

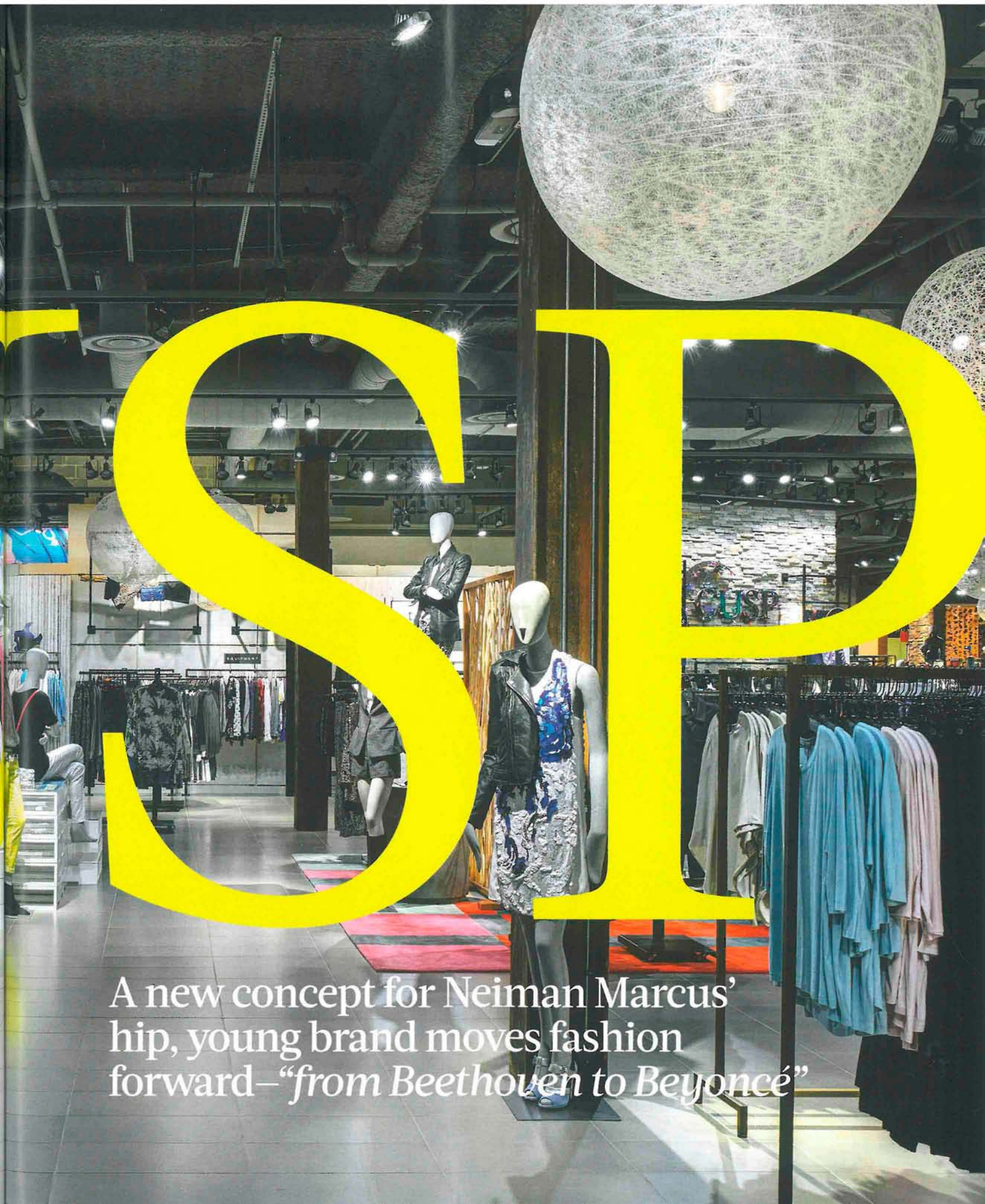
On the

OUTLET

By JANET GROEBER

Photos by CHARLIE MAYER





A new concept for Neiman Marcus' hip, young brand moves fashion forward—*“from Beethoven to Beyoncé”*

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ince launching its in-store department for a younger, more fashion-forward female back in 2005, Dallas-based Neiman Marcus continues to cultivate CUSP, its contemporary concept.

The latest version—a greatly enlarged and visually expansive location within Neiman’s NorthPark Center store in Dallas—opened last September, with styles from Rag & Bone, Vince, T by Alexander Wang and Robert Rodriguez, among others.

Now occupying the store’s former children’s pad, the 15,000-sq.-ft. department offers a simple, but warm and energetic palette of concrete, wood and steel. Fixturing and furnishings, along with textiles and graphics selected by an in-house team, further soften the space. The design team also layered in efficient LED lighting and a new sound system, along with amenities, such as new fitting rooms, to better serve this target customer.

