Marc Jacobs Flagship Store
Stephan Jaklitsch Architects (SJA)

The first Marc Jacobs freestanding store opened on Mercer Street in New York's SoHo District in 1997 when Jacobs had just begun his stint as Creative Director at Louis Vuitton. In the span of five years, the talented fashion designer, who created Louis Vuitton's first ready-to-wear clothing collection, launched a secondary Marc Jacobs line along with a full range of children's wear and went on to win multiple awards, bringing the relatively young brand firmly into the spotlight. Designed by Stephan Jaklitsch Architects (SJA), the recently opened Tokyo flagship building for the Marc Jacobs Collection is located on Omotesando Street in the upscale Aoyama shopping district, and gives the brand a distinctive presence in a neighbourhood jam-packed with luxury offerings.

Bordered by world-renowned architecture (Hernig & de Muro's giant Prada store, Toyo Ito's Tato and a gemlike Cartier shop just a short distance away), the design of SJA's three-storey Marc Jacobs building is a response to the immediate context and represents the tradition of craft inherent in Japanese construction. The 2,800sq ft area includes two main sales floors and a lower-level space with a small sales area and storage. As zoning regulations permit an occupiable building height of only two above-grade floors, the architects employed a common building element, arete eave, known in Japan as a kozukobutai, to double the visual height of the building. The wall consists of perforated aluminum panels featuring a tiled pattern inspired by designs on traditional Japanese temple and
LED-illuminated tensile fabric. As a result, the building's façade is split into three horizontal zones: void, rock and lantern.

The ground floor is a fully transparent street-level 'void' with a continuous water-glass exterior that blurs the distinction between inside and out. Additionally, the granite flooring that covers this entire level extends out to the street, forming the sidewalk in front of the building. Inside, top-lite white Corian shielding one of the three walls and mirrored glass at the top and bottom of the shelves provides a visual ease from the street. At the centre, a circular glass-and-poled glass cash wrap houses the designer's highly coveted bags, perfumes and accessories with a white gradient that lends a milky, ethereal quality. Floor-to-ceiling polished steel and glass screens on the far wall feature two aquariums and border the stairway.

Women's wear is found in the more private 'rock' - a solid form clad in striated terrazzo. The intemnes on this level are more consistent with design features of other Men's, Jacobite Collection stores, and have a distinctly intimate quality. Symanore shelving and custom seating by Christian Liaigre create a long room feel, while custom pendants lighting fixtures of hand-blown back-painted glass and mirrored dressing room doors add light to the space. The lower level for men'swear is the smallest of the three spaces and is the 'lumen' of the building. Sla designed a geometric-patterned glass-and-poled glass screen that acts as an access and separates the space from the stairway.

The new building recently received the prestigious Award of Excellence from the American Institute of Architects for its overall design, yet what stands out is the textile-datori- or 'lumen' on the third level. The store is set to get inroads flocking - not just for the retail experience but also for a quick glimpse of the enormous beacon of light.