



Hale's Jewelers flagship store set to sail into the future

By **Lee Wiser McIntosh**

How often do we get that glimpse of the “before” and “after” when it comes to seeing a new store opening? Not often... unless you are deep into the process for your own store, in which case, it's pretty stressful. I had the stress-free and fun opportunity to see a dramatic new jewelry space emerge in the Southeast.

Hale's Jewelers is located in Greenville SC, a relatively small, sophisticated, Southern city at the crossroads of Atlanta, Asheville, and Charlotte. They've been in operation since 1850 and have moved from downtown locations to a mall and to their last freestanding building before building their new store that is iconic, elegant, and provides a memorable experience for all who enter. And that's all by design.

Shannon Waters, Hale's VP, invited me to the store prior to opening and I had that “Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore!”

feeling. Filled with light and space, you immediately sense you are someplace special which is exactly what they wanted to communicate to their customers.

Owner Lucien Lee worked with DP3 Architects, a local firm, to interpret his vision of Hale's Jewelers... a store with a long, rich history that's moving forward into a robust, customer-centric future. The cases, filled with classic diamond pieces, fine watches, and contemporary fashion pieces, flow throughout the showroom. The case design is to create a blurriness to the boundaries between the jewelry and the customers and to invite them to participate with the jewels.

The lighting defines the space by piercing what would otherwise be a cavernous hall with a three-part voluminous, floating sculpture. Pendant lights, evocative of the floating candlesticks at Harry Potter's Hogwarts, hang between the spaces of these oversized



jewels designed and made locally by artist/craftsman James Moseley of The Heirloom Companies. The photography is excellent but it doesn't convey how they inhabit the space. Art elevates and must be experienced. The emotional impact that these oversized "jewels" have on the viewer cannot be underestimated in creating a sense of specialness. Collaboration like this one is a hallmark of DP3 Architects. Even the custom designed carpet in the central

salon area was a local endeavor, made by Milliken, just up the road.

In the 1940's Hale's Jewelers was the first to import watches from Europe, long before anyone else. The watch category is a mainstay and this kind of innovation is in their DNA. The tradition of being first has continued. Notably, they are the first Forevermark in-store boutique in the United States.

Lisa Cochlin, the Director of Trade Marketing and Retail Innovation for Forevermark elaborated. "The Forevermark brand environment recently installed at Hale's makes a grand statement for our De Beers Forevermark brand with approximately 300 square feet of space dedicated to house all Forevermark diamond jewelry collections. This branded space is different from all others – it's a one-of-kind, next generation of our classic retail environment which includes a 'Discovery Wall' and 'Discovery Bar' with a built in digital touch screen that allows customers to learn about the brand and our rich heritage as part of De Beers spanning more than 130 years of diamond expertise. It also includes materials that are sustainable and textures that relate to our De Beers mining communities in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Canada."

Additionally, Krysten Beausoleil, the VP of Sales for Forevermark commented that "Hale's has been a very committed business partner of Forevermark for several years, and it has been exciting to watch their business flourish. Their commitment, paired with our shared business values of integrity and transparency that Owner Lucien Lee, Vice President Shannon Waters and (their) team have

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strongly built over time, makes us honored (to) partner with them on this exciting evolution of our retail brand environment, and we look forward to continued success together.”

Hale's installed a clock downtown in 1910 which became a community landmark. Today this familiar fixture proudly stands by their new building as a reminder of the passage of time - measured as much by the expansive light which changes color and quality during the day - as by their collection of timepieces. The dedicated

Rolex area has signature green leather chairs and a Rolex bar that anyone would want to belly up to. Watches continue on that side of the showroom ending at the far end where custom design happens on the floor. A closed circuit television shows current designs as they are being produced in-house via CAD. Nearby, another seating area and a hospitality bar which will serve them well as COVID restrictions are relaxed. An additional entertainment area is outdoors.

The behind the scenes area for the Hale's team is light-filled, functional, and efficient. There's a place for everything and everything in its place. The area for the bench jewelers has a bank of north facing windows which supports their in-house design and repair. Even the employee break area overlooks the parking lot so they know when customers are arriving.

They are literally located on a parallel universe to some of the busiest roads in Greenville. Verdae is a beautifully manicured boulevard with residential and professional buildings and multiple roundabouts resulting in calm and efficient traffic. A few streets over is congested commercial mall traffic which can be avoided entirely by their customers.

Finishing touches? Larry Johnson and his team from Larry Johnson Consulting Services expertly and seamlessly made the cases





flow as beautifully as the space itself.

From concept to completion, it was a two year project. The grand opening was in early March. As a safety measure, the crowds were intentionally limited and staged at time intervals to keep the number of people in the store low.

Every detail, texture and fixture contributes to creating a cohesive

customer experience. Even the roofline etched against the sky is meant to evoke the gesture of opening a jewelry box. Yes that, and I also see a full sail that has caught the wind that will take Hale's into the future.



Lee Wiser McIntosh is a jeweler who really likes words and pictures. She creates strategic content for websites, blogs and email marketing campaigns. So if you need compelling product descriptions and engaging stories told about your jewelry or store, please reach out at lwm@thejewelvox.com

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