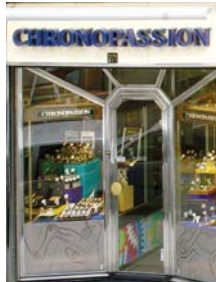






For the second year in a row, INDESIGN has left no stone unturned in our search for the coolest jewelry stores on Earth (outside of the United States; for those, check out the August issue of INSTORE). We cast the net wide and discovered great retailers in ...

France	England	Ireland	Italy	South Africa
				
→ 28	→ 30	→ 32	→ 35	→ 38

From rotating front windows, to a watch winding setup that covers an entire back wall, to espresso as a way to get customers in the door, these stores combine fascinating concepts with fantastic execution. And who knows? Maybe these stores from other shores will provide you with the next new ideas in your ongoing quest to be the coolest store in your own part of the world.

THE BIG STORY BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG

toying with time

In a charming quarter of the City of Lights, you can find a store that is built like Ali Baba's cave, filled with the finest timepieces the world has to offer. Laurent Picciotto, president and founder of Chronopassion, set out to make Chronopassion like nothing else on the retail landscape.

Chronopassion
Paris, France



"I started this shop in 1988, which was a very different time," he says. "I wanted to open the shop with just wristwatches, no jewelry, and to do it with all the brands that I think are interesting from a collector's standpoint. This was the hardest way to start, because the market was not really ready for my store. But we are still here and we have grown."

Chronopassion's first watch brand was Gerald Genta, and Picciotto loved the octagonal shape, so he did the store's display windows in that same style.

"In this, we have not changed a lot after 21 years," he says. "We did change the front window because we needed to show more watches, but the style is still the same."

"It's important to catch people with the front window — I want them to stop and look inside," he continues. "I want them to feel they are in the cave of Ali Baba. My feeling is that in this business, you need to gain the trust of the people. Customers want something where they feel that you didn't start a week before. That's why I haven't changed my design. Now, the shop is a little in the spirit of the '70s, but my customers ask me not to change. People like to feel comfortable."

That doesn't mean that Picciotto doesn't embrace technology. He is in the process of changing his front window, making it possible for customers outside the store to interact with the window by choosing the watches they want to see, all day long. It's a revolutionary idea, one that he has been working on for many years.

"The difficulty for us is that we have about 150 watches in the window, which

takes a great deal of time to set up every morning," he explains. "When the people come in, they say they saw something in the front window, but we don't know which watch they are talking about. We needed a special system for the front window to make things easier and to engage the customer. In this new window, the outside window is also the inside window, because of the rotating system of every showcase."

"The customer can now see the watches, 12 at a time, so they may stand there for 15 or 20 minutes, checking them out," Picciotto continues. "It's a great opportunity for us."

The new front window concept is a way for Picciotto to continue pleasing his customers.

He wants Chronopassion to feel like a toy shop for the watch lover. "I am always upset when I go into a luxury store because I often have to fight with the people to get them to show me the watches," he says. "People don't want a headache when they come into the shop, they come because they love watches and they want to share the passion."

The atmosphere, explains Picciotto, should be anything but intimidating.

"If a guy just comes in because it's raining outside, we'll still show him tourbillons or minute repeaters, because we just want to share our love and our knowledge. We have fun, we laugh a lot with the customers. This is the place where people have to feel comfortable and feel at home. We don't want to be too serious."

Picciotto knows that Chronopassion is not a mainstream watch retailer, and that's the point. "Through the selection of brands I carry, I am not the conventional choice," he acknowledges. "Most of the people go to the major brands, because this is the nature of the market, but I like the non-conventional. It's much more difficult to sell Greubel Forsey or de Bethune, but it's about what I feel and am passionate about."

Laurent Picciotto of Chronopassion says fun and laughter are key to connecting with customers.



A rotating window displays 150 watches that passersby can view as it moves.



