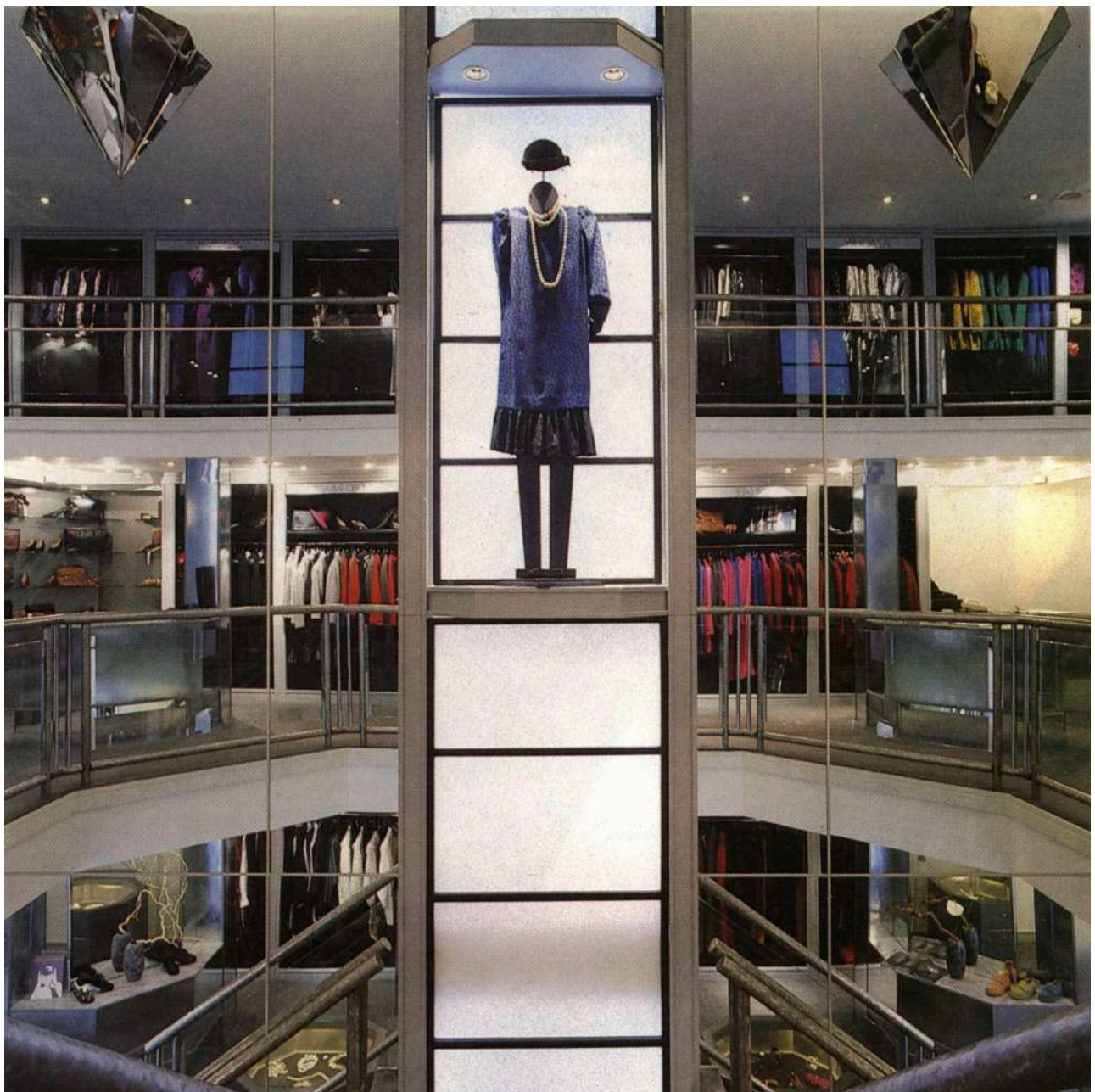


UK DESIGNERS JOURNAL - FASHION SHOP,
MAYFAIR, LONDON - 1986

Gallery 28 / Aguecheek

Photographs by Clive Frost

**REFLECTING
THE RIGHT
IMAGE**



Hidden at the back of Krizia in Bond Street, London W1, is Gallery 28, a new clothes shop designed by Derek Frost Associates. It is owned by Aguecheek, holders of the UK franchises for designers like Armani and Valentino, who wanted a London outlet for a wider range of British and international designers. The clothes on sale here are slick, urban and expensive—with an interior to match.

Derek Frost Associates were initially faced with a tall, narrow ground and basement site. This has been completely restructured and reserviced to provide three levels for display, and a mezzanine with changing rooms. Although selling space has thereby been increased by 25 per cent, designer Derek Frost says that he had many misgivings about this solution because it would emphasise the narrowness of the space. To combat the impression of shopping in a lift shaft, he has used 'masses of mirror—but in a very architectural way'. The main stairwell is right against the back wall of the shop, which is mirror-clad from floor to ceiling. This creates the illusion of a very much larger space, centred around the stairs.

Within this, materials and finishes are hard, but flashy rather than rugged, and colours are cool—grey, blue and black. Milled steel balustrading is hand-finished with wire brushes to give a moiré effect; galvanised zinc cash desks are topped with blue crystal marble; and behind the rails and glass shelves for clothes, the walls are sprayed with metallic paint. Strategically placed black mannequins form focal points, with two posed against back-lit Japanese screens in the middle of the mirrored wall. Lighting too is cool, provided by recessed low voltage spotlights and some rather crude shiny zinc uplighters.

