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INTERIOR DESIGN

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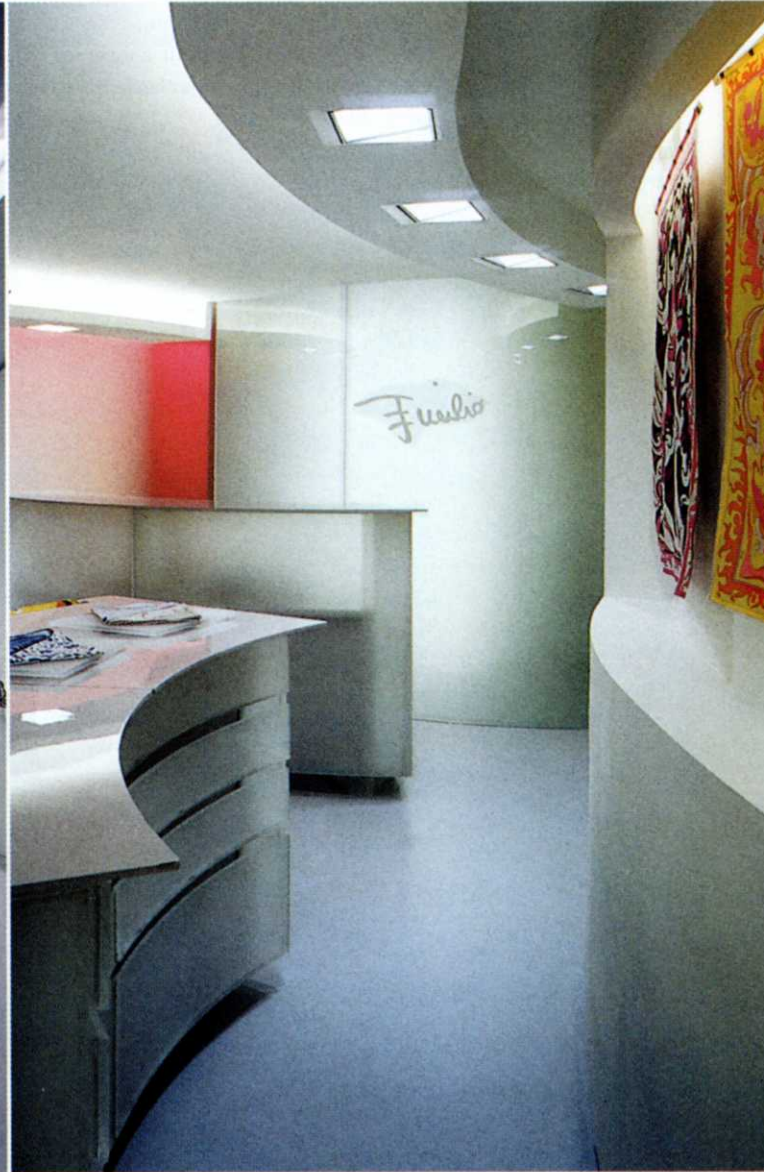
APRIL 2001



Full Frontal
The Fashion Issue

Coming *Full Circle*

A team of designers dreams up a curvaceous Milanese boutique to bring contemporary relevance to the venerable Emilio Pucci label.



WHEN FLORENTINE FASHION HOUSE Emilio Pucci was acquired by luxury group LVMH last April, it had a venerable heritage to leverage. For CEO Catherine Vautrin, the challenge was bringing contemporary relevance to the brand, better known to its multi-generational following as a funky vintage label. Just a few weeks after Vautrin joined the company, a retail space became available on Milan's Via Montenapoleone. With less than five months to the fall fashion shows, Vautrin had precious little time to strategize Pucci's new creative direction, let alone to design and build a store. "Since I didn't think we had time to go through a typical architectural process, I wanted to avoid a laborious program," says Vautrin. Her search for an unconventional decorator with a fresh perspective led her to Lena Pessoa, an artist and former fashion designer well versed in both the practical demands and the creative possibilities of merchandising. Collaborating with designer Matthieu Paillard and architect Tiziano Vudafieri, Pessoa devised a retail concept to harness the core attributes of the Pucci tradition—movement, light, femininity, and sensuality—while ushering the brand image into the 21st century.

"The most important aspect of the program was translating a feeling of femininity, which I did through the curves of the walls," says Pessoa, describing the 1,100-sq.-ft. boutique's defining feature. Fluid contours communicate the essence of Pucci's loose, body-skimming tailoring. Round, violet-hued ottomans and sinuous cabinetry of lacquered metal and frosted acrylic were custom-designed to echo the serpentine floor plan. The curvaceous design playfully references the mod, futuristic style of the '60s and '70s, while the pale resin floor and crisp lighting "capture the sea and sky of the Mediterranean," says Vudafieri. "We tried to create the sensation of being suspended in air."

To complement the technicolor, op-art prints of the merchandise, "we used color in a very light way," continues Pessoa. Other than the sportswear, scarves, and shoes on display, the only solid hue is a pastel jolt of chartreuse paint on the mezzanine level. Elsewhere, evanescent light effects play

against a glossy backdrop of creamy white and pale lilac. Pessoa draped the left wall with a fabric scrim that diffuses tinted light (which can be adjusted to coincide with seasonal collections) from fixtures behind. Near the entrance, a video of vintage Pucci prints is projected from a mirrored podium to the domed ceiling above. Pessoa describes the computer-generated imagery—a montage of graphic patterns slowly dissolving into one another—as "a dynamic element" that sets the ambiance in continual flux. By joyfully tweaking the Pucci traditions, the boutique brings the brand full-circle, demonstrating how, in the words of Vautrin, "history nourishes the conceptual thinking of today."

—Jen Renzi

Far left: Crisp fluorescent illumination, from recessed niches that mimic the curved space, deliberately avoid "the drama and the sadness of 1980s-style retail lighting," says architect Vudafieri, who requested a "positive, fresh look" from designer Walter Amort.

Near left: Acrylic partition at rear, etched with Emilio Pucci's signature, directs VIPs to the store's mezzanine level.

Above: Merchandise is displayed on custom hangers attached to ceiling-mounted acrylic bars. Metal cabinetry and shoe platforms are treated with a glossy automotive lacquer.

GRAPHIC ARTIST: CHISTOPH RADL. VIDEO ARTIST: PINO PIPOLI, ONDI ZAHORA. LIGHTING: STUDIO AMORT. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: VACE ARREDAMENTI.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SANTI CALECA

