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7 wonders
of retail
architecture



7 RETAIL WONDERS OF

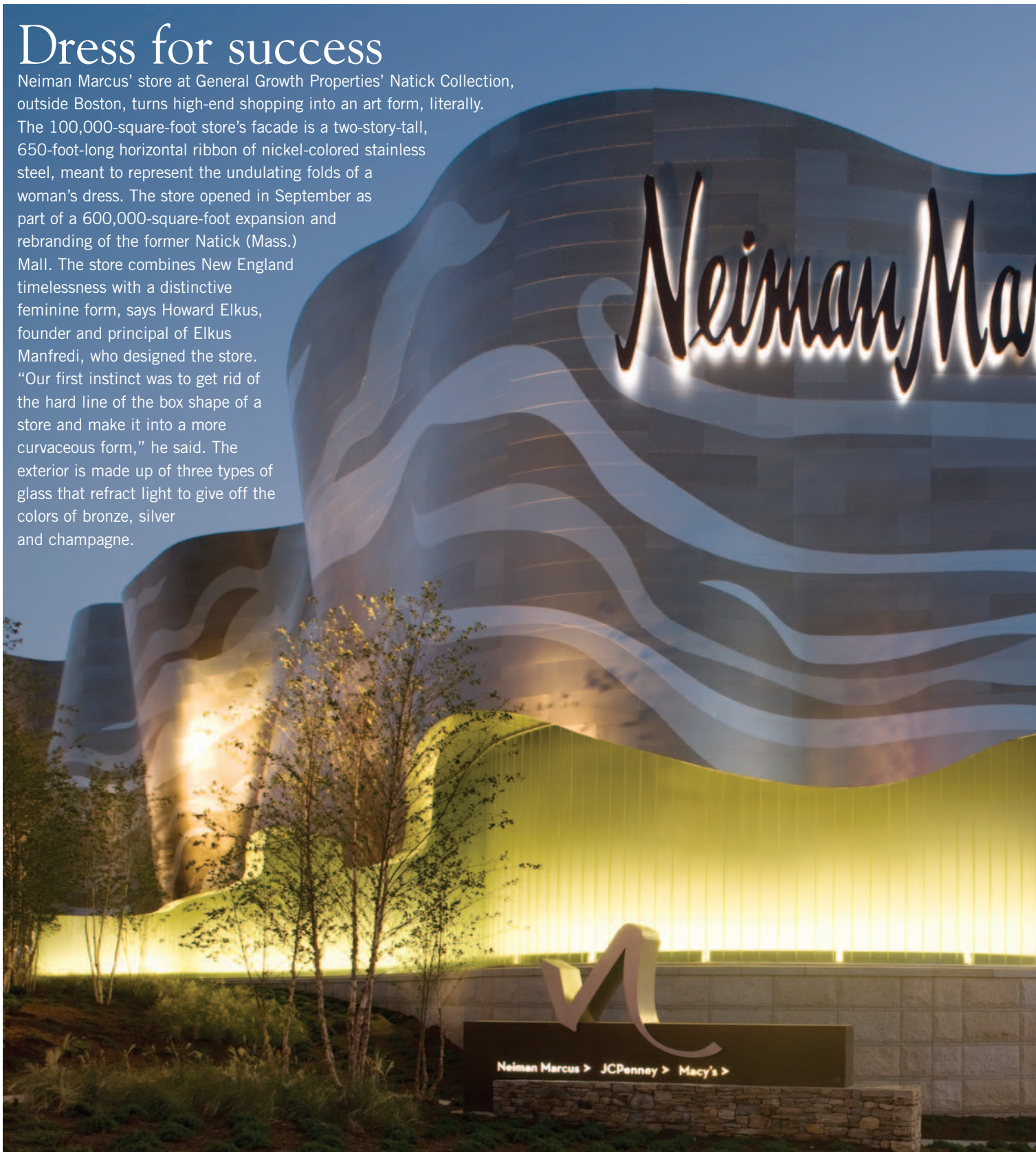
Dress for success

Neiman Marcus' store at General Growth Properties' Natick Collection, outside Boston, turns high-end shopping into an art form, literally.

The 100,000-square-foot store's facade is a two-story-tall, 650-foot-long horizontal ribbon of nickel-colored stainless steel, meant to represent the undulating folds of a woman's dress. The store opened in September as part of a 600,000-square-foot expansion and rebranding of the former Natick (Mass.)

Mall. The store combines New England timelessness with a distinctive feminine form, says Howard Elkus, founder and principal of Elkus Manfredi, who designed the store.

