

ELLE DECOR

DESIGN'S NEW DIRECTION

**INNOVATIVE, INSPIRING
IDEAS**



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**LEADING
LIGHTS**
**THE WORLD'S
MOST BEAUTIFUL
SCONCES**



The exterior of a villa in Guadalajara, Mexico, designed by architects Imanol Legorreta and Pablo Sepúlveda.

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Jasmin's Boyhood: *Lola's House and Her Animals*, by Jasmin Sian, 2012.

UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM



Gary Friedman
with the RH
Modern collection.

GARY FRIEDMAN ON REVOLUTIONIZING RETAIL

With his untucked shirt, blue jeans, and wrist laden with boho bracelets—including one embossed with a favorite saying, *Live and let live*—Gary Friedman exudes a laid-back West Coast sensibility. Yet the California native is anything but chill. Ever since he took the helm of Restoration Hardware in 2001, the company's chairman and CEO has set his sights on a complete reinvention of the way high-end home design is bought and sold. While his competitors obsess over online sales, Friedman—who rebranded the former seller of doorknobs and vintage-style furniture into RH, a chic purveyor of Belgian-linen sofas and chandeliers—has instead focused on an audacious transformation of the retail space. “It’s not about the internet,” says Friedman, who is building immense galleries complete with restaurants, roof gardens, and stores. Coming soon: RH hotels, the first of which will be attached to an 80,000-square-foot gallery in Manhattan’s Meatpacking District; a “little village” devoted to wine, art, antiques, and furniture in Napa Valley; and a possible foray into real estate with fully furnished RH homes. “We’re trying to inspire,” he says, “and by so doing, create a new market.” **INGRID ABRAMOVITCH**



The prototype
RH residence
in St. Helena,
California.



Geometric cabinet
by London designer
Richard Forwood.

ALL IN ONE

- We began as a \$350 million retailer selling nostalgic items. We’ve transformed RH into a \$2 billion luxury home platform and gone from 84 catalog pages to more than 2,500.
- The typical retail model has the brand, stores, and a website. We want to integrate design with architecture, hospitality, and real estate.
- The acquisition of Waterworks means that we’re now in every room of the house. If you are building or remodeling a residence, we can help with the entire project, including kitchens and bathrooms. We sell almost everything except the Sheetrock.

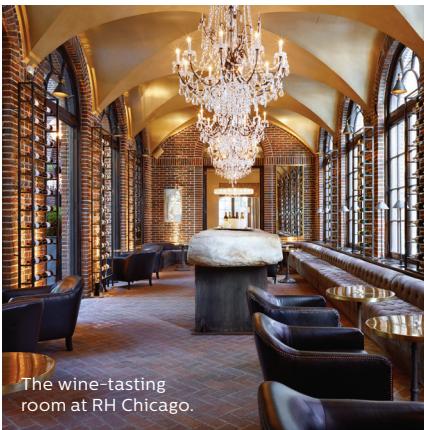
CLEAR VIEW

- The design world is going to massively evolve. There has been a lack of accessibility in the high-end home market. The trade design centers are like an iron curtain. You need an interior designer to even go look at the goods.
- We cater to the public but also offer a lot of support to decorators and architects. Through us, they can get anything from window treatments to rugs, furniture to fabrics.
- Eight years ago, we decided that instead of trying to be the best designers, we should be the best curators and integrators. We attract the top designers, artisans, manufacturers, and thinkers in our industry. Ben Soleimani is doing our rugs. Wyeth’s John Birch is designing a furniture collection for us. Jonathan Browning is creating incredible lighting.

UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM



RH Modern in Los Angeles.



The wine-tasting room at RH Chicago.



A rendering of the Manhattan gallery, which will incorporate a hotel.

The I-Beam dining table by Thomas Bina and Ed Robinson.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

- I'm the least likely guy to be doing what I'm doing. We were very poor growing up. I dropped out of college and became a stock boy at the Gap, working my way up to senior vice president of stores and operations at Williams-Sonoma. At the time, they had a 25-store business, Pottery Barn, that was losing money.
- While at Williams-Sonoma, I was remodeling my San Francisco condo and met with interior designer Kendal Agins, who quoted me \$125,000 to decorate my 1,200-square-foot apartment. I thought it would cost under \$20,000. But it turned out that that was just the price of the window treatments.
- I decided to do it myself, and on weekends I went to places like Macy's and 3 Day Blinds. Two years later, I gave up and hired Kendal. She is now my ex-wife. We have two beautiful children together. My frustrations in shopping for my place inspired my approach at Pottery Barn and at RH—the need to create a fully integrated solution for the home.

BLURRED LINES

- Only 10 percent of retail sales in the U.S. happen online; the other 90 percent still happen in stores. But there is a lack of imagination in retail. We're trying to build inspiring spaces that blur the lines between residential and retail, physical and digital—stores that feel like home.
- You can't sit in a chair or feel the fabric online. Our older stores are 7,000 square feet and display less than 10 percent of our products. The key to unlocking the value of the company is to build 60,000-square-foot selling galleries.

• Our Chicago gallery blows my mind. We renovated the former Three Arts Club building, which was built in 1914. We integrated food, wine, art, and design in 67,000 square feet. Everything you see can be bought. On weekends, the line outside for brunch starts half an hour before the store opens.

PERFECT CONSTRUCT

- We either find great architecture, or we build it. On Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, we built a store with a rooftop garden. We renovated an old natural-history museum in Boston. We've created a store in the old post office in Greenwich, Connecticut, and we're creating one in the Bethlehem Steel building in San Francisco.
- We think there is a need for fully done homes. We just did our first RH residence in St. Helena. It has a wine vault, a living area with four sofas and two chandeliers, and a fitness-and-yoga center with an outdoor massage area.

MODERN LOVERS

- Modern furniture is the next big wave, which is why we launched RH Modern—the most prolific launch in the history of home furnishings, with 544 pages of products. The style has always been a very small part of the market. But there are several trends driving it, including the migration back to cities from the suburbs. Millennials grew up with modern technology in the palms of their hands. The baby boomers are emulating younger people and building modern homes.
- Most home-design trends start when people die. Their belongings end up in estate sales, which feed the high-end antiques market and filter down into the mass market. That is why midcentury modern was big for the last 15 years. Now shag rugs are back.

PUBLIC SCHOOL

- We're trying to scale taste, which is hard to do: Walmart has a lot of scale but no taste. Others have great products but don't know how to manufacture and distribute. We try to do both.
- When we launched RH Modern, a couple of our factories lost control of production. Products were delayed up to a year. I wrote a memo to our team that got leaked to the press. It said, "The building is on fire. Don't talk about how it caught fire. First go save the people, then put the fire out." I meant it as a note of empowerment, to tell our employees, "Go make our customers happy right now."
- For most people, our catalog is the only physical manifestation of our brand. When you get it, you realize: They have a lot. I've heard, "Oh, you are killing trees" because our books are bigger. Consider that Pottery Barn mails three or four books a month. We send ours once a year. It's probably the most efficient circulation in the history of direct mail.