



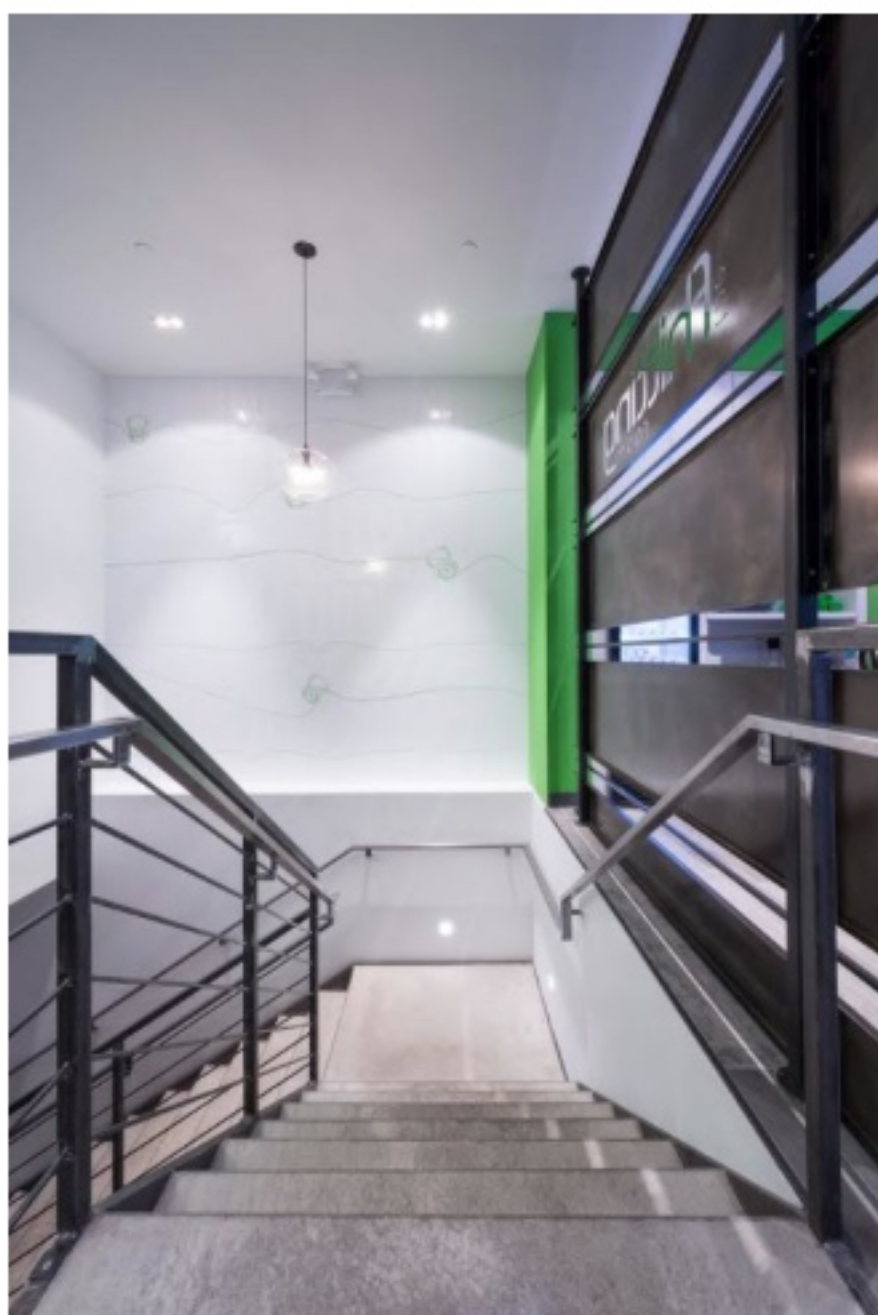
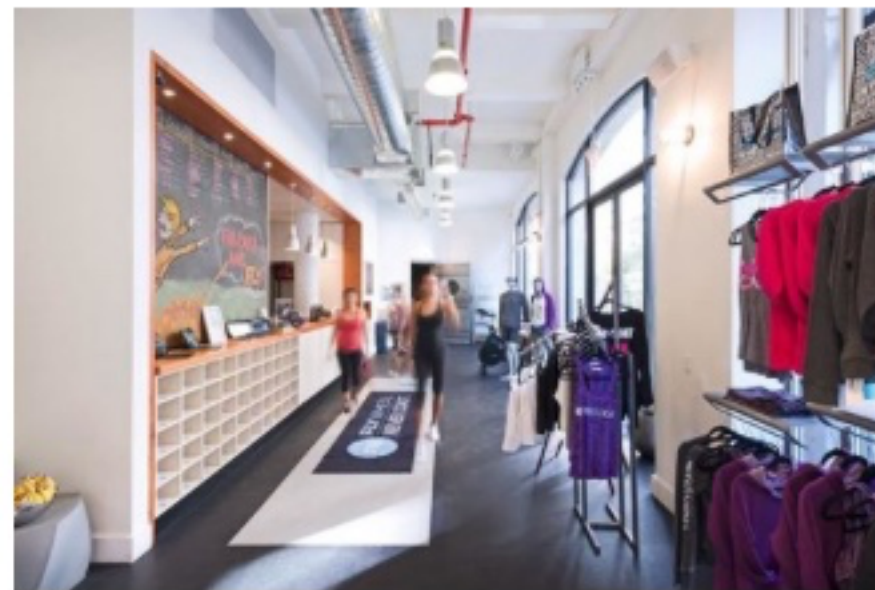
Bright Architecture: Building Heart into NYC Fitness Studios

