



Former Tiffany's Design Director Christian Lahoude Creates Architectural Masterpieces for Alexander Wang, Jimmy Choo and More

Bringing the knowledge and expertise to deliver exceptional retail experiences that are uniquely tailored to the brand identity of the client, the Lebanese-born architect whose created masterpieces for the likes of Alexander Wang, Jimmy Choo and Harry's of London translates his client's visions into elegant branded environments. Formerly the design director at Tiffany & Co. and a lead designer at Gucci's Store Design Department, we're reminded of an accomplished artisan at work. His creations, coupled with a keen design aesthetic and a precedence for detail, impart a wisdom upon the industry — ultimately creating some of the most sought after designs in high-end luxury retail spaces.

christianlahoude.com

1.) To begin, tell us a little bit about your education and how you got started with architecture.

My father owned a real estate agency and worked closely with architects. My mother was a seamstress. Looking back on it now, seeing how my father operated his independent business and being exposed to fashion at a young age probably had a big effect on how I planned my future. In high school, I had all intentions of going into fashion but I wasn't confident

enough in my drawing skills, so I decided to study architecture which met my artistic needs with science. I ended up falling in love with it.

2.) Having completed projects for, and worked with, companies like Alexander Wang, Tiffany's and Michael Kors, explain how you came to develop large-scale retail centers and flagship stores for some of fashions biggest retailers. Then, if you could, briefly explain your association with the Aishti Foundation & Mall in Beirut and the Art People's restaurant located within it.



Christian Lahoude, Founder of
Christian Lahoude Studio

In 2012, while I was director of design for Tiffany's, I was approached by Alexander Wang to help him grow the business internationally. Previously, I had worked exclusively on projects related to high-end luxury brands with a long history and storied heritage – Gucci, Chanel, Tiffany's – so Alexander Wang was appealing in that it was a younger, contemporary brand. He wasn't looking for an in-house designer, but rather someone to work on contract. At that time, it seemed like it was perfect timing to start Christian Lahoude Studio and to launch with the Alexander Wang project, which then opened up the opportunity to work with other brands starting with Jimmy Choo. I love the challenge of working with many different brands and different identities simultaneously.



Christian Lahoude's Alexander Wang Store in Shanghai



Christian Lahoude's Alexander Wang Store in Tokyo



Christian Lahoude's Alexander Wang Store in Tokyo

As far as my association with the Aishti Foundation, when we initially launched the studio's website in the fall of 2014, the millworker in Italy I worked on the Gucci projects with forwarded the website's introduction email to Aishti's owner, Tony Salame, who happened to be in New York for fashion week. We had a meeting and the rest is history.



Christian Lahoude's work at the Aishti Foundation & Mall



Christian Lahoude's Work at the Aishti Foundation & Mall

3.) Prior to starting your own firm, you worked as an architectural designer for the world-renowned retail design architect, Peter Merino. Tell us about your time working him. What did you learn from him? How has his design style influenced your work?

Peter Marino was my first job in New York after I did my masters. As per the first question, I had an equal love for fashion and architecture growing up so working on Chanel was a dream come true. I worked hard and had the opportunity to work with Peter directly. I was shocked by how involved he was in the plan and layout of the spaces. What I learned from him was not necessarily about style, but more about creating the customer journey.

4.) While working for Gucci, you established an in-house department of Architecture & Interior Design. Tell us what it was like working with Frida Giannini, the brand's former creative

director. What kinds of projects did you work on? How did the idea for the department come about?

After establishing the worldwide concept, we initiated the international team with the first project in each of the regions: Japan, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. First, we focused on the fashion capitals. The Rome flagship came first, followed by New York, then the full rollout.

Working with Frida had its challenges at first since she was coming from a fashion angle while we were approaching it from an architectural angle. As she was the creative director for an iconic brand, she was used to working with amazing fabrics everyday. So when we presented her options for upholstery and such, she was very opinionated and rightfully so. In the end, it was an invaluable collaborative process.

5.) In 2015 you completed work on the Harry's of London located at the Burlington Arcade. Being the retailer's first store, it launched using a new concept developed by your firm that gave credence to British heritage. Tell us about the project. What were your sources of inspiration?