"Our first instinct was to get rid of the hard line of the box shape of a store and make it into a more curvaceous form," he said. The exterior is made up of three types of glass that refract light to give off the colors of bronze, silver and champagne.



THE MODERN WORLD



THE ANCIENT WORLD HAD THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON AND THE PYRAMIDS. TODAY'S CONSUMERS DO THEIR SHOPPING AMID ARCHITECTURE THAT CARRIES ON THE SPIRIT OF THOSE GREAT MONUMENTS.

By Kerri Linden

WHEN IT COMES TO ARCHITECTURE, one man's wonder can sometimes be another man's eyesore. So it's no surprise that the opinions of top retail architects on what constitutes a "retail wonder" vary widely. Some point to the American classics. David Rogers, senior designer at the Los Angeles-based Jerde Partnership says Country Club Plaza, in Kansas City, Mo. designed by Edward Buehler Delk, stands out. "I remember going there when I was growing up," Rogers said. "It was one of the first in the country to approach what was a planned shopping area." Cho Suzumura, a principal at Mulvanny G2 Architects, points to a small-town favorite as a standout. "My all-time favorite is Market Square, north of Chicago, in the Forest Park area," Suzumura said. "It was built around 1919 and was really the first shopping center ever built. If you think about it, this was built so long ago. What we do now already existed back then. It's a wonderful project, with a lot of clean space." New York City-based architect Deborah Berke, who most recently designed the trendsetting Burton store in New York City, says Bal Harbour Shops, in Miami, designed by Herbert H. Johnson & Associates, is one of her favorites. "I'm not a mall shopper, since I've grown up in New York City, but Bal Harbour is an extraordinary space," she said. "With their use of plants, it's a mall experience I find tolerable."

Mark Tweed, co-founder of Beverly Hills, Calif.-based HTH Architects, thinks the space should reflect the shopper. His vote is for one of his own projects: Tempe (Ariz.) Marketplace. "It's truly what's next," he said. The project will feature laser light shows above the mall space. "Architects have to realize that the developer is not the shopper," Tweed said. "Developers build projects for 50- and 60-year-olds, but they're not who's shopping. It's quaint to have gable windows and things like that, but the 15-year-old that's shopping isn't going to appreciate it."

Europe's historic centers ranked high on many architects' list of wonders. Gene Kaufman, who owns a firm in New York City, says Paris's Palais Royale represent the best. "You have reasons to go there even if you don't intend to shop, which, of course, you do once you get there," he said. "So there is merchandising value added, due to the quality of the experience." Alex Espinosa, a senior partner at Cleveland-based Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue, says Las Ramblas, in Barcelona, Spain, represents one of "the most magnificent" of the world's retail venues.

SCT compiled its own list of retail architectural wonders, based on the editors' own aesthetic and commercial preferences. We hope you enjoy our choices.

MOTHERSHIP OF PEARL

The Mikimoto Ginza 2 store (left) is as fashionable and ethereal as the retailer's gems. The 10-level, 24,000-square-foot building's irregularly shaped windows seem to float across its surface, and the retailer describes them as "bubbles drifting up from pearl-filled oysters or petals dancing as they scatter." Because the sparkling, pink outer walls are made of steel-plate-reinforced concrete, no support columns interrupt the interior. "I wanted to appeal to the strong part of Ginza as opposed to the sophisticated part," said architect Toyo Ito, who designed the store, which opened in 2006. "The facade is already part of the structure, with iron plates used on the outside like a ship and the random shape of the building's opening. You can see the strong parts of the building from these points." Ito also feels the design of the store's architecture sends a different message than usual. "I'd like to send a message of human freedom and vitality over the general architectural concept," he said. A four-level, spiral staircase sits at the center of the store, behind a wall of crystal-studded chains. Some jewelry is available at the store, but it is primarily used to convey the Mikimoto lifestyle to consumers. Cosmetics, a coffee shop and a bridal salon each have their own floors, and a restaurant takes up the top three floors.

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

Selfridges' roots stretch far into England's past, but its Birmingham store, (above) unveiled in 2003 along with the redeveloped Bullring shopping center, looks decidedly like something from the future. The 267,500-square-foot, 60 million (\$123 million) structure is covered with 15,000 spun aluminum discs, mimicking a sequined dress. It has a fluid, futuristic shape that the architects say recalls fabric or the soft lines of a body, billowing out and then being drawn in at a "waistline" to create a fundamentally progressive, futuristic look that contrasts with the chain's staid, classical-style London flagship that was built in 1909. The company hired Future Systems, a London architecture firm, to design the new store in the Bullring complex, a formerly dowdy center rebuilt in 2000 by owner London and Edinburgh Trust. "We have reinterpreted the notion of a department store, not just in its form and appearance but also in the social function such a building now plays in our society," the firm said at the time. The interior includes a roof-lit atrium, crisscrossed with sculptured escalators, and some oval-shaped tunnels into the building.

