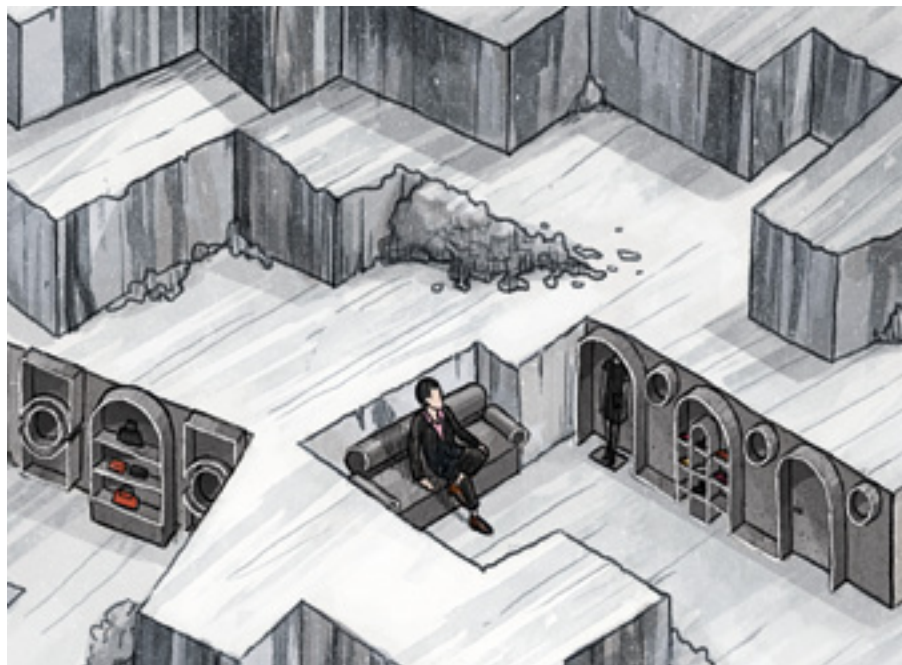# THE VINSON VIEW

Inside man and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why

OI Turned to stone
Are luxury stores losing their marbles over marble?

I love a slab or two of marble. Visit me at home in Florence and London and you'll find kitchen counters, bathroom walls and floors all decked out in white Carrara. It's simple, basic and matches the Mangiarotti 'Eros' dining tables and the Florence Knoll credenza. In black Marquina there's Konstantin Grcic's 'Galata' table and Jeff Miller's 'Plato' tables beside the beds. Metamorphic rock is a marvel that's years in the making; all that rich veining and the grandeur of book-matching (creating mirror-image slabs by using the facing sides of sliced marble). A wander up Madison Avenue or down Avenue Montaigne tells me that many fashion designers and their store planners have a similar passion; it seems nothing says luxury today like marble.

Prada is tearing up its carpets and replacing them with chequered floors of black Belgio, white Calacatta and Carrara. Tom Ford has a moody mix of grey Cala Paonazza and Kenya Black with Makassar wood. Chloé combines Paloma and Ateija stone with touches of Egee. Pucci's gilded panelling and terrazzo floors are finished off with richly veined aubergine Brescia di Medici. Céline book-matches several unusually coloured varieties for its plinths and mixes them with cross-cut onyx, white travertine and Verde St Denise stone inlay on the floor. Alexander Wang is all monochrome with white Calacatta Carrara.

Hedi Slimane's new-look Saint Laurent (W*177) is all nickel-plated brass, mirrors and surfaces built in Noir Soie and Blanc Statuaire. And Givenchy's new Avenue Montaigne store mixes Brescia Verde with an open-pored Ceppo di Gré stone on the walls.

Each and every one of these concepts is unique and has its own language. But when I visited the new Balenciaga menswear and womenswear stores in New York's Mercer Street, decorated in Verdi Ramegiatto (a gleaming dark green marble) and a little suede, limestone and cracked resin, I started to despair and wonder, is there nothing else? Yes, you can still find a novel way with marble: MSGM's first Milan store has fun flashes of fluoro-yellow in its marble counter and Vincenzo De Cotiis' new Antonia store in Milan has a Cipollino floor left *grezzo*, or rough cut. But surely there have to be other options?

Then, when I got a sneak peek of the new Viktor & Rolf store in Paris' rue Saint-Honoré, my faith in fashion was fully restored. The duo's brief to Pierre Beucler and Jean-Christophe Poggioli of Architecture & Associés was simple: find us a new material. Hurrah, that was music to my ears. Almost the entire interior – a kind of new take on neoclassicism complete with boiserie-style panelling, columns, arches and scroll-back sofas – is entirely fashioned from and finished in thick grey felt.

O2 Crystal gazer

March man of the month is surely designer Konstantin Grcic. His largest solo show to date, 'Panorama', opens at the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, while 'Man Machine', a show of new work (see above) made entirely in glass, with pistons, hinges and pumps, runs at Galerie Kreo in Paris.

O3 Dynamic duo

Taking the concept of fashion collaboration to new heights are Antwerp-based designer Raf Simons and Los Angeles-based artist Sterling Ruby. Together, they have created a full menswear collection, shown this January in Paris. It will go on sale in autumn, in lieu of a Raf Simons collection, as Raf Simons/Sterling Ruby. For one season only.

SPRING'S MUST-SEES

The first rugs by Hella Jongerius as design director of Danskina

André Balazs' Chiltern Street Hotel in London's Marylebone

BassamFellows' new lifestyle gallery in via Varese, Milan, with offerings including the duo's first footwear range (pictured)

Marco Zanini's debut for the once shuttered and now revived Schiaparelli fashion house

Marc Newson's first eyewear collection for Safilo

The new Christian de Portzamparc-designed Park Hyatt New York with Yabu Pushelberg interiors