



MAYFAIR

INTERIOR MOTIVES

MAYFAIR IS FAMOUS FOR ITS EXCLUSIVE BOUTIQUES, SOME OF WHICH OWE THEIR STRIKING DESIGNS TO EVA JIRICNA, ONE OF LONDON'S MOST INFLUENTIAL ARCHITECTS

By Claire Adler, Photographs by Cristian Barnett

Eva Jiricna's sheer body of work – just like the long list of letters after the name on her business card – attests to a glittering career in architecture and interior design. Renowned for turning luxury stores into settings for stunning, contemporary displays, the 69-year-old professor of architecture often works within London's historic listed buildings.

Her recent projects include creating new interiors for the Joseph store on Sloane Street, Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the entrance hall at Selfridges' flagship store on Oxford Street, Harrods' jewellery halls, the Marcus watch store and Boodles on New Bond Street, South Kensington's V&A Museum shop and its new jewellery gallery.

The Czech-born architect's daughter has a petite frame and soft-spoken manner, which belie her feisty, ambitious personality. 'My father told me it would be

hard for a woman to succeed as an architect. The nearest I'd get would be to marry one, he said. Being a heretic by nature, I decided I'd go for it,' she says, smiling. 'My father ended up finding some students to help me learn how to draw.'

Her signature piece is often a striking glass staircase with transparent steps linked by filigree-like, stainless-steel wires. Glass encourages light to travel freely through a space. But Eva loves it because she is an engineer at heart.

'While studying architecture at university in Prague in the early Sixties, I most enjoyed technical drawing and structural engineering. I loved the structure behind the architecture. That's why I love what you can do with transparency – by playing with the light and making something technical look aesthetic,' she says.

Some of Eva's clients have been so pleased with her designs that they have

commissioned her to get creative inside their own homes. Marcus Margulies, owner of the Marcus watch store (pictured), recently invited her to recreate the interior of his home in the capital. And not long after meeting retailer Joseph Ettedgui, at the opening of his first Joseph store in London (designed by Sir Norman Foster), she was asked to work on the interior of his London home. 'Coco [his wife] hated it, Joseph loved it and they split up soon after,' she says.

With the V&A's jewellery gallery opening in May, and Mayfair retailers Boodles and Marcus both regular clients, Eva seems to be staking her architectural claim on the world of luxury. 'The trick is to make the materials and lighting draw attention to the product itself,' she says.

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