and ceilings and wraps the drum

and giant ostrich-feather fans stand on the floor to divide pairs of wingbacks from each other. The pale colors and the ample sunlight posed a challenge, he adds: "Creating sparkle is difficult in such a bright room." A sophisticated fiber-optic system, spotlighting individual gems, amps up the shine. So does a case full of glittering loose diamonds. It's surmounted by a magnifying glass, track-mounted to slide back and forth, and supported by slim champagne-polished aluminum legs. ➤

One flight up, a brick-walled patisserie called the Salon de Gourman-disers sells chocolates alongside leather handbags and diamond-encrusted watches. While sipping cappuccinos, customers can mull over purchases or be further tantalized by jewels displayed in tiered glass cases that fan out over the leather tabletops like peacock's tails. The biomorphic sculptures in shiny canary yellow, turquoise, or cherry-red resin are by Marine Delterme, a onetime jewelry designer for

PROJECT TEAM
NANCY THIEL (STUDIO LEADER); REGIS PEAN (LEAD DESIGNER); ROBERT VERTES (PROJECT MANAGER); PENELOPE FISCHER-WHITE (INTERIOR DESIGNER); THOMAS HAGGERTY (PROJECT COORDINATOR); ADAM CAMPAGNA; GLEN LEE; AUOREY RAPHAEL; MERTON WU; ROCKWELL GROUP. JOHN-SON LIGHT STUDIO: LIGHTING CONSULTANT. RODNEY D. GIBBLE CONSULTING ENGINEERS: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. FISKAA ENGINEERING: MEP. SILVER HILL ATELIER: MURAL-IST. SPOON GROUP: TULLE WORK. DELFORM METAL FABRI-CATION: FACADE FINISHING. JRM CONSTRUCTION MAN-AGEMENT: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

PRODUCT SOURCES
FROM FRONT NATHAN ALLAN GLASS STUDIOS: CUSTOM MIRROR PANELS (SALES FLOOR). INNOVATIONS IN WALL-COVERINGS: WALLPAPER. EDELMAN LEATHER: CHAIR



Mauboussin and longtime friend of Carla Bruni-Sarkozy. The figures appear again in the VIP penthouse, where the company hosts private dinners by notable French chefs.

At night, the building itself transforms into a sculpture, as a kaleidoscopic loop of Mauboussin baubles is rear-projected onto shades covering the windows. "I may not subscribe to retail therapy," Rockwell says. "But window-shopping I love."

FRONT UPHOLSTERY: MOORE & GILES; CHAIR BACK UPHOLSTERY (SALES FLOOR); CHAIR FRONT UPHOLSTERY, CHAIR BACK FABRIC (BRIDAL); WALTER'S MIRROR: CUSTOM MIRRORS (BRIDAL); OCHRE: CUSTOM CHANDELIERS (PATISSERIE); CHRISTOPHER GUY: CHAIRS; THROUGHOUT DKDI: CUSTOM DISPLAY CASES, TABLES; MUNROD CUSTOM UPHOLSTERERS: CUSTOM WINGBACKS; AURORA LAMPWORKS: CUSTOM SCONCES, PENDANT FIXTURES, LAMPS; SIBERIAN WOOD FLOORS: FLOORING; BENTLEY PRINCE STREET: CARPET.

Above: The patisserie's resin sculptures are by Marine Delterme, who designed a jewelry collection for Mauboussin.

Opposite: Kaleidoscopic images of Mauboussin gems are rear-projected onto window shades at night.

