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The wizard of wellness design

Eric Villency shares his corner office with a SoulCycle bike.

If there’s a formula for what makes a wellness product successful, Eric Villency has it memorized and can recite it backwards—while sweating through a spin class.
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Villency, the head of Villency Design Group, is the invisible design force behind many of the hottest, most iconic products now on the wellness scene.

From his chic boutique office in Soho, he brought the ubiquitous yellow SoulCycle bike from concept to studio fixture. Organic Avenue was using a generic glass milk jar from Canada until he designed their custom juice bottle. For Equinox, he created the apparel that accompanied the splashy launch of the gym's Animal Flow class.

And in the coming months, his reach will only increase. Villency's currently designing a new custom Pilates chair and bungee system for Chaise 23, and he's working out the details for projects with other big-deal brands. (Trust us, you know them!)

"For me, it's sort of a dream come true, because I love wellness. I've always been super active, and it's a huge part of my life," he says. But how did Villency come to be New York's veritable wizard of wellness design?

It started with the build-out of @250, a boutique retail mall in Roslyn, New York, where his vision included wellness businesses. Villency got SoulCycle, Bar Method, and Organic Avenue to sign on as retailers at the space, creating his first bridge into the scene. The relationships with those brands expanded, starting with SoulCycle. "First, it was 'Hey can you make some phone cases?'" he says. "Then it was 'Hey, we need a bike.'"

And as more brands noticed how successful his products were, his business grew. "What's important and resonates is that I'm in the culture. I take the class and I understand the brand," he explains.

He combines that personal knowledge of what a healthy, urban consumer wants with the brand's particular culture, which, he says, is easy in the wellness space, since the brands tend to come with strong, passionate cultures. "It's a lifestyle, not just a product," he says. And fitness-loving, green juice-drinking New Yorkers are buying it. —Lisa Elaine Held