



Call Him Monsieur Dior

For proof that Peter Marino truly lives and breathes the brand, just visit the boutique in Seoul, South Korea

text: edie cohen

Previous spread, left: At the Christian Dior boutique that Peter Marino Architect designed for Seoul, South Korea, monitors looping video art by Yorame Mevorach Oyoram line the stairwell. Photography: Kristen Pelou/Christian Dior.

Previous spread, right: Powder-coated aluminum paillettes drape a corner of the handbag salon. Photography: Luc Castel.

Top: Lee Bul's sculpture, a composition in aluminum chains, acrylic beads, and crystals, hangs above the handbag salon. Photography: Kyungsub Shin/Christian Dior.

Bottom: The perfumery's console has a base in verre églomisé. Photography: Kristen Pelou/Christian Dior.

Opposite: The staircase, with its balustrades of mirror-polished stainless steel and glass, connects five of the six levels. Photography: Luc Castel.

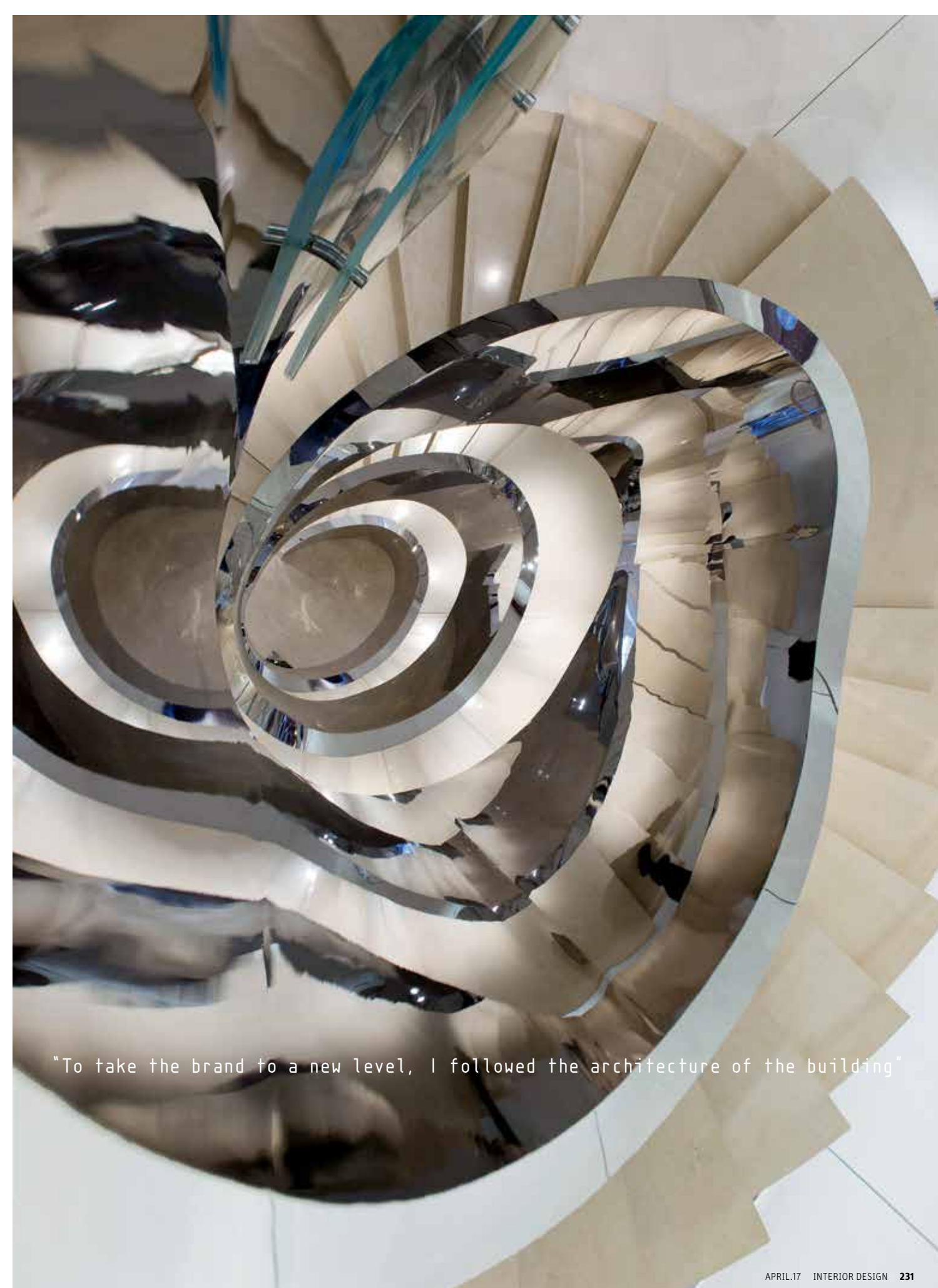


Pick a luxury brand. Bulgari, Chanel, Christian Dior, Fendi, Hublot, Louis Vuitton, or Ermenegildo Zegna. Interior Design Hall of Fame member Peter Marino has created exceptional showplaces for them all, from New York and Los Angeles to London, Paris, Rome, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. With the august Dior brand, celebrating its 70th anniversary, Marino can boast of a relationship that was established more than 20 years ago, with the redesign of the flagship *maison* in Paris, and has taken an Asian direction over the past couple of years, with boutiques in Seoul, South Korea, followed by Beijing. Of the two newcomers, Seoul is the mega-store, housed in a ground-up building by Atelier Christian de Portzamparc. Five stories, plus a basement, encompass 10,300 square feet.

"To take the brand to a new level, I followed the architecture," Marino continues. "The entire building is the brand. It's a one-off, its own story." Not to mention a major tribute to refinement in a city that he describes as "tough and cutting-edge." The corner building is wrapped with enormous white forms, perhaps sails or tulip petals, molded from fiberglass. Step inside to see how he translated those shapes into drapery: white powder-coated paillettes that curtain a corner of the handbag section that greets entering shoppers.

