

# INTEGRATION

A new design model for apparel retail environments

A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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# ABSTRACT

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As founder of Brinkworth, a London-based design consultancy, I am writing this thesis from a creative practitioner's perspective. The main research question is: How has the role and the activity of an interior designer for apparel retail environments evolved since the intervention of digital platforms, including social media and online shopping? Pertaining to this lead research question are the following two questions: How have customer behaviour patterns changed due to the intervention of digital and social media platforms? And how has brand engagement and communication with their customer community evolved with respect to the development of digital technologies?

The title of this PhD by public works, Integration, describes the key approach to my new model, which delivers appropriate physical retail spaces through a four-way system of integration: brand, space, location and community. A donor building is designed so as to successfully host the brand and facilitate the fusing of its customer community within the building's own local culture. It theorises that the physical branded retail space is at the heart of a brand's external facing retail activity. It is primarily the place that gives an invaluable opportunity for the development of a personal relationship between the customer community and the brand. This space is

also the nucleus in which platforms of digital immersion, product fusion and narrative are integrated within a central, physical hub. This concept of integration seeks to replace the convention of outmoded, repetitive, traditional retail rollout methods.

This thesis of public works outlines new models of thinking taken from Brinkworth's portfolio. Utilising the research methodology of reflexivity, it contributes new knowledge to the field of professional practice and academic research in apparel retail design, both in terms of the design work carried out and the reflection on that work. The thesis starts by examining the academic context through an analysis of the limited published practitioners' literature that it seeks to succeed. The research extends into broader and relevant academic areas of study. The specifics of apparel retail design will then be discussed, providing a blueprint by which Brinkworth implements its strategies and demonstrating why the process is significant. An assessment of how to structure and approach interior design for retail, as well as evidence and project planning information will be included within the thesis, something that has not been previously documented in this field of study. A recently formulated Model of Integration is theorised, demonstrated and disseminated through the case

studies selected in order to exemplify each retail environment typology.

This dynamic Model of Integration, driven by the evolving relationship between the brand and its customer community, is reflected in the communicative relationship between online and physical retail environments. This, in turn, drives the creation of a new type of outcome. In support of this, the resulting physical retail spaces produced are named Activation Retail Environments. These multipurpose retail environments host activities broader than retail, and include hospitality, brand/product education and events, where the customer is an active participant in a spatial and personal relationship with the brand.

Following the Academic Context, a chapter entitled Typologies and Strategies seeks to identify the key individual types of physical retail stores. It also demonstrates the optimum approach to tackling each category of store. My Model of Integration is illustrated through examples from Brinkworth's portfolio in the following chapter, and the thesis evidences the discussed retail typologies through a broad selection of completed projects. ■

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Finally, I am deeply grateful to the people who have contributed to the creative collective at Brinkworth over the last twenty-six years. ■

## INTRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Brinkworth is a London-based design consultancy working across a range of disciplines including architecture, interior and brand design. Established in 1990, the company's experience and ability to deliver has resulted in a highly creative international portfolio.

## INTRODUCTION GLOBAL

**2500+ PROJECTS • 80+ COUNTRIES.**

The Brinkworth portfolio extends internationally enabling our clients to position projects and brands anywhere within the global market. Our knowledge of international working practice and ability to deliver has achieved creative projects in a diversity of cultures and countries around the world.





