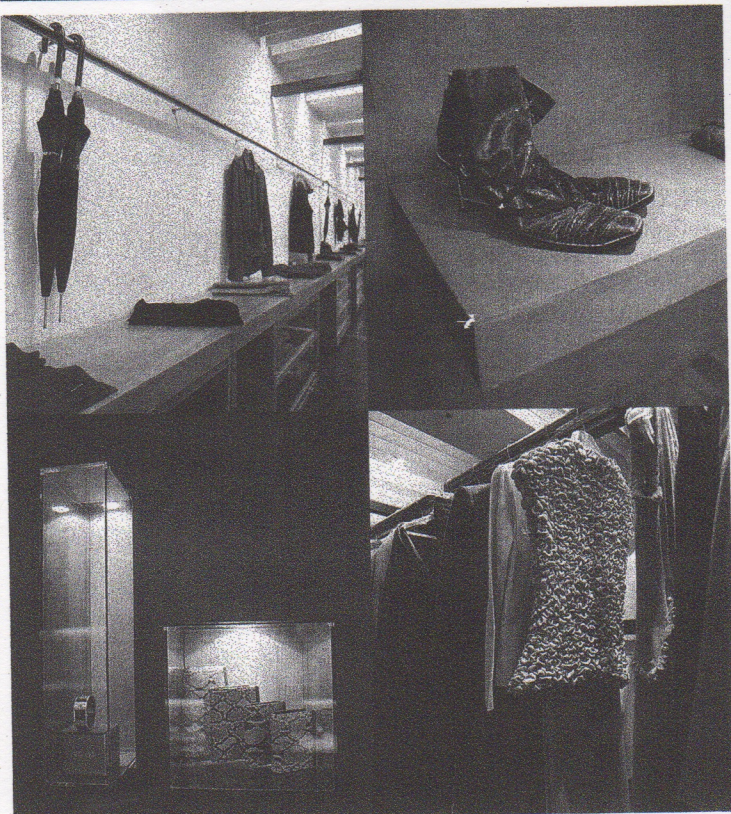


SellOut

Shops • Interiors • Style • Gadgets • People



Conduit Street

A top-drawer designer street housing Alexander McQueen's stunning new HQ.

Bond Street might be home to some of the most chic names in fashion, from Donna Karan to the ubiquitous Prada, but the designer thoroughfare of the moment is an off-shoot of Bond Street – Conduit Street. Britain's dame terrible of fashion, Vivienne Westwood, got here first; Yohji Yamamoto's flagship store sealed its kudos; Burberrys, now a trendy Brit label, is opening up soon on the corner of Regent Street; the fashion intellectual's favourite, Issey Miyake, is also coming soon; and hip young label YMC (You Must Create) has just arrived with its first store.

But it's none other than King of Cool Britannia Alexander McQueen who is

really putting the street on the map, by choosing it as the site for his first shop. Though McQueen was tempted by Soho, where he was initially looking for premises, he felt Conduit Street had a great energy. The fact that it runs from Bond Street to Soho (well, almost), means any shop located here sits comfortably between the two camps, one designer and t'other trendy. Add to this the nostalgia factor of nearby Savile Row, where McQueen started off his career as an apprentice tailor, and the decision seemed obvious.

The grade II-listed Georgian building – owned by McQueen's backers, Onward Kashiyama – becomes the McQueen headquarters.

The shop's sparse yet stunning interiors were designed by female duo Azman Owens and feature transparent changing rooms which frost over from the heat of the body. Its focus is an internally lit glass mannequin on a revolving turntable, and a glass box displaying themes from each catwalk show – currently featuring snow and blizzard. Retail controller Eddie Murray explains that the shop's intention is 'to translate McQueen's conceptual thinking into a retail space'. It looks like they've succeeded. *Lorna V. Alexander McQueen, 47 Conduit St, W1 (0171 734 2340) Piccadilly Circus tube. Open Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Thur until 7pm.*

Most everywhere: confusing shop openings

Here's a question: when is a shop "open"? Some might say it's when the doors are flung wide and the tills start chinging, but those people would be simplifying life in 1999 immensely. A shop isn't open until the fashion cognoscenti have christened it with champagne (non-drip) and canapés (non-sticky), and gone without cigarettes for the entire soiree. The first example of this phenomenon was spotted in July, with the opening of the new Niketown store: official launch Tuesday, but open to the public the Saturday before. "We're just testing it out before it opens properly," a Nike sales assistant explained with blinding clarity. The Levi's store on Regent Street, meanwhile, ensured maximum publicity recently by having an



"Opening Week", running a series of club events every evening.

The new Alexander McQueen store in Conduit Street, London W1 (left) had its official launch last night – but has been open for a week already. A triumph of stark architecture and natural light, its centrepiece, a revolving glass mannequin, was unveiled in front of a select 200 guests. McQueen has also installed a huge glass display case, housing a tableau from his current collection, complete with snowstorm.

"We've been surprised by the variety of customers coming in," a delighted spokesperson said. You, too, can feel part of London's avant-garde by checking out the merchandise for yourself. It's not as expensive (or as intimidating) as you'd think.

