Eric Villency’s moves at family firm boost bottom line

‘I grew up with a nail gun in hand’

Eric Villency grew up in midtown surrounded by the worlds of fine art and furniture making. His mother and grandmother were painters, while his father ran a successful bespoke furniture business started by his grandfather in 1932. “I grew up with a nail gun in hand,” said Mr. Villency, 39. ¶ In his 20s, he transformed the business into an interior-, fashion- and product-design firm, Villency Design Group. Some of his changes have included manufacturing products in Asia, instead of only in Europe and the U.S., for its low production costs, as well as focusing more on hospitality projects in addition to retail. ¶ Now the company has 160 employees and production offices in Hong Kong and Seoul. It sells directly to businesses—designing, manufacturing and repairing products. “We’re really turnkey,” he said, “which is what clients appreciate about us.” ¶ Mr. Villency, who lives on Central Park South, led the design team for Citi Field’s Delta 360 luxury suites; Bloomingdale’s activewear line, Feats of Strength; and Peloton’s and SoulCycle’s signature indoor bikes. ¶ “Outdoor bikes are like pieces of art. Indoor equipment tends to be functional and utilitarian,” he said of his cycle designs. “We approached this thinking, how do we make something more appealing and durable, and integrate that into the workout?” ¶ Products the firm has designed for its clients range from low-cost mobile-phone accessories to art installations costing more than $100,000. ¶ The project that had been closest to his heart was designing the waiting room at bygone St. Vincent Hospital’s Rudolph W. Giuliani Trauma Center because it combined Mr. Villency’s love of wellness and style. “We brought in progressive design in an urgent care environment,” he said, “but nothing lasts forever.” —JESSICA KRAMER