

These Two Breathtaking Dolce & Gabbana Stores Are Architectural Eye Candy

Eric Carlson, of design firm Carbondale, has set sumptuous architectural scenes in both Monaco and Venice for the luxury brand

TEXT BY [ELIZABETH FAZZARE](#)



For Dolce & Gabbana stores in Monte Carlo and Venice, designer [Eric Carlson of Carbondale](#) has created entirely custom environments, which reference the historic design contexts of their respective cities. In Venice, pictured here, hand-blown Murano glass chandeliers hang over palatial interiors.

Photo: Antoine Huot

As a designer, how do you balance brand identity and context? It seems Eric Carlson of *Carbondale* has found the secret sauce. The designer has recently created two new stores for luxury fashion brand *Dolce & Gabbana*—one in Venice, Italy, and another in Monte Carlo, Monaco. But put them side by side and you'd never know it was all the work of one person. In Venice, a historical interior design with local palatial references and craftsmanship felt right. In Monte Carlo, contemporary sleekness meets Italian baroque. Yet both carry the spirit of D&G.

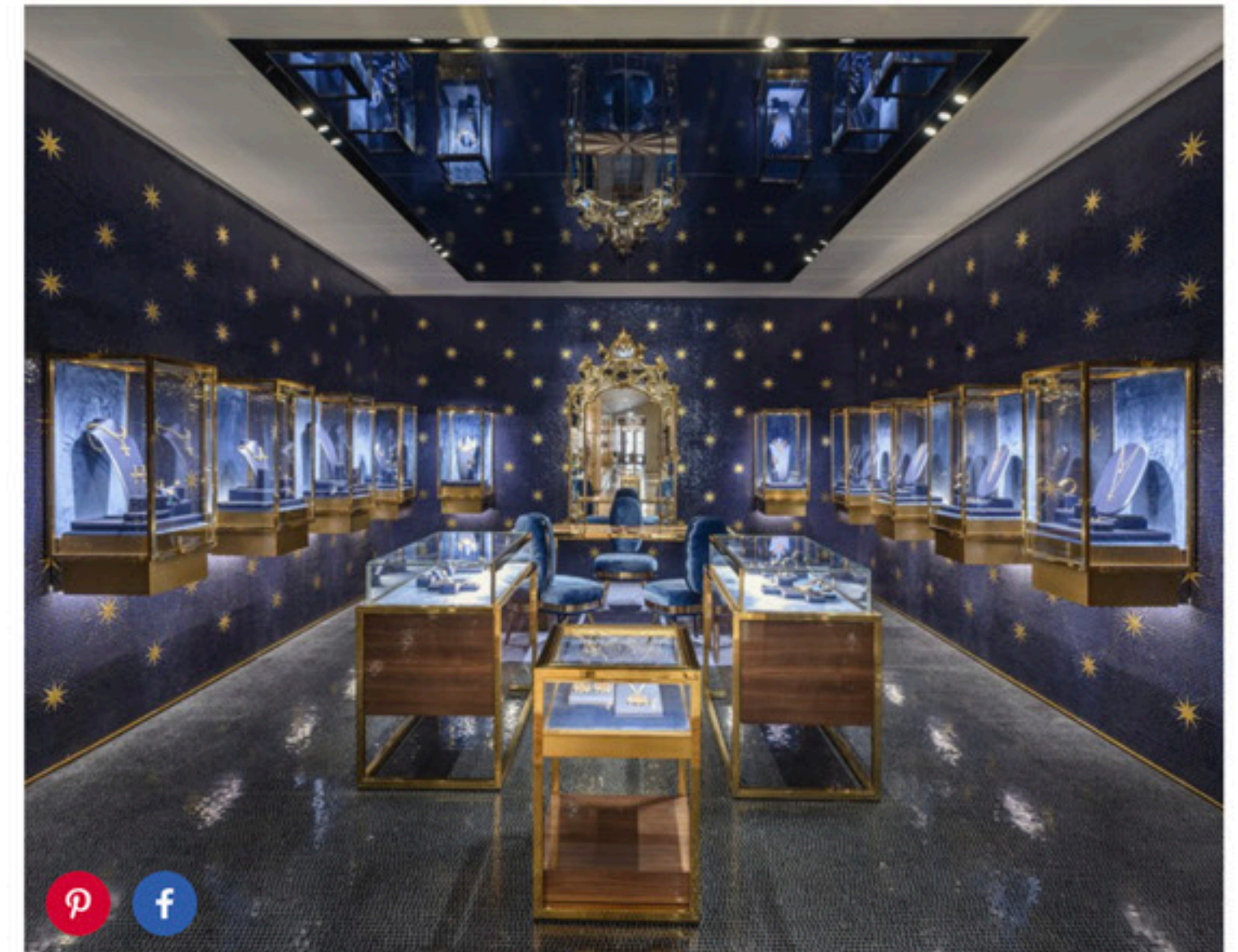
After extensive interviews with clients, customers, and employees at each project location, Carbondale met with artisans in Venice and scouted inspiration in Sicily—a process Carlson feels gave the design team more of a “comprehensive understanding” of the brand’s needs. “For me, the ultimate luxury is customization, creating something original by capturing the unique qualities of each of my clients,” he explains. *AD* got the scoop on the two new stores—pure visual extravagances, ripe with contextual allusions.



