

SHANGHAI & SENSATION

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(unless otherwise noted)

Drama and high-fashion
collide at Ports 1961's relocated
mega flagship that reimagines
the brand persona

PORTS

1961



Founded in Toronto in 1961 as a silk importing business, Ports 1961 has evolved into an international 327-store chain. Its successful business model is based on vertical integration, controlling design, production and retail operations for both women's and men's collections. In Shanghai, its high-fashion

point-of-view was expressed in its initial store opened three years ago on the street level of an historic building on The Bund, the city's classic, fashionable thoroughfare.

Encouraged by its fast-growing popularity among the city's cadre of fashion-conscious consumers, Ports 1961 outgrew its space, relocating to a new locale as a freestanding, sculptural, sparkling urban statement. The decision to invest in the facility was supported by the mega-size of the Shanghai market: 24 million residents, the biggest in China, and the largest city proper in the world. Ports 1961 moved to capitalize on its potential.

Occupying a former office building, Ports 1961 now resides in a 12,325-sq.-ft. faceted glass structure that has taken on a dramatic new life as a three-level retail store, set like a jewel amid steel and glass high-rise towers. Toronto-based UUFie served as project architect, with the store interiors and merchandise fixturing created by Toronto-based Yabu Pushelberg, led by principals and founders George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg. "We were involved with the entire process," Yabu says. "We were its 'design producers.'"

Shanghai's Ports 1961 enjoys a unique site within the surrounding urban context. Vehicular traffic and neighboring buildings do not directly encroach on the store's island-like footprint. "It's more like a crossroads of two boulevards," Yabu explains. "Imagine Fifth Avenue and 57th Street in New York, then double the size of the intersection, drop this building into the middle of it, and you can get an idea of its placement in Shanghai."

Principal architect Eiri Ota of UUFie further compares the store to a freefloating iceberg. "During the day, the faceted glass façade reflects the sunlight," Ota says. "In the evening, it generates an overall glow by means of LED lights embedded in the joints of the masonry behind the glass block skin." Two types of glass block were used: the standard 12-in. square block, and a custom-mitred block of the same dimensions. Colorful extended photo supergraphics are placed along the façades to communicate fashion messages.

Yabu Pushelberg was invited by Ports 1961 to join

the design team that is reimagining the store's brand persona. "We worked on Shanghai and concurrently with the Hong Kong store on Canton Road, which has a vertical format in a mall," Pushelberg explains. "The brand is transforming itself. Our role supports management's objective to offer an extraordinary shopping experience for the discerning fashion consumer. And that's their market."

The design team took advantage of the 14-ft.-high ceilings to create a series of open and airy rooms with the qualities of a home environment, Pushelberg says. Merchandise display areas use tenets of Japanese design into a minimalist interior theme based on the geometry of open wood-frame panels to separate the collections. In a main selling area, a ceiling-hung construction of staggered levels of open-work, dark-finished wood directs visitors' eyes to the double row of standing male and female mannequins underneath. Lighting is integrated within the structure to create a theatric, stage-like appearance.

Generously scaled arches are in contrast to the multiple intersecting angular outline of the floor-to-ceiling dividers, and invite exploration into adjoining spaces.

Supergraphics are used judiciously. In the men's department, a life-size image of a model outfitted in Ports 1961 apparel is projected on a central display unit, framed in the same wood as the open-work merchandise display system. In the women's section on the second floor, an open transition space has a curved, full-height mural depicting a model on the runway at a Ports 1961 fashion show, as viewed by the audience.

Inverse Lighting Ltd. was responsible for the exterior and interior lighting programs. According to director Filip Vermeiren, LEDs placed behind the exterior glass blocks aim toward the wall. "They light the façade indirectly. Any imperfections in the glass blocks get smoothed out to achieve a homogenous lighting effect," he explains.

Vermeiren describes the façade as "monolithically lit," with controls for dimming in large zones to balance the brightness. "For example, the pop-out windows have a separate control system," Vermeiren says. "Their illumination level is programmed to relate to the balance achieved on the surrounding flat façade."

Interior illumination primarily by LED fixtures is integrated into the store's architecture. Inverse's specifications for ambient and accent lighting included adjustable downlights, spotlights for fixed recessed slots, wall wash lights, mini spotlights for shelf lighting, adjustable linear striplight for ceiling coves and recessed pucklights. It all adds up to create this glittering gem of a retail space.





↑ The men's department features a life-size image of a model.

↓ Tenets of Japanese design are reflected in the display units.

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PROJECT FILE

Ports 1961
Shanghai

ARCHITECT

UUFie

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND
DESIGN PRODUCER**

Yabu Pushelbeg

**FAÇADE MANUFACTURER
AND INSTALLER**

J. Gartner & Co. (HK) Ltd.

FAÇADE ENGINEER

T/E/S/S atelier d'ingénierie

LIGHTING CONSULTANT

Inverse Lighting Ltd.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

eightsixthree Ltd.

Information in the project file is
provided by the retailer and/or
design firm.

