

RETAIL

The discovery-centric SNARKITECTURE-KITH collaboration moves beyond hometown bounds

MIAMI — If shopping and art have anything in common, it's a process of discovery. Efforts to imbue retail space with a sense of finding oneself in the merchandise on display have cycled in and out of fashion since Harry Selfridge began choreographing his Aladdin's cave-like department store in the early 20th century.

To design Kith NYC's retail outlets, owner and designer Ronnie Fieg chose a studio that has long been interested in building revelation into space: in 2011, as he was launching the fashion and footwear brand, artist Daniel Arsham and architect Alex Mustonen — aka Snarkitecture — were busy chiselling their way through a vast block of styrofoam that eventually became a series of

explorable caves in New York's Storefront for Art and Architecture.

Each of Snarkitecture's five Kith stores adds dimension and context to the brand through a synthesis of art and design. The first permanent shop outside New York City, and the swankiest, opened in Miami Beach in December. 'Similar to the Kith locations in New York,' says Snarkitecture partner Ben Porto, 'we wanted clients to feel a sense of discovery as they move through the Miami space.' But the experience starts at the kerb.

The use of forced perspective inside — the women's section features a series of arches that divide the bay into separate niches, decreasing in size to give the »



illusion of a shrinking hallway – creates a compelling and unexpected moment from outside the store, too, according to Porto. Inside, like the Brooklyn location, which sports 700 cast white trainers, parts of the Miami walls and ceiling are lined with 500 all-white, cast-replica Air Jordan V sneakers, a nod to the brand's fifth store. Along with perspective, the Snarkitects played with points of view inside and out: a series of mannequin niches at the entrance are lined with slanted mirrors for a funhouse effect that also invites visitors to view the clothing from all angles. 'We used lenticular fins to

create two distinct storefronts, which allows for reprogramming,' Porto explains. 'They also enable natural light to enter the shoe room and frame views of the shoes from the street.'

Kith's shops are shops, not art, but they are *experiences* as much as space, drawing parallels between the process of discovery and the access to multiple points of view shared by both art and commerce. Look for an Aspen experience to come. — SM

snarkitecture.com



Snarkitecture lined sections of Kith in Miami with cast-replica Air Jordan V sneakers, a nod to the brand's fifth store.

Not Just for Kicks

Aaron 'Ronnie' Fieg envisions his brand as an extension of himself. From the age of 12, the Queens-born designer began working as a stockist at SoHo footwear chain David Z, eventually becoming head buyer. When an image of his own technicolour design, the Asics Gel Lyte 3, appeared on the cover of *The Wall Street Journal*, the shoes sold out in a day. The Asics trainers presaged the infusion of the sneaker look into women's dress shoes, and vice versa, and catapulted Fieg into a prolific design career. In 2011 he launched Kith NYC, mixing his own apparel and footwear with that of other brands. He even integrated a cereal bar, Kith Treats, into the Brooklyn shop in 2015. Collaboration has marked Fieg's prodigious output: in September 2016, he partnered with 25 brands to show a collection of '90 looks' at New York Fashion Week.

kith.com