

HOME + DESIGN

DEPARTURES

Fall 2017

STEP RIGHT IN

Perfection in Paris

Michael S. Smith
Takes Malibu

The Insider's Guide
to New York

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK

Design expertise to navigate everything the city has to offer

EDITED BY JOE HARPER



RH collaborators in the Flatiron showroom, from left: Robert Sonneman, John Birch, Vicente Wolf, Clodagh

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

Restoration Hardware consults a quartet of New York heavyweights to grow its American empire.

by DAN SHAW

GROOMING BY OLGA POSTOLACHI

The Bali platform bed by Wolf, from \$5,495



Since 2001, when Gary Friedman became CEO of Restoration Hardware, he's transformed the chain of middlebrow furniture stores into a luxury home-design megabrand rechristened RH. In catalogs thick enough to rival the September issue of any fashion magazine, Friedman presents himself as the curator in chief—the merchant as poet, savant, and auteur. “Vision requires thinking until it hurts,” he wrote in his welcome letter to the most recent RH Modern sourcebook, a 480-page tome, “so you can see what others can't see and do what others can't do.”

And later this year, the company will show New York exactly what it's capable of when it opens its most ambitious retail destination yet, featuring new products designed by local bold-faced names. All this is a part of Friedman's ongoing efforts to borrow heavily from the hospitality playbook to create retail environments as seductive as top-notch boutique hotels, while also commissioning and reissuing furniture by name designers and giving them the rock-star treatment in catalogs. RH has also invested heavily in rehabilitating landmark buildings and turning them into emporiums for architecture buffs.

The company's six-story flagship in Manhattan's meatpacking district is 85,000 square feet. Its base is an early-20th-century commercial building that was the site of the beloved brasserie Pastis, which closed in 2014. Like the RH store that occupies the former Museum of Natural History in Boston, constructed in 1862, the New York location will have a dramatic central atrium. And like the Chicago outpost in the Three Arts Club, built in 1914 and once home to women artists, it will offer dining options by the high-flying Chicago restaurateur Brendan Sodikoff, who is the found-



Left: Clodagh's outdoor lounge, \$1,395. Below: Birch's Metropolitan sofa, from \$5,995



The Orbiter II Task table lamp in brass by Sonneman, \$800



“THAT’S THE BEAUTY OF RH,” CLODAGH SAYS. “THEY BELIEVE GOOD DESIGN IS UNIVERSAL.”

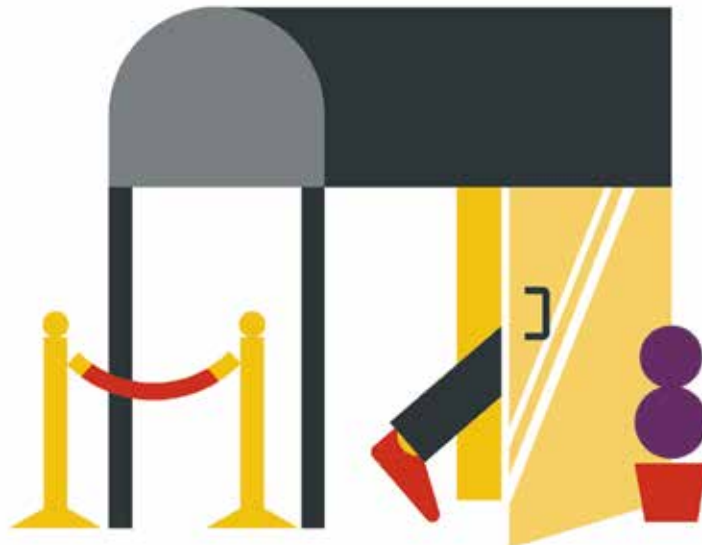
ing president of RH Hospitality. “What we are doing goes far beyond just putting a restaurant into a retail store,” Friedman explains. “Ours is an integrated experience that reflects our taste, style, and point of view. It's not outsourced to some third party.” The new Manhattan store will include a floor devoted to RH Modern—a line that debuted in 2015—with pieces by marquee local designers such as John Birch, Clodagh, Robert Sonneman, and Vicente Wolf. “I like the concepts I've seen for the meatpacking district store,” says Birch, who was persuaded to allow RH to produce his

low-slung, box-tufted sofa—a staple of his Wyeth brand. “It’s unique to me and our business, but we decided to give them the good stuff!” he adds. “The beauty is that RH can produce it so much quicker than we can and merchandise it so well.”

