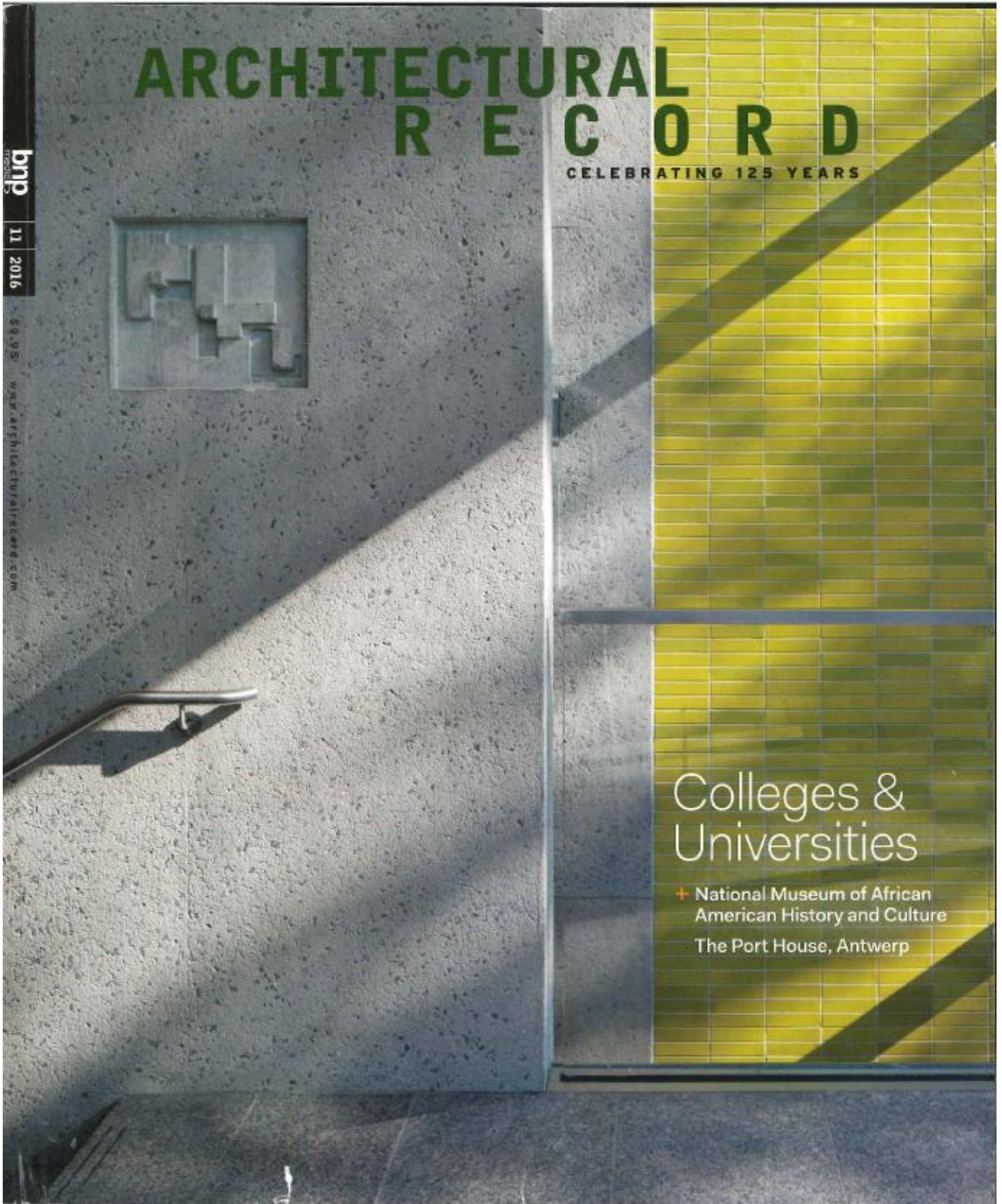


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## Downtown Style

Architect Richard Found creates a cool Saks Fifth Avenue in lower Manhattan.

BY LINDA C. LENTZ

ACROSS THE street from the 9/11 Memorial in New York, Brookfield Place, the former World Financial Center designed by César Pelli in the '80s, is undergoing a transformation along with the reconstruction of the World Trade Center site and the opening of Santiago Calatrava's transit hub (RECORD, April 2016, page 50). The office-building complex is not only luring tenants like Time Inc. but a spate of upscale food and retail businesses too. Among them, a new Saks Fifth Avenue satellite is notable for its elegant yet hip boutique style—a fresh take for the iconic department store.

Designed by London-based Found Associates, Saks Fifth Avenue Downtown is tucked into the first two stories of an octagonal pavilion at the base of a tower in the complex. Departing from the sharp edges of the exterior, principal Richard Found stacked a pair of glazed rotundas behind the faceted facade, wrapping the glass on the inside with fixed, brushed-brass louvers that filter sunlight into the sales areas. "This allows views out to the World Trade Center," says Found. "At the same time, it provides a backdrop for the merchandise."

Throughout the store, color and material choices are subtle, serene, and surprisingly consistent for a multibrand retail establishment. There are no designer shops here. The soft brass is used again on garment racks and low-profile casework; pastel upholstery wraps Fritz Hansen and HAY seating; champagne-hued carpet alternates with terrazzo floors; and hand-finished polished plaster coats the walls.

An open plan maximizes the quirky 65,000-square-foot space with avenues that branch from the rotundas back toward the building core. Whenever possible, Found fused structural, mechanical, and decorative elements. Escalators at the center of the rotundas bisect circular sales hubs, which are, in turn, ringed by clothing and accessories. Tall, modular mirrored displays fade into the scenery and also serve as storage units and full-length mirrors.



Warm LED lighting is equally discreet. Concealed in ceiling coves that follow the lines of the architectural elements, its glow creates halos around columns and above the rotundas. The lighting also delineates a corridor leading to the shoe department, and Found's

one touch of bling: a 15-foot-wide, half-spherical chandelier supporting 50 globes. Mounted on a polished-metal ceiling, it is a glittering orb—a dazzling effect, and all the more so in a Saks that offers an understated alternative to the usual luxury experience. ■

A 220-foot-long Barry Reigate mural follows a corridor into the shoe department, where a spectacular light installation hovers above mirrored storage "blocks" and Fritz Hansen Ro chairs by Jaime Hayon.