

# QUIET IMPACT

*Eastern subtlety meets Western luxury at Takashimaya*

*Text by Jean Gorman • Photography by Durston Saylor*

If you told anybody that you'd mixed elements of the 1920s, '30s, '40s, and '50s with Japanese, Anglo-Indian, and Regency influences they might well ask, 'Have you lost your mind?' But it works," says designer Larry Laslo, referring to the retail interiors he created for Takashimaya, Japan's largest department store conglomerate, newly opened in midtown Manhattan. Working in association with the Takashimaya Design Group, the store's in-house staff of designers, Laslo has managed to create a space for the Osaka-based retailer's New York flagship store in which it is as easy to envision Carole Lombard reclining on a chaise longue as it is a geisha pouring green tea, a space in which the primary message is quiet luxury. With a lush mix of vintage and antique furnishings coupled with richly textured finishes and thoroughly modern design flourishes, the store presents a series of inviting interior vignettes, each designed to

offer a focused merchandising story. The disparate pieces are tied together primarily with a neutral palette of creams, beiges, browns, blacks, and dashes of red, but also with references to the neoclassical elements of the building's architecture designed by John Burgee Architects.

Located between 54th and 55th Streets on Fifth Avenue, the \$80 million, 20-story Takashimaya building graciously acknowledges its neighbors, the McKim, Mead & White-designed University Club and the Peninsula hotel across the street and the St. Regis next door. Designed by a team led by partner-in-charge of design Jeffries Sydness (who is now a design principal at Swanke Hayden Connell Architects) and project architect Joseph Katanik, the building's abstract interpretations of classical elements—sleek black African and red Scandinavian granite columns, applied pilasters of Indiana



**The 20-story Takashimaya building, designed by architects John Burgee and Jeffries Sydness for the \$10 billion Japanese retail conglomerate, tempts passersby with a 3-story, windowed entrance facade revealing the merchandise in the ground-floor retail area. The exterior lighting design by Claude Engle accentuates the building's entire facade and detailing at night. Opposite: The ground-floor retail area is located in the 3-story atrium, densely detailed with painted cast metal moldings and balustrades, and a gold leaf ceiling.**

limestone, and heavy string-courses—extend up the tripartite composition of the building's facade toward a colonnade porch crowned with a pediment.

The interior grandeur of the building's atrium is visible from outside through the 3-story, windowed entrance facade. It begins in the entry passages flanking either side of the ground-floor retail area and lobby space, where rich materials—marble, onyx, and bronze—and articulated volumes prevail. An adaptation of a 16th-century Palladian pattern of inlaid Botticino and Rosso Alicante marble in the floor, for instance, is complemented with bronze-mullioned, cracked glass panels surrounding the retail area, which is located in the 3-story atrium space and covered with a gold-leaf ceiling. The apparent scale of the atrium's soaring volume is reduced, in part, by shortening the height of the cast metal columns on top of the balustrades wrapping around the atrium's second and third floors—from a 12-foot height at the lower

level to a 2 1/2-foot height at the third level. The pattern of Roman crosses in the cast metal balustrades, painted in colors selected by color specialists Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl, break up the proportions further with a soft checkerboard fill.

The luxurious materials and detailing extend into the adjacent lobby area and lead to a 3,500-square-foot sculpture gallery, whose hushed atmosphere foreshadows the understated tone of merchandising that permeates the retail space above it. Elevator cabs, which serve not only Takashimaya's five 5,000-square-foot floors of retail and gallery space but the upper floors of offices and the 2-story penthouse apartment on top, are densely detailed with marble, onyx, and chamfered bronze and stainless-steel muntins. And for those willing to trudge up the steps, a fire stair, which has been upgraded for general use with granite steps, Fior di Pesco Carnico marble