



Architects of fashion

Even in today's digitally skewed age, touch is still key to the shopping experience, and luxury retail brands need a physical space that puts their wares on a pedestal. We compare and contrast some architect and fashion brand pairings that are dressing to impress

Duccio Maria Gambi x Plan C

A shared passion for off-kilter contrasts cements an unlikely relationship



An artist and designer of engagingly eccentric, handcrafted objects, Duccio Maria Gambi is not a man of the fashion world, yet he shares an affinity with one of Milan's most intriguing new clothing brands, Plan C, for which he has adopted the role of retail architect. Plan C's founder, Carolina Castiglioni (daughter of Marni founder Consuelo Castiglioni), created some lacquered, rock-like pedestals for her brand's first presentation in September last year, and later saw a connection to Gambi's Zuperfici

series of colour-faced Luserna stone blocks and vases. The similarity was striking, says Castiglioni, but her pedestals 'were just an installation idea. Duccio's work is art.' Gambi was quickly employed to design the brand's first-ever store, in Aoyama, Tokyo, though his background is far from the typical retail designer's. 'I've never been fashion. I'm not

ABOVE, PLAN C'S TOKYO STORE FEATURING CONCRETE ELEMENTS AND CANARY YELLOW ECO-LEATHER-CLAD CHANGING ROOMS

Milanese. I'm removed from that world, but I felt right with Plan C,' says Gambi. There is a common passion for off-kilter contrasts that unites his visual language with Castiglioni, whose clothing designs pair femininity and masculinity, tailoring and exaggerated proportions, delicacy and sport. Gambi says, 'If I don't have a relationship with a material, the object lacks feeling'. The manual aspect imbues his pieces with an idiosyncratically human touch that contrasts with their geometry and hardness. Initially,»



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Castiglioni planned for Gambi to merely create the central artworks of the Tokyo boutique, but, she explains, ‘We liked all the same things, the materials and colours, and the idea of linear architecture carried out with a twist, so it immediately became the entire store.’ Gambi designed it before ever visiting the space, experimenting with materials and models in his Florence studio to craft the store piece by piece. Seated at his concrete polygon of a desktop, he pulls out a sheet of perforated steel atop pigmented cement. It’s the prototype for an expanse of

the store’s floor, next to a can-sized tube, which became the voluminous changing rooms’ floor-to-ceiling columns wrapped in canary yellow eco-leather. A chunk of concrete drilled with steel rods became the model for a long clothes rack, and a spaceship-shaped cement block was developed as the store’s hulking cash register counter. Gambi also made eight of his

ABOVE, DUCCIO MARIO GAMBI, PHOTOGRAPHED IN HIS FLORENCE STUDIO WITH PODIUMS FROM PLAN C’S SEPTEMBER 2018 PRESENTATION

Zuperfici creations to cluster on the store’s floor. The aesthetic achievement functions first and foremost on the artistic level, rather than the retail level, which is what works best for the brand, says Gambi. He says he has no desire to be a store architect, but with Plan C, for which he’s now developing pop-up shops at Andreas Murkudis in Berlin and One-Off in Brescia, he says, ‘I feel comfortable maintaining myself as an artist.’ And talking of Castiglioni, he says, ‘We fell in sync with the store, but it’s a relationship that continues.’ ducciomariagambi.com