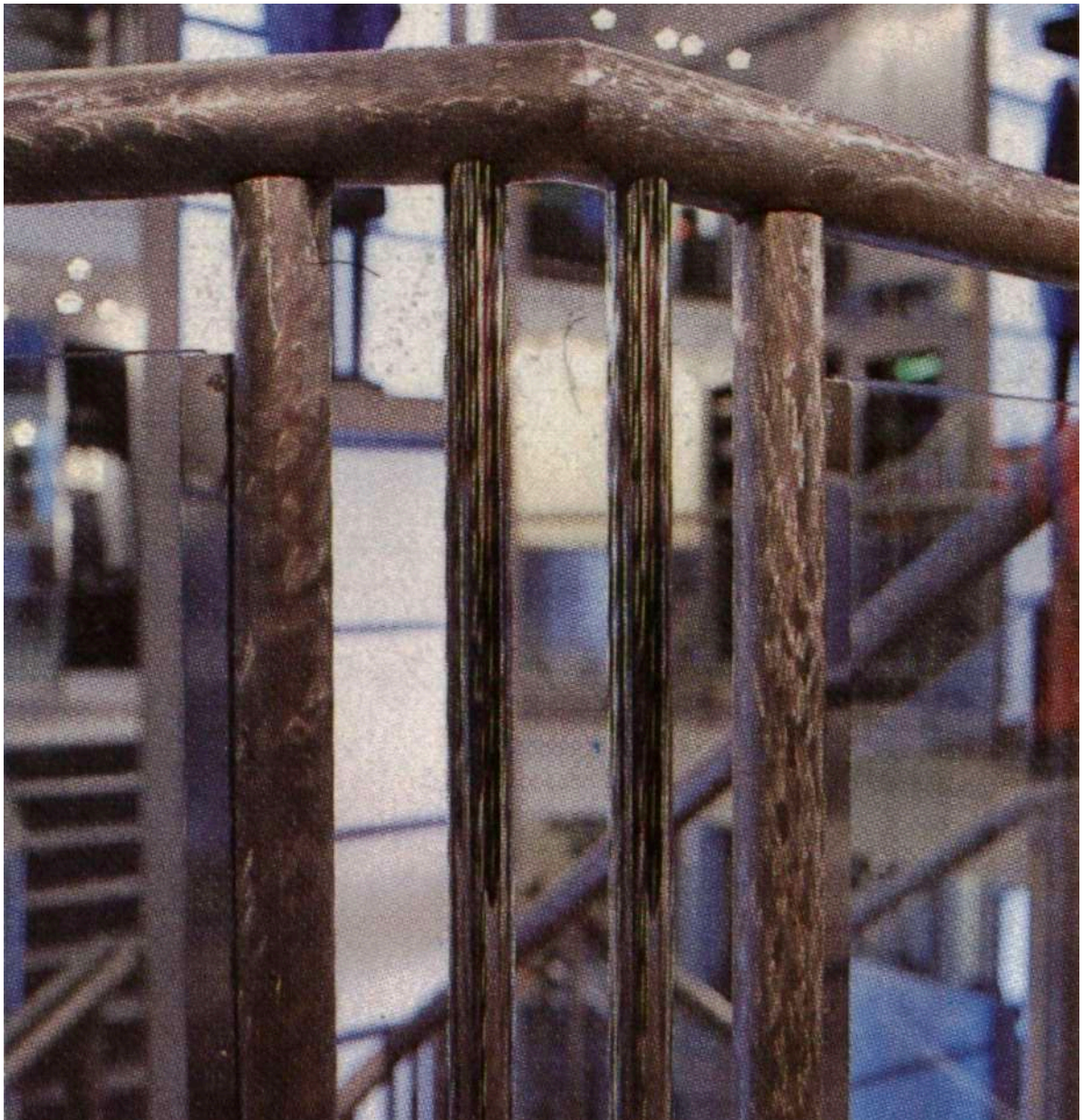
Given this hard aesthetic, says Frost, 'Many people were surprised that we had grey carpet, and not a hard floor. But it's because the client wanted it to be quiet, not clattery.'

Another soft element is the grey curtaining around the mezzanine, which was hand-painted with bold stylised figures by RCA student Yumi Katayama. Here customers emerge from the changing cubicles onto a small semi-circular stage, lined with mirrors so they can examine themselves from all angles. Another advantage of the abundance of mirror glass, according to the staff, is that it



helps to ensure much better security in the shop.

Unusually, the designers have managed to steer clear of the financial side of the project. 'We were employed to produce the design and concept, and then to supervise the shopfitters, Indica,' says Frost. 'They were responsible for all the pricing and costs.' A considerable, albeit undisclosed, amount of money has evidently been spent on the



shop. So it is all the more surprising and unfortunate that the clients did not have the courage or faith to turn over the whole site to Gallery 28: without a street frontage its chances of commercial success are bound to be reduced. With this in mind, the designers have in fact incorporated two points of access to the adjacent mews, Haunch of Venison Yard; they hope that a forthcoming



commercial development will make this a trendy upmarket enclave like St Christopher's Place off Oxford Street. If this is the case, Gallery 28 will be in with a head start. *Helen Buttery*

In Derek Frost Associates' design for Gallery 28, the display space has been increased both physically, by an extra level, 1—with changing rooms off a mezzanine 'stage', 2—and visually, by large areas of mirror, 4. Finishes are hard but not harsh: blue crystal marble, glass, and steel balustrading hand-finished to give a moiré effect, 3.