

# Lacoste Fifth Ave. Flagship Reopens With New Design

By DAVID LIPKE

NEW YORK — Lacoste reopened its expanded Fifth Avenue flagship on Monday after closing it for six months for an extensive redesign and renovation.

The store adds another 1,000 square feet of space by annexing a former jewelry store that was adjacent to its location at 608 Fifth Avenue, on the corner of 49th Street.

“We wanted to elevate the brand and create a true flagship,” said Steve Birkhold, chief executive officer of Devanlay US Inc., the apparel and accessories licensee for Lacoste, which also operates the brand’s retail stores in the U.S. “The old design was really just a bigger version of the format we have in our smaller stores and we were not utilizing the space in an efficient way to maximize sales.”

Lacoste has also inked a deal to open another flagship at 541 Broadway, between Prince Street and Spring Street, on Oct. 1. The 5,000-square-foot space was previously occupied by Foot Locker and is on one of the busiest retail streets in the city. “That unit will be a commercial flagship to really do business,” said Birkhold.

The redesign of the 6,500-square-foot Fifth Avenue flagship was overseen by Christophe Pillet, director of design at Lacoste, along with the New York firm Design Republic. The space adds a prominent floating staircase embedded with LED lights as a central design feature to channel shoppers to the second floor. By moving an elevator and redesigning the wall units and fixtures, the store was enlarged by 2,000 square feet of extra selling space, including the former jewelry store.

Men’s apparel, accessories and footwear are situated on the main floor, as is a dedicated corner for the Lacoste Live collection, the brand’s younger and trendier sublabel. Women’s products are situated on the second floor, but will also be showcased on the main level at times, such as in the spring when the first collection by new creative director Felipe Oliveira Baptista hits stores.

Taking inspiration from denim bars, the flagship has polo bars on the main and second

levels, showcasing the brand’s iconic L1212 polo. The bigger bar on the main floor holds 1,100 polos, with a similar number merchandised on a rear wall fixture, encompassing 65 colors. “We’ve more than doubled the amount of polos on the floor, which makes customer service hugely efficient,” said Birkhold.

The company is aiming to double sales in the flagship from the previous incarnation. “The previous store was very profitable, but it lacked image,” added Birkhold.

This fall, the store will add remote check-out capabilities, with sales staff able to ring up sales from a handheld device. “Guys especial-



Inside the revamped store.

ly want to be able to come in, they know the size of their polo and then check out quickly,” explained Birkhold.

Adding another premium element, the flagship incorporates a concierge service operated by Luxury Attaché, a lifestyle management firm that works with upscale residential buildings, corporate clients and wealthy individuals. The concierge will help Lacoste customers with restaurant and show reservations, car services and package delivery, among other offerings. The service will be complimentary to shoppers, but with priority for high-spending and repeat Lacoste customers.

The French brand operates 70 full-price boutiques in the U.S., with an additional 35 outlet stores. Each of Lacoste’s four U.S. business units — wholesale, full-price retail, outlets and e-commerce — is up 15 percent in sales from 2010, said Birkhold.

PHOTO BY THOMAS IANNACCONE