The curtains are not the only stunners on the immense ground level. In the center sits a pair of semicircular benches by Claude Lalanne—the seats are ginkgo-leaf shapes, the ginkgo being a harbinger of health and prosperity. (Incorporating Lalanne worked well at Dior in Paris, so why not repeat here?) Directly over the benches hangs a piece by a Korean artist, Lee Bul. It's a sculpture, a swirling tangle of chains, beads, and crystals. "Bonkers," Marino notes.

With Lalanne, we are duly introduced to a principal component of this and many Peter Marino Architect projects: commissioned art and design. Well known as an aficionado and a collector, Marino makes stellar examples a delight in all his work. He has installed more than 250 notable pieces for ➤



"To take the brand to a new level, I followed the architecture of the building"



Opposite: Claude Lalanne's commissioned benches sit on flooring of French limestone accented with Italian marble. Photography: Luc Castel.

Top: The stair's outer handrail is cast bronze. **Bottom:** Custom leather-upholstered club chairs gather in the salon for evening wear. Photography: Kyungsub Shin/Christian Dior.



various clients over the course of his career, he estimates—a figure he arrives at, by the way, after flipping through the pages of the recently published *Peter Marino: Art Architecture*. He's outdone himself in Seoul, selecting pieces by the likes of Paul Evans and Nendo for display throughout the store. On an upper level, there's furthermore a bona fide gallery. Every three to six months, it mounts rotating exhibitions organized by guest curators, positioning Dior as a cultural entity as well as a commercial enterprise.

Seoul's gallery is a first for Dior but not the only innovation. Likewise new is the idea of including a café. A collaboration with French pastry chef Pierre Hermé, it's all the way at the top of the building. Marino gave a wink to the lofty location by installing cloud-shape mirrors on the ceiling. Seating is upholstered in pastels alluding to the macarons, artisanal chocolates, and cakes on offer.

