

REFRESH

VOLUME ONE

THE WORLD'S BEST NEW FASHION STORES

THE **STOREBOOK**
BY SPORTSWEAR INTERNATIONAL

Dynamic SPACE If he was to chose a dream project architect Jeffrey Hutchison would love to improve the state of the airline travel industry. For now Hutchison uses his innovative ideas to make fashion settings look more interesting.

What are three most important elements of architectural design?

I think the three most important elements of architectural design for me are creating dynamic space, use of light and the importance of light – especially when you're talking about interior spaces – and then balancing function with art: how you balance the art of architecture with the function of architecture. In terms of retail design I adjust these aspects to respond to the voice or the direction of the particular company that I'm doing work for.

What do you think of the state of retail store design today?

I actually think it's going through a transformation. The industry has been through a period of being really focused on the idea that bigger stores are better, that creating the same store in every location is better, and I think that a backlash to that is being felt. Today retail – and especially for fashion retail – should have a more tailored approach, and adhere to the idea that bigger is not necessarily better. This cookie-cutter approach that has been really as pervasive for a while [is over]. Every project that we do, even if it's for the same company in different locations, we always try to work on variation, and how we can make a particular store unique for a particular location. For example the store I did for Barneys in Tokyo is not the same as the one I did in San Francisco and is not going to be the same as the new one in Las Vegas. But yet they all speak together and when you walk into one you still feel you're walking into a Barneys store.

How does your approach differ when you're working with different clients?

We believe it's important to find the voice of the client, and we try to respond to that and feel it's important to create a design that is dependent on the vision and the direction of the brand itself. That matters whether I'm working for a brand like Theory, which was much more about having a more minimalist and clean aesthetic, versus a Barneys which is modern but eclectic, or Ralph Lauren which is much more classic. I don't believe in one style. I believe it's important to find creative solutions that fit the direction of the voice of the brand.

How do you work to make your own design idea come to fruition at the same time as keeping your client happy?

We feel very strongly about working to understand what the brand is all about and at the beginning of a project we will spend a significant amount of time with a new client to do this. Everything from getting into the history and evolution of the brand, to visiting existing stores, to understanding marketing campaigns. We meet with the designers, we spend time really trying to understand the product, and not only where the product design has been, but where it's going. We even evaluate business issues, like how they ship into the stores. Because even something as simple as when they're on a monthly or seasonal delivery cycle makes a big difference in terms of how the store looks and how you need to respond in your design. All of that intense investigation is a big part of laying the foundation for us to be able to come up with a creative solution that not only responds to the voice and direction of the brand, but also how far we can push that. We want to know how far can we go and without essentially disrupting or changing the brand. That's really the mission from the beginning. We believe strongly in a collaboration with our clients, but at the same time,

we want to see how we can be as creative as possible within the culture that they've established, but at the same time challenge them to think about new solutions and new ways of doing things. Also, at the core of everything we do is design, so in addition to doing all of that we have a logic and a reason for why we're doing it. It's all about how you create something that – as I mentioned – is dynamic and that balances art and function, because those are the things that make people attracted to the environment and those are the things that make customers want to stay in a store. And as history tells us, the longer people stay in a store, the more they're going to buy.

What specific trends and innovations in materials and fabrics and so on are influencing contemporary store design?

In general the advancements in technology are opening up a wider range of materials that we have at our disposal that are still cost effective, that weren't even there five years ago. So, for example, now there's technology that allows us, through the use of computers and manufacturing techniques, to create three-dimensional sculpted wall surfaces at a relatively inexpensive cost. The big trend is environmentally sound products. Even just a few years ago there was not the breadth of choices that allowed – if you were trying to do something on a more luxury level – so much choice for environmentally conscious design. Now there are a lot and I think that's going to continue to advance.

Do trends in fashion influence retail design or vice versa?

I think probably though not necessarily in a direct manner. Trends in fashion do influence retail design because obviously there is an aspect of staying current to what the customer and everyone in the fashion world is moving towards. But in terms of the store design itself one of the things that we try to do is to create an environment that allows for that change to occur. But I feel it's very important to create a level of timeless design to whatever we do because we want these stores to last for a long enough period of time that people don't walk in after ten years and say "well that was yesterday's news".

How important is collaboration with other creatives when designing a retail space?

In Barneys we have had longstanding partnerships and collaborations with artists, which is one of the things that makes Barneys unique versus other retail outlets. Primarily we work in that situation with decorative artists and we work in a very collaborative manner. I think it's important to have a variety of voices in a creative environment like that.

What have been your most rewarding projects to date?

I would say the series of stores we've done for Barneys. It's been rewarding and a wonderful experience because they expect us to continually create new things but obviously stay within who they are. It goes again back to the idea of being cookie cutter or not. If you're doing exactly the same design but you're just adjusting it somewhat for a particular location it's not really a creative process, that's more of a functional process. But Barneys really encourages new ideas and new thoughts, and questions how to make the next store different. And that's I think the most rewarding experience a designer can have.

How do they differ from working on your other retail projects?

With Donna Karan and Ralph Lauren we are talking about designers who have such a strong vision of who they are and what they want for their company. In that sense you're always creating a physical environment that responds to that. And while there are a lot of great projects and opportunities in working for a Ralph Lauren or a Donna Karan, they do have a strong vision which you have to follow.

