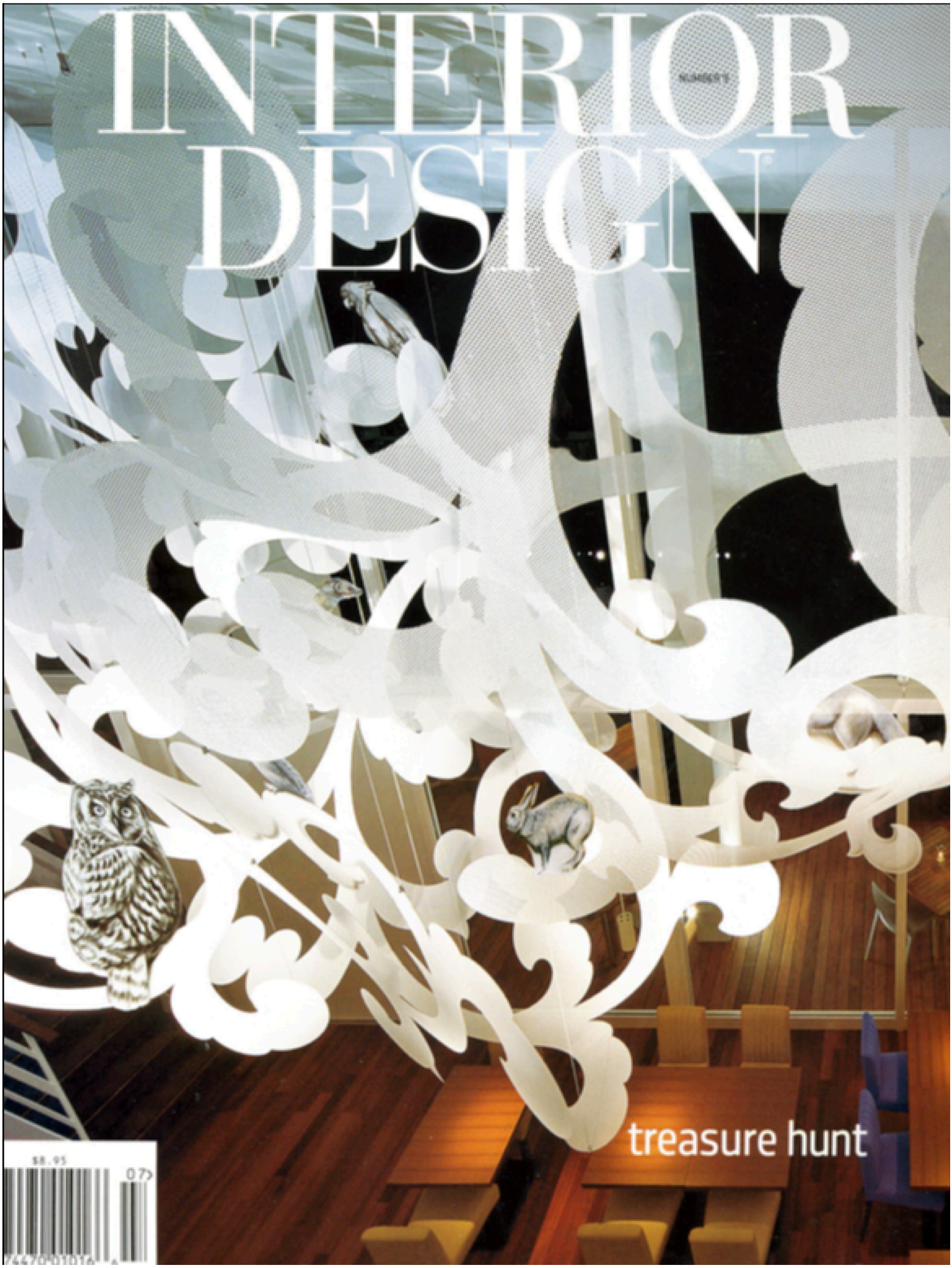
INTERIOR DESIGN



treasure hunt

mover shaker

the crystal princess

It's Nadja Swarovski who brings the sparkle to her family's manufacturing empire

The village of Wattens, in the Austrian Tyrol, may be only 160 miles from Milan. But Nadja Swarovski's journey from her hometown—also home to her family's multibillion-dollar crystal business—to a city that, for one week every April, becomes the center of the design universe has encompassed great distances and significant detours. Her route took her first to Dallas, where she majored in art history at Southern Methodist University; next to New York for gemology studies and a postcollegiate foray into the gallery world; then to Hong Kong, where she worked in the Swarovski marketing department; and finally to London, where she's vice president of communications, the de facto face and voice of Swarovski crystal. Along the way, she's lifted the company out of semi-fusty obscurity and into the spotlight.