Laura Craik

Minimum fuss

The gloves are off. If you've had nothing better to do recently, you might have noticed a fight to the death of excess taking place in Mayfair. Slate-grey, taupe and dazzling gallery-white are being used by one store against another in a war of minimalism on those fashion alleys, Bond Street and Conduit Street. That John Pawson started it with his exercise in anal retention, Jigsaw, YMC, Calvin Klein, Kurt Geiger, Donna Karan... they've all taken the spiritual route to emptiness, with only McQueen still holding a torch for the

theatrical. Now Dolce & Gabbana has opened its ice palace by David Chipperfield. Mr C likes to call it "monochrome and monolithic", and, with sharp white walls, and Basaltina stone floors, benches, stairs and cash desks, it's certainly a paradise for people whose favourite words are crisp and seamless. But what's that? Ding, ding, round ten. Issey Miyake, on Conduit Street, is slowly peeling off its hoarding. Go on Issey, how white can you go? *Dolce & Gabbana, 6/8 Old Bond Street, W1, 0171-659 9000.*

Right up the alley for the queens of frock

A small side road it may be, but London's Conduit Street is fast tipping Bond Street off the sartorial throne, says **JAMES SHERWOOD**

Every big city has at least one street dedicated to fashion design. In Paris it's the Rue Fabourg St Honore. Milan has Via Monte Napoleone and even the metropolis that taste forgot, LA, has Rodeo Drive. Before 2000, London had two heavyweight rivals, Sloane Street and Bond Street. But a feisty young feather-weight called Conduit Street has just weighed in to fight for the title of London's premier Fashion Alley.

Style tourists already know Conduit Street as home to the Vivienne Westwood flagship store which opened in 1997. "We were the pioneers," is the word from the boutique at No 44. In fashion years one could say that Westwood opened on Conduit Street when sheep still grazed on Oxford Circus. She was joined by designer stand-alone stores Yohji Yamamoto at No 14, Krizia at No 24, and Moschino at No 28. In anticipation of 2000, YMC (No 6), Alexander McQueen (No 47) and Issey Miyake (No 52) opened on the street last month. Conduit Street, the young

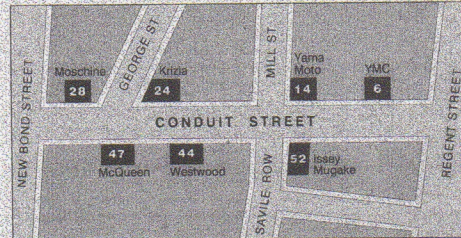


Window shopping: McQueen is at No 47 – follow the map (right)

pretender, formerly a short cut between Regent and Bond Street, definitely has youth on its side. Age-wise, Westwood may be Quentin Crisp's rightful successor but in sartorial terms, she's McQueen's sister. Issey Miyake and Krizia's Mariuccia Mandelli are as far removed from Bond Street giants Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein as Macy Grey is from Celine Dion.

Like attracts like. Conduit Street's designers are fashion's mavericks. While Bond Street is the Establishment, Conduit Street is populated by conceptual design disciples; Bond Street is the retail beat of Mr and Mrs Arms Dealer bulk-buying Chanel, Conduit Street grows organically.

The street's reputation has nothing to do with real estate agents pulling strings. YMC designer Prazer Moss calls the hype surrounding Conduit Street "a total fluke". He says, "We truly had no idea Conduit Street would suddenly get all this attention." Moss did, however, cut his teeth in the Westwood studio which may



explain why YMC felt at home on Conduit Street.

Lorna V, *Time Out's* Sell Out editor, says, "YMC is very accessible and I think the other designers on Conduit Street share that vibe. Bond and Sloane Street are programmed towards a consume and show-off mentality. Conduit Street is more for thinkers."

Architecturally, conceptually and geographically the designers who cluster in Conduit are on the edge of Bond Street. The Versace Palazzo on Bond Street looks like

Radio City Music Hall's Salute to Mammon. Conduit Street store interiors are subtler but no less spectacular – the Issey Miyake store is dominated by Ingo Maurer's silvery light sculpture. The McQueen store, designed by architects Azman Owens, "gives an insight into the conceptual thinking behind each collection". In simple English, there's a glass box in the window dressed to give customers a flavour of McQueen's catwalk show and, ergo, his vision for the season. For McQueen's

debut display he had a revolving glass mannequin, designed by David Flower, which stood in a blizzard of snow. "McQueen's windows are a destination in themselves," says Lorna V. "You don't have to go into the shop to understand exactly what McQueen is about this season."

Not since the nation chafed its thighs in Carnaby Street in Mary Quant mini-skirts has a London street enjoyed so much attention. Carnaby Street still resonates for Sixties survivors, though now it's a bit of a pedestrianised thoroughfare. It's too early to tell if Conduit Street will suffer the same fate. But as far as London 2000 is concerned, if it's fashion you're after, then Conduit is right up your alley.

No 47 Alexander McQueen: 0171 734 2340. No 52 Issey Miyake: 0171 851 4620. No 24 Krizia: 0171 491 4987. No 28 Moschino: 0171 318 0555. No 44 Vivienne Westwood: 0171 439 1109. No 6 YMC: 0171 499 0825. No 14 Yohji Yamamoto: 0171 491 4129.