

# FASHION

Sir Philip Green's Topshop has opened at one of the world's most famous addresses. **John Ryan** takes a tour with the tycoon

**T**opshop has been in the US since 2008 when it opened its first store in New York. Located in SoHo, it was a big statement of intent about the fashion retailer's global ambitions.

Since then Topshops have appeared in Las Vegas, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington DC and San Diego.

It is a retail brand that has hit the ground running Stateside and the strategy has been to open stores in high-profile US cities.

On top of its own stores Topshop also retails through branches of legendary department store group Nordstrom, and the US growth opportunity was a reason why private equity firm Leonard Green invested in Topshop.

On Wednesday Topshop returned to where it started in the US as it opened a second store in The Big Apple. This one is bigger than the SoHo outpost. At 40,000 sq ft and on four floors it is the second-largest store in the Topshop empire.

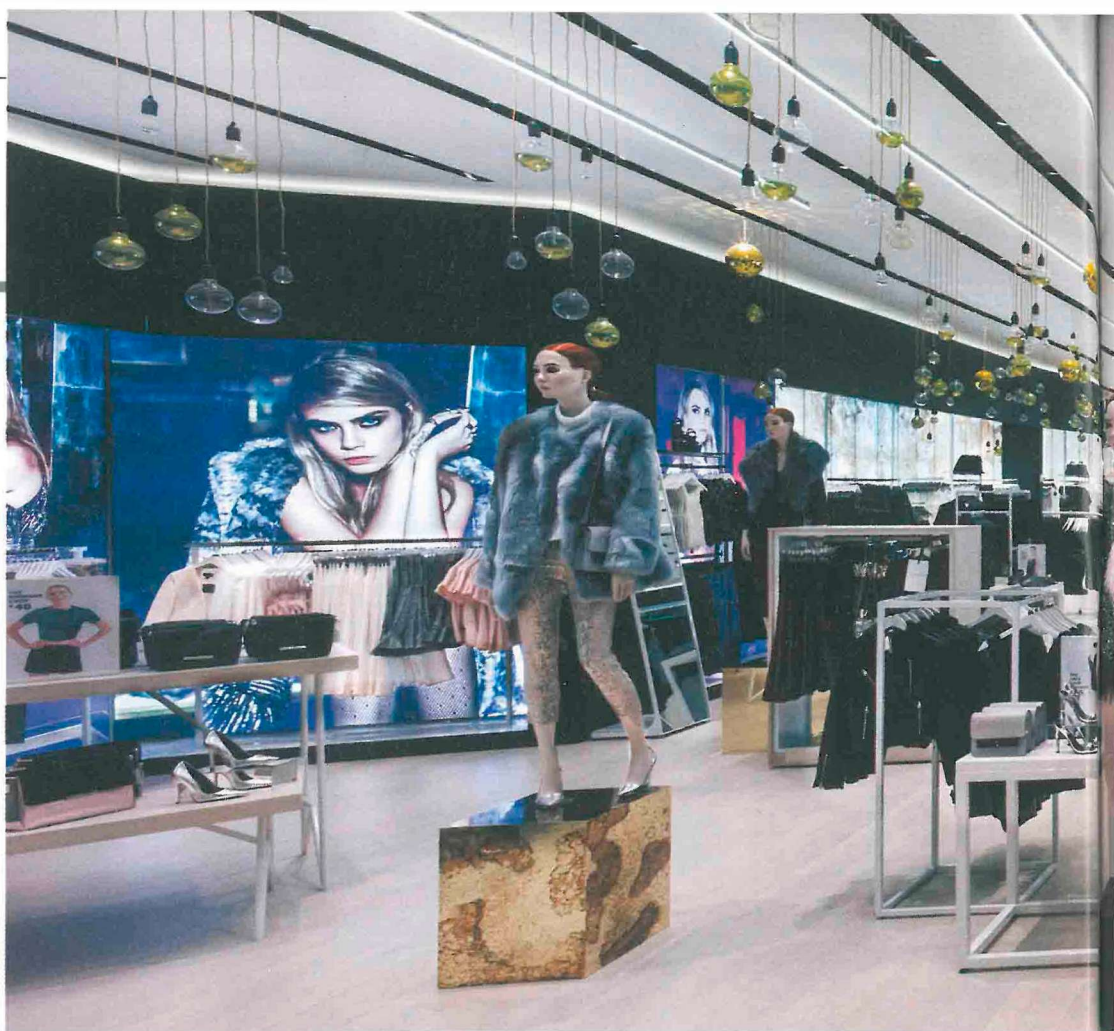
But what really makes it a showstopper is the fact that it's on Fifth Avenue in midtown Manhattan. Midtown regularly tops the global bill when it comes to retail rents and it hosts many of the world's biggest retailers.

