A photograph of a clothing store interior. In the foreground, there is a large, multi-tiered glass display case. Behind the glass, a person is visible, wearing a light-colored shirt and dark trousers, standing with their hands on the glass. The background shows more clothing items hanging on racks and shelves. The lighting is soft and focused on the display case.

A Very 'Band' Design

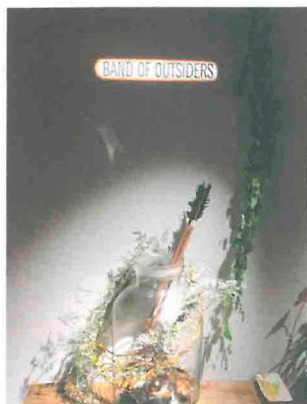
Thanks to NYC-based firm Lot-Ek, Tokyoites are going wild about Band of Outsiders' future-prep style, not to mention all the hot items in the label's first-ever store.

Words Katya Tylevich
Photos Kozo Takayama

Lot-Ek

Shop

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Decorations from The Little Shop of Flowers helped set the scene for the October 2013 opening.

His brief was: I don't just want a pretty store. I want a store that's interesting,' says Giuseppe Lignano, who cofounded architecture studio Lot-Ek with Ada Tolla. The 'brief' came from Scott Sternberg, founder and creative director of LA fashion label Band of Outsiders. The 'store' is the one Lot-Ek just completed in Tokyo's Sendagaya neighbourhood: Band of Outsiders' first retail shop, which opened its doors last October and will be followed by a flagship store in New York's SoHo this year.

Clocking in at just under 600 m², the three-storey concrete and glass building is wrapped in a perforated 'billboard' skin. See-through from inside the store, it also creates a seasonally changeable exterior that corresponds in tone with the current collection. For the store's grand opening, the building was enveloped in an image by LA-based artist Friedrich Kunath, whose 'canvas' covered the office and showroom floors, leaving the ground-floor façade visible to passers-by through glass. The overall result combined a down-to-earth connection to the city with an airily artistic representation above.

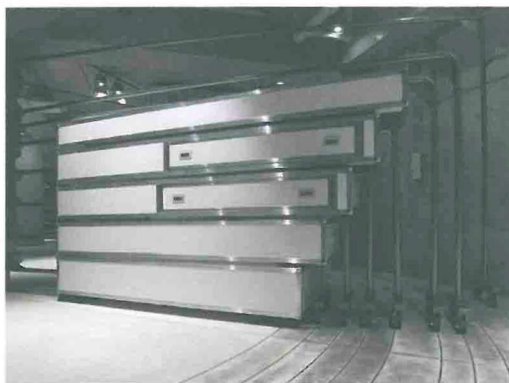
In Lot-Ek's Lower East Side studio, as we look out on a gloomy day, Lignano tells me about the nonlinear process of translating 'the visual world in Scott's head' into architecture. Reluctant to categorize the brand's creative director as a 'typical fashion designer', he says Sternberg's inspirations go beyond 'colour and fabric' into three-dimensional references like '70s projectors, movie-theatre marquees, and 'the signage, materials and shapes of Los Angeles, coupled with the ocean and beach'. I guess that helps explain what Lignano means when he quotes Sternberg, in the process of design, saying: 'I want the store to be very *Band*.'

Later that day, I catch Sternberg by e-mail as he's about to board a flight and ask him to describe the experience he wants the store to convey. His words reinforce the explanations I'd been given earlier. 'I was looking for something that didn't reference retail clichés, something that felt like a laboratory but still captured the nostalgic heart of the brand.'

The physical result could be described as a capsule shipped to Tokyo, containing the atmospheres, references and concepts, says Lignano, while he talks me through the space – the 'nostalgic heart' that Sternberg mentions, as well as something decidedly modern, even futuristic. ...



Rotatable elements can be swept to the side and stacked one atop the other to open the floor for events or installations.



