FIT FOR A KING

The CEO of Villency Design Group, Eric Villency, whose company created the Peloton bike design, takes Purist behind the scenes of boutique fitness.

Powered by devoted followers with an almost cultish devotion to immersive experiences, the explosive growth of boutique fitness has completely changed the complexion of fitness, health and wellness. The no pain, no gain mentality of my early adult life in gritty gyms has been replaced by clean boutique fitness studios where a sense of community is the central theme. Don’t get me wrong—these workouts are still fierce, but the programs distract people from the uncomfortable aspects of exercise to make workouts fun, engaging and communal.

Our interconnected world informs consumer expectations from the cars they drive, to the hotels they visit and the mobile devices they use. Sadly, unlike the gorgeous racing bikes in the Tour de France or the tricked-out gear worn in the Olympics, gym equipment has traditionally featured drab, industrial-style weights and machines. Some of my most successful work, like the bikes my company designed for SoulCycle and Peloton, pioneered a new standard for what indoor fitness equipment can look like, and how well it can perform. We call this disruption through design.

In the never-ending quest for perfection, every creation is thoughtfully curated. Recently, Rumble asked my team to reimagine hand weights as brass knuckles and instructor podiums as DJ stands, and to create a custom-designed fitness bench built to facilitate their signature exercise program.

While there are only so many movements the human anatomy can perform to improve conditioning, the trick has always been to make them appealing. My father always seems bemused by the popularity of boot camps and Spartan races, commenting that the workout used to be called “getting drafted.” While the army gets results from endless push-ups, I am pretty sure they don’t have scented candles in the bathroom, and their drill sergeants have no interest in making exercise fun.

We are already working on the next generation of products and the future of health and wellness. New technologies like virtual reality, motion tracking and AI will make fitness more compelling and enhance the quality of the experience. Tantalizing breakthroughs to facilitate injury recovery and avoidance are being integrated into equipment design right now.

Fitness has seen countless fads, but the innovations taking place now are here to stay, and it is only going to make living a healthier lifestyle more accessible.