

INTERIOR DESIGN

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Blithe Spirit

Sean Dix updates Moschino's Milan boutique with a joyous, fun-poking, and slightly zany air

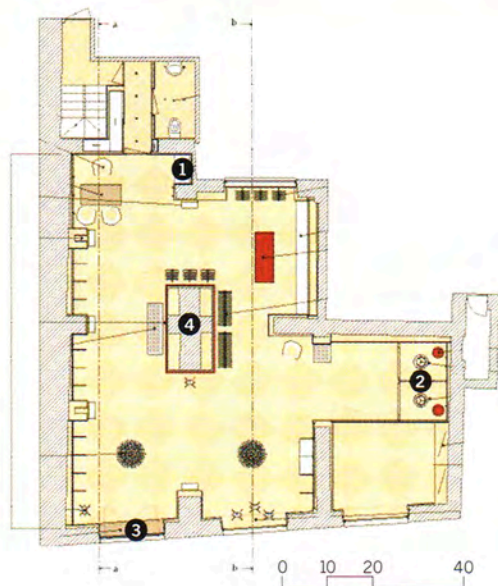




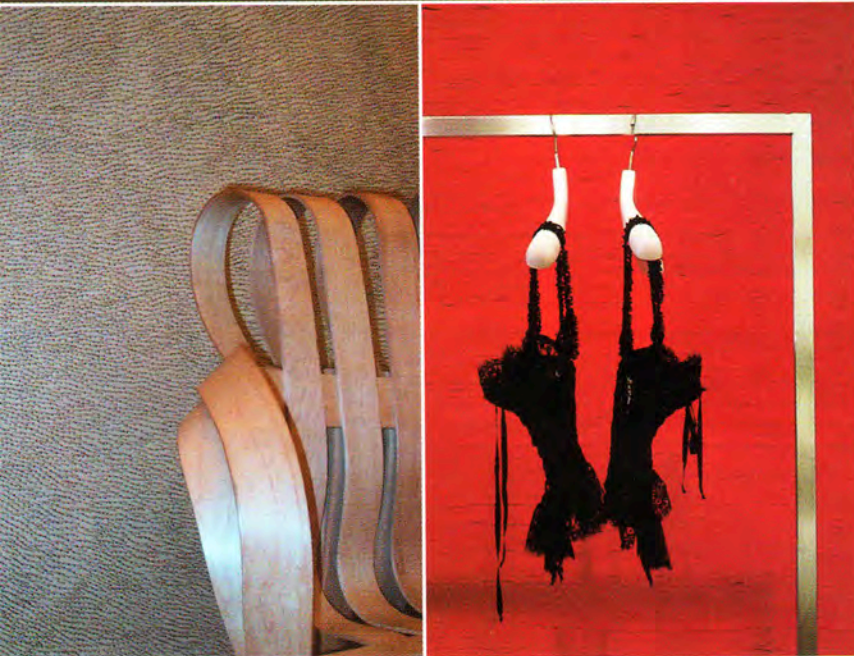
Above: The immense support column is made of 20 miles' worth of layered fabric in three shades of red. Display tables and Frank Gehry-designed Cross Check chairs in maple are set on the 47-inch-square travertine floor tiles.

Opposite: The ceiling, scored with lighting troughs, and a classic Stockman's dressmaking dummy are reflected ad infinitum in the floor-to-ceiling mirror near the changing rooms.

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of the piled fabric as well as two highly unusual display tables. One has a black marble top etched with a white lace pattern; another is of plain wood but is draped with a gauzy cloth bearing a precise drawing of a fancy, baroque table.

Vying with the fabric-layer pieces for showstopper status, a 50-foot-long ecru wall is covered with raised white letters spelling out Hans Christian Andersen's entire tale of the emperor's new clothes, in Italian and English (but not in Danish). The famed story's irony and sarcasm strike Dix as emblematic of the iconoclastic mood he chose for his prevailing theme. He also cites Alice in Wonderland to justify his "playing with scale," examples of which include the immense, 47-inch-square floor tiles and over-size, 14-foot-tall dressing room doors. There's no credit for Cinderella, however, with respect to the two grand chandeliers embellished with 90 glass slippers.

Other eccentricities? Oh, yes, many. Moschino logos made of inconspicuous transparent lettering appear on the bottom corners of the storefront windows. Ceiling lights hung in the changing rooms have shades of wound twine held together by resin. Adding a touch of gold to the strong strokes of regal red is a wall surfaced with countless dressmaking pins, creating the illusion of sun-dappled fur. "Minimalism formed from millions," quips Dix. The wall abutting the rear courtyard appears to be made of lace but is actually a concatenation of interlocking laser-cut wood pieces perforated to admit sunlight. Rather than fill in the naturally pockmarked Italian travertine flooring, our creative contrarian applied transparent resin, thus preserving the cavities while assuring cleanliness. As a foil to the overall whimsicality, Dix then selected unobtrusive display elements, including lateral and frontal rails of brushed stainless steel.

Invaluable to the job's success, the designer stresses, were the multitalented contractor, team leaders, and crews, whose synchronized work schedules made it possible to complete demolition and construction within 64 days. Best of all, the project actuated a fast follow-up job: A second Moschino store, practically around the corner on Via Spiga, was finished early this year. The second location sells Moschino's other lines, including Cheap and Chic. "It's cool," Dix declares, "seeing one's work on two of Milan's three fashion streets."

—Monica Geran

Left, clockwise from top: Dix used white lacquered wood for shelving throughout. Two corsets. A Gehry chair set against the wall of dressmaking pins.

Opposite: Beyond the fabric-pile bench is a wall of interlocking laser-cut wood pieces.

CROSS CHECK CHAIRS: **KNOLL**. RESEARCH, TRANSPARENT LOGO LETTERS: **BISK**. OTHER FURNITURE, LIGHTING, DISPLAY PIECES, GENERAL CONTRACTOR: **SICE PREVIT**.