Band of Outsiders

Location 2-6-3 Sendagaya, 150-0001 Tokyo, Japan

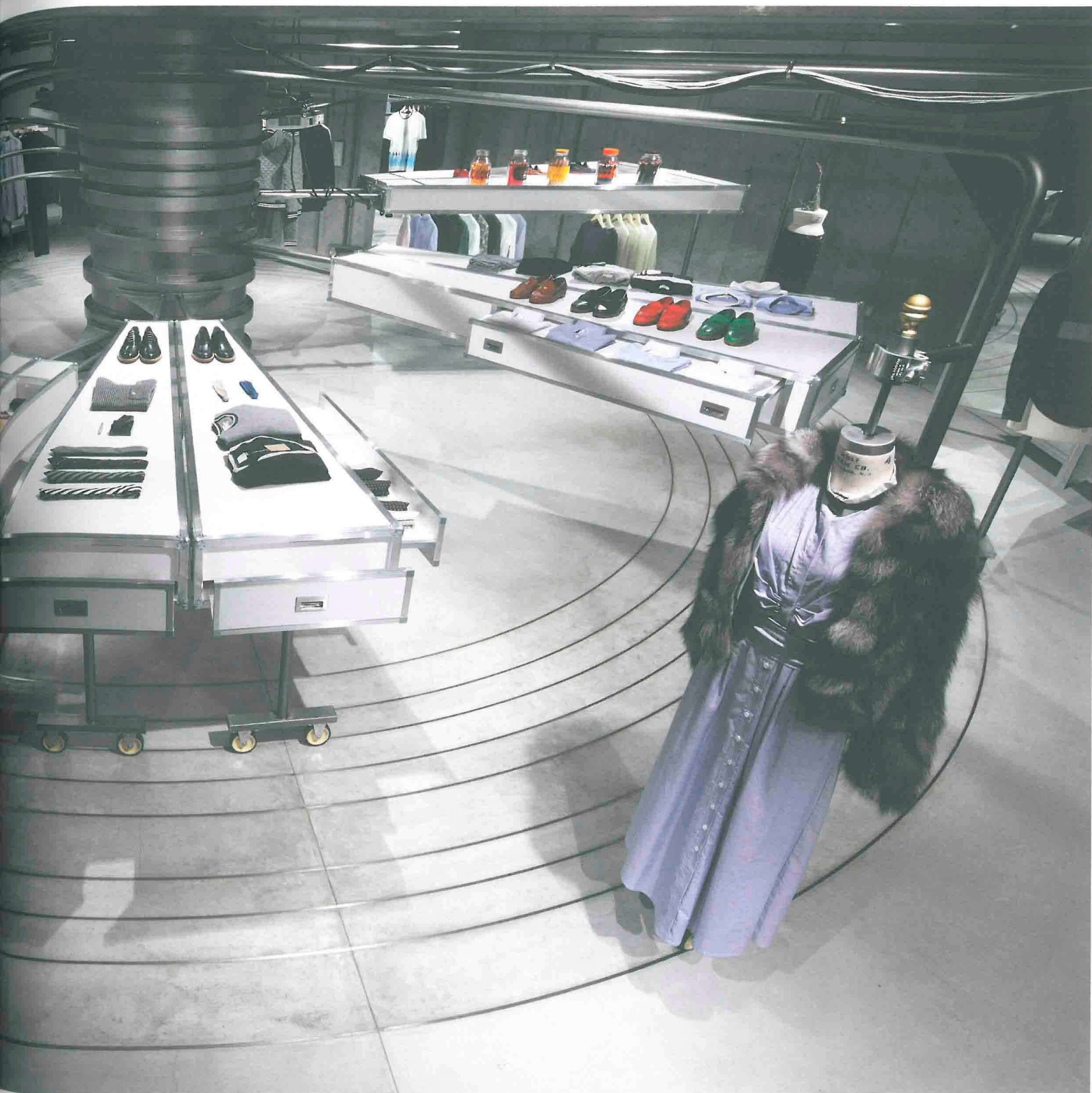
Design Lot-Ek (lot-ek.com)

Materials Steel, concrete, wood, glass

Furniture, lighting, flooring, walls D.Brain Co., Ltd. (dbrain.co.jp)

Area 180 m²

Completion October 2013

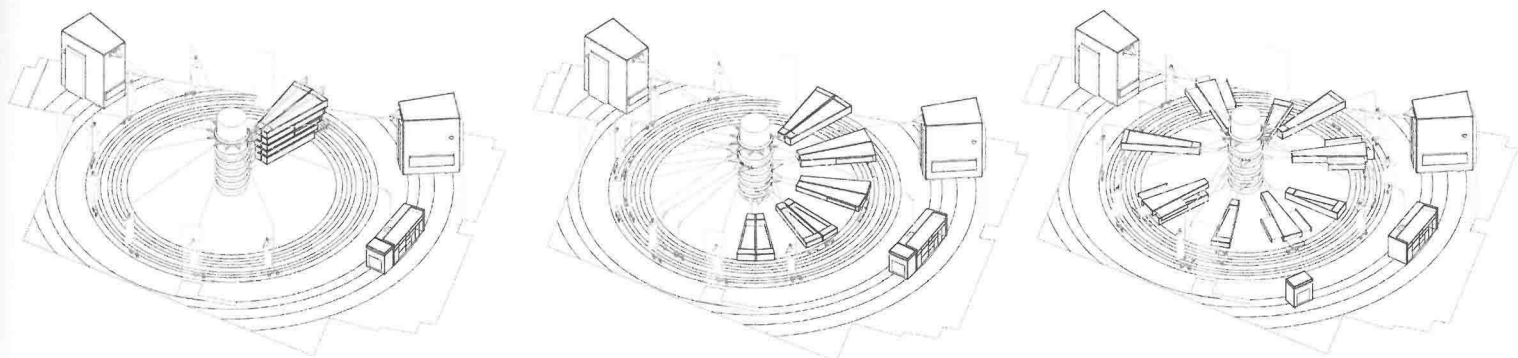


Lot-Ek

Shop

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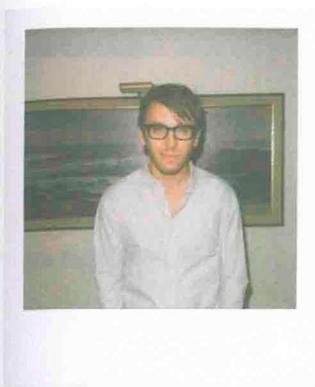
The retail interior is organized around a column encased in a massive fabricated-steel construction.



