

THE



Architect and designer Peter Marino's enduring career with Chanel is the subject of a new book, punctuating a remarkable tenure in the fashion industry.

By Jackie Cooperman



Peter Marino. Photo by Jason Schmidt. Opposite page: The Architecture of Chanel (Phaidon 2021).

STANDOUT

Whatever Peter Marino does, he does with undeniable gusto.

The 72-year-old architect and designer is noted nearly as much for his distinctive look — leather-clad biker, toned and tattooed biceps in a field whose most noted practitioners often favor discrete minimalism — as he is celebrated for his almost absurdly blue-chip list of corporate and individual clients. His work includes projects for fashion houses such as Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein, and Fendi; the Cheval Blanc hotels in Paris and Beverly Hills; and even the historic preservation of a Venetian palazzo and the New York Public Library.

But in all of this, Marino's most enduring professional relationship is with the storied house of Chanel, and with Karl Lagerfeld, the company's late creative director. To mark a quarter-century of their collaboration, Phaidon has just published *Peter Marino: The Architecture of Chanel*, an impeccably produced tome housed in an acrylic

slipcase meant to evoke Marino's work on the Chanel boutique in Istanbul.

"Chanel basically said: 'We leave the architecture to you. Whether it's a building, a store interior, or a piece of furniture — the design must come from you.' No other client has done that for me before or since," Marino notes in the book's foreword.

To create the book, Marino tells us, he winnowed down the more than 200 projects Chanel commissioned from him to a series of 16. "Within these 16, you have the icons of Chanel seen in many forms. A white silk blouse is referenced in the pleating of Chanel Istanbul's façade," he explains. "The little black dress and its tweed are echoed in Chanel Seoul, seen in the varied textures of the façade, with the black lava stone."



The Architecture of Chanel (Phaidon 2021).



Chanel, Seoul, Cheongdam-dong, 2019. *The Architecture of Chanel* (Phaidon 2021), page 138. Photo by Manolo Yllera.



Chanel Miami Design District Boutique. Photos courtesy of Chanel.

In the Design District, where Marino says, “every single store is trying to outdo the other with more and more ‘playful’ and elaborate forms of expression,” he envisioned Chanel’s boutique as an elegant rebuke. “In this context, I’m trying to make the Chanel building stand out with an old simplicity that will offer quite a relief. It’s a beautiful white cube,” he notes.

If the physical buildings remain emblematic of Marino’s success, he embraces the tangibility of documenting his favorite projects in print. “A book still remains the best way to record a body of work,” he says, striking an elegiac tone.

“To be honest, who knows how long anything lasts—and especially retail architecture never lasts that long. We live in a very disposable society.”

Transient as society may be, Marino has found countless ways to create permanence. At his Southampton estate, he tends not only a bevy of Italian bees but often spends 12-hour days alongside his gardeners, making sure the property is just so before taking time off for tennis and working out with his trainer. He chronicled his meticulous and lush plantings in the 2017 Rizzoli book *The Garden of Peter Marino*.



Nearby, he opened the Peter Marino Art Foundation last summer, after spending three years restoring the façade of what had been an 1895 library building. The 8,000-square-foot exhibition space features Marino's collection of more than 100 works, from rare Renaissance bronzes to pieces by Robert Mapplethorpe and Damien Hirst. In its inaugural year, the foundation hosted exhibits and live events with artists like Francesco Clemente, Tom Sachs and Rashid Johnson.

Among his upcoming projects, Marino says, are a private property and resort on the Greek island of Skopios; a Christian Dior flagship in Paris and the renovation of Tiffany & Co.'s iconic Fifth Avenue flagship. Despite his myriad accomplishments, Marino remains unsated, his restless curiosity and artistic bent untamed.

"I would like to build all the buildings that I won in competitions that were never built," says Marino, whose non-biking loungewear includes leather hoodies that Chanel produces just for him. In particular, he dreams of creating an opera house. "In 2000, I won a competition for an opera house in Palm Beach that never happened due to lack of funding," Marino says. "I'd love to actually complete one."

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Exterior of Peter Marino Art Foundation, the former Rogers Memorial Library, built in 1895, originally designed by R.H Robertson. The exterior was restored and interior redesigned by Peter Marino Architect, creating 8000 sq of art exhibition space.



From top: A Francesco Clemente show included a commission for Peter Marino, "Untitled (Elysian Fieldleaves), 2013", watercolor on paper. Surrounding sculptures by Tom Sachs; Looking at paintings by Francesco Clemente, Damien Hirst and sculptures by Joel Morrison.

