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VISION OF FAME

THIS MELBOURNE BOUTIQUE
IS INFUSED
WITH AN OLD WORLD CHARM

Fame Agenda, a new fashion store in Melbourne Central, occupies a premier location in the shopping complex. With floor-to-ceiling glass shop front windows on two sides, it could have been too exposed for both staff and customers. "I didn't want to feel like we're sitting in a gold fish bowl," says the store's owner Monica Lim. "Customers also want to feel comfortable just browsing through the racks."

Lim commissioned designer Matt Gibson to refit the store. "I wanted the design to capture the edginess of the labels I stock, which are predominantly from Melbourne," says Lim. As a collector of vintage clothing and antiques, Lim also wanted Gibson to connect to the past. "I wanted to be able to bring in old things without them looking out of place," she says.

Initially Gibson proposed replacing the store windows, but the centre's management requested these be retained. To create a discrete veil, Gibson used decals on the windows, featuring images of historic Venetian buildings and arcades. "I was inspired by Janet Laurence's ephemeral artistic layering of photographic architectural images," says Gibson. Gibson and Lim were also keen to replace the ceiling with timber trusses, to create a more industrial aesthetic. "But the budget didn't allow for that," says Gibson. However, he was able to age the ceiling by adding Venetian style cornices.

One of the most difficult aspects of the design was working with a central structural column. This column not only appeared to segment the space, but also interfered with sight lines. Gibson clad the square column with mirrors and added an eight metre-long mirrored bench to create an L-shape. This solution not only reflects Geoffrey Mance's delicate candle lights, it also doubles as a display unit for labels such as Nevenka, Lover, Gail Sorronda and Karen Walker.

As Fame Agenda primarily sell dresses and separates, the emphasis of the fit-out is steered towards hanging space. The deep reveals also contain two Victorian church window frames, distressed with time.

"I found these windows in a second hand yard," says Lim. To maximise their effect, Gibson strategically placed the frames behind the arches on the shop windows. "I wanted to create some perspective in the store," says Gibson, who also used the windows to frame garments. "There's a sense of depth even before you enter," he adds.

Lim also discovered some old doors in second hand yards. These were simply stripped back and used to enclose the store's change rooms. "I'm continually looking for old things," says Lim, who was delighted to find bronze display cases on one of her hunts. "Melbourne fashion isn't just about the new. There's usually something from the past drawn in, whether it's the structure or the silhouette," she adds.

For Gibson, who regularly designs store fit-outs, the initial briefing with clients is paramount. "You start to tease out ideas. It's also important to come up with a vision that reflects the labels," says Gibson. And while sometimes the vision is heroic, he's mindful of keeping within the budget. "I also didn't want the design to detract from the clothes. The idea is to create an environment that brings people into the store, where they feel comfortable."

Stephen Crafti is Indesign's Melbourne correspondent.



ABOVE AND RIGHT Decals on the windows feature images of historic Venetian buildings and arcades



WORD **STEPHEN CRAFT**
 PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRISTINE FRANCIS**

DESIGN PRACTICE **MATT GIBSON A+D**
 LOCATION **MELBOURNE | AUS**
 PROJECT **FAME AGENDA**

“The idea is to create an environment that brings people into the store, where they feel comfortable”

MATT GIBSON



FAME AGENDA

DESIGN Matt Gibson A+D
DESIGNER Matt Gibson
MAIN CONTRACTOR
 Beach Building Services

BUDGET \$100,000
TIME TO COMPLETE 2.5 months (design),
 1 month (construction)
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 85m²

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FURNITURE Mannequins from Mei + Picchi

LIGHTING ‘Candle in the Wind’ feature lights
 by Mance Design and metal halide downlights
 from Ambience Lighting

FINISHES ‘Antique White USA’ paint by Dulux
 ‘Gothic’ insert ceiling cornices from Hopkins
 Plasters

FIXED & FITTED Recycled timber doors and
 frames from Steptoe’s

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