

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

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a little fashion



Slade Architecture's Flight Club New York consignment stores are a slam



Logo caps and outerwear share a sidewall at the flagship.

## they've got game

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Perusing the portfolio of Slade Architecture, potential clients click on the House of Barbie mega-store in Shanghai and say, "Wow. That's really pink." Even Barbie might blush if she could. For the record, though, Hayes and James

Slade are serious architects, their versatility proved without a doubt by two Flight Club New York stores that Hayes Slade characterizes as "anti-Barbie"—swapping girlish pink for stoplight red and macho black. This mecca for collectible sneakers, caps, jackets, and shirts is all about

raw urban testosterone and adrenaline. Which isn't to say you won't find, in men's size 8, a \$300 pair of Adidas high-tops in transparent plastic, both shoes featuring a floppy and flamboyantly cartoonish wing that suddenly puts you in league with the Greek god Hermes. That's just one of the flavors of fabulous for sneaker snobs today. Merchandise varies widely, because it's 99 percent sold on consignment. ➤

A first inkling of the sports-gear underground came to the Slades through their teenage son, who dragged mom and dad into Flight Club's tiny original iteration to ogle a pair of gray Nikes he intended to wear exclusively on sunny days—and then only with extreme care in order to avoid creases. Flight Club is “kind of an institution,” Hayes Slade says. “All the kids know about it.” Soon, however, the Slades discovered high-schoolers to be far from the sole sneaker obsessives in town. Renovating a town house for Ricky Kenig, co-owner and namesake of the Ricky's NYC mini-chain of outrageous beauty and costume emporiums, the Slades designed a footwear display wall lined in brushed-aluminum shelving. It was Kenig, a Flight Club customer and a friend of the founder, who passed their name along when Flight Club needed a bigger location. “We already knew how to make sneakers into decor,” Hayes Slade says. Clearly, the Slades were a shoe-in.

Several blocks from the first shop, the 2,700-square-foot flagship occupies the ground level of a century-old loft building. The Slades removed a free-floating stair from the front and uncovered original brick side-walls. Other walls are now surfaced in black recycled rubber or vermilion-painted gypsum-board. In terms of materials, though, the intervention was planned to look as if very little had been done. Fluorescent linear fixtures are exposed, the ceiling timbers above simply painted matte black. For the floor, the Slades laid out plywood sheets with architectural precision, then clear-finished them.

After considering multiple floor plans, the owners opted for a layout open enough “to play basketball in,” James Slade says. “It's like you're at a gym.” The milky glass backboard for the regulation basketball hoop doubles as a rear-projection screen for videos and game broadcasts—Eddie Murphy, Knicks, or Lakers. Pickup games are allowed only after-hours, but shoppers still find the uncluttered space inviting, like an extension of the sidewalk.

On one 100-foot-long sidewall, a black-painted steel grid supports small shelves for shrink-wrapped sneakers. (Left foot only. The right foot waits downstairs.) Opposite, wire hat forms display rows of baseball caps. Because of the Barbie project, the Slades knew it wasn't expensive to customize a standard form in China, and they were lucky to have a native Mandarin speaker in their New York studio to guide modifications. Below the hats, jackets and shirts swing from hangers that the general contractor bent from 1/2-inch copper plumbing pipe. The bench for trying sneakers on has a slanted base of reflective polished stainless steel—whereas, in a different kind of shoe store, standard mirror would have been used. Counters and the front doors' push plates are surfaced in the same pebbled orange leather as regulation-approved basketballs.



**Opposite:** The base of the built-in bench is mirror-polished stainless steel.

**Top, from left:** Flooring is clear-finished 4-by-8-foot plywood sheets. The laminated-glass basketball backboard doubles as a rear-projection screen for video. Pebbled leather, usually found on basketballs, surfaces a counter with inset computer monitors. **Bottom:** Basketball leather also surfaces the front doors' push plates.





After the eight-month-long flagship project, the Slades were asked to remake the original Flight Club, just 700 square feet. Its palette is similar to that of the flagship, for what James Slade calls a "more concentrated experience of the same thing." Shoppers encounter a compact space with a thicket of athletic shoes hanging from magnetic hooks stuck onto the steel-clad wall. A few special shoes, plus sunglasses, are displayed in a low glass-fronted case near the front. In the rear, an apparently haphazard framework of shiny plumbing pipe and fittings adds complexity to the already densely populated space while serving as hang bars and even a rudimentary bench. Suffice it to say, there's no Barbie pink in sight. ➤



**PROJECT TEAM**

TIAN GAO, GEORGE BRENNER, ROBERT MILLER, TRINE SKOVBO, HALLEY WURTZ, ELIZA KOSHLAND, ADAM CROWLEY: SLADE ARCHITECTURE. GILSANZ MURRAY STEFICEK: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. PAVANE & KWALBRUN; MEP: BRONZE HILL; GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

**PRODUCT SOURCES**

FROM FRONT XIAMEN DISPLAYART CO.: CUSTOM HAT DISPLAY (FLAGSHIP). KC STORE FIXTURES: SHOE DISPLAY. SPALDING: BASKETBALL HOOP. CARVART: BACKBOARD MATERIAL. ELLIPTIPAR: RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES. HORWEEN LEATHER COMPANY: DESKTOP, PUSH PLATE SURFACING. DORMA: CUSTOM DOORS. THROUGH McMASTER-CARR: PIPE, FITTINGS (STORE). THROUGHOUT THOR PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS: RUBBER SURFACING. THROUGH CONTRACTOR LIGHTING: LINEAR FIXTURES. BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.: PAINT.

*Opposite: Brick on the sidewalls dates to the late 1800's.*

*Top, from left: At the original store, sneakers' shoelace eyelets are zip-tied to hooks attached with high-strength magnets to the steel-clad wall. A cast-iron column stands at checkout. The store occupies 700 square feet in a limestone building. Bottom: Galvanized-steel plumbing pipe and fittings create hang bars and a bench at the rear.*

