


the raw and the cooked

From red light to limelight, New York's meatpacking district redesigns for fashion

A blue background with a curved metal rod and a street sign. The rod is dark and curves from the top right towards the bottom right. At the bottom right, there is a green street sign with white text that reads "WASHINGTON STREET".

In Manhattan, even the toughest neighborhoods get tenderized eventually. All it takes is a handful of pioneers lured by bargain rents and the promise of street cred. A restaurant here, a contemporary-art gallery or vintage-furniture store there, and soon all the hipsters want in on the action.

So it is with the meatpacking district, the latest stretch of Manhattan real estate to experience the urban rite of passage from dicey to desirable. As meat wholesalers relocate to the outer boroughs, retailers are converting the processing plants into chic boutiques. Transvestite “ladies” of the night have made way for ladies who lunch—the downtown breed that prefers Seven jeans to Chanel suits.

Luckily, many of the newcomers are preserving and honoring the neighborhood’s past, albeit in decidedly different ways. Rubin Chapelle arrived early on the scene, with a boutique by art-world favorite Annabelle Selldorf—whose matter-of-fact design draws attention to the act of construction in much the same spirit as Rubin Chapelle’s architectonic clothing. Pushing to the opposite extreme is architect William Russell’s design for the Alexander McQueen flagship, an upside-down landscape of undulating forms and ceiling-hung fixtures that update the iconic meat hook. Architect Jonathan Clarke’s skin-toned scheme for Stella McCartney falls somewhere between raw and radical with its tactile, visceral fleshiness.

Despite these overt stylistic differences, all three spaces showcase an obsession with surfaces. Selldorf peels back Rubin Chapelle’s interior to expose the beauty of the carcass beneath. Russell folds, puckers, and tailors a single continuous membrane to define a series of volumes. And Clarke celebrates touch, imbuing planes with three-dimensionality. Much has changed in this part of town, but skin, it seems, is still in.





This page: Selldorf Architects transformed a meatpacking plant into the Rubin Chapelle boutique. Stripping the 2,600-square-foot interior to its bones, principal Annabelle Selldorf exposed brick walls patinated with plaster and peeling paint; she also salvaged wood beams for reuse as decorative and display elements. Floors are concrete, surfaced in a liquid cement compound.

PROJECT ARCHITECT: LEANDER GRAYSON.

PROJECT MANAGER: ANNE NIXON.

LIQUID CEMENT COMPOUND: ARDEX.

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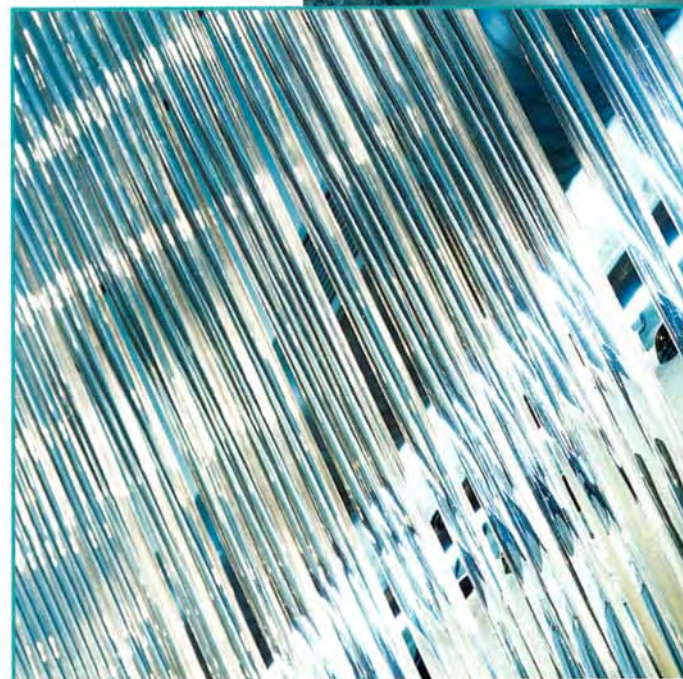
A closer look at the hottest solutions from April

Selldorf Architects installed a 30-foot-long row of inexpensive acrylic rods at New York boutique Rubin Chapelle to divide a

dise from the front door to discourage potential shoplifters. "The Raw and the Cooked," page 198. —J.R.

divide and conquer

small anteroom from the area where clothing is displayed. The 250 acrylic rods are supported by holes drilled into a run of wooden beams salvaged from the site—a former meatpacking plant—and held in place by a painted-hardwood ledger on the ceiling, 9 feet above. The rods measure 1 inch in diameter, and principal Annabelle Selldorf spaced them 1 inch apart to offer a tantalizing preview of the clothing behind. The rod wall also adds practical value, screening merchan-



girl power

For Stella McCartney's boutique in New York, Universal Design Studios brought flirty femininity to the rough-and-tumble meatpacking district. Firm director Jonathan Clarke separated merchandising zones with curtains of reedlike aluminum rods just 1/5 inch in diameter. Swaying 3 inches above the polished terrazzo of the floor, the ceiling-mounted rods are powder-coated in gradations of color from rose to ivory. "The coloration brings softness to the material," says Clarke. Partners Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby created the hexagonal ceramic tiles lining a curved side-wall. "The hexagon is

nature's building block, found everywhere from cells to honeycombs," says Clarke. Viewed from afar, the tiles' raised floral motif abstracts to a circle. "The Raw and the Cooked," page 198. —J.R.