He didn't break completely with heritage, however. Shimmering pale gray, the signature color straight from Dior in Paris, is expressed by a plethora of luxurious materials in Seoul. Note the silvered tables, the silvery leather upholstery on seating, the lacquered acrylic panels, the antiqued glass, and the *verre églomisé*. Moving from silver to dark gray, textured plaster walls "thick like impasto," he remarks, set off the floor's limestone. Traditionally French, the floor even has contrasting black marble cabochons. But closer examination shows them to be subtly scattered rather than regular in arrangement. ➔

"Shimmering pale gray is expressed by a plethora of luxurious materials"



The ground level is given over to handbags, other accessories, and perfume—the bottles seemingly infinite in their mirrored enclave. The level above is devoted to fine jewelry and watches. It's on three, home to the day, cocktail, and evening-wear salons, that the most money changes hands. Nevertheless, Marino notes, since the majority of Dior's sales overall occur in department stores, the stand-alone boutiques function more as brand statements, allowing him greater artistic license. He took full advantage of that in evening wear, a glamorous setting populated not by earthbound mannequins but by floating figures suspended from the ceiling. Again, this merchandise display is unique to Seoul. Again, tradition is tweaked. Ditto for the VIP lounge. No old-school boiserie here. Instead of actual paneling, it's pictured in Robert Polidori's photomurals of the Château de Versailles.

Traveling between these different environments requires taking a trip to the future, via a spectacular staircase with balustrades of mirror-polished stainless steel and glass that undulate as they spiral. At grand houses, Marino points out, the stairwell is customarily a portrait gallery, showcasing family lineage. Here, in lieu of oils on canvas, individually framed monitors loop video paeans to the house of Dior, eye candy for Seoul's technology-obsessed hipsters.

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PROJECT TEAM

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PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT PM67 CONCEPT: CUSTOM PAILLETTE CURTAINS (HANDBAGS). LASVIT: SHELF CRYSTAL (PERFUME). THROUGH GARRIDO GALLERY: TABLE (EVENING WEAR). PELLE VALORE: CHAIR UPHOLSTERY.



Top: Planks of solid Danish oak anchor the gallery for temporary exhibitions. Photography: Kristen Pelou/Christian Dior. **Bottom:** At Café Dior by Pierre Hermé, cotton broadcloth uphusters the custom seating. Photography: Kyungsub Shin/Christian Dior.

Opposite: Under cloud-shape mirrors, the café's custom tables combine resin tops and aluminum bases. Photography: Kristen Pelou/Christian Dior.





Both the flagship maison in Paris and a recent mega-boutique in Seoul, South Korea, informed Peter Marino Architect's design for a Christian Dior outpost in Beijing's China World shopping mall—keeping company with Céline, Prada, and Louis Vuitton. The interior “emphasizes Frenchness,” Peter Marino begins. Given concerns about counterfeits in the Chinese market, that’s a visual way of conveying the message that these Dior goods are the *real deal*.

French references fill the two-level, 9,800-square-foot store. “There’s plenty of Louis XVI-style paneling,” Marino continues. Further delighting Francophiles, the staircase is inspired by the original one in Paris. Limestone flooring with black marble cabochons, quintessentially Gallic, was deployed in Seoul and reappears here with slight differences in patterning. Curtains of white paillettes, which started in Seoul as a specific reference to the facade of the building that houses the boutique, are déjà vu, too, as are shimmering expanses of silvered metals and *verre églomisé*. Individual video monitors surrounding Seoul’s spiral staircase have become an unbroken screen wall backing the stairs. Even without a gallery like the one in Seoul, Beijing afforded the opportunity to assemble another collection of art and design. The place of honor, at the foot of the stair, goes to a sculpture by Turner Prize winner Richard Deacon. ↘

if the shoe fits



ETC.

Clockwise from top left: Powder-coated aluminum paillettes conceal structural columns at a Christian Dior boutique in Beijing. Richard Deacon's stainless-steel sculpture sits at the base of the staircase. A console by J. Wade Beam stands in front of French paneling. The shoe salon features a Pae White tapestry. Flooring is French limestone.



FROM FRONT PM67 CONCEPT: CUSTOM PAILLETTE CURTAINS (SALES FLOOR). **THROUGHOUT PURE CREATIVE INTERNATIONAL:** ARCHITECT OF RECORD. **METIS LIGHTING:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **FERRIER CHAN & PARTNERS:** MEP. **RICH HONOUR DESIGN GROUP:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

MANOLO YLLERA
CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: MANOLO YLLERA (2); ALGIRDAS BAKAS/CHRISTIAN DIOR

