

# INTERIOR DESIGN

APRIL  
2004

fashion: right on target

text: ian phillips photography: santi caleca

2004 Fall

WINTER

# a clear improvement

Vudafieri Partners's rooftop accessories showroom for Costume National, Milan, stands miles above the rest



**Ennio Capasa is a man of** the south, born in the town of Lecce on the heel of Italy's boot. "There's lots of light there," he says. "It's very magical." The same cannot be said of Milan, where he set up Costume National in 1986.

In 1996, the fashion label moved to its present headquarters, a postwar red-brick warehouse in the city's southwestern Naviglio district. As soon as the detritus had been cleared out, Capasa replaced every single

of urban-chic shoes, bags, belts, and jewelry.

With the help of Vudafieri Partners, he came up with a steel-framed oblong with brick end walls. The rest is glazed—and that includes the roof, imperceptibly sloped for drainage reasons. "In this area of Milan, all the late 19th-century workshops are glass, iron, and steel, so it seemed fitting to come up with something similar," says architect Tiziano Vudafieri.

Technically, the addition rep-

resents something of Capasa's native Puglia. Two internal patios are planted with typical Mediterranean loquat and European smoke trees, and a 3-foot-wide strip of cactus garden runs along one side of the space, behind a glass partition.

References to southern Italy also include the whiteness of the paint on the end walls and the epoxy resin of the floor—inspired by the region's white-washed farmhouses. Meanwhile, two pools on the roof evoke →



one of the building's 2,800 panes of glass and knocked down several internal walls, putting up transparent glass partitions instead. However, not even those improvements were sufficient to infuse the interior with what he longingly calls a "very Mediterranean light." Hence his recent decision to add a "glass house" on the roof: a 3,300-square-foot showroom for Costume National's range

resents something of an exploit, as everything hangs from an 98-foot-long external I beam. Light regulation comes in the form of the roof's aluminum louvers as well as the west-facing wall's semitransparent white cotton drapery. "Otherwise, it would be too bright to work on summer afternoons," notes Vudafieri's partner, architect Claudio Saverino.

Sunshine isn't the only thing

**Previous spread:** Transforming the roof of Costume National in Milan, Vudafieri Partners enclosed 3,300 square feet as an accessories showroom and flooded two other areas with 6 inches of water recycled from the air-conditioning system.

**Above:** A solid-surfacing shelf extends along the cactus garden's partition, supported by short steel poles screwed into the glass. The shelf terminates near an internal patio walled in by glass but open to the sky.

**Opposite:** A 98-foot-long steel I beam supports the showroom addition.











the Ionian Sea. They're also redolent of Japan, where Capasa trained with Yohji Yamamoto.

Besides the poetic purposes of reflecting clouds and sky, the pools collect waste water from the air-conditioning system, whose ducts run beneath the floor of the addition. Also cleverly hidden are halide fixtures, bolted to the side of the roof's crossbeams.

For Capasa, it was important that the space be both "spectacular" and at the same time "quite neutral" in order to show off the accessories to best advantage. "We change our collections every six months, so there would be a risk of clashing with the architecture if it were too *designed*," he says. The staircase leading up to the addition introduces the pared-down aesthetic: white solid-surfacing treads and risers combined with a handrail in white-painted steel.

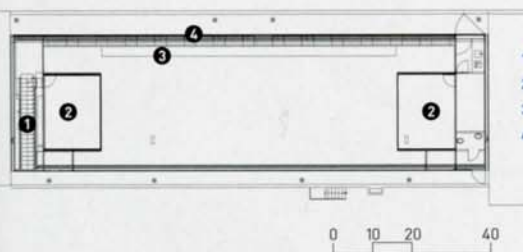
Inside the showroom proper, Vudafieri Partners built a solid-surfacing shelf along the cactus garden's partition, attaching this 72-foot-long fixture to the glass panels with short poles placed at 8-foot intervals. The shelf's matte finish contrasts with the glossy epoxy floor—an interplay that Capasa believes enhances the display of fashion accessories.

For spring-summer 2004, merchandise lining the shelf might have included a pink-and-green suede shoulder bag and pale blue strappy sandals—already replaced by fall-winter's Sheherazade-inspired necklaces and bracelets. Freestanding furniture changes even more frequently. Jean Nouvel's razor-sharp Less tables, set up during market weeks, are stored away again when the normal fashion cycle resumes. Usually, Capasa groups his own black lacquered tables with black velvet-covered love seats and ottomans that he originally designed two years ago for Costume National's boutique in Paris.

