

FRAME

THE GREAT INDOORS

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RETAIL

MUTI RANDOLPH'S generative surfaces connect physical and virtual retail at Melissa

NEW YORK CITY – The Melissa flagship in New York City, having relocated from Greene Street to a larger retail space in SoHo, is a dynamic jungle of irregular geometries infused with layers of reflection and abstract moving imagery. In fascinating flux, the entrance to the shoe store is 'a pyramidal, kaleidoscopic funnel that sucks people from Broadway into the store', as its designer, Muti Randolph, puts it. Like the Brazilian brand's recent Covent Garden showroom, also created by Randolph, the SoHo space has a main entrance and one room that accommodates installations, including interactive works that are driven by visitors' movements and a Kinect sensor. The imagery that Randolph designed for the store's August opening – and for segueing between seasonal installations by various artists – recalls a drawing by composer and architect Iannis Xenakis, here set into motion like music, the medium in which Randolph's work has its roots.

Although Randolph is a pioneer of interactive interiors, he uses hi-tech interactivity with increasing restraint. Many surfaces in the new flagship are not interactive but generative, manufactured by a computer in »



real time, never to repeat. 'I've been seeing too much interactivity for the sake of interactivity. Art can be interactive, but it needs a reason to be. Interactivity is no longer a novelty, and it never has been: a doorbell, a pencil, a mirror, architecture – these are interactive. Because this project's kaleidoscopic, pyramidal and trapezoidal spaces are covered with mirrors that multiply the products, the people, the video and the space itself, the SoHo store is particularly interactive.'

Randolph, who started his career in 2D graphics and moved into 3D illustration for set design, began creating Melissa's lounges for São Paulo Fashion Week 15 years ago. He gave the first São Paulo Galeria Melissa trompe l'oeil graphics and a colourful interior garden featuring plastic flowers with a saucy lollipop look. In New York the jungle reference – which balances cool plastic, LEDs, converging linear lighting and metal cladding – evolves into a lounge fringed with a living green wall.

Instead of exaggerating the distinction between online and bricks-and-mortar shopping, Randolph layers and blends the two. He enables visitors to inhabit his work physically while also letting them feel the mutation, variation and movement of the virtual world. It's his way of encouraging shoppers to rise above the act of consuming, to be inspired and fed by the *experience*. In a symbiotic process, they, in turn, can feed the brand. – SM mutirandolph.com

Much of the imagery at Melissa in New York City is one-of-a-kind, manufactured by a computer in real time.



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