

Donna Karan New York

Madison Avenue
New York

Enrico Bonetti and Dominic Kozerski

As soon as you step over the threshold of this spacious three-storeyed boutique, you have the perception of being enveloped in a Zen-like experience. Almost all the senses pulse, but slowly, gently, quietly. Visually, the eye is released into a space that flows on and out. Audibly, the ear is soothed by the tranquil sounds wafting through the music system. And your sense of smell is warmly awoken by the aromas of essential oils released through the air conditioning.

Donna Karan is America's premier female fashion designer, the most widely known and, financially, the most successful. Yet her style is restrained, classic, everywoman. You cannot get simpler than one of her characteristic outfits: a

blouse or T-shirt, skirt or trousers, and a jacket. In her collections, as here in her Madison Avenue boutique, she seeks, through simplicity, to evoke a spiritual awakening within her clients. There is that fun and sporty side to her, which she lets loose in her DKNY label and whizzy DKNY shops. But with her luxury Donna Karan New York brand, she seems to come closer to her true self.

Donna Karan and her architects, the Italian Enrico Bonetti and the Englishman Dominic Kozerski, found their starting point for the new boutique on a day in London, when the three of them visited an exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery. Filling one whole room was but one large installation. Called 20:50, by the artist Richard



Clockwise from above left The large and expansive showcase for the Donna Karan New York brand; a view into the atrium, with its pool edging and glass wall to the central courtyard; a bench by Zaha Hadid snakes through the space. **Opposite** Beneath the staircase, a display screen evokes hearth and home.





Wilson, it was formed of a pool of smooth, dark and reflective sump oil. Here the trio discovered the "black of infinite depth", recalls Kozerski, a concept of space that never stops and yet always returns.

So, the question became: how to translate this impression of a secret infinity to within a late nineteenth-century New York building, one originally designed by the Beaux-Arts architects Carrère & Hastings? The key was found in creating a large inner courtyard as the focal area, a point which the customer circulates around, leaves, returns to. Climbing the full height of the shop, the back wall is glazed, with views of the patterned brick of the surrounding buildings. The ground floor is a garden, edged with a black pool reminiscent of the Wilson installation. Its dark water is carried beneath the internal glass wall, taking the inside out and bringing the outside in.

The courtyard flooring is Portland stone imported from England, and this is the principal material used throughout the store. Two rough stone sculptures by Izumi Masatoshi are placed on the patio, beneath a towering thicket of bamboo. Stepping into this atrium garden, over the pool, the visitor is reflected in a large mirror that leans against the far wall.

The reverberations continue in the theme of reflective black. Near the entrance is a great black wall, the background for the mannequin displays. The merchandise on the ground floor, for home and lifestyle, is set on dark mahogany shelving within black niches. The display furnishings, tables and fixtures are in reclaimed Bali teak.

The stone and glass central staircase is dramatic. Set at an angle to the entrance, it switches more than 90 degrees at the first-floor level to the men's section, rising to the women's on the second. Here on the top floor are two principal spaces. At the rear is a room with a bay window overlooking the internal garden. At the front is the *salon*, with the original glass doors leading to the over-street terrace, screened with translucent silk. But contrasting darkness returns with the zigzag bench down the centre, a black glossy sculpture by the architect Zaha Hadid. Glowing in the traditional fireplace are flames that waver over a bed of black river rocks. Here is our destination – home, to peace and tranquility.



Opposite The naturalness of wood and stone enforces the spiritual simplicity of Donna Karan's collection. **Above** Internal windows overlook the atrium.