



It's in the Leaves

Swiss luxury tobacco brand Davidoff makes a grand flagship debut in New York's Brookfield Place.

By Carly Hagedon, Managing Editor

Zino Davidoff was born in what is considered present-day Ukraine in 1906. Attempting to flee the tumultuous political climate of the then-Russian Empire, Davidoff's parents and siblings found themselves in Geneva by 1911, opening their first tobacco shop in 1912. He later spent time in Latin America as a young adult, educating himself on the tobacco trade, and eventually took over his parents' shop in Switzerland, growing it into a lucrative business by the end of World War II. Fast-forward to



TOP LEFT *The store's glowing orange exterior (shown toward the left) was a challenge for designers to implement. All pieces were imported from Italy and had to be matched to the company's signature color.*

BOTTOM LEFT, RIGHT *Davidoff of Geneva's in-store humidor features a wide range of high-quality cigars and cigar accessories. No matter what level of interest you have, the staff is on hand to guide customers through the various offerings.*

2016, and the Davidoff (Basel, Switzerland) brand is a household name among tobacco and cigar enthusiasts worldwide.

Experiencing a boom of sorts recently, the retailer opened seven U.S. stores in 2016 alone. One of its most recent locations is a flagship and lounge experience, Davidoff of Geneva, in New York's Brookfield Place, the shopping center situated near One World Trade Center in the Battery Park City neighborhood.

Upon entering the 2000-square-foot space, guests can browse the retailer's collection of accessories, like cigar cutters and lighters, but the main draw is the walk-in humidor, which is visible from outside the store, slightly resembling a shop-in-shop at first

glance. There, shoppers can purchase fine cigars and are invited to proceed into the bespoke lounge, which offers views of the Financial District. Private lockers can also be leased to customers to store their purchases for later use in the VIP-style area.

When it comes to the shopping journey, store associates allow customers to browse or help those new to cigars by guiding them through the cigar selection, cutting and lighting processes. Shoppers may be asked about their favorite flavor profiles and beverages they enjoy, among other preferences, to tailor each customer's purchase.

"[Our staff] is happy to share tips, favorite pairings and suggestions," says Luis Torres, director of retail,



TOP *The bespoke lounge allows customers to escape to a relaxing, secluded environment to enjoy their purchases, away from the hustle and bustle of New York's Financial District.*

BOTTOM *This tobacco leaf installation inside the store's humidifier is a direct reference to what you might see inside a drying barn on a typical tobacco farm.*

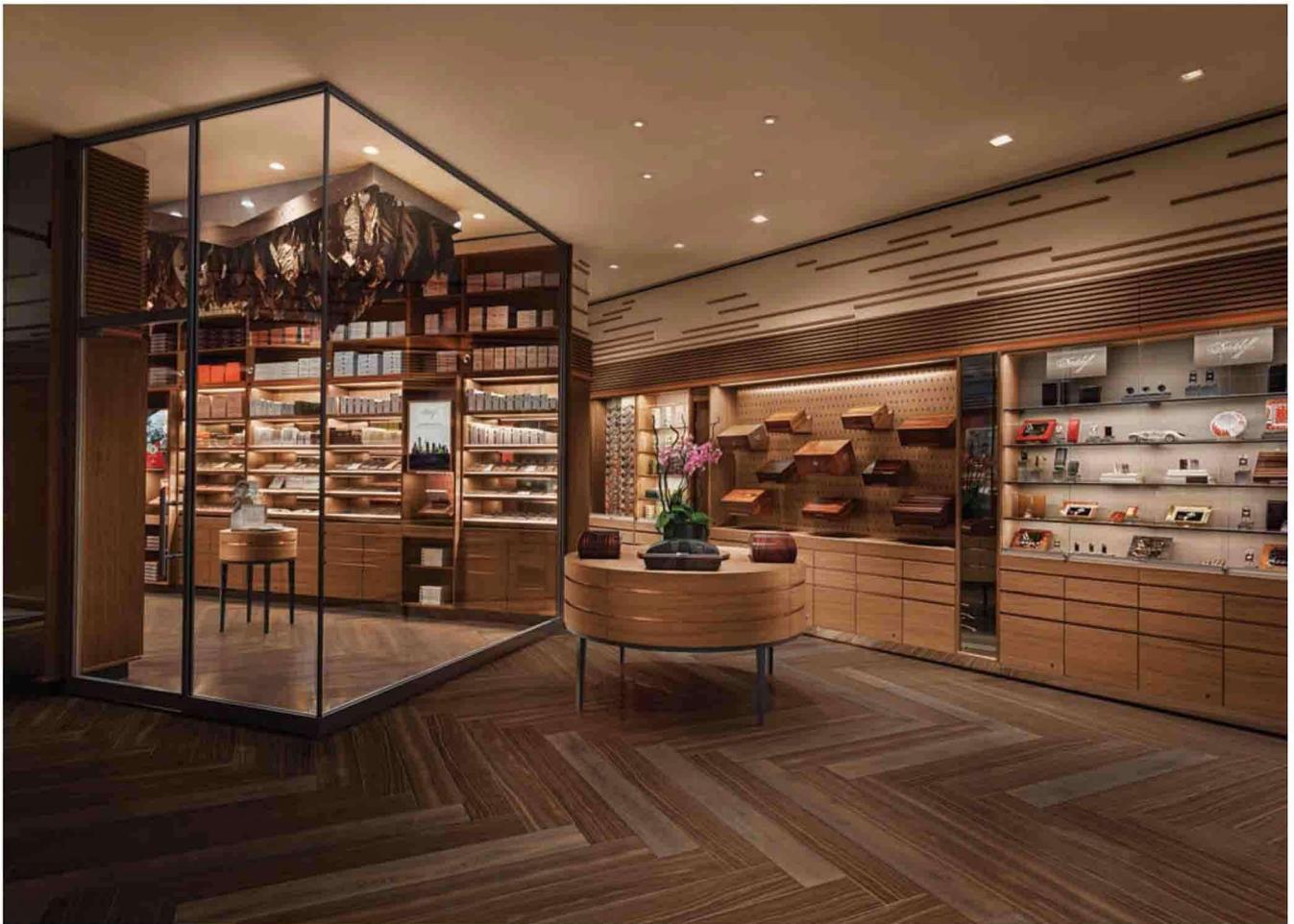
USA, Davidoff. "They are on hand to welcome and assist all guests, from the seasoned aficionado to the novice, and even the non-smoker who is shopping for a unique gift."