A mirrored ceiling creates a seemingly infinite vista in the Monaco Dolce & Gabbana store by Eric Carlson. Pink quartz and black Nero Marquina marble wrap the store.

Architectural Digest: For each project, what served as design inspiration?

Eric Carlson: For Dolce & Gabbana in both Venice and Monte Carlo, it was the characteristics shared by both the brand and cities respectively that become our design inspirations. For Venice, these are Italian craftsmanship, contrasts, the historical and contemporary, tradition and innovation, expressive emotions, and sublime beauty. A good example is the High Jewelry room. In Venice’s Piazza San Marco adjacent to the Doge’s Palace is the remarkable Basilica San Marco. Nestled into the façade of cathedral’s pediment stands a golden lion (the symbol of Venice) against a backdrop of dark blue sky with golden stars. I was inspired by this motif. . . . The room is wrapped in glass mosaics of blue and 24-karat gold stars handmade by the companies Friul and Orsoni, Venice-based family artisans dating back to the 1889. I love this space because it represents a rare fearless contemporary beauty without relying on austerity or minimalism; it’s sumptuous. For me, this could also perfectly describe Dolce & Gabbana.



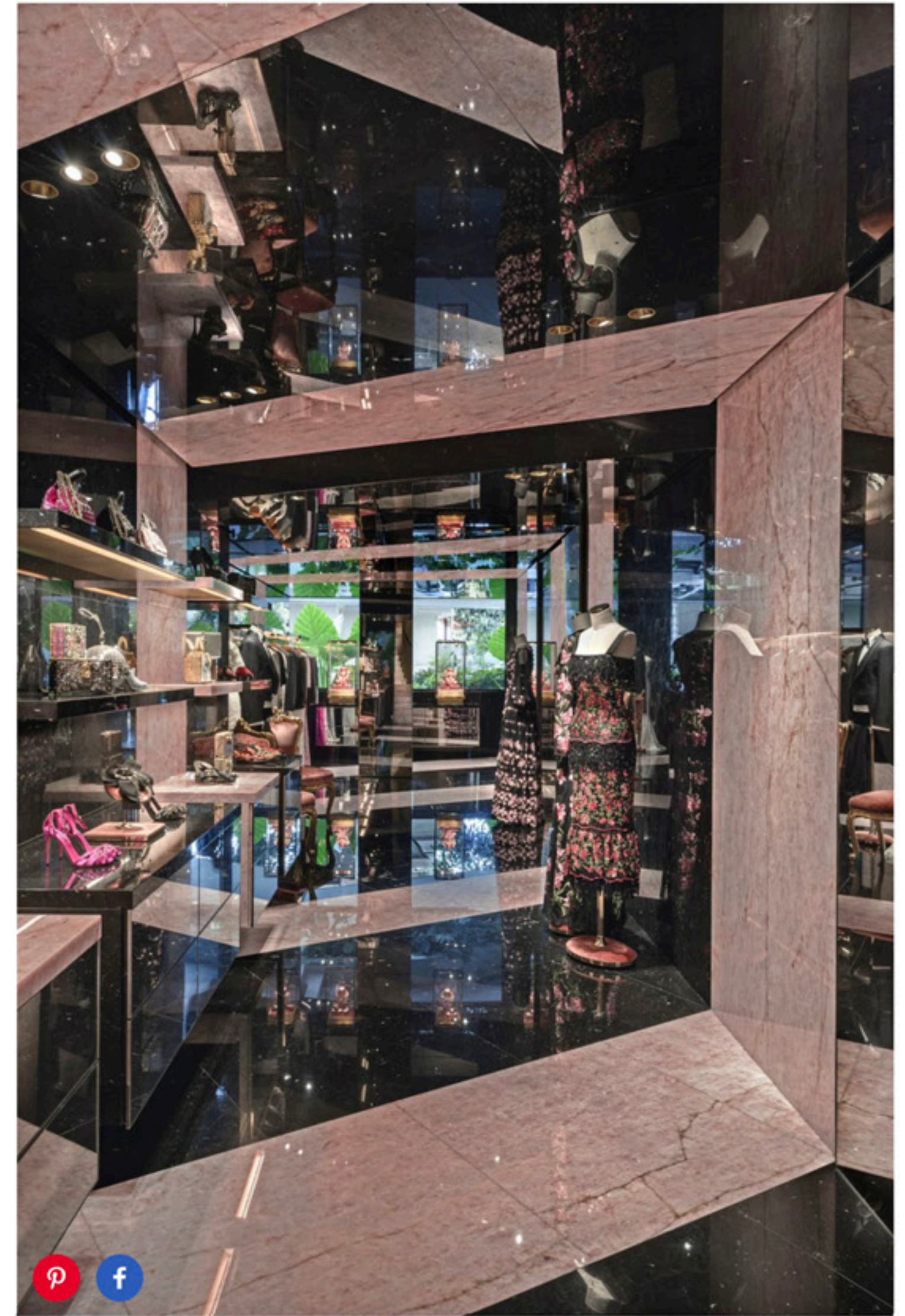
The High Jewelry room in Dolce & Gabbana in Venice with star motifs inspired by the city's Basilica San Marco.



