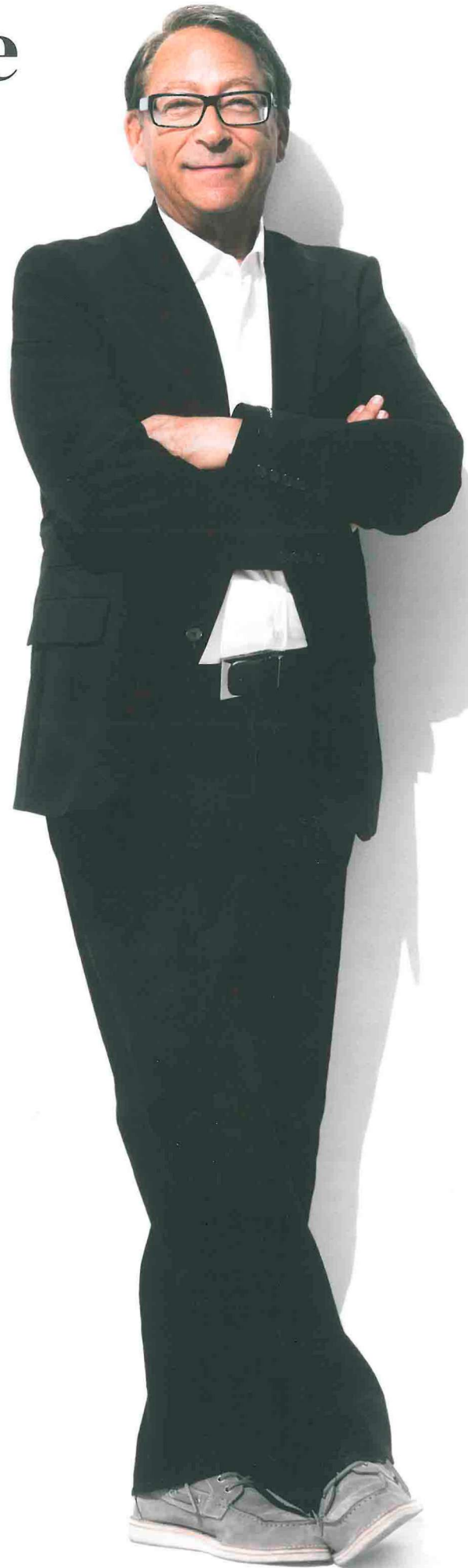


# 'Her beautiful designs create a world of their own'



Stuart Weitzman

Footwear designer Stuart Weitzman explains why Zaha Hadid was the obvious choice for his new high-impact flagship in Milan.

Words **Jane Szita**

Portrait *courtesy of Stuart Weitzman*

Shop

When Stuart Weitzman decided to open a new store in the heart of Milan's Quadrilatero d'Oro, he was clearly intending to make a big splash: the three architects on his shortlist were Frank Gehry, Santiago Calatrava and Zaha Hadid. The job went, of course, to Hadid, the architectural equivalent of übermodel Kate Moss, who stars in Weitzman's current money-no-object ad campaign. Weitzman explains how the sleek spaceship-meets-grotto extravaganza took shape.

**Was it difficult to persuade Zaha Hadid to take on this job?** Stuart Weitzman: I convinced her people that it would be fun to do – after all, this is a very small project compared with their usual commissions. At first they said no. But I'm very persistent and kept calling. I'd seen Zaha's buildings at the London Olympics, and I really wanted her to do it. I envisioned something fantastic for the new store. I wasn't in the market for designers who do stores. I needed someone who thinks outside the box. Eventually, after quite a few calls, I got them to change that no to a ...

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Zaha Hadid's design for Stuart Weitzman's Milan boutique is 'fluid, futuristic and playful'.  
Photo Jacopo Spilimbergo



Stuart Weitzman

Shop

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## ‘You show us how the store has to work, and we’ll show you how to make it beautiful’

... maybe, and then we had a meeting, where I told Zaha that shoes, as much as works of art in a museum, deserve a beautiful setting. She said I had a very good point. Women love shoes, and Zaha’s no different.

**You’re an entry-level luxury brand, and your products aren’t the most expensive on the market. So why the cutting-edge architecture?**

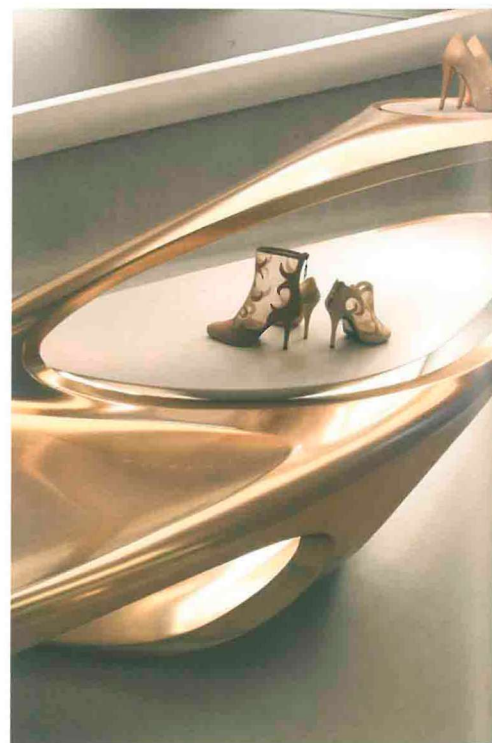
I’m convinced it will prove to be a wise business decision. In fact, it’s already done just that. Our new store in Milan has triple the sales of our old store, which was just a few metres away. It pays to invest in architecture. We are part of the affordable upper-middle market, but we have a luxury attitude and image. We’ve always played it that way. The Zaha Hadid stores – I think we will do six altogether – are not about putting our prices up or doing crocodile shoes. When we go to a new location or upgrade a top location, we aim for a store that’s unique, original and potentially iconic. That’s what it’s about.

**What was in the brief you gave Zaha Hadid?** I’d visited 100 shoe shops and all were the same, from Chanel to Nine West. Flat wall, flat

shelves, rows of shoes – with seating far away from the merchandise, forcing the customer to get up and walk to the wall to see the products. So I told Zaha that I want the consumer to be part of the store. She shouldn’t have to walk. I want the shopper to sit among the displays. Instead of idly sitting and waiting, she can pick up the shoe at her elbow. The architects really took that on board and made it an intrinsic part of their design.

**What kind of experience did you have – working with a star architect and her team?** The first thing they asked for was our expertise: ‘Tell us everything you know about how a shoe shop works.’ I was impressed with their effort to get a grip on the function of a retail space. I knew I wouldn’t have to battle with an egocentric creative. They said, ‘You show us how the store has to work, and we’ll show you how to make it beautiful.’

zaha-hadid.com



Weitzman convinced Hadid to jump on board for the project by likening shoes to works of art in a museum, deserving of ‘a beautiful setting’.  
Photos Jacopo Spilimbergo