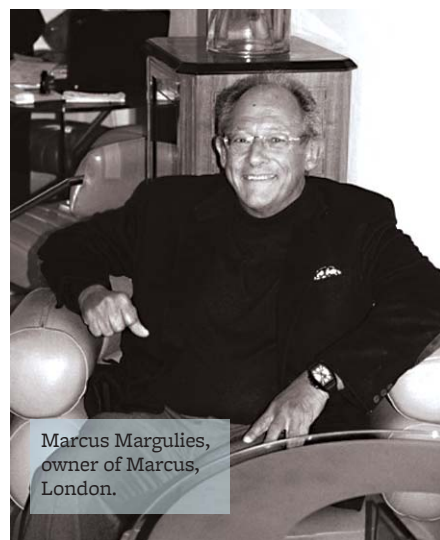
"It's important to catch people with the front window — I want them to feel they are in the cave of Ali Baba."
— LAURENT PICCIOTTO





A gallery setting helps to highlight individual items in the Marcus displays. 28

“I wanted a gallery type atmosphere to set off unique things, which is totally different from what other stores have set out to do.”
— MARCUS MARGULIES



Marcus Margulies, owner of Marcus, London.



high rent, low pressure

Marcus, a high-profile luxury watch retailer located on London’s New Bond Street, some of the most expensive retail space in the world, is named after the owner of the store, Marcus Margulies. An amalgam of steel, glass and mirrors, designed by Czech architect Eva Jiricna, the store is described by the owner himself as a “shrine to Haute Horlogerie.”

Marcus
London, England



“The first thing that makes our store stand out, aside from its design, is the stock — and that’s really the only thing that makes any store stand out,” Margulies says. “We have the biggest selection of complicated watches in the world.”

Margulies’ initial venture was actually wholesale, in volume watches. But, over time, he realized that many of the watch retailers in England were

undercapitalized. He decided there was room in the market for a higher end store, and opened Marcus in 2000.

The store itself is designed to make luxury buyers feel comfortable. “I think we’ve got a very beautiful store,” he says. “We sell in an environment that is conducive to luxury buyers. These customers enjoy being treated in a quiet way. We don’t pressure sell at all. We want people to feel welcome, we don’t want people to feel harassed.”

In order to enhance the luxury aesthetic, Margulies set up the store to spotlight individual items.

“I wanted a gallery type atmosphere to set off unique things, which is totally different from what other stores have set out to do. Purchasing something for that amount of money should give you pleasure, and if it doesn’t, it’s sad for the buyer. Most shops operate on the principle that they want to take the customers’ money. It should be more than just that. We don’t want to be a ‘wrap up’ shop. We think that the customer favors us by buying from us.”

One unique feature of the store that gets lots of attention is the watch winding wall in the basement. Supplied by Buben & Zörweg, it covers the entire back wall and is capable of winding 60 watches at a time. The wall offers testament to the credibility and panache of Marcus.



Marcus is so distinctive that several companies have done limited editions of their watches specifically for the store, like the Hublot Marcus Big Bang, and the Franck Muller Marcus Conquistador and Marcus Long Island.

“I think people have reacted well, because we have people coming back to the store,” says Margulies. “People coming here to buy are very knowledgeable. They want qualified salespeople who understand complicated watches and they want to buy in a relaxed way.”

“For us, the customer is always right,” adds Margulies. “Treating people with courtesy and correctness is important, though I have to admit I’m pretty short-tempered when I see people mucking us around. We don’t pay Bond Street rent for people to waste our time.”

making the grade

Irish jeweler Paul Sheeran didn't set out to be involved with diamonds and watches, he was pushed into it by his father. Having not done well in school — "I never passed an exam in my life," he says with a sheepish smile — his father took him out of school and put him into watchmaking. "My father told me he'd never seen a poor jeweler," explains Sheeran. Fortunately, for the young man, he found that he loved watchmaking and diamond grading.

Paul Sheeran Jewellers
Dublin, Ireland



Sheeran opened his first shop in Dublin in 1994, and his second in 2006.

When Sheeran was considering opening his store, he realized that Dublin had a lot of second- and third-generation jewelry shops, and he knew he had to do something differently. "I am the next generation of jeweler, so we opened a very comfortable, contemporary, modern shop and we went with a young team," he explains. "We built our store by

asking what customers wanted — if we built it this way, would you come in?" he says. "It's been brilliant working with the brands and our customers have really responded to our concept."