Diagrams show the elements in various configurations.



Musician road cases make up both the movable display cases and the fitting rooms.



Scott Sternberg.

The Band Brand

Launched by Scott Sternberg in 2004, Band of Outsiders started as a menswear collection: button-down shirts and ties, alluding to a not-too-distant past or to nostalgia in real time. In 2007 Band introduced a line of 'boyish' clothing for its already hardcore female followers. Oxford shirts, varsity jackets, trousers, rompers: all part of Band of Outsiders' vocabulary.

This season, it's even possible to wear Atari prints on one's sleeve (and dress, and cardigan, and chinos). 'I sometimes describe our clothes as "future prep",' says Sternberg. 'It's a balance of respecting and paying homage to the past while always looking towards what's new and next.'

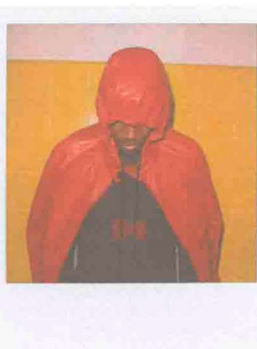
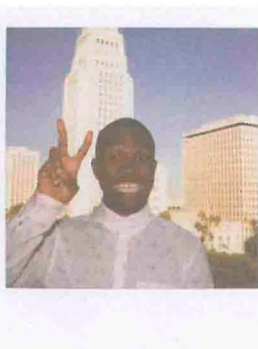
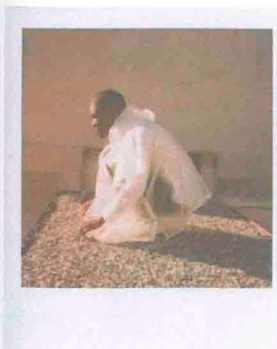
Based in Los Angeles, Band is largely considered to capture something of an American, and specifically Californian, atmosphere – or rather the idea of that atmosphere: an edited counterpart, which appears in memories and movies rewound and re-watched in present day. It's an atmosphere communicated well by Polaroid pictures, a staple of Band's lookbooks and website, which interacts casually with its visitors, like a scrapbook of notes and photographs.

Band of Outsiders is, of course, also the North American title of Godard's 1964 film. Band can be seen as something of a tribute to the visual environments and cool, classic styles of that movie. But it's important to remember that the title is the 'translated' version, which gains new meaning with each original intention that's lost in the conversion. Maybe the point is that Band of Outsiders does capture the mood or grain of watching a 1964 film – but on a 2013 laptop, with the subtitles on.

bandofoutsiders.com



Images from the SS14 menswear collection convey Band of Outsiders' casual approach to photography.



Polaroid pictures are a staple of Band's lookbooks and website.

... The retail space is conscious of being tchotchke-free, but it's more expressive than minimalist. The design is modular, both in its present flexibility and in its potential applicability to different sites, as Band of Outsiders grows and more shops open. 'We wanted a concept that could live everywhere, anywhere.'

The interior of the shop is organized around a structural column encased in a massive fabricated-steel construction. The resulting creature, nicknamed 'The Monster', has 28 arms that carry the store's essential elements – including two fitting rooms, display cases, hanging displays, mannequins, a checkout register and projector. These items can rotate around The Monster like a merry-go-round on wheels, moving along 'tracks' within the concrete floor; they can also be swept to the side and stacked one atop the other to open the shop's floor for events or installations.

Musician road cases make up both the movable display cases and the fitting rooms, the interiors of which are wallpapered with visual imagery 'that Scott is very connected to', including stills from *Star Wars*. Sound installations complement the imagery.

'We wanted a concept that could live anywhere'

As Sternberg explains in another of our rapid-fire e-mail exchanges: 'Film, narrative, and storytelling are important aspects of the brand, as well as cultural references from my childhood and adolescence. To counterbalance the laboratory feeling [of the retail space], I thought it would be cool to transform the dressing rooms into portals – one with *Star Wars* references, the other with more vague beach-scene references. I also wanted the ability to project film against the walls of the store, which is why we added a projector to The Monster.'

Indeed, this conceptual transparency – literally showing some of Band of Outsiders' influences and references on the store's walls – works very much in concert with the physical transparency of Lot-Ek's clean, strong design. The shop suggests the energy of a moving picture, a revolving carousel, or even the click-click-click of a slide projector. Although alluding to the imagery and textures of a certain past, the store's atmosphere is very much one of forward motion.

The decision to open the first store in Tokyo was both a product of Band's partnership with Sazaby League, its distribution partner in the region, and the number of ardent fans the label has in Japan. 'Japan has been a strong market for the brand for many years,' Sternberg writes me. 'The following [it has there] is unique and rabid – they understand my approach to fashion and embrace it in a way that is pretty specific, enthusiastic and fantastic.' Suitably, the design of Band's first store might be described with similar adjectives. _