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A VISIONARY VIEWPOINT

WITH NEW RH DESIGN GALLERIES IN PARIS, MILAN AND (SHORTLY) LONDON, THE ALL-AMERICAN BRAND CONTINUES TO EXPAND.

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The tale of how CEO Gary Friedman brought RH to Europe is no less than Dickensian in scale. Within the span of nine months, the brand will have opened design galleries in Paris, Milan and (in June) London—a feat Friedman says would be notable if it all unfolded in nine *years*. These new outposts offer more than furniture, they encompass restaurants, bars and even libraries holding rare architectural tomes. “They might be the most original, inspiring and immersive consumer experiences in the world,” he observes.

In describing the effort, Friedman frequently references the talents of his team. But what might cause Charles Dickens, the

master of rags-to-riches sagas such as *David Copperfield*, to take notice is the CEO’s own story. Friedman grew up poor in Sonoma, California, and struggled with a reading disorder. Later, he dropped out of community college. “People thought I was dumb and treated me that way,” he says. But what his

detractors didn’t know is that Friedman has an eye, and it turned out to be a golden one. “I saw the world in a certain way, and I knew what I liked,” he explains.

Fast forward several years and up the ladder at iconic American brands (Gap, Williams-Sonoma) to Friedman’s first trip

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to Europe at age 35 (a Paris work venture), when a seed was planted. “The architectural beauty of Europe was the first thing that hit me,” he says. “The structures are balanced and symmetrical, and that made sense to me—it made a lasting impression.” The visionary vowed to one day do something in these extraordinary places.

The opening of this trio of design galleries in the style capitals of the world is when Friedman truly made good on his promise. The Milan and London galleries are in historic buildings, and the Paris venue lies behind archaic, nationally protected gates.

All three are fantastically reimaged with the help of London-based Foster + Partners, and they embody the core RH ethos. “Everything we design—buildings, products, experiences—is done through the lens of architecture,” Friedman notes. “We are obsessed with it.”

Every good Dickens-style story ends with a zinger from a plucky character, and this one is no different. When asked what he would say to his early detractors at this moment of achievement, Friedman offers a simple reply: “Thank you for the motivation.” **rh.com**

Italian Ascent

RH Milan (below), the brand’s first gallery in Italy, is situated in a neoclassical palazzo on Corso Venezia. Behind the 1880s façade, visitors will find a library of rare design books; La Volta, the brand’s first below-ground restaurant; and an interior design studio. Throughout are RH furniture and accessory collections, including the debut of RH Estates, pieces with a classic aesthetic conceived through a contemporary lens.



PHOTOS: COURTESY RH