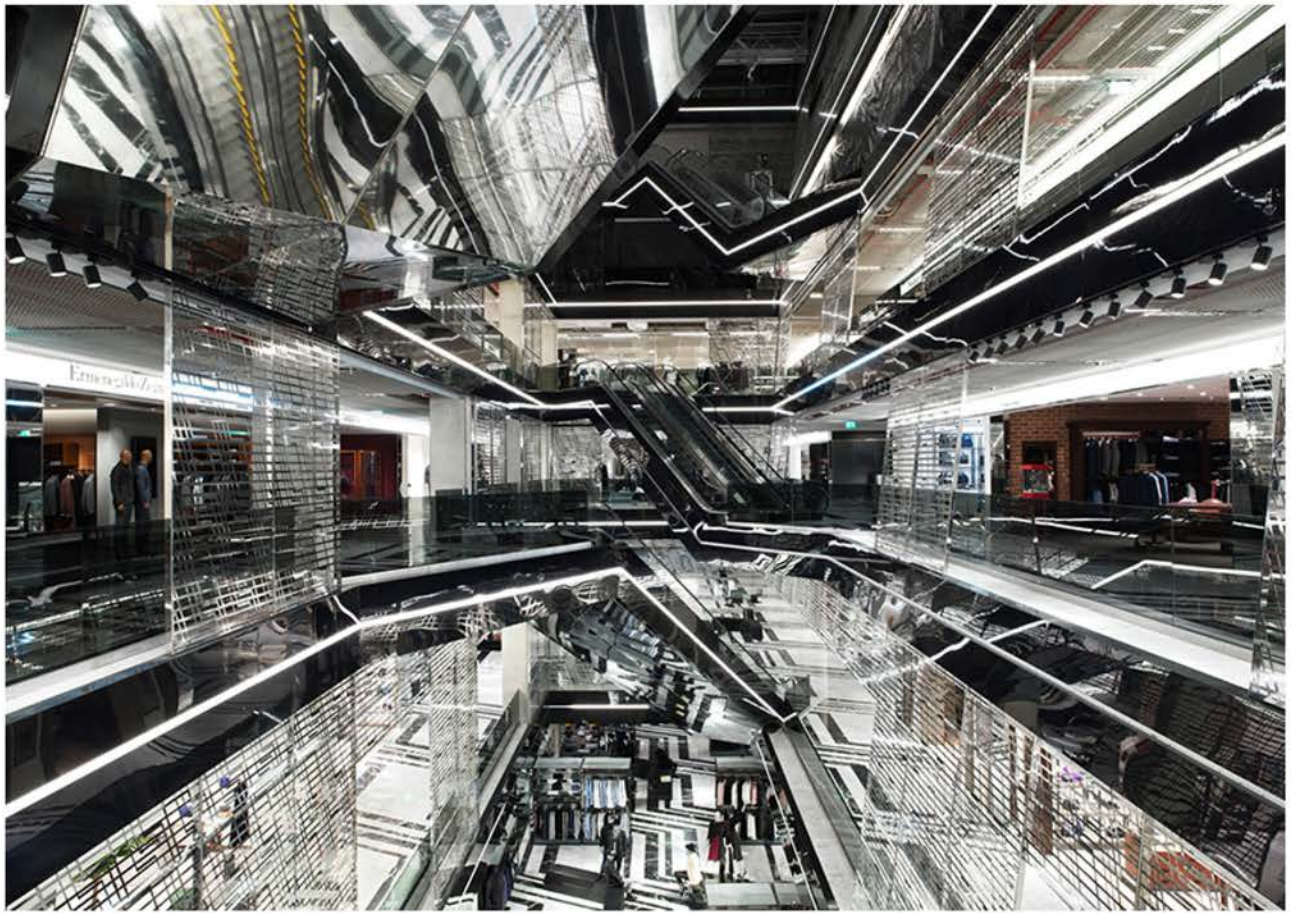
Harry's of London is an evolving project. Currently, we are creating an updated concept for their new Park Avenue store in New York which is planned to open soon. Once it's complete, I'd be more than excited to talk about it then.



Christian Lahoude's Harry's Store in London



Christian Lahoude's Harry's Store in London



Christian Lahoude's Work at the Aishti Foundation & Mall



Christian Lahoude's Harry's Store in London

6.) Throughout your career, you've worked on Jimmy Choo stores in Cannes, St. Tropez and SOHO, NY to name but a few. Back in 2015, your firm finished their Paris Avenue Montaigne store where the underlying inspiration for the store's design came from the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. Tell us about the design process for the project and how you came to use this concept as your source of inspiration?

Given that the real estate on Avenue Montaigne is the most valuable retail space in the world, we elevated and personalized the elements that were already established in the brand's standards to this specific project's needs.

Inspired by the flagship of the quintessential Parisian house of Balmain which happens to be around the corner from this location, we guided the trims to achieve the intended luxury and used the mirrors to give the store's small footprint a larger feeling.



Christian Lahoude's Jimmy Choo Store in Paris



Christian Laude's Jimmy Choo Store in Paris

**7.) As an architect, what's a typical day on the job like for you?
What are your sources of inspiration? What's your creative**

process? Name one thing you couldn't live without.

I usually start the day by visiting the construction sites of local projects. Once at the office, I address any client queries starting with international clients to make up for the time difference. Then, I meet with the studio's project managers to review the progress of current work and to discuss deadlines.

In terms of my creative process, I am very inspired by ART, mainly the performing arts and dance. Visual stimulation is very important to me. It's like food for my eyes.

And concerning the idea of one thing that I couldn't live without, I would have to say that I am very much in love with New York City and all the energy that comes with it. I also get a lot of ideas during my travels to other big cities like Tokyo and London.

8.) As a company and/or architect that offers an array of services ranging from retail design where creative consulting, furniture design and architectural services are a staple asset, to retail experience where brand identity, visual merchandising and global expansion lead your design process, what are your favorite aspects of the job? What gets you excited about taking on a new project?

I get excited by all of it. My favorite aspect of the job is creating an architectural language and visual cues that connect the customer with the brand ultimately tailoring the space to the client's character. I know how to make a product shine.

With respects to new projects, during my days at Tiffany's, for example, I loved getting involved with everything from the music playlist in the stores

to the outfits of the sales staff to the champagne serving trays in the VIP rooms.

9.) In three words, please describe your architectural style.

Timeless. Tailored. Glamorous.

10.) Lastly, what are you currently working on and what can we expect to see from you in the future?

In December, our collaboration with Sulwhasoo, the leading skincare brand in Korea, will finally be introduced to the world with a flagship store in Guangzhou, China. Andalusia, a 7-story luxury spa, will also be revealed in Jeddah, KSA very soon.

Then, once the Harry's of London store on Park Avenue is finished, it will be followed by a pop-up in London where we recently completed the Wedding Gallery, a first-of-its-kind wedding department store.

We are also in the process of expanding the Jimmy Choo flagship on Madison Avenue as well as creating an elevated concept for the brand Bond Collective, a luxury co-working company which is opening office spaces in Bushwick, Brooklyn and the One Penn building in Philadelphia.



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