SKY LIGHT

Warsaw's Zlote Tarasy (left) contains 2 million square feet of retail, entertainment, dining and office space and boasts one of the largest glass roofs in the world. The undulating shape of the roof provided a particular challenge for the architects, the Los Angeles-based Jerde Partnership, which used some 4,700 panes of glass in the construction. Each piece was specially fit into the steel framework, much like a jigsaw puzzle. The tree canopies in Warsaw's historic parks served as inspiration for the roof's rolling waves, says David Rogers, a senior designer at Jerde. "In our research we found that 95 percent of the city had been destroyed in World War II, and the only thing left in the images of the city were the trees in the beautiful parks. We decided to have the mall be a winter garden," said Rogers. "We wanted the canopy to allow for sunlight in the mall, and we looked at the sun angles and how the sun moves through the city each day to maximize the amount of light coming into the center." Jerde used as many local Polish resources as possible, including sandstone and wood. The center, developed by ING Real Estate and Rodamco, both of which are Netherlands-based, is located in the city's central business district. What was once an empty lot now sees 50,000 people come through the mall daily.

BARE NECESSITIES

Dallas' NorthPark Center (above) is often compared to a museum. And that is a logical connection, because the airy, austere center showcases sculpture by Klaes Oldenberg and paintings by Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol. Originally developed in 1965 by Raymond T. Nasher, the center's clean lines remain prevalent even after a \$235 million redevelopment that began in 2005 and brought the center to its current 2.4 million square feet and 205 stores. Omniplan, a Dallas-based architectural firm, was responsible for creating the center's design and maintaining it through the expansion. "The new generation that executed the expansion had to take special care since the original was so successful," said Tipton Housewright, an Omniplan principal. "We couldn't just roll out a carbon copy." The redevelopment added two new floors to the formerly one-level center, as well as a cinema and a 200,000-square-foot Nordstrom, but retained the elements that contributed to its success — natural light, unity of materials, proportioned space and simple storefronts. "The design shows off the stores, just like art museums show off the art. The center elevates the quality of the shopping experience," he said. "It's not your typical commercial environment. There's so much informality today, with people dressing down, and that extends to architectural design today too."

APPLE UNDERGROUND

Wunderkind Apple makes it a point to extend its ingenuity from electronics to its brick-and-mortar stores. The company opened a flagship on New York City's Fifth Avenue (below) in May 2006, and thousands lined up as much to view the store's unique structure as to see its offerings. It sports a \$9 million, 32-foot glass cube with the iconic Apple logo lit and floating inside. Customers walk down a circular staircase or take a cylindrical glass elevator to a 10,000-square-foot, underground space that rests below 58th and 59th streets. The store is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in keeping with New York's identity as the city that never sleeps. "We wouldn't do that in Palo Alto, but this is New York," Steve Jobs told *The New York Times*. The store has clean lines and abundant white space and uses such natural materials as wood and stone, in contrast to the futuristic aspect of its products. "It's a gorgeous piece of architecture that's completely at home amongst all the other high-end retail shops along Fifth Avenue, and yet not like any of them at all," wrote Khoi Vinh, New York Times design director, on his *Subtraction.com* Web site. "It's otherworldly in some respects, completely transparent and yet not immediately apparent in its purpose, giving it a ghostly kind of classiness."

FIT FOR A KING

Named after the first king of a united Italy, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (right), one of the first enclosed malls in the world, represents the classical style and luxury of Milan. Giuseppe Mengoni designed the shopping center in 1861, and the center was built between 1865 and 1877. The center features a covered double arcade intersecting in an octagonal dome, measures 640 feet long from north to south and is essentially a grand passageway connecting the Piazza del Duomo and the Piazza della Scala. The Galleria has become representative of the seismic changes in Italian culture. "The iconography of the inlaid mosaic concourse and the painted pendentives of the 164-foot octagonal dome, raised over the crossing, represents the union of church and state which first came into being with the triumphant nationalist revolution of 1848," wrote Kenneth Frampton and Yukio Futagawa, architecture critics and historians, in the book *Modern Architecture: 1851-1945*. The center is still strong 120 years later, says Gene Kaufman, a New York City-based architect. "Although it was a part of the historical evolution of modern shopping malls and development, it is still one of the best," Kaufman said. "Anybody and any merchandise looks good there."