

# the world's coolest jewelry stores



THE BIG STORY | BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG

Six jewelers show the rest of the world how to be extraordinary



THE WORLD GROWS EVER SMALLER. Homogenization in Europe and elsewhere is a huge concern when it comes to unique retail shops. Walk down the Ginza in Tokyo and you find many of the same stores you see in Geneva, Berlin, Chicago or Sydney. So, we here at **INDESIGN** went out of our way to track down the coolest jewelry stores in the world, stores that have exceptional features and designs that stand out in this increasingly chain-store world. After all, if America's finest jewelers can learn from each other, why not their brethren across the oceans?



# displaying differently

## Watches of Switzerland Flagship Store London, UK

FOR TOO MANY YEARS, one jewelry and watch store has been just about like any other. Show windows, bright lights and display cases scattered all over the store. High-end retailers like Watches of Switzerland, based in London, are now realizing that they have to have a store and experience that is on par with the products they are selling. No longer does the status quo work when selling high-end luxury goods. Today, stores have to match or exceed the quality of the products sold within, and stand out from the crowd.

"We wanted to create a boutique that was in keeping with our client base and the products we are selling: high-quality Swiss timepieces," says Richard Gerrard, commercial and property director of Aurum Holdings Ltd. "We deal with a very sophisticated client; a lot of them are absolute watch lovers and they spend considerable amounts of money on these watches, so it was important that the design was in line with customers' expectations. We wanted to be able to display the watches correctly. The lighting system is fantastic — all the display lighting is set into the ceiling, not in the display cabinets, so the watches don't get hot."

One of the most outstanding features of the new Watches of Switzerland flagship store in London is the display cabinets. Most watch and jewelry stores do business from cases, where the product is displayed and then brought out to show the customer. This creates an artificial boundary between the customer and the salesperson.

"We wanted to create a real welcoming, classy feel, without any barriers," Gerrard explains. "We wanted our store to have an environment where the customers feel close to our staff. The displays are cantilever display cases set against the wall, where the staff stand next to the customer. It's a bit of a culture shock for our staff, but they have embraced it."

The new design justified all the cases on one side and cantilevered them from the wall. "By justifying the cases to the wall, we increased the open space, which feels more luxurious," says Steven Derwoed, managing director, RYA Design Consultancy, with offices in Dallas and New York. "Customers can easily shop the entire store and end up at a private presentation area to see the product."

"We then wanted to add services and amenities to make it a more luxurious experience," he continues. "We took the support functions (offices, etc.) and baffled them, creating a feel of a



modern gentleman's club. When you open the door, you see a gorgeous fireplace at the other end. We created private selling rooms with floor to ceiling sliding glass doors that utilize electrified glass, so the glass can be changed from clear to cloudy with the push of a button."

Watches of Switzerland's goal is to enhance the customer's experience. "What makes it different when you first walk in is that the store exudes sophistication," Gerrard says. "It's a very welcoming store. The way we display our watches is different from any other watch retailer. The product is technically very well displayed — I have never seen watches illuminated and displayed so well. We believe very strongly that the customer has to have a wonderful experience, no matter whether they are buying a Rolex or a Patek Philippe or coming in to have service."

The new open design of the Watches of Switzerland flagship store has been so successful that the company plans to expand it to its other retail outlets. "The general impression we have had from our customers is that they love it," Gerrard says.











# crystal clear

## Swarovski's Ginza Flagship Store Tokyo, Japan



**Tokujin Yoshioka**  
*designed Swarovski's  
worldwide store concept.*

WALKING INTO SWAROVSKI Crystal's flagship store on the Ginza in Tokyo is like walking into a crystal wonderland. Designed by award-winning designer Tokujin Yoshioka, one of the key features is a waterfall-like crystal chandelier, which harks back to the first project the designer ever did for Swarovski.

"I first worked with Swarovski for the project called Swarovski Crystal Palace back in 2004," Tokujin says. "For this project, in which Swarovski invited designers from around the world to

create chandeliers, I designed a futuristic chandelier entitled Stardust, which projects images on each crystal component with fiber optics.

"In 2006, I was fortunate to be nominated as a designer to create and develop a new Swarovski retail concept," he continues. "I intended to design a new retail architecture, which makes the visitor wonder, from the moment of stepping in the boutique, whether he or she is in a forest, jeweled with crystals and pieces of jewelry, rather than proposing an ordinary interior design for retail."

The effect is magical, with crystals everywhere, literally dazzling all who walk through the doors. "Stepping inside the store through the entrance, the visitor will encounter a crystal staircase," the designer explains. "It orchestrates the sparkling of the crystals and radiates brilliance throughout the entire space by creating a fantastic atmosphere. Moreover, dazzling crystals on the floor are embedded in the stone like a fossil. Each staged object increases its transparency and sparkles more in the space when the illumination hits and brings the pieces to life."

The new design is quite a change for Swarovski, which has been extraordinarily successful over the last decade and originally questioned such a big change.