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By Nathan Bright, Owner and Founder

I founded [Bright Architecture](#) on the premise that the heart of creating beautiful spaces is much more than recreating a magazine photo. What flows through the veins during the design of a home, an office, and especially a new gym that finally – yes, finally! – opened in your neighborhood is a series of design processes, construction sequences, and the constant consideration of how simple, day-to-day activities work in unison, intersect, and relate. In this way, the core of the spaces and the gyms that we move through every day demand to be approached as evolving landscapes, supported by a circulating infrastructure of numerous actors, that includes us, their architects, as well.

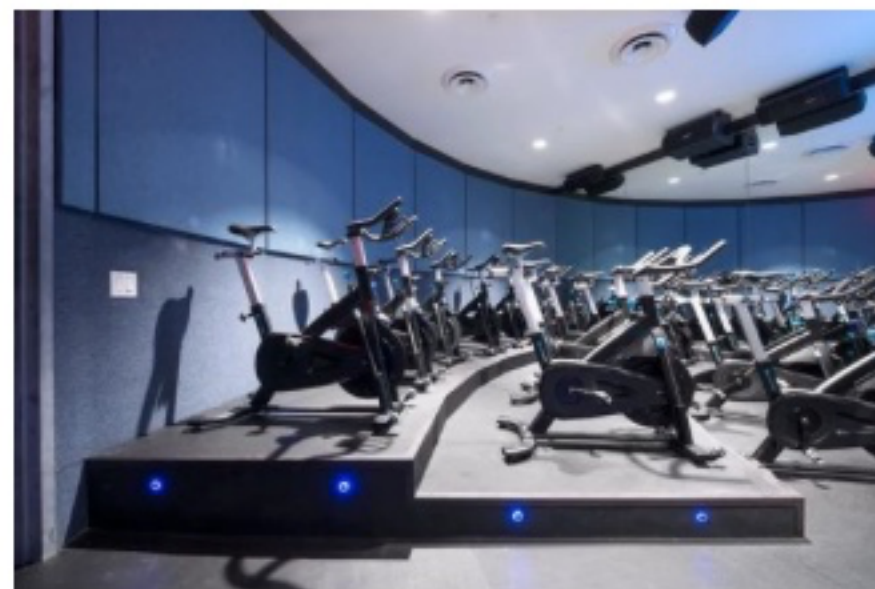
Five years ago, we had the opportunity to design our first fitness studio with [Flywheel Sports](#) and soon expanded our portfolio of amazing studios to include [The Fitting Room](#), and [SLT](#), among others. We quickly realized that what defines one's favorite gym is more than your average retail store or big box fitness style. My common expression is that a boutique studio is the exact opposite of the static Talbots store in a mall, or the club experience of Abercrombie and Fitch. Gyms are not simply cloaked transactional spaces. They are places we go to in order to sweat, to move, to strive, to challenge ourselves, and to achieve. They are places we go to at 6 a.m., three times a week, to be part of something larger than what we can be on our own. Boutique gyms are very much an event space and a community of like-minded individuals.



