Chanel, Inc.
North American Operations Center
Commercial

Client
Chanel, Inc.

Location
Piscataway, New Jersey

Year
Completed: 1996

The $35,000,000 expansion of Chanel, Inc.'s, North American manufacturing headquarters derived from Chanel's need for space and recognition that its existing facilities poorly represented one of the world's most important fashion houses.

The primary challenge for the North American Operations Center was to unify, expand and transform 360,000 sq. ft. of banal office, research, manufacturing, and distribution facilities in a suburban office park, spread the length of a site 3/8ths of a mile across and split by a four lane road.

To get the right architecture for these challenges, the House held a closed competition for the Operations Center. Rejected schemes overpowered the special elegance of the House.

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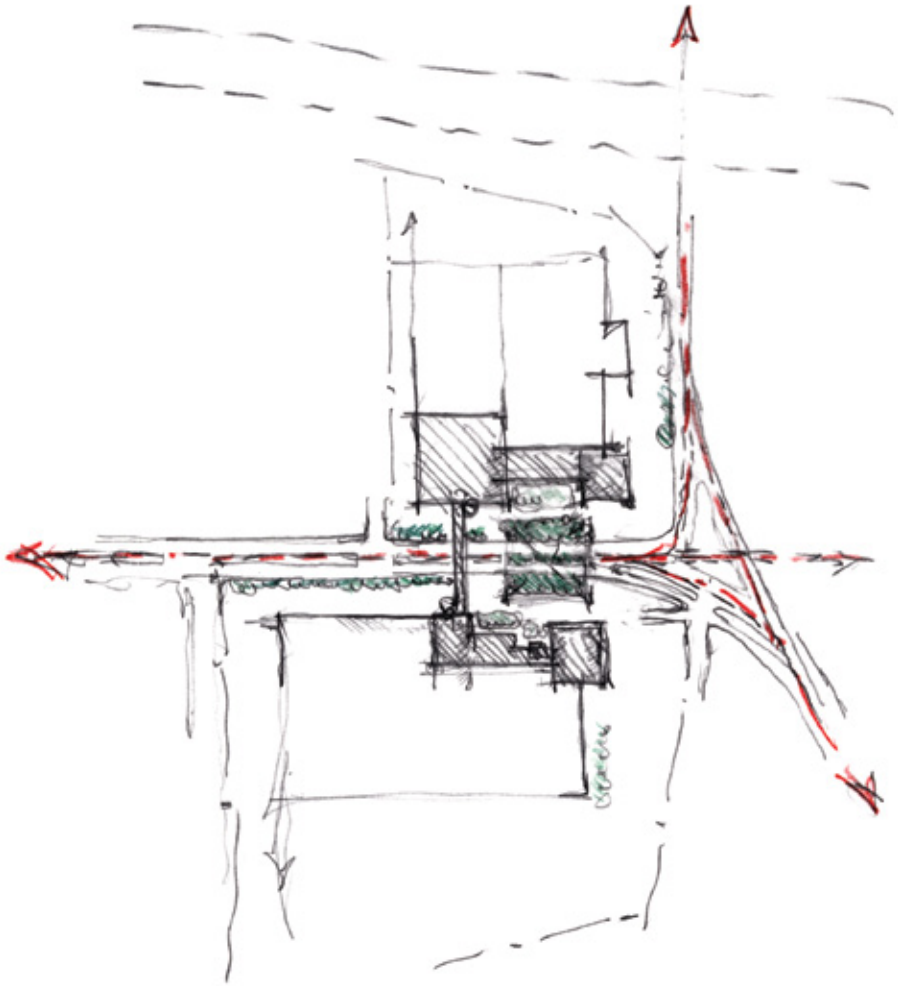

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Our winning scheme designed by focused on a 240-foot double level bridge for pedestrians and goods that links the portions of the plant on opposite sides of the four-lane highway. The bridge reads as a long and elegant horizontal object held up on a slender central flat black bracket, carefully curved to seem perfectly straight. The transparency of the skin of the walkway made it light as fabric. Black and white with a touch of beige, the bridge brought home the strength and elegance of the House's strictly controlled palette.

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The old and new facilities together cover 450,000 sq. ft. and include a new, highly sophisticated automated highbay warehouse, as well as new offices, testing laboratories, and manufacturing space. The new offices are clad in fine metal and glass, animated by the smooth motion of the skin as it folds away from them. Surviving building elements were re-dressed in black and white curtain wall. Windowless components were given a complementary beige stucco. The characteristic black stripe of the House was threaded through the composition like a ribbon.