"Swarovski has a long and respected history and the company challenges anything new and experimental," Tokujin says. "I had a stimulating and interesting experience through the collaboration with them. The red and blue store has been an icon of the brand. The challenge was to modularize design so that the same system and function could be applied in other stores in order to use the



*It's raining crystal at Swarovski's flagship location in Tokyo, where customers can even mount crystal-embedded stairs.*

### Crystal Forest around the world."

In the flagship store, the ground floor houses Swarovski's jewelry, handbags and other accessories. The second floor features Daniel Swarovski's couture jewelry, handbags, Crystal Living accessories and made-to-order dinnerware.

"On the second floor, a special installation called Shooting Star is presented, in which crystals make a scene just like a fall of shooting stars," Tokujin says. "Using the shimmer of the crystals to resemble stars, Shooting Star is an installation which shows people the beauty of overlapped and reverberated transparent sparkles."

Tokujin is happy with the flagship store — as are customers. "I am happy to see people who come into the store and they look just like children: They enjoy the store," Tokujin says.

# reaching ever higher

**Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer**  
Interlaken, Switzerland

KIRCHHOFFER, AN ESTABLISHED watch, jewelry and Swiss gift retailer in Interlaken, Switzerland, and its environs, saw an opportunity to open a store that focused exclusively on the high end in watches.

The result is Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer, located on the main street in Interlaken. Filled with 16 of the best brands and located in the oldest building in town, Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer offers the discerning watch client a unique experience.

"We already had two stores on this street, so we had to do something completely different," explains Jurg Kirchhofer, the second generation owner. "We wanted the store to be very high-end, nothing below \$2,500, and the average sale is now above \$15,000. We tried to do something that matched the style of the outside of the house, like a chalet, but not going into something that was touristy-Swiss inside."

Getting the right feeling in the interior was not easy. Kirchhofer wanted something that matched the excellence of the product but that was comfortable and welcoming at the same time.

"I was not happy with my original architect, so I went to the famous watch designer Mr. Mijat," he says. "He came up with everything in the shop. He approved all the materials, and the store is mostly solid oak and brushed stainless steel. The milk glass we use is translucent, some are half transparent, and they all feature parts of watches in the decoration — there are wheels, hands, dials, numbers — all used as an artistic element. My challenge was to find the artisans and craftspeople who could realize Mijat's ideas. The back glass of the show windows have this feature, and we did the same pattern where the air conditioning is, but we did it in brushed stainless steel."

In addition to the selling areas, Kirchhofer has a permanent display of antique watchmaking tools, to give the store a sense of the tradition of watchmaking, in a modern display, as well as a library area and a champagne bar with lounge seats where customers can be pampered. "We have a video center where people can watch the videos of the brands they are interested in, and we have a library," he says. "The atmosphere in this part is like in a library in a private home." The store has three private rooms, where they greet VIPs and do private sales.

The result is a store that looks very traditional from the outside but is in fact warm and welcoming, high-tech and modern on the inside. Customers from all over the world shop, and truly enjoy, Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer.







*Solid oak, brushed stainless steel and glass greet shoppers inside Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer's Interlaken location.*

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**JURG KIRCHHOFFER**

*Owner, Haute Horlogerie Kirchhofer*







# turning customers into friends

**Seddiqi and Sons**  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates



**Mohammed Abdulmagied Seddiqi** carries on his family's business.

DUBAI IS ONE OF THE FASTEST-growing places on the planet — rumor has it that 70 percent of the world's cranes are in Dubai and its surrounding areas, part of the incredible building boom going on there.

Taking advantage of the growth in this desert city where luxury is standard and über luxury is expected is high end watch retailer Seddiqi and Sons.

Opened in the early 1950s, Ahmed Seddiqi and Sons started buying watches from watch distributors in other Gulf countries, because Dubai wasn't

that developed at the time. Dubai was just a hub, using the seaport to pass goods through. Now, Dubai is a boom town where lots of money is spent, much of it within the walls of Seddiqi and Sons.

"The product mix that we have is the most important, because we have just about everything available, and that is vital to our success," says Mohammed Abdulmagied Seddiqi, chief operations officer of Ahmed Seddiqi and Sons. "This makes our store a destination for people, because they know we will have the product. We have full lines of everything we carry."

Security is an issue in Dubai, but Seddiqi has built in security measures that no one can see, because it's vitally important that the customers don't feel worried at all.

"We have had some security issues in the past, but our showrooms in Dubai are all open, and people are welcome to walk in," Seddiqi says. "They have to feel comfortable entering into our showrooms. Thanks to the government, we have undercover police walking around throughout the day — the government is pushing security and safety all the time and we have cameras all around."

The security has to be as unobtrusive as possible; having an armed guard and a locked door would hurt business. "We have extra cameras in the showrooms now," Seddiqi says. "We changed all our glass to the extra security glass, just to be on the safe side.

"It always has to be a friendly environment," he continues. "A person can enter the showroom wearing shorts or a suit, and we train our staff to be friendly. At the end of the day, your customer is



Watch enthusiasts will soon be able to enjoy Seddiqi and Sons showrooms in more than 50 locations throughout the Middle East.

your friend, you have to be nice to the people and help them find the right watch. According to his way of living or what he likes, I try to present the right watch, regardless of the price. We give them the right advice."

