

# australian style

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## THE SOFT SELL

*Smoothing over an aesthetic makeover in old Seoul.*

BY LEE TRAN LAM PHOTOGRAPHY JUNG-SIK

INSTEAD OF GIVING an old building a facelift, Cho Slade Architecture treated it to the equivalent of a Botox injection. James Slade and Minsuk Cho applied the artificial aesthetics of cosmetic surgery to an old house on a hill in upmarket Cheongdam-dong, Korea, and turned it into the sleek and smooth Martine Sitbon boutique. The New York-based architects transformed the front into two tiers of glass screens. The bottom row acts as a display window for the whole shop, and the top row presents a richly textured golden surface at nightfall, due to the polyester paint coarsely painted on the back of its two-way mirror surface. Inside, the creamy interior mimics the seamlessness of plastic casting, and its lack of hard edges disguises the varying height of the building (which shifts from two to four to six metres). Cho claims that the synthetic feel of the boutique plays off the natural materials of the clothes, which are displayed in triangular fixtures, and the linear light object ornamented with artificial white hair near the shop front. Even the sales counter offers a surprise – it's constructed from soft, squashy silicone. The architects are amused to note that customers have been touching the walls to test whether they, too, are malleable. The walls aren't, but the surface's toughness proves that, like the results of cosmetic surgery, appearances can be deceiving.