

WWWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



Golden Hour

Matthew M. Williams says he likes his collections for Givenchy to include strong fashion items alongside a wealth of timeless pieces for wardrobe building. This dramatic chubby in long-haired sheep would fall in the former category, shown with sleek stirrup pants and a metallic leather Cut-Out bag. *For more on the resort season, see pages 6 to 8.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGO VEUILLET

RH's World

The company has unveiled RH England, The Gallery at Aynho Park, in its drive to become a global luxury brand.

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Simkhai's Step

Jonathan Simkhai has launched menswear after 13 years of focusing on growing his women's collection.

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Bigger Purpose

Fe Noel wants her first store, in Brooklyn, to be a pipeline for creative talent between the U.S. and Grenada.

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BUSINESS

CEO Gary Friedman on RH's Biggest 'Masterpiece'

● This weekend the California-based company cut the ribbon on RH England, The Gallery at Aynho Park, a 73-acre, 17th-century estate that aims to be a luxury travel destination.

BY SOFIA CELESTE AND VIOLET GOLDSTONE

AYNHO, England – “I don’t expect to be understood initially, but I do believe that it will be respected and inspire people eventually,” RH chief executive officer and chairman Gary Friedman said of his unique strategy, last month during an analyst conference call.

A rarity in the corporate world, the veteran executive is boldly aiming to reshape U.S. upscale furniture retailer RH (formerly Restoration Hardware) into a global luxury brand with exclusive galleries, restaurants and lodging worldwide.

RH’s most ambitious project yet – RH England, The Gallery at Aynho Park – is a 73-acre, 17th-century estate and the crown jewel in this strategy. Envisaged as a luxury travel destination for design, food and wine, the revitalized property opened its doors Saturday, to a select group of VIPs that included British period series royalty like Regé-Jean Page and Michelle Dockery, as well as film stars like Sydney Sweeney, Zoe Saldana and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, her wife, actress Portia de Rossi and Idris Elba, who DJ’d at the star-studded event.

The company is creating bespoke experiences like RH Yountville, an integration of food, wine, art and design in the Napa Valley; RH1 and RH2, its private jets, and RH3, its luxury yacht that is available for charter in the Caribbean and Mediterranean where the wealthy and affluent visit and vacation – immersive experiences the company says will expose new and existing customers to its evolving authority in architecture, interior design and landscape architecture.

When it opens to the public on June 9, RH England will include three full-service restaurants – The Orangery, The Conservatory (opening in the fall) and The Loggia, plus three secondary hospitality experiences: The Wine Lounge, The Tea Salon and The Juicery.

Guests will appreciate views of Europe’s largest herd of white deer grazing on the scenic property from the 46 windows adorning the south-facing main building

and can enjoy a glass of wine or afternoon tea service while sitting around monolithic stone firepits on the Grand Viewing Terrace.

The company said that the Aynho Architecture & Design Library will feature rare books from the foundational masters of architecture, Andrea Palladio, Vincenzo Scamozzi and Leon Battista Alberti. The centerpiece of the collection is one of the first printings of “De Architectura (Ten Books on Architecture)” by Vitruvius, a Roman architect and engineer whose work from the 1st century BC is said to have inspired Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing of the “Vitruvian Man” 1,500 years later.

Among England’s rare Grade 1 listed landmarks, which include Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and Tower Bridge, Aynho Park was refurbished by British architect Sir John Soane in the early 19th century. Constructed in 1615 and later rebuilt after the English Civil War, the property is nestled between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire and sits between a 200-acre conservation area.

The late-Georgian estate feature marks Friedman’s latest real estate revamp after revitalizing several landmark buildings across the United States, including the former museum of Natural History in Boston, The Bethlehem Steel Building in San Francisco and the historic Three Arts Club in Chicago.

On the eve of the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Friedman discusses the landmark project and how he got his hands on the rare, first-edition Vitruvian book.

WWD: People are calling the RH England Aynho Park RH’s biggest masterpiece to date. Why is that?

Gary Friedman: Let’s start with Aynho Park [which] is a Grade 1 listed building. Buckingham Palace is a Grade 1 listed building, and Grade 1 listed buildings represent only 2.5 percent of all listed buildings in the U.K. So RH England is built on a foundation of rarity and revered for being something remarkable in the history of architectural spaces and places. Aynho Park has a design history that we are inspired by, and presented a beautiful canvas for us to write its next chapter and ours.

WWD: How did you obtain the Vitruvian manuscripts?

