

Water in every faucet. Flame at every burner. And did we mention the personal chef?

**PIRCH** has created a network of immersive retail sanctuaries that make shopping for kitchen and bath wares engaging and (gasp!) sexy.

oy is not a term one would usually use to describe shopping for appliances. But that is exactly what PIRCH wants you to experience in its stores—so much so that “Live Joyfully” is part of the company manifesto.

It didn’t start out that way. PIRCH (or Fixtures Living, as it was first known before a rebrand in 2013) was a concept born of frustration. Co-founders Jim Stuart and Jeffrey Sears compared notes about horrible home improvement shopping experiences.

“It ended up being probably the worst experience we ever had buying anything, anywhere in the world,” explains Sears, who now serves as CEO of PIRCH. “We thought, ‘How is that possible?’ These industries make beautiful products. They adorn our homes; they create inspired moments in people’s lives—memories with their families. Why would it be this difficult or uninspiring?”

The experience should be better, they thought. And thus, their ideas became Fixtures Living, which opened in an industrial park in San Diego in 2009, followed by a showroom in Rancho Mirage, Calif., in 2010.

For the third location, in Costa Mesa’s Newport Beach region of California, the company reached out to Columbus, Ohio-based FITCH to help create the ultimate home-shopping oasis that would reflect the journey that the company wanted customers to go on.

Christian Davies, FITCH’s executive creative director, Americas, went out to meet with Sears

and his team. “They had some of the ideas that ended up in the final concept they were kind of toying with,” Davies says. “They had a test kitchen, and a version of the coffee experience that they have now. But, it was all very piecemeal, and none of it flowed in the way they wanted it to.”

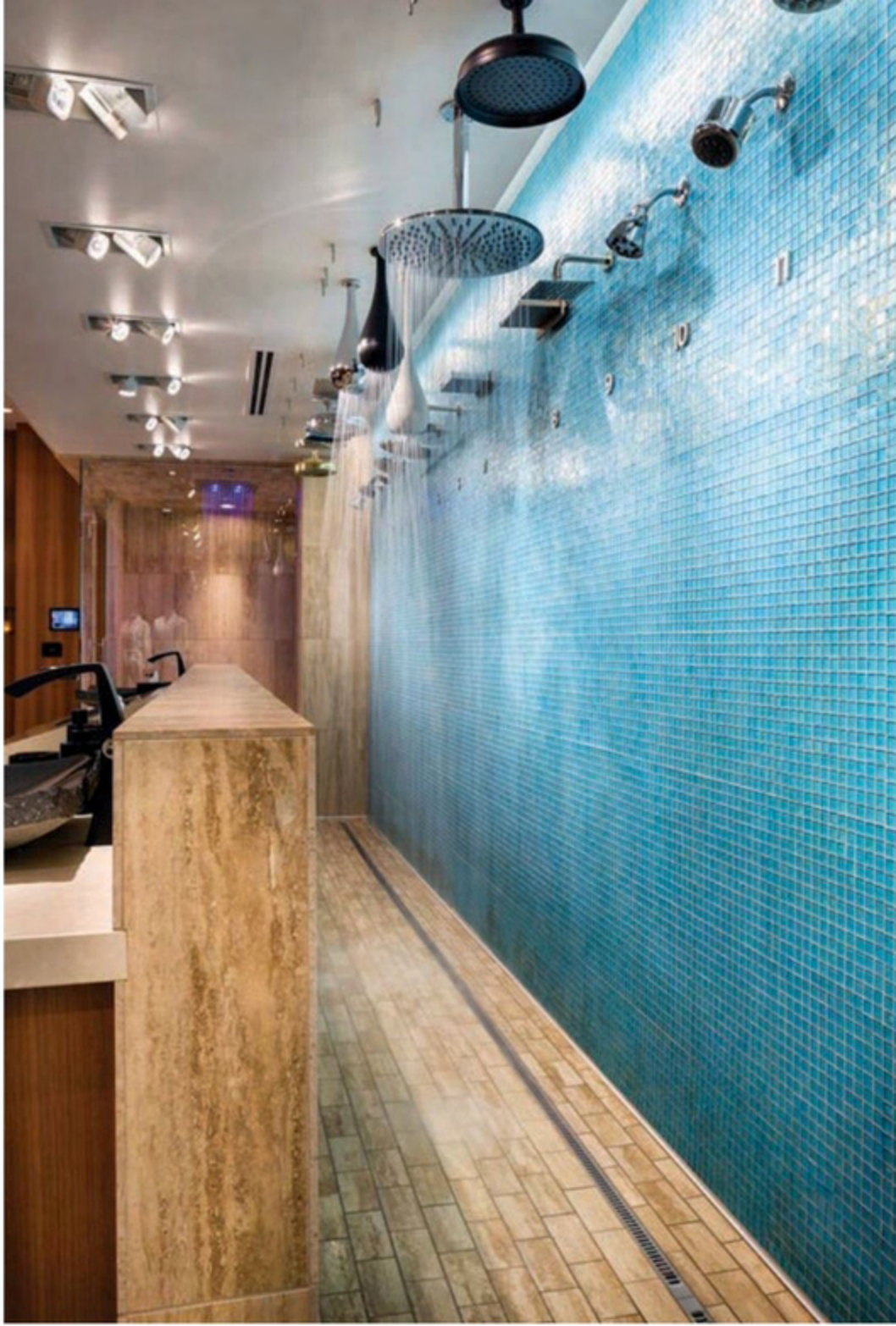
The Fixtures Living team then traveled to Columbus for a two-day brainstorming session to create their ideal store. “We said, ‘Let’s imagine if we had a white sheet of paper and imagine if we were starting from scratch, what would we do?’” Davies says. “That’s when we decided people were going to have to get naked in a retail store.” (More on that later...)

