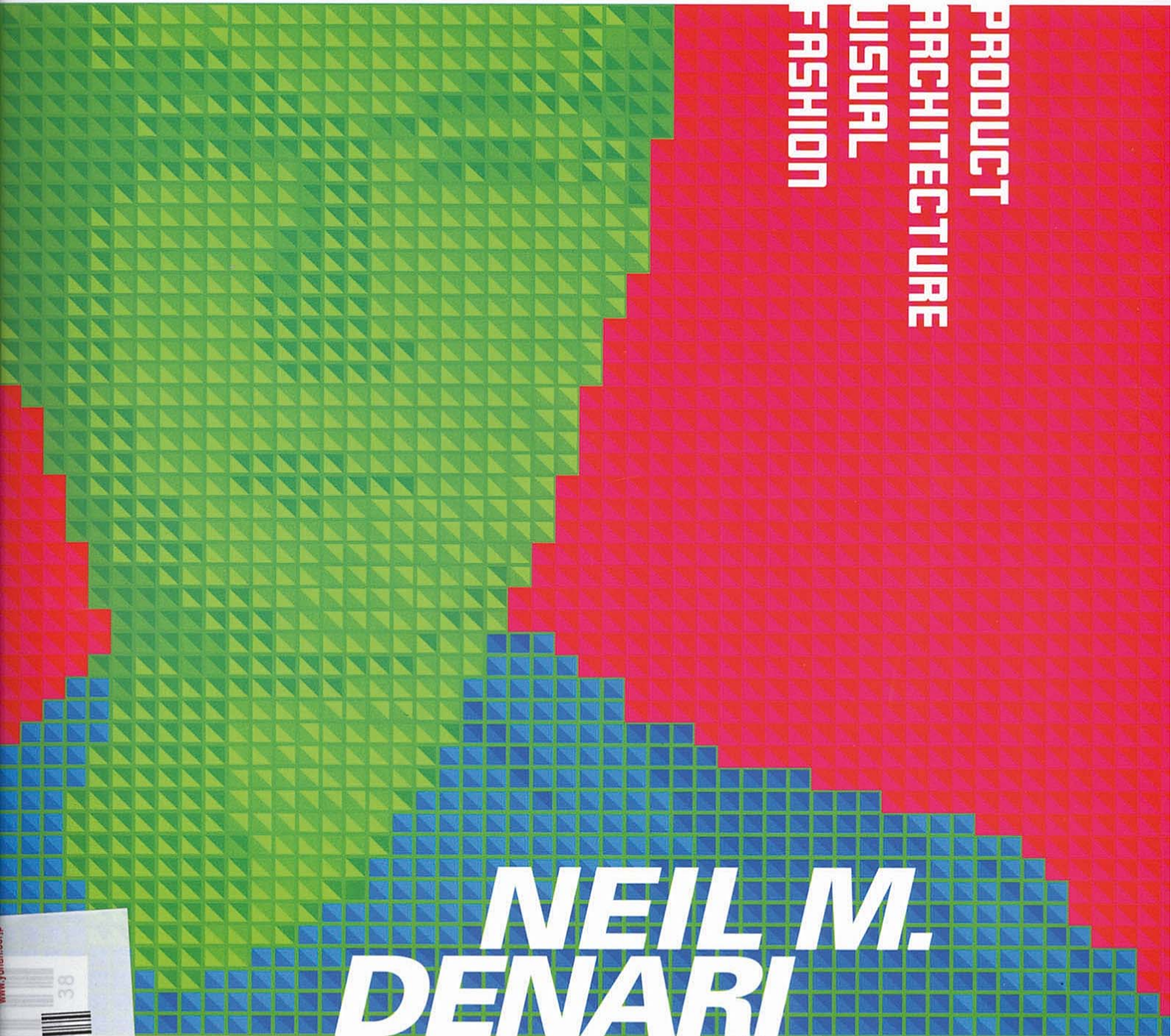


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ARCHITECTURE: SEBASTIEN SEGERS // DESIGN: MARC NEWSON  
PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTOHIRO SUNOUCHI





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The main drags and back streets of Harajuku and Aoyama in Tokyo are a veritable laboratory for shop architecture and design. There has been a general sense of one-upmanship among brands in this area to create the next «big thing,» and in doing so seem to be willing to give free reign to high profile designers and architects in this quest. So it shouldn't be entirely surprising that in-demand designer Marc Newson has also been called upon to work his magic on a retail interior in this neighbourhood as well. Of note, however, is the quietness with which it was done (compare with the spiky new Cartier shop around the corner which basically screams «look at me!»). The shop was designed for Marie-Helene de Taillac and is the jewellery brand's second freestanding shop (the first, in Paris, designed by Tom Dixon). The quiet style of the shop is one of the few similarities between the two stores, de Taillac says, «It's boring when you travel and you see brand shops using the same design for all their stores.» The shop itself is largely just walls, no overt display fixtures or vitrines. Instead, visitors to the shop are greeted with mini-window displays in the interior walls. The whimsical displays change seasonally, the current one plays on a sunken treasure theme and is a natural fit for the interior, which de Taillac likens to an aquarium. The displays tease visitors with a glimpse of the shop's offerings, the full range of which are then made visible by pulling open drawers beneath each window. De Taillac says «I like my shop to feel like an Aladdin's cave and for there to be a contrast between the minimal display and the hidden treasure.» The softly curving walls are finished in lacquer, an effect Newson says he is using in many recent projects «because it is very luxurious, modern and classical.» With Newson's work in jewellery design early in his career, was there anything from that experience that he brought with him to this project? «Yes, in fact, it affects my design in general. It's the concentration on detail and the need to have a good knowledge of the materials.»