

INTERIOR DESIGN

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FASHION

Tailor Made

Tru Partners fashions an inviting flagship boutique

for sportswear designer Jenne Maag in Manhattan.



KNOWN FOR HER expert tailoring and pioneering use of stretch fabrics, Jenne Maag designs a line of sportswear items that fit and flutter the body as if they were custom-made. "Her clothing is about structure and texture—it's very well cut and well constructed," says Laura Kiraz of Tru Partners, hired to "create something similar architecturally" for Maag's Manhattan flagship boutique. Although the designers' shared passion for craftsmanship and innovative materials guided the concept, various functional requirements dictated the tight program. Maag's list of requests included ample inventory storage, movable fixtures for hanging and folding displays, and two full dressing rooms—all within a very snug 500 square feet. "And, being a true Texan, she wasn't willing to compromise," jokes Kiraz, "which made the project more fun and more of a challenge."

Located on a prime corner in the hip Nolita neighborhood, the rectangular space "was kept as wide and open as possible to give the impression of being outdoors." The two street-facing façades were given over to expansive aluminum-framed windows showcasing hanging mannequins and knee-high display platforms. A pair of dressing rooms and a pint-sized closet and bathroom were grouped at the rear of the store, strategically hidden behind floor-to-ceiling mirrors that create the illusion of a third outdoor exposure. Along the remaining wall, the Tru team devised a modular storage/display unit of adjustable drawers, open and closed shelving, and steel face-out rods of various heights. Punctured panels near the ceiling disguise HVAC ductwork while allowing for airflow.

Materials throughout the store complement Maag's "traditional yet high-tech" ap-

proach to fabrics. The designers chose recycled pressed plywood with a distinctive end-grain pattern for the floors, and upcycled the custom onyx in bathroom-colored rubber. Sheets of 5-in.-thick bucklit polycarbonate were fabricated for the glowing wall unit and mustache boxes. The meticulous pigmentation process required to achieve the desired light-diffusing, "beeswax softness" yielded subtle chromatic modulations from panel to panel, says Kiraz, who loves the resulting irregularity. "The clearest of error involved really producing something spectacular, a marriage of the manufactured and the handmade."

Although the novel design harmonizes with the neighborhood's funky, downtown vibe, the sophisticated and highly-finished look "could easily be transplanted to Madison Avenue," concludes Kiraz. —*Jon Buzi*