

CARBONDALE for Dolce&Gabbana - THE VENETIAN PALACE:

Customized contemporary architecture merged with heritage craftsmanship.

When asked to design the new Venetian Dolce&Gabbana flagship store, Eric Carlson and his Paris based office CARBONDALE set out to create a new and different retail experience, one that customizes and enhances the cultural values and traditions of Italian quality and authenticity shared by both Dolce&Gabbana and the city of Venice.

Eric explains that when designing a store in Venice it is essential to understand that “Venice is not a shopping destination like Paris or Milan, Venice is a cultural destination”. Visitors from all over the globe come to explore a vast array of cultural traditions from the extraordinary architecture and urbanism, to the International *Mostra* film festival, the Art and Architecture Biennale’s and of course Carnival. A commitment to the Venetian artistic heritage & craftsmanship to create a Dolce&Gabbana store that is first and foremost a “culture destination” became the genesis of the architectural design direction, a challenge that was supported by *Save Venice* and *Venetian Heritage* associations.

The 800 square meter store location was perfectly selected to fulfill the design strategy as a pinnacle of Venetian culture. Situated over two levels along Via XXII Marzo the store combines both a contemporary building structure with the breathtaking historical *Palazzo Torres*, a former bank, from 1880 designed by the Venetian Architect and Sculpture Giuseppe Torres in the neo-Venetian renaissance style.

For a brand defined by contrasts, the exterior and interior design explores and accentuates the contrasts between the “historical” and the “contemporary” with a spatial design inspired by the Italian palazzo model with their distinctive rooms each with a characteristically different colors and finishes. Eric Carlson’s modern design pays *homage* to traditional Venetian craftsmanship dating back centuries.

The experience begins by penetrating the free-standing symmetrical stone façade to discover the meticulously restored 19th entry volume displaying the brands accessories for men and women. The remarkable space is lavishly detailed with intricately carved dark wood walls and ceilings and elaborately patterned inlay mosaic stone floor creating a sumptuous and overwhelming ambiance. The contemporary furniture is delicately designed to disappear or to reflect and accentuate the historical envelope.

The journey then leads to a linear architectural “atrium-canal” flooded with natural light. A spectacular 20 meter long by 4.5 meter high wall of 24 karat gold glass mosaic tiles handmade locally in Venice by traditional mosaic craftsmen *Orsoni* and *Friul*. Reflecting the natural light the shimmering gold mosaic wall supports 45 floating brass shelves displaying latest Dolce&Gabbana bags and accessories. Functionally the central atrium space serves to organized the surrounding rooms for women’s ready-to-wear, men’s ready-to-wear and high-end jewelry. Carefully selected Italian and Venetian materials and craftsmanship including marbles, stone and glass mosaics, wood inlays, silk damasks woven fabrics and hand blown Murano glass define and differentiate the sequence of 14 rooms while giving authority to each product category.

The large women's ready-to-wear room is RED, walls lined with *Rosso Levanto* marble and stone mosaic tiles while the men's ready-to-wear is GREEN with *Verde Menta* marble and mosaics. The BLUE high-jewelry space is lined with dark blue glass mosaic walls punctuated with glimmering gold glass mosaic stars inspired by the 10th century arched portico of the Basilica at Piazza San Marco. The GREEN stair tower space lined in *Verde Antigua* marble leads visitors up to the prestigious 2nd level. Upstairs a 20 meter long wall mirror visually and magically doubles the size of each room. The BLUE & GREEN rooms for men's formal-wear are wrapped in blue silk Damasks made by the historic Venetian *Bevilacqua* weavers, and *Irish Green & Italian Blue Boquira* marbles. The GOLD women's evening-wear room is defined with wood inlaid flooring, brilliant gold Damask and *Giallo Siena* Marble. The spatial experience crescendos in three exceptional rooms from the 1800's meticulously restored and finely inhabited with exquisitely designed furniture to accommodate the Dolce&Gabbana's men's *Sartoria* and women's *Serra* creations.

Eric Carlson's design considered every element within the spaces as a customized expression and blending of the Dolce&Gabbana image and Venetian traditional craftsmanship. The door handles, clothing hooks, display stands and mirrors are hand-blown in Murano glass by the *Seguso* family, and the Damascus fabric from the historic Venetian weavers *Bevilacqua* and *Rubelli*. As said by Mr. Carlson "*These works are timeless, both contemporary and historical but inherently Venetian, and inherently Dolce&Gabbana.*"

"Luxury" for CARBONDALE is measured by the reflection and consideration for every detail and Eric Carlson is personally involved in all aspects from the beginning to the end. Each project develops an ingenious Design-Strategy derived from an extensive research phase that guides the creative process to uniquely personalized designs at every scale. For example, the seating created for the Venice store is inspired by the "couturier soul" of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana. The tailor's "pincushion" became the starting point for the voluptuous and inviting chairs and sofas are wrapped in luxurious velvets and colored according to the different room themes.

CARBONDALE's design masterfully unites and expresses the depth, diversity and richness shared by both the Venetian and Dolce&Gabbana cultures through an architectural experience of discovery by unveiling historical treasures and exemplary contemporary design to celebrate a brand and a city.