

PROJECT OF THE YEAR

Brown Thomas Luxury Hall, Dublin, Ireland

Burdifilek, Toronto

The new Luxury Hall marks Burdifilek's third plum job at the Dublin, Ireland, flagship of luxury department store Brown Thomas. It follows on the heels, as it were, of the Brown Thomas Women's Designer Collections and Shoe Departments in 2006 and the Men's Concourse World in 2008.

The Luxury Hall, dedicated to fine jewelry, watches and luxury gifts, is laid out as a piazza with enclaves for brands like Cartier and Tiffany projecting beyond the main area. The perimeter is sheathed in subtly reflective dichroic glass, the colour delicately shifting with light and movement as shoppers move through the space. Invisible floating vitrines are suspended on modulated transparent glass walls, allowing for a glimpse through to the adjacent in-store boutiques. Underfoot is a honed marble floor, in mottled creamy shades of taupe, cream and café-au-lait, while soft lighting further accentuates the shimmering, gold-hued iridescence throughout.

Semi-circular glass display cases appear to float, cantilevered over sand-blasted, champagne-coloured bases made of Starfire glass (a lead-free glass that lacks the usual greenish tinge). Oyster-coloured suede displays provide an inconspicuous backdrop for the jewelry itself, allowing the product to take centre stage. The curving display counters encourage meandering and lead shoppers through the space.

Taking a multilayered approach that blurs boundaries and dematerializes space, Burdifilek creative director Diego Burdi sheathed the big structural columns in mirrored glass, draperies of various lengths, and floor-to-ceiling sculptural assemblages of glinting, polished nickel rods suspended on wires. The rods' reflections further enliven a ceiling already made interesting by the freeform, cove-lit cutouts above the column tops.

Burdi cites as his inspiration for the sculptures Harry Bertoia, who is best

remembered for his wire-basket-framed chairs for Knoll. However, a more proximate retro-era precedent would be Robert Lippold's Orpheus and Apollo stabile (1962), made of hundreds of slender copper planks suspended from the ceiling of the piano nobile at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall in New York.

Design team: Diego Burdi, Paul Filek, Tom Yip, Jeremy Mendonca, Jacky Ngan, William Lau, Helen Chen, Anthony Tey, Edwin Reyes, Amy Chen and Wilson Lau