The historic facade of Dolce & Gabbana in Venice faces Piazza San Marco, the city's main public square.

Photo: Antoine Huot

The Monte Carlo store is 8,073 square feet divided over three levels situated near the famous Casino de Monte Carlo and the Café de Paris with views out to the Mediterranean Sea. Here, the inspirations derived from the overlapping characteristic with Dolce & Gabbana brand were glamour, exclusivity, opulence, and a touch of James Bond-inspired humor for a jet-set clientele. For example, the long narrow lower level space with its discreet VIP entrance architecturally interprets the famous 007 swirling gun barrel with dynamic spirals of polished black marble and pink quartz stone wrapping the floor, walls, and ceiling.



Alternating bands of black marble and pink quartz in the Monte Carlo store reference the swirling gun barrel from the James Bond films set in the city.

Photo: Antoine Huot

AD: The rich materials in each project lend a dramatic air to each space. Did they inform design as well?

EC: The materials were an especially important part of making a distinctively “Venetian project.” We were fortunate to work directly with some of the most remarkably rich and diverse crafts and materials available from traditional artisans in Venice and the Veneto region of Italy. These included eight types of Italian marbles, marble mosaics, glass mosaics, and inlaid woods that line the floors and walls as well as damask and velvet fabrics from the famed Bevilacqua and Rubelli houses to accent wall panels and upholster the furniture. For me, this was an opportunity to pay homage and support the future of these artisans by showing how these historic houses and their highly refined artisanal virtuosity dating back centuries can be reinterpreted in a modern manner. The approach for materials for the Monte Carlo store was also important but in a very different way. Most of the materials and the finishes were designed to reflect and “dematerialize” surfaces to create an elusive, sparkling perception as visitors move through the spaces. For example, all of the ceilings are composed of crisply beveled rectangular mirrors and the floors in highly polished black Nero Marquina marble. Visually, this increases the volume and generates an intangible, magical impression . . . like stepping inside a diamond.



Dolce & Gabbana in Venice

AD: How does the furniture add to the visitor experience of the stores?

EC: Both the Venice and Monte Carlo flagships are *alto posizionamento*—everything was designed specifically for each project down to the smallest details. Nothing is standard or industrial. An example for the Venice project is the seating. Inspired by the brand’s tailoring expertise, I transformed the tailor’s pincushion to create benches, chairs, and sofas wrapped in colored velvets. Pure and simple in geometry, noble in presence, yet lush in comfort. We also collaborated with the famous Seguso family, who has made handblown Murano glass since the 14th century, to custom-design numerous pieces including chandeliers, mirror frames, furniture displays, tables, and even the door handles and clothing hooks. For Monte Carlo, to contrast with the angular orthogonal interior architecture, we selected a few highly sculptural antique Italian baroque chairs and sofa pieces and reupholstered them in richly woven pink and gold Italian silk damask fabric. In both projects, the furniture participates with the spaces, materials, and lighting to reinforce the ideas and experience.



A dressing room in Dolce & Gabbana in Venice.

Image: Antoine Huot

AD: The stores seem very much to be designed as destinations rather than just shopping outposts. What sets these apart?

EC: While most brands have a store “concept” and repeat it over and over again, Dolce & Gabbana is pursuing a bold and innovative strategy to create a unique and distinctive architectural retail environment for each store. This quest for authenticity is the next level of luxury retail architecture.