It's of course the Crystal Palace chandelier exhibitions that put Swarovski's name on the lips of tastemakers in architecture and interiors. "Around 2000, our components division was doing well in two sectors, fashion and jewelry, but our chandelier components were relatively unknown," she says. To make a publicity push, she teamed up with cutting-edge designers, introducing them to the inventory and encouraging them to experience ➤

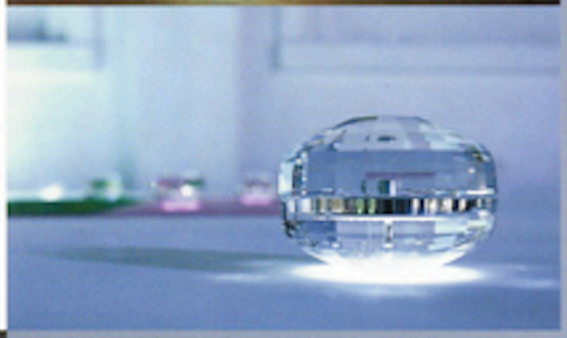
Nadja Swarovski at Moss, New York, with Tord Boontje's Blossom chandelier, which debuted in 2002 in the first Crystal Palace exhibition.

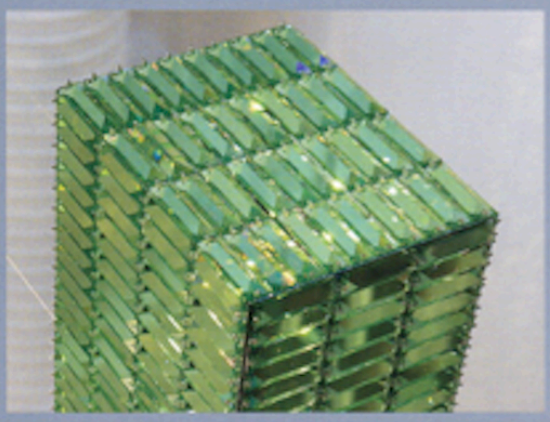
the product visually and tactilely. Results, launched in 2002 at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, included Tord Boontje's Blossom chandelier, now an icon. "We'd expected shapes to be contemporary yet still chandelierlike," she continues. "Tord's work was absolutely groundbreaking, a revelation even for us at Swarovski. It was so organic and pretty and emotional, a delight."

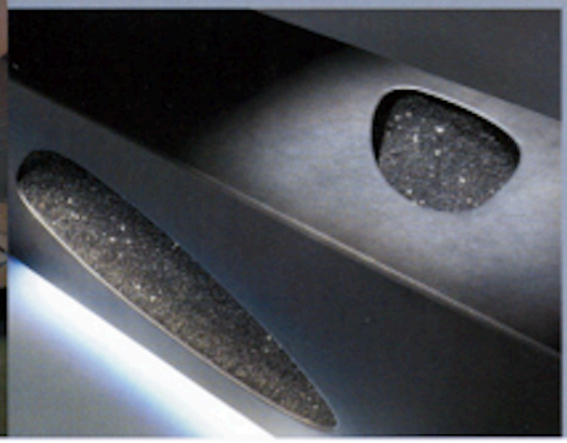
Six years and seven collections later, the ongoing project represents a wide swath of the industry, from a Pritzker Prize winner (Zaha Hadid) to a 30-year-old getting started (Paul Cocksedge). And that's very much Swarovski's intention—the company has a tradition of encouraging emerging talent. Catering to the needs of these designers, both new and established, there's an entire production division devoted to Crystal Palace.

From fall 2007 to spring 2008, Crystal Palace made its usual transatlantic tour, stopping in the contemporary-art capitals of Miami, London, and Basel, Switzerland. "A Ron Arad collector, for instance, appreciates seeing us at the big fairs, especially since there's such a dovetailing of art, fashion, and architecture today," Swarovski says.

Showing alongside the chandeliers in Milan, for the first time, was furniture. Arne Quinze contributed the Fragments divider, filled with amber-colored crystal strands lit by LEDs, and the Ellipsis light sculpture. Monolithic tables, seating, and lighting in Fredrikson Stallard's Cavern collection are punctuated by deep gouges lined with crystals, recalling the way crystalline formations develop geologically. A crystal-studded wool rug was a joint effort with Tai Ping Carpets. Another manufacturing ➘







Clockwise from top right: *Stardust by Tokujin Yoshioka, 2005. Stone Light by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, 2007. Georg Baldele's Glitterbox, 2006. Fredrikson Stallard's Cavern bench, 2008. Arne Quinze's Fragments divider and Ellipsis sculpture, 2008.*

COURTESY OF SWAROVSKI

From top: *Double Solo by Marcus Tremonto, 2008. Marcel Wanders's Aqua Jewels, 2008. Cascade by Vincent Van Duysen, 2004.*

partnership explored was with Bisazza, which provided the tile for Marcel Wanders's crystal mural, Aqua Jewels. "That was a good three-way street. Marcel had a great working relationship with Bisazza, we have a great one with Marcel, and Bisazza's product is amazing—different, obviously, from crystal but with a similar impact," Swarovski says.

Swarovski has worked with Basso & Brooke and Piero Lissoni to develop signature crystals, too—as she previously did with fashion designers, among them Giorgio Armani and Donatella Versace. "Definitely, more collaborations are in our future," she promises. Currently in the pipeline are top-secret projects with Arad and Ross Lovegrove.

—Maria Shollenbarger

mover shaker