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Maison Margiela's Ephemeral Concept Store Opens in SoHo

The store is the brand's first new location to open in Manhattan in more than a decade.

By [Sharon Edelson](#) on November 1, 2019



📷 Maison Margiela's new Transitory Concept store with Jessi Reaves' functional sculpture in the background and Tabor Robak's mini Jumbotron hanging from the ceiling.
by courtesy of Maison Margiela

ESSENTIALIST

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[Maison Margiela Opens Ephemeral Concept Store in SoHo](#)

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If you've ever wondered what it would be like to be in the presence of a couturier — an impassioned and thought-provoking talent — and hear him speaking to you, then your wait is over — sort of.

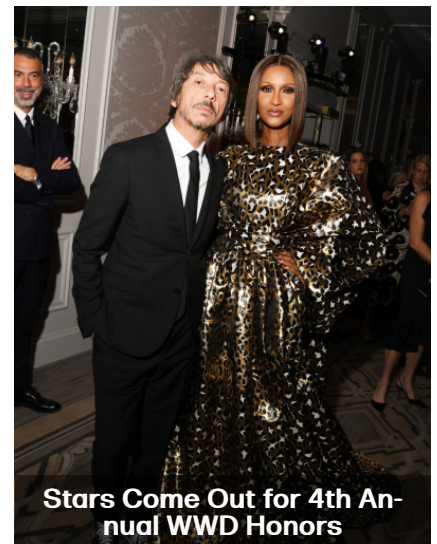
[At Maison Margiela](#)'s new 2,200-square-foot store at 1 Crosby Street in Manhattan's SoHo, creative director [John Galliano](#)'s voice comes spilling from sound cones. When a client walks into a noise-canceling zone and stands beneath one of the cones, snippets from the designer's podcast series, "The Memory of... with [John Galliano](#)," are uttered in his inimitable British accent. [The designer notably reupped his contract](#) with the house in buzzy news earlier this week.

One cone hangs above the collection and the other is installed in one of the dressing rooms. Billed as "having your own moment with John" and "very emotional," the podcast, where Galliano explains his collection, will change when a new season is introduced.

Authenticity, redefinition and subversion, at the heart of the house's core values, appear in fine form at the new unit, which is considered a transitory concept store. The location will operate for nine months before reopening as a permanent [Maison Margiela](#) boutique at a later date.

"After more than 10 years in New York, we only had one store on Greenwich Street. We started to look for a new store. This space on the corner, this area, is a little more removed [from the heart of SoHo]," said [Monica Voltolina](#), chief executive officer of [Maison Margiela](#). "This building had this element of the cool and cutting-edge ethos of the house. It's very intimate.

"This store is very promising for us. Our first New York store opened in 2005 on Greenwich Street, which is a residential street," Voltolina said, adding that the unit will remain open. "The Meatpacking District is growing. We see Hermès and the Whitney Museum opened. It's another point-of-destination shop. The traffic here is 20 times more. We have great expectations. This is our dream corner."



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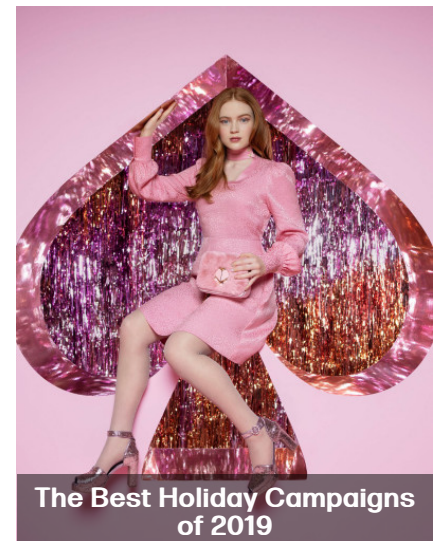
Maison Margiela's concept store has black-painted walls and 16-foot-high black ceilings, a vestige of the former tenant, jeweler de Vera, whose owner Federico de Vera once said the store was "darker and more mysterious" than an uptown unit. Maison Margiela added its own curious elements, including a 47-foot upside-down mirrored runway suspended from the ceiling, which causes confusion of the senses when people walking the urban catwalk outside the store's windows come into view. Infinity mirror boxes featuring a key accessory or shoe, and installed in place of original floor windows, add to the store's theme of illusion.

A black-and-white curtain, its velvet pinned like a couture piece, hangs in the store. Nearby, a trompe l'oeil version of the curtain has been painted on the wall.

The lighting designer Jan Kroeze, who has worked with Galliano on his shows, heightened the drama of the collections, including a coat with Macintosh fabric and silk print, \$4,500, and accessories such as Tabi shoes for men and women, and fusion sneakers, \$1,820. Prices range from about \$300 for small leather goods to \$7,000 for special pieces from the Défilé collection. The average price for handbags is \$1,800 and shoes, \$750.

Five chapters of art exhibitions featuring works by contemporary artists and curated by Dennis Freedman, will be incorporated into the environment, where the artists' voices will be in a nonarbitrary dialogue with the visual identity of the fashion house. Jessi Reaves' functional sculptures double as seating at the store. Reconfiguring familiar archetypes, the work reflects ideas about deconstruction and reconstruction, upon which Maison Margiela has been built. Tabor Robak's art, a mini Jumbotron, also blurs the lines between reality and virtual reality with its images of New York street scenes such as food cart vendors seen on LED screens.

This is the first time the works are being seen outside Paris, where they were displayed under black lights during Galliano's artisanal collection spring-summer 2018 runway show set. The



designer doesn't collaborate with artists, but rather chooses to showcase work that touches a nerve and is simpatico with the house. Reaves uses sawdust and glue and Galliano has been using some similar materials for the interior linings of clothing. The designer is said to be interested in artists of the generation of Reaves and Robak, who are in their 30s.

Flamingos are also a work of ephemeral art. A row of delicate pink birds perched on tall white sticks and displayed at the front of the store are actually cake pops, intended to fly away with customers.

The new Maison Margiela concept store touches each of the senses: sight, with art and fashion; sound, with Galliano's voice; taste with flamingo cake pops, and touch with the products themselves. Smell may come with fragrance.



[John Galliano](#) [Maison Margiela](#)
