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Fashion flagship.

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A shop for one of Britain's best loved young fashion designers provides a flavour of his famous catwalk shows and interactive setting for sculptural clothes.

The young British designer Alexander McQueen is a prodigy of the fashion industry. Restless inventive energy underlies design of his extraordinary sculptural clothes (requiring the most ingenious cutting) for his own fashion house and for Givenchy, where he is chief designer. The four collections staged each year are lyrical, often surreal, feats of theatricality. McQueen's new shop, designed by Azman Owens, is in Conduit Street, London on the stretch between Regent and New Bond Streets that was once the preserve of airline offices and the odd corsetiere. His arrival, following those of fashion luminaries like Vivienne Westwood, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake, suggests the street has acquired a new avant-gardist exclusivity.

Azman Owens's scheme, developed with McQueen, is intended to accommodate the seasonal metamorphoses of fashion design. It has been inserted into a Grade 2 listed building, dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries, and its modern back extension. The site is long and thin, stretching 32m from street to rear wall and shaped at the front by the indentation of an entrance hall and stairwell. The architects have made much of its linearity and, in spite of various flights of fantasy, the scheme has a tough, industrial, almost workmanlike quality -- rougher than the polished minimalism prevailing in recent shop design.

The glazed shop window allows a view from the street to the back of the shop where distant images of McQueen's last collection flicker across a tv screen. On entering, you confront a full-height glass box set against the opposite wall which contains a changeable tableau conveying McQueen's seasonal vision. (Before Christmas, mannequins in pale padded creations were set adrift in an Arctic wasteland.) From the entrance, you pass down a corridor between restrained displays of accessories. To the left small glowing boxes project out of a wall. To the right, a single case is part of an elegant counter, a visual link between the two sections of the shop.

At the back is an ingenious hanging system designed to be changed at will. The main components -- fixed T-sections running across the space with movable bays at right angles -- are steel, wire-brushed to look rough, and then lacquered. Secondary elements, of stainless steel, include rails fixed to tensile rods for clothes, and frames suspended from rollers along the top of bays. At present they contain decorative panels, but they can be pivoted and made horizontal for shelving.

Around two edges of this contraption are changing rooms. A wall of sandblasted glass screens women's cubicles as well as neighbouring storerooms along the south-west wall. Cubicles have illuminated glass floors and in one case, an electrotropic glass panel. Those for men, behind a sandblasted glass screen, are furnished with solid wooden doors and are more conventional.

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