The new Topshop therefore has a brace of cross-border retailers as near neighbours including H&M, Zara and Uniqlo, and it is just across the street from upscale department store Saks Fifth Avenue.

It is therefore in good company and the arrival of a large Topshop in this neighbourhood marks an important stage in its transition from a Brit retailer with a store in Manhattan, to a force to be reckoned with in US retail.

## Bespoke stores

Sir Philip Green, Topshop and parent Arcadia owner, is clear about the reason for opening on Fifth Avenue:



# Topshop's Man

**TOPSHOP/  
TOPMAN  
FIFTH  
AVENUE**  
**Opened** November 5  
**Size** 40,000 sq ft  
**Number of floors** Four  
**Design** In-house  
**Ambience**  
Manhattan slick

"Every leading fashion retailer would at some point want to trade on this street. It's got to be up there in the top two or three in the world. We've learnt a lot [about the US] over the last four or five years".

He observes that even on an island that measures just 13 miles by 2.3, there are variations: "There are people who shop in this part of Manhattan who never get down to SoHo and it's a different sort of customer."

More broadly, he notes that each of the Topshop flagships that have opened in the US is different and that has been through understanding each location and responding accordingly.

**"Every leading fashion retailer would at some point want to trade on this street"** Sir Philip Green, Arcadia

The same is probably true of the future stores that are planned for the US and Europe. Atlanta and Houston will get a Topshop/Topman in early 2015 and the first European standalone, in Amsterdam, is to open in February.

## British style

For the midtown shopper heading into the Fifth Avenue store there are three floors of womenswear and accessories (principally shoes) and the Topman offer in the basement.

The first thing consumers will notice after admiring the sleek modernist exterior and being drawn inside is the depth of the shop. Green points to the fact that in its previous life and prior to the deal being done on the site, over Christmas 2013, the store was only about two thirds as deep as it now is. Increased depth has added to the impact, internally and externally.

The ground floor has backlit perimeter panels that draw the eye through the space towards the rear where a 45 ft graphic occupies the back wall, behind the nine checkouts. Guy Smith, head of design at Arcadia, makes the