Sheeran and his team go out of their way to make clients feel comfortable. "When you walk in the front door, you are met by a greeter," he says. "There is always someone standing there and their only responsibility is to greet you."

Customers also enjoy the feeling of expansiveness and comfort that Sheeran presents. "We have a sweeping staircase up to the first floor. We have our watches on the ground floor, and there is a large TV at the back of the store with another staircase going up. It gives you an idea that there is something going on upstairs. The cherry wood gives the store a lovely warm feeling; we wanted a continuous feeling in the shop, rather than a mish mash of colors."

On the second floor of the store are private selling rooms for diamonds and jewelry, along with two luxury suites, using sofas instead of tables and chairs.

The key component for Sheeran is not to lose sight of the



The entrance to Paul Sheeran includes muted colors and quirky plants to make customers feel comfortable coming in.

"We compare ourselves to a five-star hotel: We want to be a five-star jeweler. When customers walk out, no matter what they have spent, they have to feel good about the purchase."
— PAUL SHEERAN



occasion of a customer's visit to his shop. "It's the most special day in their lives," he explains. "What we are selling is not a commodity. People can buy a diamond anywhere in the world, so we have to give added value. Some salespeople forget the occasion, but it's the most special occasion and a very important step in their life. Additionally, we predict that we will generally sell 10 more products off that first diamond ring in the following years, so it's very important to us," he continues. "We are all about long-term business."

The warm décor of the store is designed to make people feel comfortable. "When customers come in to buy an engagement ring, they are not sure about anything," he continues. "People are nervous; it's a massive step. You have to be relaxed and help people calm down and enjoy the experience. People are making sure they are getting their euro's worth, so we try to remind them it's not a commodity, that they should enjoy it."

In addition to a luxurious, comfortable store, Sheeran adds extras like really good coffee. "We are very picky about cappuccino, we want to make sure it's the best one of the day for whoever drinks it," he says. "If you want a cup of coffee, a bad cup of coffee could ruin the whole occasion. We want to make sure that everything we offer that is extra is done to a high standard. We compare ourselves to a five-star hotel: We want to be a five-star jeweler. When customers walk out, no matter what they have spent, they have to feel good about the purchase."



The Paul Sheeran location in Dundrum is the newest store and utilizes a more contemporary feel.



The original location in Johnsons Court uses cherry woods and rich carpeting to deliver a luxury experience.

windows of luxury

The family-owned and operated Pisa Orologeria store in Milan, Italy, is a bastion of fine Italian design and beautiful watches. Founded in 1940, Pisa Orologeria just recently renovated and expanded its existing shop. The company focuses on the best of the best when it comes to watches, and the main store features a separate Patek Philippe area, called Spazio Patek Philippe. Additionally, Pisa Orologeria has partnered with Rolex to introduce the first stand-alone Rolex boutique in Italy.

Pisa Orologeria Milan, Italy



"Our company was started when my grandfather, Ugo Pisa, came to Milano from a little village with his brothers," says Stefania Pisa, who handles marketing and communication for the family business. "He opened a very small shop where he repaired watches during World War II. He later decided

to begin selling the most well known watches, like Omega, Rolex, Piaget and others. In 1960, his daughter Grazia Maristella Pisa started to work in the company and now she heads up the company."

Stefania Pisa, granddaughter of founder Ugo Pisa.

The original shop, which was about 500 square feet, stayed pretty much the same until last year, when the decision was made to upgrade, renovate and enlarge the store. Pisa Orologeria acquired the space next to the original shop and now the store is 3,200 square feet.

Luxury at its finest, Pisa Orologeria's multi-brand store





The simple, elegant layout of Pisa Orologeria is designed to make customers feel comfortable and special.



