



Fashion Retail

Eleanor Curtis

Cho Slade Architecture with GaA Architects

Martine Sitbon

Seoul 2002

Commissioned to provide a Seoul home for the fashions of French designer Martine Sitbon, Cho Slade of New York, with local architects GaA Architects, crafted a jewellery box out of a former townhouse in the Cheongdam-dong shopping district. Both classic and modern, the fashions of Martine Sitbon change from season to season, a characteristic that the architects considered when designing the 'timeless' space that would host the collections. The half-buried commercial area at the base of the house was originally the garage and storage areas, with ceiling heights ranging from 1.75 metres to 6 metres. Cho Slade exploited this restrictive characteristic of the building by wrapping the entire interior volume in a continuous surface that bends around corners, floors and ceiling.

The exterior is a glass skin made up of two rows 12.5 metres wide by 3.6 metres tall, stacked on top of one another to create a glass wall at the end of the building. During the day the top row of glass reflects the blue of the sky, while the ground floor row offers a transparent view into the store. At night, the building transforms into a mirrored wall that, rather than reflecting the surrounding neighbourhood, reveals the strong solidity of a wall with its rough polyester paint.

Clothes are displayed using objects in the space: suspended, they appear to float or are subject to the tensions of the architectural dynamics that seamlessly connect the varying heights of the ceiling. The weightlessness is enhanced by the backdrop of a uniform surface compound that literally wraps the floor, walls and ceiling. Whilst glass is the store's outer skin, a buttery-yellow glistening skin envelopes the interior. This glossy finish could give a 'flashy' feel to the store, but is played down due to its neutral tone and the contemporary nature of the display.

The verticality of the movable display racks exaggerates the tightness of the space. The warped surface of the front side of the racks implies a liquid shaped by surface tension, while the mirrored backs, together with the glass shelf and dressing-room mirror, provide a sharp-edged counterpoint to the rounded edges of the space.

The sales counter is made of soft silicone whose smooth edges welcome both client and salesperson. The finish looks much the same as the walls and floor, but in contrast is soft and squishy.

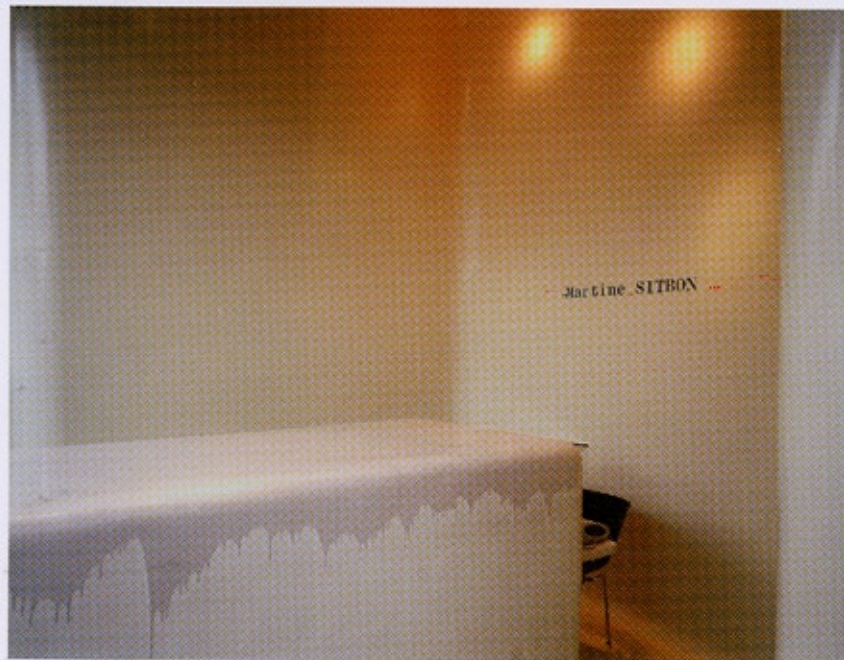


Above **Martine Sitbon Seoul**. The far end of the glass facade offers a preview of the store as well as reflecting the neighbourhood's urban fabric



Above and right: **Martine Sitbon Seoul**. Day through to dusk, the store's glass skin changes to accommodate the differing reflections of each time of day – from blue sky to the towers of adjacent buildings

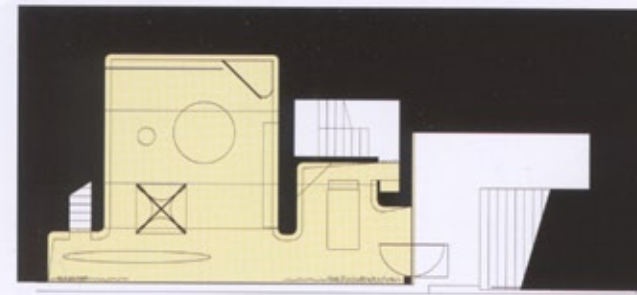




Left: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** The buttery interior skin, with its changing ceiling, offers a smooth and silky backdrop to the sharp-edge of the hanging units

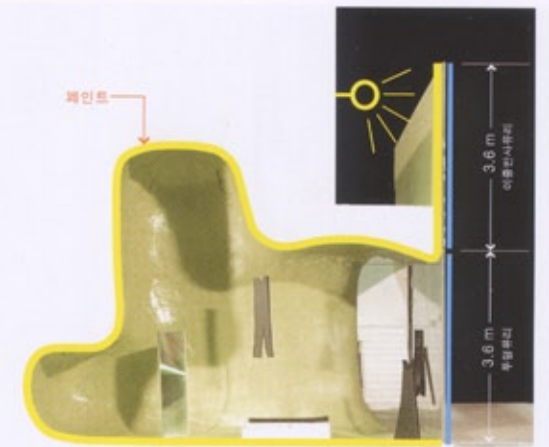


Left: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** The shiny low black display object is like an oversized polished pebble. It reveals the height and width of the space in its rounded reflections



Above: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** Plan

Below: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** A wide view of the interior of the store, with the black polished oversized pebble dominating the floor space



Above: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** Section





Above: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** Garments are suspended and float in the space, whilst interrupted by the sharp edges of the mirrored screen. The cocoon-like linear object that floats behind the facade accentuates the length of the space and the symmetry between floor and ceiling



Above: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** Daytime view of the entrance and facade



Above: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** The store at night almost glows, with a rusted golden hue to the upper floor

Right: **Martine Sitbon Seoul.** The length of the transparent facade at night, with the soft silicone cash desk between two dressed mannequins in the foreground

