



# The Bartlett Identity

## John Bartlett is a changed man— and that's a good thing

Words by Martin Haro

The New York-based designer, **John Bartlett**, launched his own label 15 years ago. He has had a great career, full of awards and praise: In 1993, he was awarded the Council of Fashion Designers of America's Perry Ellis Award for Best Newcomer, becoming the first menswear designer ever to receive the honor. The CFDA celebrated him again four years later when it named him Menswear Designer of the Year.

The late-1990s saw Bartlett splitting his time between the United States and Europe. While he continued working on his eponymous line, he also served as the creative director for **Byblos**, from 1998-2000, earning rave reviews.

In late-2002, though, he closed shop. He left for Cambodia and Thailand, shaved his head, and studied Ashtanga yoga and Buddhism for four months. Then, he returned to New York. Changed.

He found new inspiration overseas, and re-entered the industry with a collection offering of furnishings, clothing, and accessories.

Last fall, he opened his first freestanding store in New York's West Village, at 143 Seventh Avenue South.

While in New York to see the spring collections at **Mercedes-Benz Fashion**

**Week**, *Miami Living* met with Bartlett in his new 500-square-foot store, a space that previously was the home to a vintage store called O Mistress Mine.

"I moved to the West Village in the fall of 2006," he said. "I had always wanted to live there. I love its history and the bohemian flavor of its inhabitants. My shop is very close to my house, so I can walk to work, which has become a dream come true for me."

Guarded by Bartlett's three-legged shepherd-Rottweiler mix, **Tiny Tim**, the store, he told the *New York Times*, is "the antithesis of Madison Avenue chic."

It was designed by architect **David Gauld**, who, before opening his own office ran the New York office of **Arata Isozaki** and has overseen projects such as the **Guggenheim Museum SoHo** and the **Bass Museum of Art** in Miami Beach.

"We removed the ceiling to expose the wood rafters and uncovered the existing pine sub-floor and finished it with a white stain," Gauld explained. "We shellacked the walls, cabinets, and baseboards, and we wrapped them in linen. And we constructed a fieldstone veneer wall with niches to install shelves. To display hanging clothes, we fashioned a rack made with copper plumbing pipes." Large façade windows give the store a bright and welcoming feeling.

"With this smaller, more intimate space," Bartlett said, "I want my customers to see the whole vision of John Bartlett, from the tailored suits, shirts, and ties to the jeans and other denim pieces to the candles, ceramics, and other items I have developed."

For Spring, 2008, the designer says he was inspired by his travels to India. He presented the new line at the new store.

"I juxtaposed classic Americana with more exotic touches. I made a navy pinstripe linen suit both in a classic peak lapel jacket as well as a long floor-length tunic. I kept the colors quite neutral—khaki, navy, white—and mixed tailoring with super beachy styles."

The results are wearable, sophisticated, and very sexy. "Menswear in America right now is very exciting as American men are becoming more style conscious."

He says the move toward a smaller enterprise does not mean he is slowing down, and says he is "simply focusing my energies on my customer and on my shop rather than on traveling around the globe and burning myself out." (He currently is a creative consultant for **Ghurka**.)

For more information on Bartlett and his new store, visit [johnbartlettmy.com](http://johnbartlettmy.com). **ML**