Of course, there are also challenges to this type of atmosphere for both the gym owner and member, as well as the designer — the ritual shower lines, the crowded, sweaty hallways, the ubiquitous array of toilet and changing rooms, the irritating digital locks that simply will not open, and the pretty branded bottles of hand lotion that everyone will swear they never stole. From the viewpoint of a discerning gym-goer, how these aspects are addressed can be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful gym, especially in New York City where competition is strong and constantly growing. From the viewpoint of a discerning designer, it's a question of expectations: What's the experiential difference between an open garage-door Crossfit in Brooklyn, and a tightly crafted Pilates studio in a narrow SoHo lot? It's a game of physical constraints, but it's also about asking what makes each space unique. What is the one aspect, if taken away from your weekly gym experience, that would make it no longer the same? We ask these questions constantly because the answers are often different.

Our passion with boutique gyms can really be found in the excitement we have experiencing the studios from the other side, by working with the dedicated founders as they see what they envisioned grow and take shape. We take on the challenge of helping to define their spatial products. We ask how each studio, as a core of activity, embodies their values and culture. We look at the distinct disposition of how decisions are made, and seek to craft a pathway for scalability. We work with newly trained development teams as they realize that their gyms are constantly in motion — changing, expanding, and always improving. Within this is something both tactile and nascent, and at the heart of what transforms an idea into a gym.

As architects we understand that everything mentioned above goes beyond our traditional role of simply producing a set of drawings. Rather, our projects are very much defined in forming relationships across value chains, in understanding our client's internal logistics, and establishing an active role during the entire process of the build-out. Our successful projects are seen as long-term external partnerships, where we bring our experience not only to the design of branded spaces, but also to the arteries of distribution to hopefully allow our clients' gyms to be built faster, built better, and built to be what they want it to be.



In the end, these partnerships allow our clients to do what they do best — kick your butt for the next 45 minutes, and have you asking for more!



Nathan Bright, AIA LEED-AP is the principal of [Bright Architecture](#), a Brooklyn-based design studio with a broad portfolio of boutique retail spaces and fitness studios. His practice is rooted in the command of architecture as a craft, to provide clarity and simplicity to the spaces we work in, live in, and exercise in. Fundamental to that philosophy is a focus on the design of the process as much as the product, allowing his work to respond to the demands of each project through rethinking the boundaries of the architecture profession.

Among Bright Architecture's clients are [Flywheel Sports](#), [The Fitting Room](#), [SLT](#), [Row House](#), [DreamDry](#), [Crossfit South Brooklyn](#), [Bari Fitness](#), and others.

With over 15 years experience in New York City, Nathan has worked extensively with the New York City Department of Buildings, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and Board of Standards and Appeals. Outside of New York, Bright Architecture has projects and fitness studios in major cities across the US and internationally, including Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Miami, Los Angeles, Seattle, London, and Dubai.

Nathan has a Bachelors of Architecture from the University of Texas and a Masters in Environmental Design from Yale University. He has been an Adjunct Professor in Interior Design Department at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Find Nathan and Bright Architecture at Twitter [@BrightArchitect](#), and [www.brightarchitecture.com](#)