

Press release

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A jade façade made from recycled champagne bottles: MVRDV completes Bulgari flagship store in Shanghai

Shanghai Plaza 66 – one of the largest and most popular shopping malls in Shanghai – is now the home of a new Bulgari flagship store at Shanghai’s Nanjing Road. The new store features a green, jade-like façade designed by MVRDV, made from brass and recycled champagne, beer, and other glass bottles. Inspired by a medley of influences, from the original Bulgari store in Rome to Shanghai’s unique Art Deco architecture, the project is innovative and sustainable, yet remains true to the heritage of both Bulgari and Shanghai.

Bulgari Shanghai is the third flagship store façade in MVRDV’s ongoing partnership with the luxury Italian jewellery brand. Like the previous designs, the Shanghai project makes use of a visual motif inspired by the portals and cornices of Bulgari’s first original boutique on Rome’s Via dei Condotti, adopting the recognisable visual identity that now distinguishes their stores worldwide.

However, in a twist on the previous designs, this motif is not used to form windows in the façade. Instead, the Shanghai façade is mostly windowless, and the cornice motif is employed in layered panels that form an Art-Deco-inspired pattern. Art Deco is a theme that Shanghai and Bulgari have in common: the Chinese city’s status as a key port connecting East and West in the early 20th century gave it a rich tradition in this architectural style, while Bulgari’s Déco collection characterised its jewellery in the same period.

To close this circle of inspiration, the façade takes on the materiality of fine jewellery with panels that resemble China’s most precious stone, Jade. The result is a complex design, with layer upon layer of cross-cultural references; Art Deco architecture with a jewellery-like quality, combining the best of Eastern and Western culture. The gold-coloured brass trim gives the façade an appearance like jade jewellery.

The panels are made of compressed green glass, a unique material effect that creates a translucent finish. At night, a backlight behind the panels gives the façade a striking glow, highlighting the unique textural quality of the glass. The glass is completely recycled, produced at the Magna factory in Teutschenthal, Germany, which specialises in glass treatment. The project demonstrates the potential of sustainable recycled materials, even in luxury contexts, and takes one step towards MVRDV and Bulgari’s goal of store designs that are built using 100% circular economy materials. Meanwhile the backlight is engineered to minimise the façade’s energy footprint, using less than half the energy of a typical comparable installation.

“Our collaboration with Bulgari has yielded some fascinating material experiments,” says MVRDV founding partner Jacob van Rijs. “It’s a passion we share with them, albeit in different design disciplines. The Shanghai store encapsulates the value of these experiments: given the right treatment and detailing, leftover champagne and beer bottles, which would otherwise be thrown away, become a jewel for the city.”

Bulgari Shanghai is the third shopfront MVRDV designed for the Italian brand: in 2018 Bulgari Kuala Lumpur opened with a marble-inspired façade illuminated by veins of gold light. For this effect, glass-reinforced concrete was cut according to the cornice pattern, filled with resin, and illuminated by amber LED Lights. This was followed by the opening of Bulgari Bangkok in 2020, where the cornice pattern was created in brass and combined with different types of glass to give a striking jewel-like effect. Subtle lighting in each window highlights the store’s products in Bulgari’s signature saffron colour.