

## covering the spectrum

Different programs, scales, and styles fill the portfolio of James and Hayes Slade

**A design power couple** even before joining forces professionally, James and Hayes Slade met at Cornell University, where he was studying architecture and she engineering. They first built separate, successful careers. He cofounded Cho Slade Architecture; she worked at Arup and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill followed by an MBA and a job at the Boston Consulting Group. Then, jolted by the events of September 11, 2001, husband and wife decided to launch their own New York firm.

Slade Architecture has completed an impressive array of projects: W hotels in Philadelphia and Providence, Rhode Island, lounges for Virgin Atlantic Airways, the Barbie flagship in Shanghai, and an enclosure for the carousel at New York's Staten Island Zoo as well as offices and residences on both the high and the low ends of the budget spectrum. Currently, the nine-person staff is involved in the Guggenheim Helsinki design competition while developing a concept for Marriott International. We checked in with the duo to discuss their prolific partnership, which, by the way, has also produced four children. ➤



*Clockwise from left: Slade Architecture's husband-wife founders. Their lobby for the New York office of the global law firm Ashurst. At Mimi & Mo in Long Island City, the cash-wrap counter's top in CNC-cut, painted plywood.*



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**Which project types do you currently have on the boards?**

**JS:** We're working on houses in upstate New York and Jackson, Wyoming, residences in Long Island City, New York, and Stamford, Connecticut, and a hush-hush concept for Marriott guest rooms. Marriott hired us based on the fact that we've done many brand-specific concepts, all of them very much in line with that brand—not us imposing some design strategy that we have as a firm.

**What are the particular challenges in working on a branded project?**

**HS:** We're always balancing a number of priorities. The

design should obviously be on target in reflecting the brand but, at the same time, should offer something new. There needs to be something fresh. Then we also have to think carefully about such concerns as practicality and durability.

**How did you bring your approach to the New York office of Ashurst?**

**JS:** Although it's a global law firm, headquartered in London, the client likes to think of itself more as a creative agency. And its branding has a strong graphic identity, so there needed to be impact, especially in reception.

**How did you achieve that?**

**JS:** It was tricky, because the

**From top:** A.J. Bocchino's wall covering, printed with New York Times headlines, in the Ashurst reception area. The glass-wrapped reception desk. Hans Wegner's chairs and Finn Juhl's sofa.

New York office also had to relate to a family of offices around the world. All have supergraphics that reflect the city they're in—with iconic buildings and so forth. In keeping with that tradition, but in our own way, we chose a wall covering made out of headlines pulled from the *New York Times*, a neighbor of Ashurst's.

**HS:** Since they're lawyers, they immediately fixated on the meaning of the words in the headlines when we showed the wall covering in a design review. The partners were unsure at first, because the content could be interpreted as controversial. But eventually they were really excited about it.

**What were the project's more pragmatic considerations?**

**HS:** There's tension in regard to paper usage among the lawyers. They're really striving to go paperless, but in reality there's still a lot around. So we spent time studying how they work to determine how it all could be accommodated in a way that would at least *feel* cleaner and more organized.

**You're also still doing small projects. Why?**

**HS:** The challenges are different, and it's important for us to exercise our brains in different ways. Working for individuals, for a very specific use, allows you to take things further, allows for more freedom.

**JS:** In the case of the Mimi & Mo boutique in Long Island City, we just liked the client. It felt like we were really helping somebody. She's a young woman starting out with a store that sells fashion-forward clothing for both mother and child, so we based the display system on the Eameses' House of Cards, how the pieces interlock. Since we had a fairly low budget, and the owner's father was building the fixtures, we used plywood milled to fit together.

**HS:** We work with all types of materials, but one of the most satisfying parts is when we reimagine a material that's inexpensive or typically industrial. We step back and reconsider it, admire its



fundamental beauty, and then we're able to see and use it in a new way. Plus, since House of Cards is basically a toy, it tied into the child side of the project while still being a sophisticated, modernist reference. —Dan Rubinstein



**Clockwise from top:** Charles and Ray Eames's House of Cards, the 1954 game that inspired the display system at Mimi & Mo. Its concrete floor painted with a hopscotch motif. The display system's interlocking panels of milled plywood. Fluorescent linear fixtures and incandescent pendant fixtures. Women's clothes hanging beneath plywood built-ins.