

MODERN LUXURY

Angeleno

A woman with long dark hair is posing against a white, curved wall. She is wearing a red, navy blue, and white polka-dot dress with a white belt and white high-heeled shoes. Her hands are raised behind her head.

STATE *of the* ART

*The Definitive Guide to
L.A.'s Thriving Scene*

FAB COLLAB

TOMMY HILFIGER AND CAMERON SILVER
LAUNCH A CHIC VINTAGE COLLECTION

HOTEL HOLIDAZE

THE BEST SEASONAL OFFERINGS
AT L.A.'S HOTTEST PROPERTIES

IN GOOD TASTE

HAKKASAN'S NEWEST OUTPOST
DAZZLES IN BEVERLY HILLS

SPARKLE AND POP

FESTIVE RESORT LOOKS
FOR EVERY OCCASION

ZOË
SALDANA

THE STYLE-SAVVY
SUPERSTAR ON
LOCATION AT LACMA



TOTAL RESTORATION

RESTORATION HARDWARE'S GARY FRIEDMAN IS CHANGING THE FACE OF RETAIL—ONE GROUNDBREAKING IDEA AT A TIME.

By Amanda Friedman

The remarkable career trajectory of Gary Friedman, the innovative chairman, creator, curator and co-CEO of Restoration Hardware, has become legendary in the retail industry: During a brief stint in junior college, Friedman joined the Gap in San Francisco as a part-time stock boy, quickly moving up the ranks to become the youngest regional manager in the company's history and attracting the attention and mentorship of the Gap's then-CEO Mickey Drexler. Next, at only 29 years old, Williams-Sonoma recruited Friedman to join the fledgling home brand as an executive vice president. Over the next 14 years, Friedman transformed the company from a \$300 million to a \$2.1 billion-a-year

business, introducing revolutionary retail experiences like test kitchens and tasting bars, and making over the Pottery Barn division and launching West Elm along the way. "Looking back, I was a young guy who didn't know what couldn't be done," Friedman says. "I was very open and curious about a lot of things. But I was also very careful."

But the real turning point in Friedman's career was also his biggest professional heartbreak: In 2001, Friedman was passed over to become the next CEO of Williams-Sonoma. Despite having millions' worth of stock options in the company, Friedman made the bold move to walk away. "Everything happens for a reason, and it's not what happens to you, it's how you react," he says. "What this did was really give me the opportunity to do my own thing." Friedman set his sites on another Bay Area brand, Restoration Hardware, which was on the verge of bankruptcy and known for selling novelty, tchotchke-type items. Once again, he slowly began to completely transform the company. "We eliminated a lot of the nostalgic pieces that Restoration was famous for," Friedman says, "and brought in the textiles and bath hardware businesses, and started to update the lighting and furniture." Then came the 2008 recession, and another bold decision. While everyone else was lowering costs and sacrificing quality, Restoration Hardware increased the value of its products and elevated its

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THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF RH
Clockwise from left: RH Contemporary Art acquired the first edition of Rain Room by Random International, which debuted in the United States at New York's Museum of Modern Art; Signature pieces from Restoration Hardware's tremendously successful home line; Co-CEO Gary Friedman in front of a David Bates painting at his Marin County, Calif. residence.



NEW HORIZONS
 Clockwise from top: A look inside the RH Center of Innovation and Product Leadership, the company's impressive new headquarters in Corte Madera, Calif.; artist Nathan Baker used digital inkjet prints and sandpaper to craft this untitled work, on display at RH Contemporary Art's gallery in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood; Samantha Thomas' *Landscape #8*, a manipulated canvas representing L.A.'s urban sprawl, is also on display at the new gallery.

...CONTINUED design. "I told everyone, 'Let's not worry about what the customer wants because, today, the customer isn't buying,'" Friedman explains. "Let's just create what we love and see if we can inspire other people who believe what we believe."

Clearly, the strategy has worked. Today, Restoration Hardware is worth \$2.8 billion and is expanding at awe-inspiring rates. Friedman has proved to be a true retail visionary, curating a company based around his personal aesthetic and exacting taste. He constantly travels the world, seeking inspiration from the antiques and artisans that he encounters along the way, and has elevated the shopping experience by creating design galleries in architecturally significant buildings throughout the United States. Most importantly, he

creates what he loves. "Everything is based around this truth," Friedman explains. "This authentic enthusiasm and passion comes through in everything we do."

Now, Friedman is at another pivotal moment in his career—quite possibly his biggest yet. After rebranding from Restoration Hardware to RH, the company is expanding outside of the world of home furnishings and positioning itself to become a leading luxury lifestyle brand. "We believe that we can curate a world beyond the four walls of the home," Friedman explains. He has already launched RH Music, a record label devoted to emerging artists, and has plans to debut an artisan-driven fashion line, RH Atelier. But his most ambitious endeavor is RH Contemporary Art. Frustrated by his experience trying to purchase works for his own home, Friedman set out to create an interactive, multichannel platform for exhibiting art and increasing its accessibility. And in true Friedman fashion, his art-world introduction was an earth-shattering success: RH acquired Random International's monumental Rain Room installation, which debuted last summer at New York City's Museum of Modern Art and became an overnight sensation. "I knew that we had to find something that had never been seen before, that we had to enter the art world in a very brave and courageous way," Friedman says. "To me, Rain Room was incredibly inspiring, illustrating the belief that you could step into an environment and control the outcome." MOMA curator Glenn Lowry agreed, championing the work throughout its display.

And now, RH Contemporary Art has opened its first gallery in New York City's



Chelsea neighborhood. The impressive six-story space debuted last month with a high-profile party and five solo exhibitions by emerging artists—Nathan Baker, Toby Christian, Peter Demos, Samantha Thomas and Natasha Wheat—discovered by Friedman and his global curatorial team. There is also an innovative website where clients can interact with works, watch documentaries of the artists and converse with personal art specialists. Next up, Friedman is planning to unveil an art gallery in Los Angeles and RH Guest House, a boutique hotel in New York City. "Our vision for our company is to create a message of hope, inspiration and love that will lift and connect the human spirit and change the world," Friedman says. Clearly he's only getting started. ▀