Identical pink seating joins the mix when Capasa holds special events, such as book signings and art exhibitions. He has also used the space for the company Christmas party and the launch of Costume National's first fragrances. An alluringly androgynous meditation on jasmine, hibiscus, and amber essences, the collection is named with characteristic simplicity: Scent. ■

PROJECT DESIGNER: **MATTEO VISCHIONI**. PROJECT TEAM: **EMANUELE BELGRANO; LIVIO STEFANO; GIOVANNI REDAELLI**.

SHELF, SHOE-DISPLAY SOLID SURFACING (SHOWROOM), STEP SOLID SURFACING (STAIR): **WILSONART INTERNATIONAL**. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: **STUDIO AMORT WALTER**. MECHANICAL ENGINEER: **CONTERM ENGINEERING**.



- 1 STAIR
- 2 PATIOS
- 3 SHELF
- 4 CACTUS GARDEN

**Previous spread, top:** Vudafieri Partners and Ennio Capasa collaborated on the solid-surfacing shoe-display fixtures. **Previous spread, bottom:** Capasa originally designed the velvet-covered seating for his Paris store.

**Opposite:** The showroom is lit by halide fixtures bolted to the crossbeams.

**Top:** A painted steel staircase connects the ground-floor reception area to the rooftop showroom. **Bottom:** Treads and risers are solid surfacing.



FAKE HAIR

FAKE SMILE

FAKE BOOBS

FAKE DIAMONDS

FAKE DESIGNER

bios



**KWID**

"Retro Redux," page 184

**principal:** Kelly Wearstler.

**completed projects:** Avalon Hotel, Maison 140 hotel, Viceroy Santa Monica hotel, and Ben Stiller's residence, all in Los Angeles; the high-roller suite at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas; Viceroy Palm Springs hotel, California.

**current projects:** The lounge at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas; the Lincoln restaurant and residences in Los Angeles; fabrics and wall coverings for F. Schumacher & Co.; carpets for Patterson, Flynn & Martin; a monograph, *Modern Glamour: The Art of Unexpected Style*.

**honors:** The Pacific Design Center's Stars of Design.

**fashion passion:** "My Hermès Birkin bag, a fabulous hand-holder."

**passion for fashion:** "You know you're a shopaholic when American Express thinks someone has stolen your platinum card."

317 North Kings Road, Los Angeles, CA 90048; 323-951-7454.



**Shimoda Design Group**

"A Pearl of a Project," page 170

**principal:** Joey Shimoda.

**completed projects:** GBM Idea Lab in Dallas; commercial buildings and the Coldwell Banker Real Estate Corporation in Los Angeles; an exterior renovation for Navigator Press in Monrovia, California; the Patterson Dental Supply

showroom in El Segundo, California; Intertrend Communications in Long Beach, California.

**current projects:** A lobby renovation for Rolex in Dallas; a Steelcase showroom, Hollywood Park Casino, Boondoggle corporate offices, and residences, all in Los Angeles.

**pearl of wisdom:** "Each element of a project is a beautiful pearl waiting for a designer to align it with the next right pearl. The result: a classic strand."

**when the world's not our oyster:** "Embrace the difficulty. Sometimes crises lead to more successful solutions."

837 Traction Avenue, Suite 101, Los Angeles, CA 90013; 213-596-1771.



**Vudafieri Partners**

"A Clear Improvement," page 138

**architect:** Tiziano Vudafieri.

**architect:** Claudio Saverino.

**completed projects:** An Emilio Pucci boutique in Paris; Jimmy Choo boutiques in Milan, London, Moscow, and New York; a Givenchy boutique in Tokyo; a Miele showroom and a private art gallery in Milan.



**current projects:** Emilio Pucci boutiques in Moscow, New York, and Kuwait City; a Louis Vuitton boutique in Milan; a house in Java, Indonesia; the renovation of an art collector's 500-year-old farmhouse in Bolzano, Italy.

**high life:** A keen skier, Vudafieri has just taken up the sport once more—despite five knee operations and against the advice of his doctor.

**high life:** Saverino, who loves fishing in the Alps, says he always uses artificial bait. "I like the idea that a well designed fake fish can catch a real one."

66 Viale Lombardia, 20131 Milan, Italy; 39-02-2611-3990.