

## LOCAL NEWS

### EJS Design working to help revitalize retail in Willoughby with creativity

#### Design firm creates visual displays in retail industry



EJS Design, LLC. is currently working on what will be a fall window display for J3 Clothing Company in Moreland Hills. The leaves are being made out of newspaper, manila folders, construction paper and velvet fabric. (Submitted)

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Around the age of 19 or 20, Edward J. Sajovic decided to tell his parents that he was moving to New York to study cosmetology or interior design.

After discovering cosmetology wasn't for him, Sajovic got on a path that led him to not only open [EJS Design, LLC.](#), but to work with Willoughby and its downtown businesses.



Finestra Gallery's fall window display was created by EJS Design, LLC. (Submitted)

Formerly called Edward J. Sajovic Design, LLC., EJS Design is a creative service and design firm that produces custom seasonal and holiday visual displays and events for national retailers, their flagship stores, hotels and real estate portfolios. Ever since he was young, Sajovic, a Cleveland native, was always involved with theater and the Willoughby Fine Arts Association, on stage and backstage building sets.

When he moved to New York, Sajovic took six months to a year to figure himself out, he said.

"I talked to hairstylists and decided cosmetology wasn't for me, and that interior design was," said Sajovic, who then enrolled at the Fashion Institute of Technology where he took interior design courses for six months.

Sajovic recalls a weekend where he stumbled upon a group of students who were installing a large exhibition for Brothers Sewing Machines. The students had built an oversized replica of a sewing machine in addition to working with mannequins, wigs, clothes and props.

"I ran over to them and I asked what major are you," Sajovic recalled. "They said, 'visual merchandising display and exhibition design.' Two weeks later, I switched majors."

In 2005, Sajovic received his associate's degree at FIT. Unfortunately, at that time, the program didn't go beyond two years, Sajovic said.

"Now, they have a full-blown masters program," he noted.

Sajovic eventually received a bachelor's degree in business and marketing. Throughout his collegiate studies, he freelanced for Bloomingdale's and Henri Bendel, and also worked for Holiday Image Incorporated, a company that did large, oversized exteriors, holiday decorating, visual merchandising and retail rollouts to 200 stores.

"I worked there for two years," Sajovic said.

Eventually he filed the paperwork for Edward J. Sajovic Design, LLC., the New York-based company.

"I did everything out of my apartment in Queens," he said.

"I had \$26,000 saved and I said I'm jumping," Sajovic said. "I'm hopping ship and I'm going to do this, and do it with a little bit more creative heart, dedication and a different twist. It was history ever since."

The firm grew quickly with Henri Bendel, Michael Kors, Macy's, Jones Apparel and eventually Harry Winston on Fifth Avenue becoming a part of the client roster. Each client that came in and each job that was bid on, Sajovic treated as a new challenge and a new way to interject art into commerce.

"We had a great run in New York and subsequently, my business partner and I wanted to go in different directions," Sajovic said. "Around that time, my mom fell ill with colon cancer and I'm an only child, so when I found that out, I sold off as much inventory as I could and drove back to Cleveland across the period of a month with two, 26-foot trucks in 2014."

After coming back to Cleveland, Sajovic spent time relearning and reflecting. He taught at North Coast College and did consulting work for creative companies.

"There are great art-based things here," Sajovic said. "I was always creatively planning and thinking."

In 2019, Willoughby received Sajovic's portfolio for what is now the Bridge to Willoughby's Future, an art piece created by Bill Rigo at the corner of Mentor Avenue and Erie Street.

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"I immediately said absolutely," Sajovic said. "We took a month or two and we started to craft this project called 'Retail Revival.' What it is at its core is Willoughby saying, 'We love our downtown and we want to refresh the skin, and the businesses.' That was the take off in working with Willoughby. Willoughby recharged me and got me back in motion in a way I never expected. It's only grown from there."

In addition to working with Willoughby merchants, a referral was made to J3 Clothing Company in Moreland Hills, Sajovic said. Since starting the creative partnership, it has brought more attention to the store.

"Each season, we switch out the windows," Sajovic said. "We are continuing with another seasonal package (this year). Part of our creative process is looking at the apparel and the lines the client is bringing in. For fall, I felt this was the right opportunity to play with newspaper and natural materials, so that's what we pitched and they loved it."

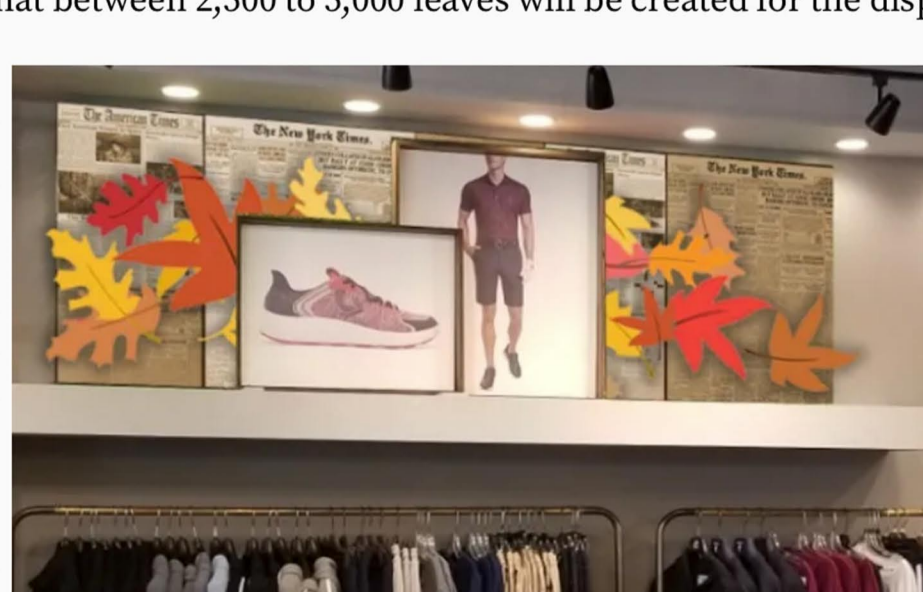


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For J3, Sajovic and his team are currently in the midst of replicating natural materials, which includes an oversized tree and leaves. The display is scheduled to be installed the weekend after Labor Day.

"We're using a multitude of paper, so we're going to incorporate some newspaper, manila folders, construction paper and velvet fabric leaves we found," Sajovic said. "The entire presentation and the compositions of leaves will be a mixture of those."

Sajovic estimates that between 2,500 to 5,000 leaves will be created for the display.



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"We love mystifying and providing inspiration for all of our clients," he said. "I've always loved watching children and adults stare at a window, and discover all the details."

Growing his company and the client roster are goals Sajovic has. He would eventually like to expand into the downtown Cleveland area, creating displays for large scale events at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the museums.

"It takes a village to make these things happen," Sajovic said. "I love my creative team."