Burdifilek
Joe Fresh, New York

Joe Fresh, the affordably-priced Canadian fashion label, debuted six years ago in a shop-in-shop at a Loblaws supermarket. Now there’s a flagship in a New York icon, a Manufacturers Trust Company bank designed in 1954 by a young Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The main challenge for Burdifilek was that both the exterior and the interior wereondenied, meaning the floors, walls, and ceilings couldn’t be touched.

Commercial viability and artistic sensitivity at the 17,800-square-foot bi-level site were the key issues in a debate now resolved by preservationists, the Vornado Realty Trust, and JPMorgan Chase & Co., the bank that eventually absorbed the assets of Manufacturers Trust Company—allowing Burdifilek to proceed with a plan renovating original details and surgically inserting merchandising elements. The latter would have to defer to the interior’s star attractions: a massive steel-and-brass kiosk and mobile commissioned from Harry Berndt for the mezzanine, now the main sales floor.

In lieu of solid walls, freestanding modular “wardrobes,” configured in C or L shapes, define roomlike vignettes. Each white box is 10 feet high by a wide, large enough to stand up to the architecture’s grand scale but small enough to transport upstairs via one of the repurposed escalators. —Joe Vonk