Sonneman was surprised when RH called and asked to reproduce his namesake lighting line’s Cathedral chandelier—but with a significant modification to the circa-1972 original fixture, which was composed of undulating ribbons of metal. “They wanted to make it in solid brass, which was an interesting challenge. We had to go back to a factory that still does hand fabrication,” says Sonneman, who was blown away by the new iteration. “I like this better than the original.”

When the company contacted celebrated interior designer Vicente Wolf about contributing a piece that would bridge RH’s modern and traditional collections, he suggested the Balinese-inspired bed with an open metal headboard he’d designed for his own beach house. The oak platform extends beyond the mattress, so there’s space to add a reading lamp. “It’s a great stand-alone piece of sculpture that can float in the middle of a room,” Wolf says. “I know what will work for their customers because my customers are theirs too.”

Clodagh, who’s known for her spiritual approach to luxury, intuitively understood RH’s hospitality-oriented vibe when the brand asked her to design outdoor furniture. “We’ve been doing a lot of hotels, so it’s something I think about,” she says. Clodagh created substantial woven pieces—as simple and familiar as well-crafted baskets—that would look equally at home in Malibu and Mumbai. “That’s the beauty of RH,” she remarks. “They believe good design is universal.” *rh.com, rhmodern.com.* ♦



SHOPPING

HOW TO ACCESS PRO RESOURCES

A once secretive trade is slowly granting purchasing power to the decoration layman.

Designers guard their sources. But now Manhattan design centers—buildings filled with made-to-order showrooms customarily open only to the trade—are allowing greater access for consumers without an industry connection. One of the city’s main destinations for fabrics, accessories, and furnishings is the **Decoration & Design Building** (*ddbbuilding.com*). Those without a decorator may browse the D&D and then buy after contacting the building’s Designer Referral Program. The service provides introductions to a rotating list of ten decorators with access to discounted, to-the-trade prices for a structured fee. The D&D’s 130 showrooms on 18 floors just welcomed silk stalwart **Jim Thompson** (*Suite 1640*) and **THG Paris** bath fittings (*Suite 1206*), with French crystal company **Saint-Louis** (*Suite 816*) arriving in November. Downtown, the 500,000-square-foot **New York Design Center** (*nydc.com*) also invites people to visit its 100 showrooms spanning 16 floors. It has its own referral service: After evaluating style, budget, and personality, Access to Design pairs clients with one of 30 experts. Recent arrivals include outdoor furniture by **Fermob** (*Suite 414*), Belgian upholstery from **Verellen** (*Suite 804*), and architectural glass by **Bendheim** (*Suite 1602*). For kitchen and bath, the **Architects & Designers Building** (*adbuilding.com*) hosts some of the world’s top brands, such as **Gaggenau** (*Suite 700*) and now **Scavolini** (*Suite 560*). In the rare case that one of its 35 showrooms requires a professional, it will also provide a referral. —*Melissa Feldman*

Ask the Insider



“**Holland & Sherry** [*Suite 1402*] has the best collections at the D&D Building—and not just because my furniture, fabric, and carpets are sold there! I like **Waterworks** [*Suite 134*] for kitchen ideas, and **Passementerie** [*Suite 213*] has what I imagine a proper trim shop in the early decorating days would have had: elegant silk, statement tassels, elaborate cords.”

—**VICTORIA HAGAN** *furniture and interior designer*