Seddiqi and Sons is a major power in the Middle East, with 35 showrooms right now and plans for another 17 showrooms by the end of 2008. The Dubai Mall, set to open later this year, is slated to be the biggest retail mall in the world, with 12 million square feet. Seddiqi will have 11 showrooms in the mall with boutiques for Rolex, Chopard, Piaget, TAG, IWC, Panerai and Richard Mille, plus four multi-brand shops.





By educating its customers, The Hour Glass hopes to revolutionize the way the world views watches.

# educating the masses

## The Hour Glass Singapore



Executive director **Michael Tay** places a high premium on customer service.

THE HOUR GLASS, headquartered in Singapore, is one of the region's leading retailers, currently owning 21 stores throughout Asia. The Hour Glass is also the sponsor of World Tempus, the world's largest gathering of watch brands and CEOs outside of Switzerland.

The most important part of The Hour Glass' marketing approach is its focus on education. "About 10 years ago, we started chanting the education mantra," executive director Michael Tay explains. "Many retailers don't want their

customers to know too much. The Hour Glass sees itself as the watch world's leading cultural retail enterprise and this gives us great responsibility. We can't just be a leader in terms of sales, we need to also be a leader in terms of how future generations of watch consumers look at watches and the way they buy watches. We want to influence that, and to do that we have to educate our clients to the best of our ability. We hold a lot of programs dedicated to the global development of watch culture and we want to raise the consciousness of consumers."

For The Hour Glass, the relationship with the customer has been critical to its success. "We have developed an incredible level of trust between us and our clientele," Tay says. "They know when they step into The Hour Glass, they won't get shortchanged. There is trust in our long-term approach to client relationships and after sales service, and it extends beyond that. For example, for some VIP clients, we offer a watch valet service. We have a lot of clients who live around the region and should they need a watch repaired. We will make sure it is done. Because we have such a geographic spread, when our clients travel, they will have our office do their travel arrangements for them, book their hotels, their restaurants."

Following the trend in the marketplace, The Hour Glass is increasing its store footprint. In Asia, 1,000 to 1,500 square feet was sufficient, and 2,000 square feet was large, but now retailers are opening stores that are 21,000 square feet. "We do a mix of shops-in-shops and corners," Tay says. "The Hour Glass has always believed in the concept of providing brand corners, which are the best examples of the brand image and values. There is, however, a limit to the amount of space that can be given to them."



The Hour Glass uses shops-in-shops and brand corners to emphasize and differentiate its many watch lines.





“The Hour Glass sees itself as the watch world’s leading cultural retail enterprise.” **MICHAEL TAY** *Executive Director, The Hour Glass*





# THE BIG STORY THE WORLD'S COOLEST JEWELRY STORES





# luxury to your doorstep

**DiA Precious Jewellery**  
Mumbai and New Delhi, India

DI A PRECIOUS JEWELLERY IS THE CURRENT incarnation of a family-owned business, Mohanlal Raichand and Sons, which was founded 1916. The first DiA store opened in the Taj Mahal Hotel Heritage Wing in Mumbai, India, in October 2000. DiA's second store opened in New Delhi at the ITC Maurya Sheraton in June 2005. In addition to its own diamond jewelry brand, DiA carries such international watch brands as Rolex, Vacheron Constantin, Piaget, Chopard and more.

"We are one of the few stores in India that sell high-end jewelry and watches in a multi-brand environment," explains Jay Makhijani, head of business development for DiA Precious Jewellery. "Since we carry some of the best names from the Swiss watch industry, it is very important that the jewelry is of the same standard. Our goal always has been to be a one-stop shop luxury retail store.

"Luxury is a hard sell in India, as the average duty on a Swiss watch is around 50 percent, so this makes the margins very tight and the cost of operating in cities like Mumbai and Delhi very high," he continues. "The key is to do a decent volume while at the same time maintaining a profit. Our customers are very price-sensitive, as they do travel around the world, so at the end of the



day it's the service that distinguishes us from everyone else."

DiA's locations are in the best hotels in the country, accessing the Indian high-end customer. DiA is committed to fantastic customer service, so it focuses on training, doing ongoing sessions in the store and sending salespeople overseas to work directly with the brands.

"The Indian market is very different from other retail markets," Makhijani says. "The client still wants the product sent to his or her place of choice, whether it be home or office. They want the comfort of luxury delivered right to their doorstep. We will do whatever it takes to serve the customer.

"In India, luxury is growing at a rapid pace," he continues. "The customer always wants to be treated well and at the end of the day one good customer brings in ten more. We try our best to keep everyone happy. The customers have responded to us pretty well. They do want to feel important at the end of the day, and we make them feel that way."

As a result, DiA is growing strongly, opening new luxurious multi-brand stores in the best locations. It is looking to expand into cities throughout India, with the next store opening up at the Emporio Mall in New Delhi.

