



BENDEL HEADS FOR THE HILLS

Stylish Short Hills newcomer Henri Bendel thinks outside the hatbox, turning a legendary store into a powerhouse brand.

By Polly Blitzer

It's nearly impossible to glimpse chocolate-on-white stripes without registering Henri Bendel. First introduced to New York City in 1895, the boutique featured exquisitely detailed hats made by a milliner named Henri Bendel. Today, the luxury mecca is returning to its roots by opening a series of concept stores—one at The Mall at Short Hills—carrying gifts and accessories featuring the brand's signature patterns. “Our stripes, polka dots and other logos that we've used on hatboxes have always been part of what we do at Bendel,” says Ed Bucciarelli, president of Henri Bendel, a Limited Brands Inc. company. “Customers understand our fashion legacy. And our concept around accessories and gifting really stems from our heritage and the iconography surrounding it.”

But why deviate from a shopping formula that's worked for more than a century? “We've always served the really young, hip, sophisticated consumer, and that hasn't changed,” explains Bucciarelli. “What's changed over time is what that young, hip, sophisticated consumer wants. And we've adapted to that.”

Handbags are the cornerstone of

“WE STRETCHED THE DEFINITION OF ACCESSORIES... TO TITILLATE YOU A LITTLE, IN THE FALL SEASON WE'RE DOING THE STRIPES ON A VESPA HELMET.” —Ed Bucciarelli, President, Henri Bendel

the concept, which will include a variety of brands along with an exclusive collection Henri Bendel is developing. “The big story is we're turning the store into a brand,” says Bucciarelli, who adds that the merchandise will be set up like a candy store, featuring whimsical stations showcasing jewelry, leather goods, Wellies, candles, stationery and other items. “We stretched the definition of accessories to include things like china teapots, teacups and jewelry boxes. To titillate you a little, in the fall season we're doing the stripes on a Vespa helmet.”

For the Short Hills beauty enthusiast, rest assured—there will be something for you too. The brand has plans to introduce a personal-care line this fall called Henri Bendel Pamper. “As you navigate through the store, you will always discover something unexpected,” Bucciarelli says.

After a series of successful test

locations in upscale shopping centers nationwide, the accessories-boutique concept has been perfected for Short Hills. “The Mall at Short Hills is kind of a girl's playground, and we've always thought of ourselves as a girl's playground too, so it's a privilege to be a part of it,” Bucciarelli says. “It's a top mall and we're on the 50-yard line, so it's hard to turn down that kind of real estate opportunity.”

The “new and improved” Henri Bendel doesn't end with just interior design, though the store's management team is keeping its next phase a mystery. “We are testing something in our flagship store called Bendel's Bespoke. Once we get some traction, we will hopefully roll them out to our concept stores,” says Bucciarelli. Until that day, we'll just have to savor having our favorite brown-and-white-stripe boutique in our community. After all, as the old saying goes, good things come to those who wait. ■



Henri Bendel Bendel Girl Shopper



Debutante Asymmetric Clutch



Love Henri Print Barrel Bag



Petite Hinge Bangles



Rivet Print Enamel Bangle



Sterling charm bracelet



Henri hobo in blue