

Store design update: flexible concepts

By Laura Saunter, WGSN, 01 April 2014

A fast-changing technology and consumer landscape is driving the need for flexible store concepts, which include thematic or hybrid spaces and rotating pop-ups.



Story, New York

* WGSN ANALYSIS

- Customers' evolving shopping habits mean that retailers need to be able to react quickly and frequently to changing behaviour and current trends
- Stores with an easily scalable, flexible and temporary design are a great way to achieve this, creating impact at low cost
- A flexible store strategy also enables retailers to continually reinvent the shopping experience, creating something fun and memorable that keeps customers coming back for more
- Flexibility and versatility were strong themes at this year's **GlobalShop** and **EuroShop**, where exhibitors offered everything from interlocking modular display fixtures, to mannequins with removable facial features or heads

Creating an in-store environment that changes regularly, whether through design, VM or product are major priorities for retailers today. As shoppers' commercial needs are increasingly met online or on mobile, their reasons to visit a store are diminishing.

For Rick Caruso, CEO of Caruso Affiliated, the property developer behind Los Angeles' leading malls The Grove and Glendale, this means that now more than ever retailers need to focus on creating a "magical and memorable" shopping experience. Speaking at [Retail's Big Show](#), he said: "When you create a compelling retail experience, not only does your market share grow but more importantly your heart share grows too; that's known as customer loyalty".

Explaining his approach, Caruso said: "We don't design our properties for people to shop, but for people to enjoy; and when they feel good, they do shop".

At an individual store level, flexibility and versatility are now dominant drivers of store design, enabling retailers to continually evolve. As highlighted by Aurora Fashions' deputy MD, Jess Wilks at last year's **Retail Week SHOP** conference, this also allows retailers to keep up with the changing pace of retail and new technology and consumer developments. "As a retailer today, it's less about making stepped changes and more about continually evolving. We should create stores which allow for this, rather than needing a complete refit every five years," she said.

Thematic spaces

Stores which change their entire design concepts on a regular basis – based on product offer or a temporary theme – are engaging and innovative, creating an interesting experience which keeps customers coming back for more.



The Apartment, New York



Sauver le Monde des Hommes, Paris



Aigle, Hong Kong



Story, New York

- The Apartment is the first physical store for New York brand **The Line**, which until recently had an online presence only. The concept treats the store as a canvas which changes seasonally and invites customers to experience the brand in an offline world. The Apartment also plays host to dinner parties, screenings and workshops
- Sauver le Monde des Hommes is a new menswear multibrand boutique in Paris. Every two months, it

spotlights a different male icon (such as an actor or a musician), played out through the products on offer and changes to the interior décor

- French brand **Aigle's** new store in Hong Kong is designed around a different theme every three months to suit the collection on sale. For this season, the space has been designed to look like a grocery store in Provence, with products displayed on traditional wooden shelves and wicker baskets, alongside and fresh flowers and garden furniture. The natural environment of Provence was the inspiration behind the brand's spring/summer 2014 collection
- **Story** is a retail space in New York that takes on a new theme every four to eight weeks, transforming merchandise and store layout to reflect the new story. Past stories have included Colour, His Story, Made in America and Wellness

Permanent pop-ups

Permanent pop-up concepts are an increasingly popular option for retailers looking to update fixed space. By rotating theme and product offer on a regular basis retailers can quickly and easily tap into current trends and micro markets, and create a longer-term buzz around the brand. Within airports, retailers are using rotating pop-ups to cater for repeat travellers, giving them a reason to return every time they pass by.



Nike permanent pop-up space at Helsinki airport



Gap pop-up, New York



Reed Annex, New York



Storenvy pop-up space, San Francisco

- Nike's permanent pop-up space at Helsinki airport changes its theme every two months to showcase a

different sport. Last winter, the hangout zone screened ice hockey tournaments next to its ice hockey clothing range. In the summer, it showed football matches alongside a range of football kit

- Gap has installed a rotating pop-up shop next to its flagship retail store in New York to promote collaborations with designers and brands based on seasonal and cultural events. Previous concepts have included a Crunch Fitness Lab to encourage healthier lifestyles, while the **current pop-up** showcases a curated selection of signature items from the spring/summer 2014 collection, along with lifestyle magazines
- US designer Jeff Staple runs two stores next to each other in New York's Lower East Side. Reed Space, his main store, contains a mix of fashion and lifestyle products such as magazines and T-shirts. Reed Annex is a smaller space located next door on Orchard Street, and plays host to an ever-changing variety of pop-up shops, including collaborations between Staple and other brands, as well as art shows and new product launches. Most recently the space hosted a series of educational interactive workshops titled The Reeding Annex
- Last year, online social marketplace Storenvy opened a permanent pop-up in downtown San Francisco, allowing its favourite online merchants to sell their wares from a physical retail store. The 1,700sq ft space features five independent local sellers every month, and is an extension of the online experience: transactions are still done through the website, not with a traditional cash register, and each vendor is completely in control of his or her own spot
- Nike's permanent pop-up London retail space 1948, located under the railway arches in Shoreditch, sells an edited selection of Nike product as well as hosting art exhibitions, screen printing workshops and light installations. Most recently the space played host to a series of talks, workshops and workouts around the art and science of feeling, inspired by the Nike Free Hyperfeel running shoe