G.F.: We collaborated with a noted curator to evaluate and source rare architectural books to fulfill our vision of creating

RH England, The Gallery at Aynho Park



an inspiring and authentic architecture and design library at Aynho Park that reflected the RH design ethos. Through extensive search and discovery of mostly private collections, we focused our initial efforts on “De Architectura (Ten Books on Architecture)” by Vitruvius. We obtained the first edition printed in a modern language [in Italian] from 1521, in Como, Italy.

WWD: Can you tell us how RH came into contact with James Perkins, owner of Aynho Park, and why it is special to the brand?

G.F.: We were searching for a location that would enable us to introduce ourselves to the U.K. and Europe in an inspiring and unforgettable fashion, in a manner that communicated our values and beliefs, and rendered our brand more valuable. We worked with Savills to find such a place, and they proposed many interesting options, but we chose only one, Aynho Park, which was not for sale. They arranged a meeting with the owner, James Perkins, and the story unfolded from there.

WWD: RH will have openings in Germany, U.K., France and Italy next year. Can you give some more details about where those will be exactly?

G.F.: We have galleries under construction in London (Mayfair), Paris, Milan, Madrid (two locations), Munich, Düsseldorf [Germany],

Brussels [Belgium] and Sydney [Australia] opening over the next three years.

WWD: What will be the next guesthouse and/or spa to open its doors?

G.F.: We are under construction in Aspen [Colorado], and plan to open our second RH Guesthouse, and our first RH Bath House & Spa in 2024.

WWD: When did you have the epiphany moment that RH needed to be a services, design, dining and travel reality? It’s quite the departure from what it once was.

G.F.: Our vision for the RH brand is constantly evolving and expanding. The more we do, the more we learn. The more we learn, the more we see. The more we see, the more we do. It’s an upward spiral of invention and innovation.

WWD: How is the RH Guesthouse and luxuries compared to other locations?

G.F.: In every way...

We tried to conceptualize a unique hospitality experience for travelers seeking privacy and luxury. Privacy is the one thing everyone has given away with social media, and the internet has taken away as you can Google most anything about anyone. We believe privacy is going to be a large and important market.

BUSINESS

Sydney Sweeney, Idris Elba Dance The Night Away at RH England

● Stars from the worlds of design, fashion and entertainment celebrated the unveiling of RH England.

BY VIOLET GOLDSTONE

AYNHO, England – Overlooking rolling green hills filled with free-roaming white deer, guests including Zoe Saldana, Sydney Sweeney, Regé-Jean Page, and Michelle Dockery, admired RH England, The Gallery at the historic Aynho Park, the retailer’s luxury shopping experience.

Embodying John Soane’s design ethos of classical antiquity with midcentury

modern furniture decorating the space, the renovated building features design details from the original building, such as the house’s wooden parquet flooring and banisters, complimented by recently installed features such as elaborate crown moldings, inspired by Greco-Roman motifs.

Actress Portia de Rossi, founder of General Public, an art publishing company that is sold exclusively at RH, and wife of Ellen DeGeneres, was one of the many celebrities at the buzzy soiree.

“This is a last-minute trip to the U.K., to see the magnificent creation that is Aynho. We’re finding new artists and launching new collections – we have

done some specific exclusive pieces and collections for Aynho,” which have yet to be revealed to the public, teased de Rossi.

Stars opted to wear British talents for the occasion. Sweeney sported a sleek black look with flair cuffs from Nensi Dojaka’s fall 2023 collection, while Jordan Dunn wore a see-through green dress by Supriya Lele.

Aside from touring the space, which includes a John Soane exhibition room, partygoers were able to get a taste of the menus at two of RH England’s three restaurants.

Inside, guests were able to sit down for a 10-minute tasting menu at the

Orangery, which offered a choice between the wagyu rib eye, rotisserie chicken, or cauliflower steak before having to choose between the caramel banana split or butterscotch brûlée.

In the outdoor loggia, pizzas were on the menu, from margherita for traditionalists to sausage for the more adventurous crowd.

While they queued, attendees sipped on wine or Bellinis by Cipriani London, while listening to music DJ’d by actor Idris Elba.

RH’s chairman and chief executive officer Gary Friedman made a grand entrance at the event, followed by a speech.

“While some call us the company formerly known as Restoration Hardware, we are not a hardware store. We are not a travel or hospitality company...Our strategy is quite simple: We do what we love, with people we love, for people that love what we do,” he said.