CUSP coexists with the surrounding Neiman Marcus, although it’s an aesthetic stretch from the serenely appointed envelope. Moving from Neiman Marcus proper to CUSP, says Paola Antonini, manager of store planning, “is like going from Beethoven to Beyoncé.” Customers can gain department access by way of two interior entrances, and the store also doubles as a freestanding space with its own dedicated mall entrance.

Once inside, “the spaces slide into each other, dissolving the feeling of the traditional ‘roomy’ enclosures,” Antonini explains. By removing the former walls, the space offers flexibility for designing “shop-ettes” for key brands, complete with signage, mannequins, displays and forms.

“Instead of using traditional wallcoverings, we strategically located feature walls throughout the space and wrapped them in custom adhesive vinyl that are easily applied and removed, so we could react quickly to changes in the business from showcasing new vendors and trends to special events,” Antonini says.

All steel beams and columns were left bare, and the ceiling was exposed to the 17-ft.-tall structure above—decisions made during the project’s





← [Opposite] All beams and columns were left bare and the ceiling exposed.

← Fixtures and furnishings, along with textiles and graphics, were selected by an in-house team.

↓ The CUSP department offers a simple but energetic palette of concrete, wood and steel.

“The rusted metal, cracked concrete, bent steel and old contractor notes written on the wall were artifacts that almost bridged over into the art world.”

— PAOLA ANTONINI, CUSP





“When you decide to excavate and go for a raw, urban look, you have to be ready to accept the surprises.”

—IGNAZ GORISCHEK, NEIMAN MARCUS



↑ Graffiti artist Richie Miranda created a series of urban murals for the space.

↗ CUSP is in Neiman Marcus, but has its own dedicated mall entrance.



tear-out phase. But that's not all they uncovered before construction started. "We found a beautifully preserved, curved brick wall that was part of the original exterior entrance of the mall back in the 1960s," Antonini explains. "But [it] was covered up and subsequently forgotten, remodel, after remodel, after remodel." Layers of drywall and coats of paint with names like "Dusty Rose" and "Miami Beach" concealed the wall and told the story of previous renovations.

Further demolition also exposed more architectural details. "We were in for a big surprise when we found steel cross-bracing in a wall cavity that was supposed to be abandoned," Antonini says. "None of our, or our engineer's drawings, showed this steel structure on them, but it was there and it was big." Stretching from floor to ceiling, the two "X" cross-braces made of structural steel I-beams spanned about 60 ft. in width.

"The initial reaction from the on-site team was to cover it back up with drywall and work around it," Antonini notes. "But when Ignaz (Gorischek) got the photos of what they had found, he loved it. He immediately directed the team to leave them."

Now working with a fully stripped-down space, the team marveled at the patina that had developed over the years throughout the entire area. "It was something that no architect or designer could replicate," Antonini says. "The rusted metal, cracked concrete, bent steel and old contractor

notes written on the wall were artifacts that almost bridged over into the art world."

And speaking of the art world, the store does feature the work of renowned graffiti artist Richie Miranda, aka "Seen," who was given a near free hand to complete a series of urban murals for the space. Following the graffiti artists' code, another of Gorischek's directives was not to impose any limitations on Miranda except to say, "nothing too vulgar or too aggressive."

Antonini says the goal was for Miranda's murals to look as if they too had been there the whole time—"discovered"—much like the rusty steel and faded brick. Rather than label his works, there are two monitors with a video documenting Miranda painting the murals on-site. "Richie was the catalyst that made us lower the fitting room walls," Antonini explains. "So you could see his graffiti from anywhere inside and outside the store."

The ambitious project—part spontaneous architectural preservation, part considered art installation—turned out perfectly for the edgy CUSP customer, says Gorischek, who is vice president of store development. "When you decide to excavate and go for a raw, urban look, you have to be ready to accept the surprises," he says. The X-bracing they found is a case in point. "It added a dimension to the space that we could not have duplicated." Sometimes, he continues, "Those surprises make the design work better. And that was the case this time." der



PROJECT FILE

CUSP

NorthPark Center, Dallas

RETAILER/DESIGN

Neiman Marcus
Store Development

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Spec-Built Inc.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Neiman Marcus Properties
Group

CONSULTANTS/ENGINEERS

Koegel Engineers

STORE FIXTURES

Capital Fixtures, VIRA

MANNEQUINS/FORMS

Pucci

LIGHTING

Essential Lighting Design
Studio

FLOORING

Vaswani, Horizon

SIGNAGE/GRAPHICS

Jane Designs, Artografx,
Neiman Marcus Corporate
Graphics

WALLCOVERINGS

Bettinger Studio, Astek
Wallcovering

FURNITURE

Phillips Collection, Central
Station, Vaswani

SOUND SYSTEMS/TECHNOLOGY

Pro-Motion Technology Group

VIDEO/MEDIA CONTENT

Planet Productions

Information in the project file is provided by the retailer and/or design firm.