

A NEW ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

MB&F





A NEW ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY FOR THE M.A.D.GALLERY AND MB&F

SUMMARY

It is now over a decade since the MB&F M.A.D.Gallery first opened its doors on Geneva's Rue Verdaine in 2011, in the heart of the city's Old Town. A second M.A.D.Gallery opened in Taipei in 2014, a third one in Dubai in January 2016, and a fourth one in Hong Kong in October 2018.

"Like many things at MB&F, it all started with a 'wouldn't it be cool if...'" shares MB&F Founder Maximilian Büsser. "We were clueless, we had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. There was no plan for expansion. But it really took off and has grown organically. Now, 10 years later, I really wanted to elevate the gallery to be at the level of the art pieces. I wanted to bring a sense of dignity and importance to the artists," says Max.

In collaboration with Voltige Design & Architecture, a highly experienced team with offices in Geneva and Lausanne, MB&F has redefined the interior design and architectural identity for its M.A.D Galleries – starting with the largest of its galleries, located in the famous Dubai Mall. The fresh identity is also applied to the growing number of MB&F shop-in-shops at the brand's retail partners around the world – like the MB&F corner at PMT-The Hour Glass in Bangkok – and to a new retail format dubbed "MB&F Lab".

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THE M.A.D.GALLERY CONCEPT

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A VISUAL MARKER

Voltige founders Tyl Vergriete and Vincent Groetzingler started with a focal detail that would be a visual marker for each space. “We came up with the idea of a central element, a sort of giant lens that would turn the world upside down with its reflections that move as you walk past,” explains Tyl Vergriete. “It stands alone, but does not steal the attention from the other creations in the space.”

Manufacturing the lens was an incredibly challenging process, carried out by a French ceramics company that has been in operation for over 170 years. Tyl continues: “Working with different artisans was also an important part of the project as MB&F wanted this element of craftsmanship to be present throughout, just like it is with their watches.”

DOMED GLASS DISPLAY CASES

Another major challenge was the fabrication of the glass domes of the showcases, reminiscent of the aesthetics of old science-fiction movies – and the domed sapphire crystals of MB&F Machines. Several criteria needed to be met, including an outstanding optical quality, a good level of security and the ability to access the watch easily. To avoid any structural element or visual disturbance, the glassmaker had to find a way to make a cut in the 5mm thick glass dome and then create a perfectly matching second piece of glass to serve as a door. A fully customized curved slider was designed to allow for the door to slide out while moving to the side in one easy motion.

Where the vast majority of showcases are square glass boxes on four legs, the domed showcases break away from this usual industrial geometry to create something unexpected, echoing MB&F’s creations. The domes are completed with a cast aluminium tripod-like stand and a blue ceramic disc, that matches the giant lens, recalling MB&F’s love for all things space-age.

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CUSTOM-DESIGNED FURNITURE

The third key element of the new design is the furniture, which Max Büsser explains as "something I would like to have in my own home". The result is an homage to the quality and know-how of furniture craftsmen of the 50s and 60s. The main piece is a large table that has been modified by skilled carpenters so that it can display watches in recessed showcases embedded in the wooden surface. This watch display will take pride of place in the centre of the space and welcome the visitor to sit at the table and take the time of a conversation. Original mid-century chairs and a sofa convey a sense of quality and elegance, both around the table and in separate lounge and bar areas.

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A DISCOVERY PATH

Where the previous M.A.D.Gallery interior design could be slightly overwhelming, Voltige and MB&F have paid particular attention to creating a discovery path through the space, starting with the most impressive artworks and leading to the smaller, more affordable pieces at the rear. Each domain has its own clearly defined space, and MB&F has its own space at the centre of the gallery.

LIGHTING AND DIGITAL FEATURES

The lighting is surely the last thing visitors notice in a gallery, but it is one of the most important elements. Voltige has installed a state-of-the-art system combining exhibition track lighting, allowing surgical precision for the art pieces, along with recessed ceiling lights and wall washers to ensure that the atmosphere and light intensity are always right during the day and night. The challenge was to create a comfortable mood in the space while giving each art piece the specific light it requires, so that everything feels coherent and harmonious.

In addition to the lighting, a digital screen in a portrait format has been installed to show images of different elements from the MB&F world.

“What I love about this project is that we jumped in without really knowing if it was all possible – and MB&F jumped with us,” shares Voltige co-founder Vincent Groetzing. “To see that the result is so close to our first 3D models is really satisfying. The other thing that I like is how it is really an extension of the MB&F world and its products.”

NEW OPENINGS – NEW RETAIL FORMATS

The M.A.D.Gallery in Dubai and MB&F shop-in-shop in Bangkok are the first locations to be fitted with the new architectural identity. The other galleries and several new shop-in-shops will follow suit in 2022 and 2023.

In addition to the M.A.D.Galleries, MB&F has defined a new hybrid retail presence called “MB&F Labs”. These will combine MB&F machines with a limited number of art pieces, in spaces not quite large enough to host a full-fledged M.A.D.Gallery. The first MB&F Labs will open in 2022 in Beverly Hills and Singapore.

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THE M.A.D.GALLERY CONCEPT

MB&F created the M.A.D.Gallery concept in 2011 in Geneva, in order to situate their Horological and Legacy Machines in an appropriate context ("M.A.D." stands for Mechanical Art Devices).

Max Büsser explains the concept behind the gallery and the common thread running through the various pieces presented: "We saw the M.A.D.Gallery as the perfect platform to showcase our own Machines as well as other pieces of mechanical and kinetic art by other creators whom we greatly admire. At MB&F we create Machines that happen to tell the time, not to tell the time. They are unique examples of mechanical horology but, more than that, they are pieces of three-dimensional kinetic art. The same goes for all the creators featured in the gallery: their craft transcends a practical purpose and their creations assume the status of artworks. Thanks to the M.A.D.Gallery, we are meeting like-minded artists operating in parallel worlds; people who think like us and share our passion for creating mechanical art."

The galleries present the range of MB&F's Horological and Legacy Machines, but also the brand's Co-creations such as the table clocks crafted with L'Epée 1839 or the music boxes created with Reuge – along with carefully-curated art pieces by various artists from around the world.

For more information on the M.A.D.Galleries:
www.madgallery.net

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NEW ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