Multifunctional spaces

A flexible store design enables retailers to create multifunctional spaces, where shopping areas can be mixed with bars, cafes and art or event spaces. These destination-type stores offer customers another reason to visit and encourage dwell-time. By inviting other, often local brands to share the space, retailers are also building the community aspect of their locations and exploring potential new revenue streams.



heidi.com, Neuchâtel, Switzerland



Club Monaco, New York



Katy Has A Loft, Taipei



Deus Ex Machina, Sydney

- Streetwear brand [Heidi.com's new store](#) in Switzerland encompasses an event space, a bookshop and coffee area. Since the soft launch at the end of last year, it has hosted pop-up shops for Swiss brands Karlen and Risa, and for the current month it will partly function as an art and design space with a Zaha Hadid exhibition
- Club Monaco's [New York flagship's](#) aim is to bring its popular [Culture Club](#) blog to life by incorporating a florist, bookstore and cafe. Located on Fifth Avenue, the space has a separate street-front entrance for Toby's Estate Coffee. The coffee shop lead into an in-store book shop operated by Strand Bookstores, which carries 2,500 art, culture, food and fashion titles. Florist Polux Fleuriste completes the offer
- Katy Has a Loft in Taipei targets Taiwan's busy female consumer with a shop that offers fashion and lifestyle accessories alongside a healthfood delicatessen, cafe and art space. Designed to provide a sensory experience, the store is constructed from natural materials and feels calm and soothing, inviting customers to dwell
- Australian surf and motorcycle company Deus Ex Machina runs the Deus Cafe next door to its Sydney and Bali retail stores, designed as a hangout zone for surf and biker enthusiasts. Described as a 'Temple of Enthusiasm', the space houses a motorcycle workshop, surfboard shaping bay, artist studio, gallery and bar/restaurant
- Taking the concept a step further, Urban Outfitters plans to open an entire village in Pennsylvania by 2016. Called Devon Yard, the development will contain Urban Outfitters and Anthropologie stores as well as a garden centre, boutique hotel, fitness centre and several restaurants

Fixtures & VM

Flexible, on-the-ground visual merchandising strategies are a key strategy for keeping store environments fresh and relevant. Freestanding, moveable and fully flexible fixtures allows the retail experience to be easily updated to keep up with current trends, and to quickly reflect the change in pace of retail life.



Band of Outsiders, Tokyo



Flexible fixtures by Neon at Topshop, London



Camper, Malmö



Nike 1948 space, London



Kloke, Melbourne



Crocodile concept store, Singapore

- At Band of Outsiders' **Tokyo flagship**, instead of traditional display units and visual merchandising, in the centre of the space is a large steel mechanism with 28 arms extending outwards to anchor the fixtures, rails and cash register. The arms can be reconfigured to change the seasonal layout and look of the store. The exterior of the building is covered in a printable mesh fabric which can also be manipulated to change every season
- London-based design practice Neon created a series of fixtures for Topshop's Oxford Circus flagship which are designed to be fully flexible. Made from untreated wood, the fixtures have a simple

construction and are on wheels so they can be easily moved around the store

- Footwear brand Camper's store in Malmö has been designed with flexibility in mind. Swedish firm Note Design Studio devised a set of mobile metal trolleys to display product, mounting them on wheels so they can be moved around and refreshed with ease
 - Nike's permanent London pop-up space 1948 features 12 modular, wheeled units that resemble tiered stadium bleachers. The versatile benches can be used for seating during events or arranged to create multi-level table-top displays for merchandise, enabling the store to easily update its look and feel based on current events such as the World Cup or the Olympics
 - Design studio Sibling created an interior for Australian fashion brand Kloke inside a Victorian building in Melbourne using locally-sourced ash wood cubes that act as flexible display units. The store design is based on a three-dimensional grid, with cubes stacked to create display components and an alcove with a fitting room beneath it. The cubes can be easily reconfigured so that the entire store can be re-organised over time
 - Singapore fashion brand Crocodile's VivoCity flagship store is described by its designers as a "transformable shell": the rotating panels can be turned to reveal mirrors on the other side, while the steel frame in the middle holds key items that can be refreshed regularly
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