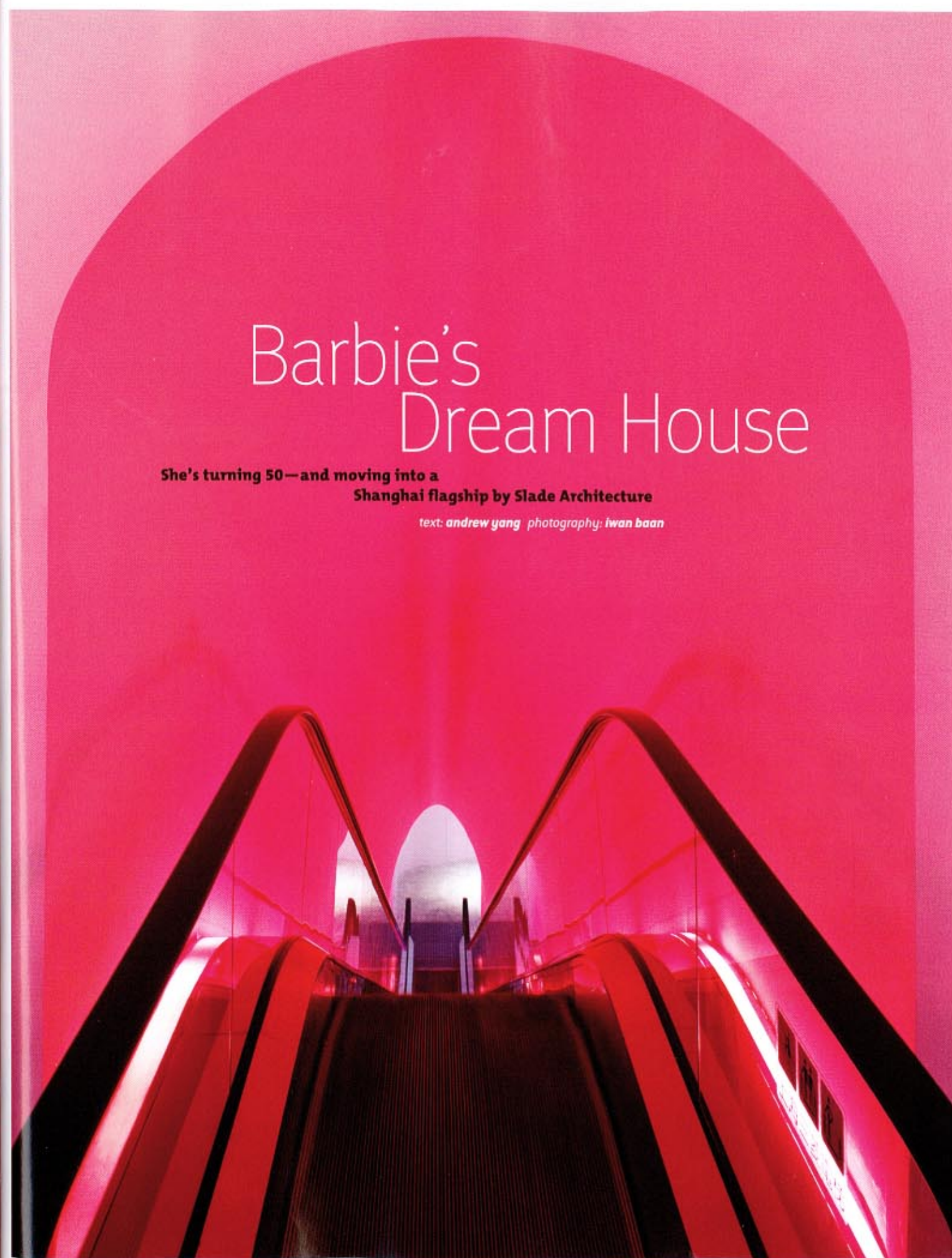




Barbie's Dream House

She's turning 50—and moving into a
Shanghai flagship by Slade Architecture

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Previous spread, left: At Shanghai's House of Barbie by Slade Architecture, lacquered panels front shelving. *Previous spread, right:* Gelled fluorescent tubes illuminate the escalator that ascends from the lobby. *Top:* Flooring changes from terrazzo to carpet in the area devoted to toys. *Bottom, from left:* Beaded curtains in the couture area. The crystal beads on stainless-steel cable. A mirror-finished acrylic bubble and backlit acrylic disks in the cutouts of a lacquered wall. *Opposite:* Embedded in the wall, plastic balloon shapes dispense candy.

Even on bustling Huaihai Lu, one of the main shopping arteries in the megawatt city that is Shanghai, the House of Barbie is a behemoth. The six-story flagship is also the very first store devoted to the world's favorite doll, who turns 50 this year. After countless focus groups, parent company Mattel chose Shanghai for a variety of factors including China's fast-growing economy as a whole and the optimism of the city in particular. The project was conceived by the branding and advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather and designed by Slade Architecture to celebrate Barbies of every variety: vintage dolls to collect, dolls outfitted by Vera Wang and Juicy Couture, dolls dressed for the beach, dolls in astronaut and nurse uniforms.

