Mood indigo

Footwear merchant Capezio brings a blast of color and form to Toronto’s fashion-forward Bloor Street

By Alison Entwroth Medine, Managing Editor

Shoppers passing by the nearly 20-ft-tall, all-glass Sentry façade at 70 Bloor St. in Toronto’s Yorkville district might think a new retailer has moved into town. Capezio, a Toronto-based footwear and accessories merchant, however, has been residing in the posh location for more than 30 years—but with a dramatic getting and renovation by Toronto-based buldfiles, you’d never know it.

Operated by Marki Designs Inc., a family-owned business run by the Markowitz family, the Bloor Street location is one of six Capezio stores in the Toronto area, in addition to the family’s three more upscale DAVIDS footwear boutiques. The Capezio store carries more than 500 SKUs by upwards of 15 designers in the space. In addition to attempting to attract a younger, more fashion-aware clientele with the renovation, the store needed a better layout and more linear space to display the mass quantities of product. “Primarily, we were looking for an evolution from our previous design and looking to take it to another level,” says David Markowitz, CEO and president, Marki Designs Inc. “We also wanted a lot of flexibility within the space so that we are not pigeon-holed into one type of space—we wanted to be able to move it around for seasonal and display changes.”

The architecturally driven design concept was largely conceived as a spatial solution to an extremely challenging blueprint. The space was awkward and small at only 1,095 sq. ft., consisting of drastically different ceiling heights. In the first 20 ft. of the store, the ceiling soars 13 ft. high, then drops down dramatically to 7 ft. in the rear of the space. “We were trying to create more of a sculptural space, so we brought this origami-type form into the scenario,” says Diego Burdi, creative partner, buldfiles. “We played with 3-D model forms and even paper to create this sculptural form and contrast with the ceiling elements.” Crafted of drywall and white MDF, the geometric architectural elements around the perimeter of the store not only provided the company with avant-garde cove cut-ins needed to display product, but also added a dynamic architectural statement merging walls, ceilings and floors—clearly visible from outside. PAR halogen lights are cut into grooves in the ceiling, and simple fluorescents are used to backlight the shelving units where the shoes are displayed.

The 100 percent wool carpet and custom-upholstered seating elements—aroma-foil organic pods that cluster together in the center of the store—are rendered in a modern “Tokyo purple,” a deep lavender richened with a hint of blue. “We wanted something that created a point of memory that people will talk about after they leave,” Burdi notes. “We wanted a color that was still feminine in nature, but created a branded identity for the company.” Small, circular display tables in the center seating area are laminated glass with a complementary lavender emulsion inside them.

Lavender, while a dramatic statement in the Bloor Street store, is not a color that Capezio is married to in future store designs. A second store recently opened in Toronto's Sherway Gardens Mall featuring the same structural design aesthetic—only the accent color was a bright fuchsia. “We might go the next one Kelly green,” Markowitz says. “The idea is that we'll keep the same structure, but we might change our color every time just to give each store a new, bright identity.”

The Bloor Street Capezio, historically one of the company’s strongest-performing locations, exceeds sales of $1,200 per sq. ft. “Ever since the renovation, we’ve had double-digit increases,” Markowitz states. “For a store that has been there for 30 years and was really a No. 1 performing store, the new design has taken it to an even higher level.”
Success Obliges

Admittedly, David's Footwear store in Toronto is not easily accessible for all shoe fetishists. But any cosmopolitan would undoubtedly be pleased to discover a new source. David's was founded in 1951 by Louis and Julia Markowitz. 55 years later, it is still family owned and operated. David's is Canada's largest independent shoe emporium, setting trends and defining fashion, offering its clients unparalleled service and carrying all the major designers of luxury shoes. From Christian Louboutin to Giuseppe Zanotti, René Caovilla, Tony Rosi, Lorenzo Benet, plus many other leading names - all are united under one roof. The flagship store on Bloor Street in downtown Toronto was recently completely refurbished. The new store layout and design provide ample evidence that, even after so many successful years, the élan discovering new horizons has not diminished. Noblesse obligé!

Capriano, also founded by the Markowitz family, is another well-known name in shoe design. Capriano shoes are sold in 6 locations across the Toronto area.

DESIGN: Rundflik, Toronto, Canada
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