“The mission was to have a place that looked and felt like a home. It is very comfortable, very warm and inviting.”
— STEFANIA PISA



mixes rich dark woods with Italian marble for an atmosphere that is welcoming and comfortable. “We wanted to have space to offer better service to our Italian customers, as well as to the many foreigners who shop with us,” Pisa explains. “We did the shop with an Italian architect, and the mission was to have a place that looked and felt like a home. It is very comfortable, very warm and inviting. When you enter inside, the customer can feel like they belong. We used all the best materials like marble, special stones and luxury woods.”

One of the hallmarks of the flagship Pisa store is the front entrance, which features immense windows with watch displays spotlighted inside them. “We have this big gallery with windows — that is very unusual here in Milano. We have tall windows, about 6 meters (20 feet), all in glass, so people can enter into this

gallery and look at the watches from all the brands.” Included in the new store is a Dream Room, where clients can be taken for private showings. This kind of luxury is rare for Milan, where store designs haven’t changed much over the centuries. The Pisa family deals with the world’s best watch brands, but they remain open to other ideas — they just recently became the exclusive agents for Meissen’s new porcelain jewelry.

One thing that is important for Pisa is to have their own signature look, which meant saying no to the brands who wanted their own corners or displays.

“We used our own design for the showcases; we didn’t want to use the designs of the brands,” Pisa says. “We are our own brand. Maybe in the future, we will open Pisa Orologeria in other countries, to grow the brand Pisa.”

Luxury woods, marble, glass and stone complete the sumptuous shopping environment at Pisa Orologeria.



coffee and carats

Ten years ago, Mark Gold opened Mark Gold Jewelers in Durban, a coastal city in South Africa, and combined it with a high-end coffee shop, called Coffee at Mark Gold. A strange combination, to say the least, but it has worked phenomenally well.

Mark Gold Jewelers
Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa



“A strong part of our retail concept is the combination of our jewelry store with our now very famous coffee shop,” says Gold. “It creates a lifestyle around our store. Usually, jewelry stores are quiet, reserved and intimidating. It takes the edge off the store and makes it much more friendly.”

For security reasons, Gold had to separate the coffee shop from the jewelry store, at least to a point. But, he says, because of the design of the two stores, the link is obvious. “There are tables and chairs that sit outside the jewelry

store, so whoever sits there is exposed to the brand and the product,” he says. “Once they are comfortable with the space, they are comfortable with us as their jeweler.”

About five years ago, Gold opened a store in a golf resort called Fancourt, and two years later, he opened in Melrose Arch in Johannesburg, a very contemporary mix of residential, retail and commercial areas. Two of his three stores include a Coffee by Mark Gold shop.

“When we developed the concept, we knew very little about coffee, but we knew that if we delivered something below average, we would send the same signal about our jewelry,” he explains. “We put together something that is way above average in terms of the delivery of the product, and the product itself is the best coffee in the world. In Durban, they have a Great Cappuccino competition and it is quite a big thing, and out of eight years, we have won it five times, and come in second twice.”

Gold seizes the opportunity when people are sitting outside his shops drinking his coffee to approach them. “I ask them how their coffee is, and after they say it’s excellent, I say, ‘Wait until you see our jewelry.’ This way, I get them into the store. They either like or they don’t like it, but at least they know about it.”



Enjoying a cappuccino at the Durban location of Mark Gold.

Gold designs and produces his own jewelry and makes everything he sells, with the exception of the odd piece of designer jewelry and the watches he carries. “We sell some of our jewelry in other stores as well,” Gold says. “They have to be at the right level and geographically not too close to our stores. We choose them, they don’t choose us — we know if they are the right people to represent our brand. We are serious about protecting our brand name.”

Will we see Mark Gold Jewelers in the United States? Gold says it’s a possibility. “It is our plan to roll more stores out,” he says. “We need two more in South Africa, one in Capetown and one more in Johannesburg. We want international stores, as well. We are looking at moving into the USA, in Florida.”



Mark Gold of Mark Gold Jewelers in South Africa.



“I ask them how their coffee is, and after they say it’s excellent, I say, ‘Wait until you see our jewelry.’”
— MARK GOLD



In Mark Gold’s Melrose Arch store, the cabinets are on sliders which lock magnetically with electronic keys. Each key is coded to a particular salesperson.