



COACH REVEALS ITS NEXT-GENERATION RETAIL CONCEPT.

# Staging an Evolution

*By Eric Feigenbaum, New York Editor*





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– Stuart Vevers, executive creative director, Coach

**COACH INC., THE MODERN LUXURY ACCESSORIES** company, unveiled its revitalized brand concept last November. Reflecting the aesthetic sensibilities of the New York-based design house, the company launched its 3909-square-foot Beverly Hills, Calif., flagship on Rodeo Drive. With plummeting stock prices and stiff competition from rivals Michael Kors, Kate Spade and Tory Burch, Coach executives recognized the time was right to differentiate their in-store environment and overall brand identity from others within the classification.

Partnering with design firm Studio Sofield Inc. (New York), Stuart Vevers, executive creative director at Coach, explains, “As the Coach brand continues on the path of transformation, I wanted to create something different – different for Coach and unique in luxury.”

With references to the company’s metropolitan



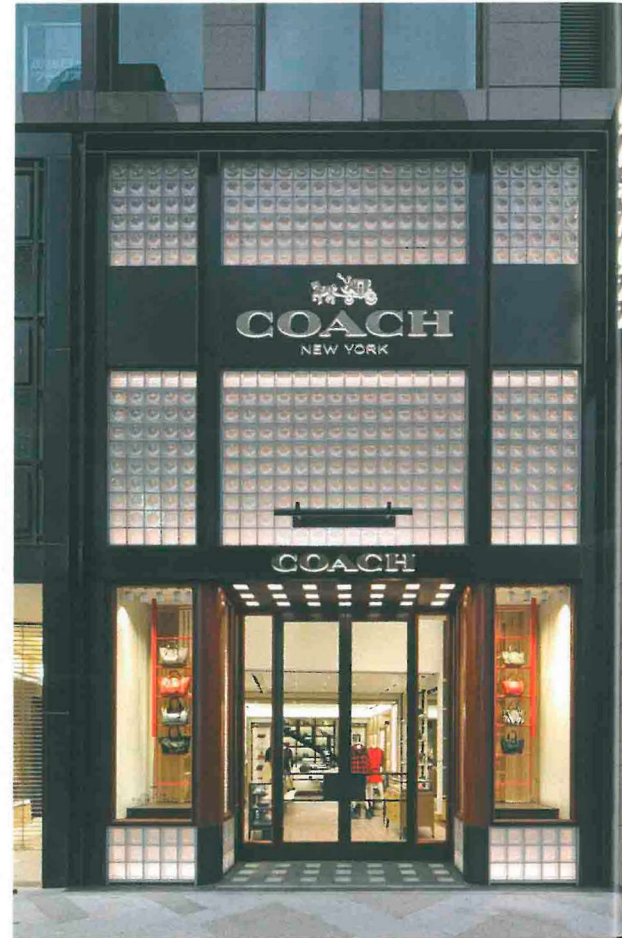


**ABOVE LEFT** *Customer traffic is driven to the floor above by powerful vertical merchandise statements positioned around the stairwell of the Coach Shinjuku flagship in Tokyo.*

**ABOVE RIGHT** *The two-story-high glass façade of each concept store makes a grand architectural statement with massive steel I-beams, a double-height entry, bronze logo signage, and marquee lighting on the underside of the vestibule.*

roots, customers are welcomed into a sophisticated space, where suggestions of industrial elements commingle with a refined palette of rich and varied, luxe materials. In addition to an elaborate design transformation, the new concept had to work. Louis Minuto, svp of global architecture and construction, says, “A retail store has to function and satisfy modern selling requirements. We’ve integrated great fixturing and a beautiful aesthetic that works in a modern retail environment.”

Coach collected inspiration from New York’s High Line – a linear park, repurposed from an abandoned railway – as the structure literally meanders past its corporate office on 34th Street. Subtle references to



the company’s New York heritage appear in all stores, regardless of location. (Internationally, the new concept was unveiled at the Coach Shinjuku flagship in Tokyo, Japan, last October.)

