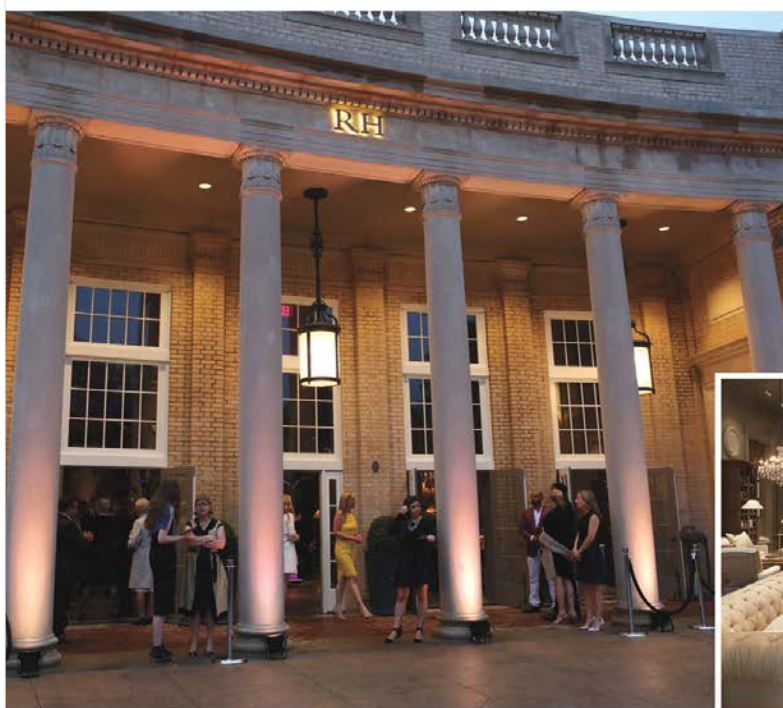
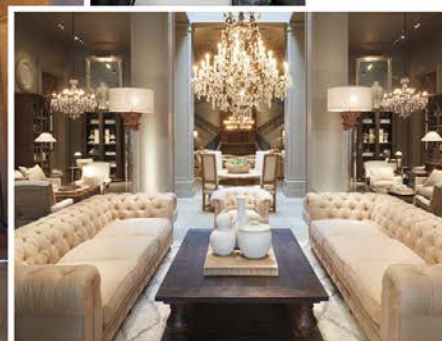


GOTHAM[®]

ABODE & BEYOND



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The opening of the RH store in Greenwich; CEO Gary Friedman; a chesterfield-style sofa from RH's Petite Kensington collection (starts at \$2,295); an interior setting at the Greenwich store.



Designs on the Future

AFTER OPENING A CHELSEA ART GALLERY LAST FALL, RESTORATION HARDWARE SHINES A NEW SPOTLIGHT ON THE HOME WITH A JUST-LAUNCHED INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM AND A HISTORIC GREENWICH OUTPOST.

BY MATT STEWART

Under the leadership of Chairman and CEO Gary Friedman, RH (Restoration Hardware) has evolved from a buzzy purveyor of period-inspired furniture, hardware, and whimsical home accessories to a major player on the art circuit, resulting in last November's opening of the RH Contemporary Art gallery in Chelsea. But RH, which

saw a 33 percent growth in revenue last year, remains firmly committed to its home design roots and recently launched a new interior design program with a full floor dedicated to the program at its Flatiron location. The company, whose many lines reference classic styles, has also made a firm commitment to historic preservation—for its newest store, RH recently completed a multimillion dollar, three-year restoration and transformation of the 97-year-old post office in Greenwich, Connecticut. *Gotham* recently sat down with Friedman to talk about the continuing evolution of the brand and the company's recent ventures.

What made you decide to launch an interior design program?

Gary Friedman: The interior design aspect is new for us, but it emanates from an authentic place, because RH has approached the home furnishings market from the point of view of designers and curators, rather than merchandisers. Since we furnish our homes many fewer times in our lives than, say, we buy a car, we wanted to offer our clients the opportunity to have our designers come into their homes and work with them for a complete interior design [experience]. In New York, we have Alison Downey, an interior designer for many years, who has

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JONAS K. SUNDSTEDT. IMAGES FOR RESTORATION HARDWARE: LESTER ORL



been quite skilled in helping to create and develop a team. There will be a lot of firsts for us because we're learning.

Why did you decide to roll out this program in New York?

New York is the best place to start anything because it makes you elevate your game to its highest level.

What prompted the expansion of the Flatiron flagship store?

When we were able to take over two additional floors at the Flatiron gallery, it gave us the opportunity to nearly triple our space. To put more of our offerings into the New York market has been a driving force for us. As we've evolved and transformed the RH brand, less than 10 percent of our current collection is displayed in our legacy retail stores. This expansion has allowed us

to offer a more complete collection of our outdoor furniture on the third floor.

Tell us a little about RH's new Greenwich gallery.

We're inspired by great architecture because it speaks to our ethos. We tried to respect what this building [the former Greenwich Post Office] was by going back to the original design, stripping it down to

"New York is the best place to start anything because it makes you elevate your game to its highest level."

—GARY FRIEDMAN

what it was and then trying to imagine what it could be. We were able to create a second level within the building that is not visible from the street. There is a conservatory hidden within the parapet of the building [and] we [tried to] replicate the original brick from the building's exterior and use it in the interior courtyard, so the parapet looks like it was always there. We always ask ourselves how can we bring the building forward, make it more useful for today, and render it more valuable. **G**

BELOW: A room setting at the new Greenwich store.