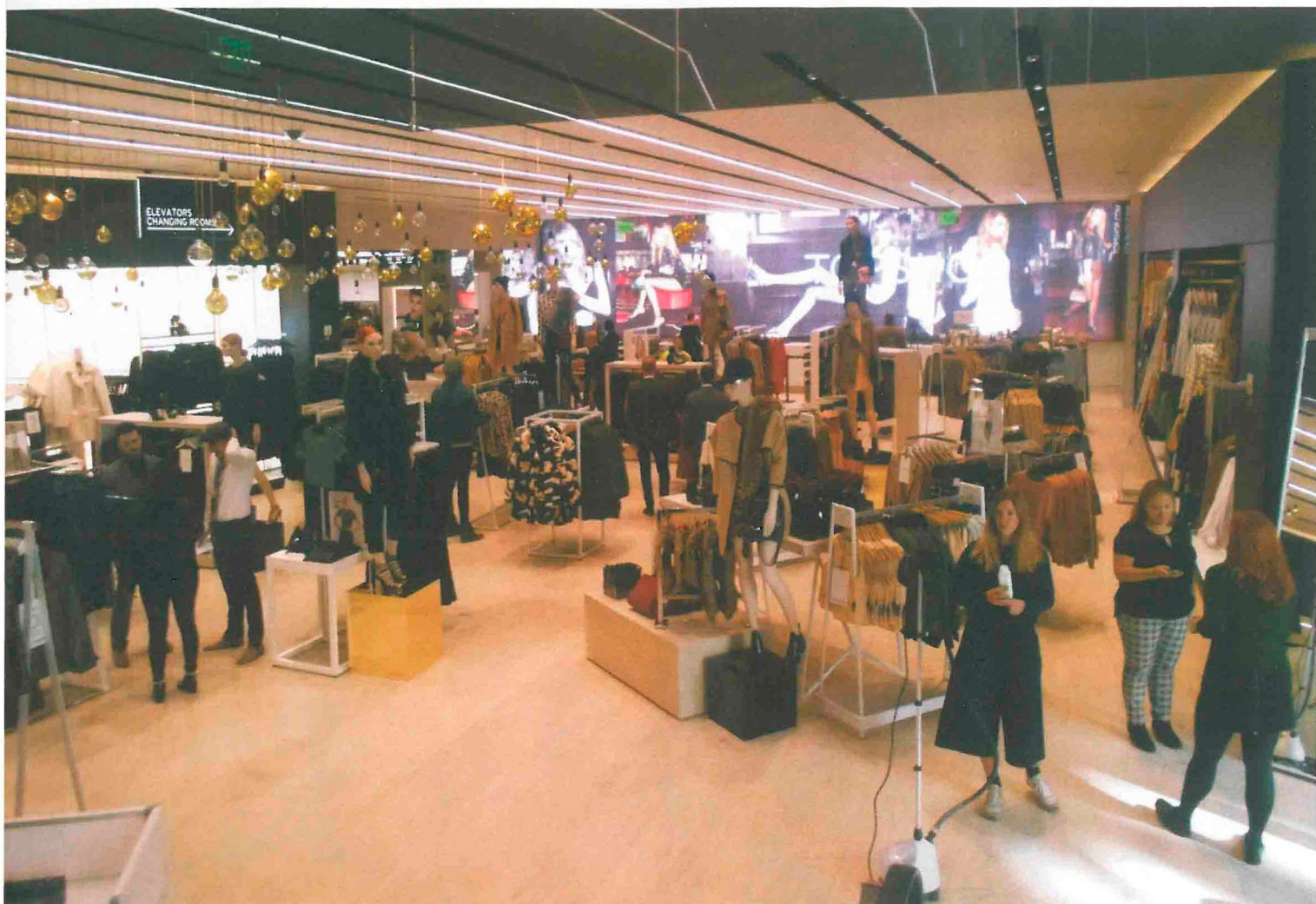
# hattan transfer





# FASHION

To see a video of this store go to  
[Retail-week.com/topshopnyc](http://Retail-week.com/topshopnyc)



► point that a digital back wall was considered but that it would have been so large that it “would have become a store about a video wall, as opposed to a store about fashion.”

There are no obvious walkways—the intention being, presumably, that the shopper meanders through the space. And if the need is felt, there are personal shoppers on hand to help with the tricky business of deciding what works.

When that is necessary, there is a suite of changing rooms, each of which is different, and in which the Brit card is played. This is for the benefit of the US audience and comes in the shape of a lobby with a Vivienne Westwood Union Jack rug on the floor, among other things.

## Denim a star

The other thing that should be noted about this 9,000 sq ft floor, a footplate that is repeated on the three other levels, is that there are no mid-floor pillars. Smith says that is because the ceiling is suspended from internal cross braces, helping to reinforce the

## “We don’t do vanity projects. This is about making money” Sir Philip Green

sense of space and meaning that selling space is not sacrificed.

It is a feature not lost on Green, who points on each floor to the ceiling height, which does not diminish greatly as an ascent is made through the building. There is more women’s fashion on the first floor, but the standout element is the denim wall, which is backed by strings of LED lights. Smith says that the entire store has been LED-lit, a first for the retailer.

On the next floor are shoes, lingerie and ‘Tall’ (a collection for taller women), and more LED lighting features have been put to work and the product is displayed on midshop tables and around the perimeter.

And so to the basement, home of Topman. Smith says that in the

past Topman has occasionally been in the shadow of Topshop, but that here “this has been addressed”.

It has, inasmuch as the perimeter wall panels have also been backlit—this time with an illuminated brick pattern and there are as many mid-shop groups of mannequins as on the floors above. There is a more linear feel to this floor however, and for men who are in the mood, personal shoppers are also at hand.

## A few dollars more

The question in all of this is whether it will pay. Look south across Fifth Avenue and there is a new multi-floor H&M, which has had a vast amount of selling space removed from its front to create a jaw-dropping atrium. It works in

terms of attracting admiring glances, but it is hard not to wonder at what cost given the very low selling prices of the merchandise in the window.

That is not the case in Topshop and Green is adamant that the Fifth Avenue store will be about making money. “We’ve got a chance. We want to be able to make a statement, but we don’t do vanity projects. This is about making money,” he says.

Green notes that one of the elements in the US business that still needs to be sorted is sourcing. At present about 20% of what is on view comes from local sources and the rest is shipped from the UK. That is certainly an additional operational expense, but he is confident that it can be overcome.

As for the future in the US and elsewhere, Green comments: “The journey’s still in progress, but we’ve come a long way.”

The retailer certainly has. Green and Topshop look increasingly like Manhattan retail royalty and an established part of the US panorama. 