Collaborating with Paris-based design agency Stories and Steve Blatz, Architect (which managed the site's construction), the designers faced some smoke ventilation issues when installing the humidifier. But the most complicated feat, according to Gaetan Mansard, director global retail design, Davidoff, was crafting part of the store's glowing exterior façade made up of orange onyx stones imported from Italy. "Each piece has been chosen individually to reflect the corporate ... orange Pantone [color]. The stones are extremely heavy with a backlit system – a real difficulty for the engineering team," he says.

Another issue was the shape of the interior, which was awkwardly compartmented. Turning this into a positive, the store was designed like an apartment, lending a "cozy-but-modern look and feel," says Mansard.

An eye-catching moment in store is a grouping of dried tobacco leaves, visible from the humidifier's interior, a reference to Davidoff's main product offering, meant to resemble what you might find on a typical tobacco plantation, specifically in a drying barn.

"The tobacco leaf is the most important element in



PROJECT SUPPLIERS

RETAILER
Davidoff,
Basel, Switzerland
Oettinger Davidoff AG,
Basel, Switzerland

DESIGN
Stories, Paris
Steve Blatz, Architect,
New York

FURNITURE
Poltrona Frau,
Tolentino, Italy
Walter Knoll,
Herrenberg, Germany

CHANDELIER
Ontwepduo,
Eindhoven, The
Netherlands

our products,” says Mansard, explaining that it highlights the brand’s “crop-to-shop” philosophy. “Playing with all senses was our objective: touch, sight, but most of all, smell. The smell of the tobacco leaf is unique and almost impossible to reproduce in a perfume.”

Continuing the celebration of the tobacco leaf, a bespoke rice paper-based installation, titled “The Harvest,” is prominently displayed in the lounge, created by Dominican artist Pascal Meccariello, who took part in the company’s Davidoff Art Initiative. (He also helped create the undulating leaf pattern seen on the lounge’s bronze mirrors.) Because much of the company’s production is based in the Dominican Republic, the initiative strives to “give back” by bringing wider visibility to the culture and art of the Caribbean region.

A chandelier centerpiece in the lounge conveys a similar style, intended to resemble the country’s native tropical flowers. The rest of the lounge features a classic but approachable feeling with whimsical graphics paired with a masculine ambience. Set apart from the hustle and bustle of the city outside, this area exudes exclusivity.

“The key to success in these kinds of projects is careful preparation,” Mansard says. “Our mission is to surprise and delight our customers by providing unrivalled brand and retail experiences. After [our customers’] initial visit, they all come back.” ▀