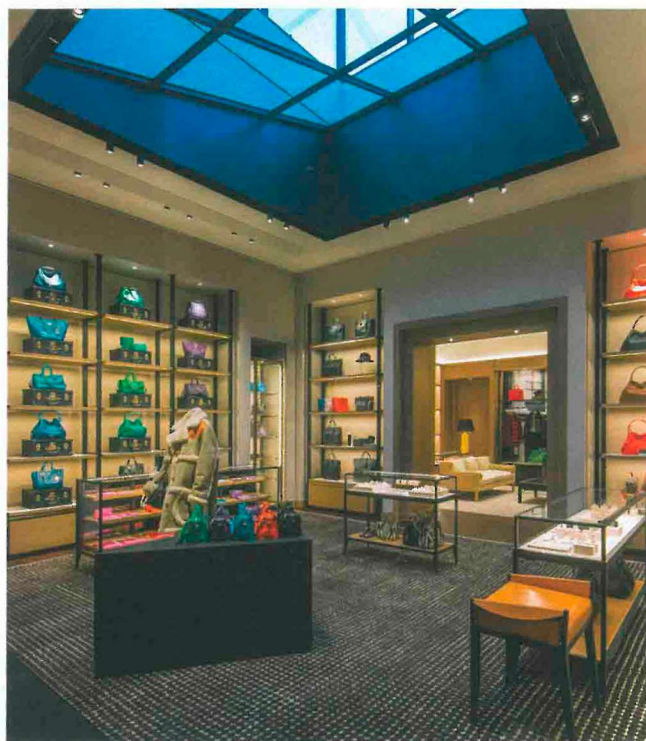
The welcoming touchpoint of the new concept stores – based in Beverly Hills, the Time Warner Center in New York; Manhasset, N.Y.; and San Diego, Calif. – are their entries, featuring a façade of glass blocks, supported by a series of massive steel I-beams, and a flooring transition from the street, clearly defined by ironspot brick pavers, which serve to move foot traffic forward. Mahogany panels on the building’s exterior, fastened by copper screws and washers, elevate the level of authenticity and detail.





*ABOVE Perimeter cabinetry features changeable environmental and seasonal artwork integrated into merchandise groupings on strategically positioned roll-down systems.*

*RIGHT A skylight in the Rodeo Drive store adds a splash of natural light to the environment.*



Once in the store, allusions to iconic American imagery, including carriage houses with equestrian appointments, lead customers on a journey of discovery. As they move through a progression of rooms, denoted by flooring changes – from reclaimed heart-pine wood, to custom hand-tufted wool carpeting – transition points announce to the customer that they've arrived to a new merchandise classification.

Offset by a series of elegant vitrines and casework, framed with slenderized I-beam supports, a video monitor seamlessly integrates media into the space. The disparate mix of materials and textures, from rich to rough, and hard to soft, creates a palpable tension in the space. Surface treatments vary between natural and ebonized ash, blackened steel and antique bronze. Suede trim on shelving and back walls offers a soft, tactile backdrop to perimeter casework used as a platform to highlight product. Wall cabinetry accommodates environmental and seasonal artwork backdrop changes on a roll-down system.

As an unassuming, noncommercial way to reflect the company's design philosophy, the stores are





*LEFT An expression of color in the form of a floorstanding sculpture adds an element of excitement to an elegant leather seating arrangement.*

*ABOVE Statement mid-century furniture defines the space with a collection that includes custom steel and leather counter stools, shoe benches in tufted leather, pearl lamb-shearling-upholstered club chairs, and Pullman cloth fabric-covered sofas.*

well-appointed with statement mid-century furniture pieces, including leather stools and pearl lamb-shearling-upholstered chairs that complement the fine woodworking and industrial elements. The stairs also feature mahogany treads and a leather handrail, stitched by the same people who craft Coach product.

In a collaborative effort between store designers, visual merchandisers and merchants, a prototype was first built in a warehouse to “kick the tires” and test the functionality of the concept.

“The new incarnation of the Coach store that William Sofield and I created will trigger a powerful change in the perception of Coach,” Vevers predicts. William Sofield, designer and president of Studio Sofield, adds, “The legacy of Coach finds dignity in the honest simplicity of form. It is authentic and timeless – a sophisticated, yet playful refinement that embodies New York style.” ▀