Exemplifying how the store literally exudes Barbie, the front of the building shimmers pink, purple, and white at night as light passes through floral patterns in panels of polycarbonate and fritted glass—contoured to recall Barbie's vacuum-formed plastic packaging. The 35,000-square-foot interior behind the facade is a wonderment. "It's an aspirational boutique with a playhouse feeling," James Slade says. "Even though those things don't usually live with each other." His wife, Hayes, adds, "Since the project was called *House of Barbie*, it also became a kind of fantasy residence."

In the lobby of the former office building, visitors squeeze into a narrow escalator tunnel to be whisked straight up to the expanse of the third level. (Two is occupied by a Barbie spa run by a third-party licensee.)





Containing the latest model of Barbie, custom acrylic boxes hang from steel hoops to enclose the stair that connects the third through fifth levels.

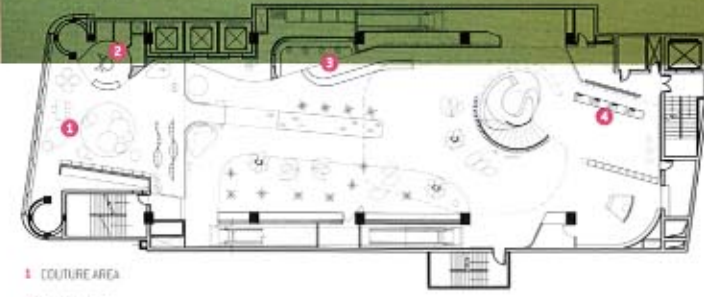


From three, a staircase spirals upward to levels four and five, providing a literal and visual link. The stair enclosure is a giant cylinder of clear acrylic that appears to be composed of individual stacked boxes containing the latest Barbie model in a multitude of pink outfits. The stair enclosure's location, rising from a double-height atrium, symbolizes how the doll itself is "the core of the brand," Hayes Slade says. "We built out from that."

While using a lot of the color most associated with Barbie—namely pink, pink, and more pink—the Slades varied it with textures that really pop. Shiny gold mosaic tiles clad the curved walls and the floor in the beauty salon. Silvery, reflective acrylic bubbles burst through a partition. Glitter and beading abound. However, the sense of fun that had to be conveyed is coupled with practical considerations about children running rampant through the store. That meant plush carpet, rounded surfaces with no sharp edges, and no places to easily trip or fall.

While the doll is certainly the core of the brand, those familiar with the universe of the quintessential girlie girl know that it also encompasses clothing and accessories, even campers and ➤

0 10 20 40



- 1 COOUTURE AREA
- 2 FITTING ROOM
- 3 SALON
- 4 CASH WRAP

Top: Lacquered built-ins define the storytelling area, where one wall is covered in a cotton blend. **Bottom, from left:** Cash-wrap desks transformed by custom-printed photographs of vintage furniture. The souvenir shop on the ground level. The fourth level's balcony.

Opposite top: Mirrored glass tile clads the beauty salon, where girls prepare for their fashion shows. **Opposite bottom, from left:** The couture area's custom tables with lacquered MDF tops and bases of either chromed ceramic or cast resin. LEDs set into the routed MDF walls along an escalator. The renovated entry of the 1980's building.





Top: For privacy in the unpartitioned fitting room, fabric cylinders descend at the touch of a button. The resin floor is speckled with glitter. **Bottom, from left:** the women's restroom, with its Ceram sink vanity. One of a-kind shells backed by a scrim outside the design center. Mirror-polished stainless-steel panels suspended from the ceiling.

Opposite: LEDs glow through the facade's layers of polycarbonate and fitted glass.

houses. The Slades and U.S. firm Chute Gerdeman went one step further, far beyond the typical retail experience, with activities created almost from scratch. On any given day, kids in the photo studio are having their pictures taken for Barbie passports. In the design center, adults guide little girls on touch-screen kiosks to create custom dolls. On the fifth level, girls can stage their own runway show—with the help of a team to do hair and makeup and to dress them in Barbie apparel before they step onto the catwalk to strut their stuff for parents and friends. Several shows run daily.

"This store makes experiences and memories. It allows parents to have quality time with their kids," Dennis Gerdeman says. "In the end, the photos and other customized accessories are cherished items." Of course, accepted retail wisdom is that the longer customers stay in a store, the more they're likely to spend. That thought should keep Barbie young for another 50 years. **▶**

PROJECT TEAM

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PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT TO REAR: CUSTOM DOORS (EXTERIORS) HANNAH WALL COVERING (STORYTELLING) BURSTER. CARPET EUROREX CURTAIN FABRIC (CLOAKROOM) INTERIORS FOR CARPET (THIRD LEVEL) SUPANI WARD MATERIAL (RESTROOM). TORALD LIGHTING FIXTURE BRANDI SCHMIDT (DESIGN CENTER) THUNDERBOLT KITCHEN. STRANDS DESIGN CO. CUSTOM FURNITURE. CHUNG SHEUNG.