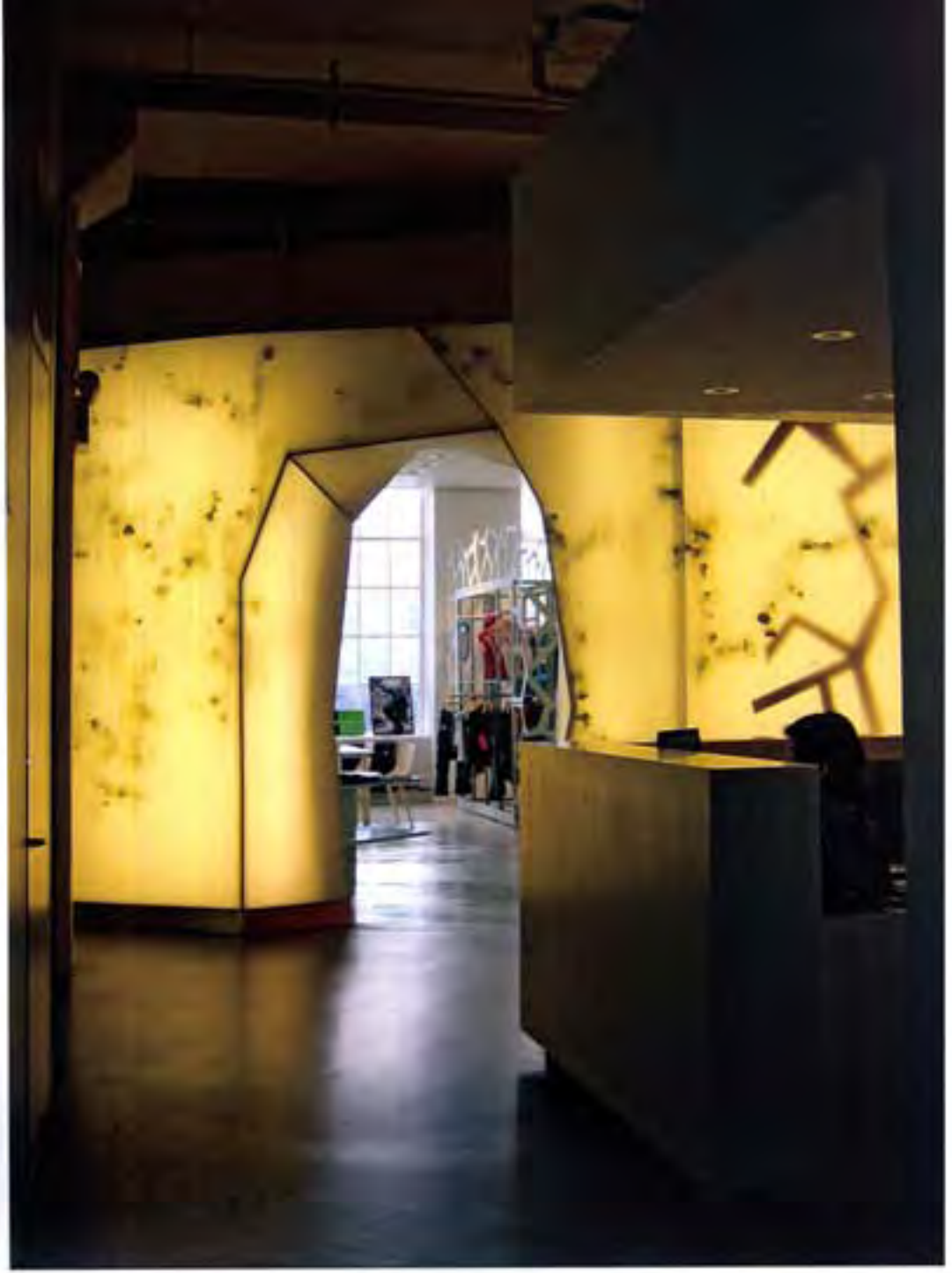
Why work in retail design as opposed to any other form of architecture?

If you can believe it I've been doing this now for over 20 years so I either love it or I don't know what I'm doing! I get up every day and I love it because first of all it's exciting work, you're working with creative people. I would rather work across the table from a creative person than someone who's not giving me any sort of interaction or feedback, and is looking for me to give all the answers. I think that creative dialogue is really important and I enjoy it. I also love the speed of retail – it's a very fast business. The process and timeframe to get projects done is on a much shorter cycle than other types of projects that you might do. You get to see dreams happen faster which is very rewarding. I can't really think of another form of architecture that I would get as excited about.

If you could have a dream client with an unlimited budget, who would it be and what would your design concept be?

A very tough question! Thinking about it, one of the things that really interests me right now is the sad state of the airline travel industry from a physical-experience perspective. So if I had an unlimited budget I would love to have a company that would say to me "create a whole experience from the moment you come to the terminal, to the moment you get to the other end." It's more than just designing what the inside of the plane looks like, or designing an airport lounge, it's how do you bring back that luxury feeling and level of service back into the airline and transportation world? You still walk into the airport now and it feels like you're taking the bus. How do you change that so people don't feel like they're just getting on a bus with wings?





Jeffrey Hutchison

Vita Jeffrey Hutchison had his sights set on architecture from age 12 and, after acquiring his architecture degree from **Texas Tech**, worked for prominent Dallas firm **HMMBH**, before coming to **New York** in **1987** where he was employed by **Peter Marino**, one of the world's most prestigious retail architecture firms. In **1991** Hutchison joined **Polo Ralph Lauren's** in-house store design team, where he became vice president.

until his departure in **1998**. His own firm, **Jeffrey Hutchison & Associates**, has been up and running since **2001**, and is responsible for some of the most exciting and influential retail design projects across the globe. Hutchison has worked with brands including **Donna Karan**, **Ralph Lauren**, **Nariso Rodriguez**, **Theory** and **Barneys New York**.