“We didn’t talk about merchandising and fixtures,” Davies says. “We didn’t talk about the look and feel of the space. What we talked about was could we begin every customer’s journey not with ‘What are you looking for today?’ but ‘HOW do you want to live?’”

Those aspirational ideas were manifested in the 20,000-sq.-ft. Costa Mesa store, which opened in 2012. A year later, Fixtures Living changed its name to something shorter that they felt would fit in better with the retail neighborhoods they were moving into. And so PIRCH, a play on the word “perch,” where a bird would roost, was born. “Feather your nest, feather your home,” Sears says.

PIRCH now operates seven stores across the country, including the latest 27,000-sq.-ft. Atlanta store, which debuted this past December.

In keeping with the idea of living joyfully, everyone who walks through the door is treated as a privileged guest, welcomed with the offer of a complimentary beverage before venturing into the PIRCH experience.



↖ Customers can test out the showerheads, either with clothes or without.

↑ The Oak Brook, Ill., store was the first PIRCH opened outside of California.  
Photo by DARIN FONG PHOTOGRAPHY

← The test kitchen in the Dallas store.  
Photo by DARIN FONG PHOTOGRAPHY



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-CHRISTIAN DAVIES, FITCH

And what an experience it is. A hands-on, fully functioning experience, from the gas ranges to the showerheads in the Sanctuary area. Sears wouldn’t have it any other way. “It’s just logical,” he says, comparing the investment in your home to going to a car dealership and not being able to test drive a car before buying it. “You’re asked to spend \$20,000 on a beautiful range, but you can’t even cook on it? How would you select a showerhead if you couldn’t see the water come out of it? It just seemed elementary,” he explains.

Each PIRCH store has an on-site chef, doing cooking demonstrations on stovetops, rotisserie systems and built-in ovens in both the indoor kitchen and in the Outdoor department, so guests can see the equipment in action. Gas ranges are set up so customers can turn on the flames to see how they adjust.

Now, back to getting naked in-store. In the Sanctuary, a wall of touchpad-operated showerheads allows guests to see how the water flows out of them. For a more in-depth demonstration, customers can come after-hours and actually test them out. Seriously—the area is closed off for privacy, and you can strip down and test the showerheads, tubs or saunas (both wet and dry). Try doing that at your local big box (on second thought, don’t!).

Creating working kitchens and running water in bathroom vignettes requires a massive amount of construction work. PIRCH serves as its own general contractor, so the company builds the stores as well. According to Sears, in every store there are more than 464 floor penetrations for gas, electric, water and sewage. “It’s the equivalent of building three restaurants and a spa and a retail store,” he

says, “Or 17 kitchens and 18 master baths in someone’s home.”

This set-up was one of the challenges FITCH faced in putting the conceptual design plan in motion. “We have to land on the penetrations. That has to be set very early on,” Davies explains. “We may be able to move a little bit here and there, but that means, versus another concept where you’re moving stuff around at the last minute, the floor plan has to be largely fixed weeks into the concept. From there, we can have a lot of fun with materials and fixtures and lighting, but stuff can’t really move once we make that decision.”

The store concept and design is consistent through all PIRCH stores, but is flexible enough to fit into any shape or size building, including one opening in March in Paramus, N.J. Slight alterations

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will be made in the store they currently are working on in New York's SoHo district, set to open in 2016, as it is located in a historic building with a lot of architectural details and brick arches that won't be covered up, Davies says.

For materials, FITCH chose a neutral palette, with a contemporary look and clean lines, so as not to distract customers from picturing the products in their own homes. Throughout the store, products are set up in lifestyle vignettes to help customers as well, so they don't feel like they are in a massive 30,000-sq.-ft. space, but rather in a more intimate kitchen or bathroom setting.

All of this—the design, the products, the people—is there with the focus on the customer, and how to help her follow a journey to live joyfully. “If you don't define why you exist first, then it's very hard to create a sustainable business,” Sears says.

So, how do you want to live?

d:r



- ↑ The Sanctuary in the Atlanta store allows customers to take a dip in the tubs.
- ← [Far left] Demystification Station signage helps customers figure out what best suits their needs.
- ← [Left] Vignettes are arranged to feel as if you were in an intimate kitchen instead of a large store.