# INTRODUCTION CLIENTS



SELFRIDGES & CO

WHISTLES

ARC'TERYX



CASIO

Supreme

LBI

BASTYAN



CONVERSE



Rapha



DIESEL

ALLSAINTS SPITALFIELDS

BEN SHERMAN



KAREN MILLEN LONDON



sunglass hut



DAY BIRGER OF MIKKELSEN

MARKS & SPENCER

GHOST



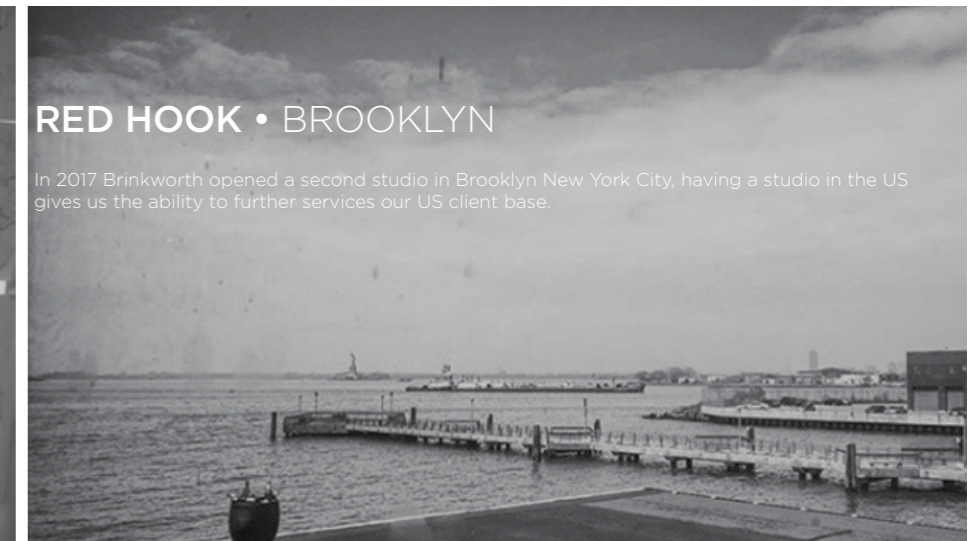
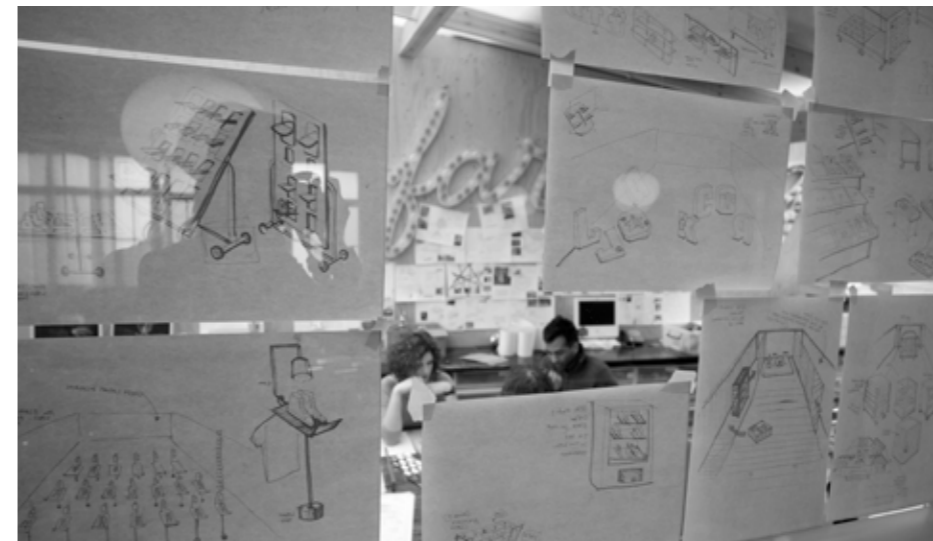
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# INTRODUCTION STUDIO

## BETHNAL GREEN • EAST LONDON

The Brinkworth studio in East London, began in 1990 as the company's workshop from which to design and build projects. Since then it has evolved, becoming home to a diverse and vibrant culture, which nurtures a unique approach to collaboration and the formation of fresh ideas across a range of disciplines including architecture, interior and brand experience.



## RED HOOK • BROOKLYN

In 2017 Brinkworth opened a second studio in Brooklyn New York City, having a studio in the US gives us the ability to further services our US client base.

# INTRODUCTION

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This is a PhD by public works reflecting on my new Model of Integration for global apparel retail specifically for interior designers. This is in response to the changing role of the interior designer for apparel retail environments since the growth of digital platforms, including social media and online shopping.

On reflection, I feel incredibly fortunate to have studied design during the 1980s. After completing a two-year diploma and then a Bachelor of Arts in three-dimensional design in Wolverhampton, I did my Masters in furniture design at the Royal College of Art, London. This period of time up to the present day spans thirty years that have revolutionised the way interior design is approached. With the huge impact of the digital retail age now prevalent, I feel fortunate to have practised interior design during the period when the relatively straightforward pre-digital age became a fully encompassing physical retail challenge invigorated by the digital intervention of web stores and social media. It has been a period of experimentation and change that has captivated my attention. I also realise that I was blessed with naivety in my own knowledge of the subject, and in some cases the naivety of my clients, as we were both able to start with a blank page. Interior design courses with retail design on their curricula were few and

far between during my studies, and relevant literature was also sparse. Had I been taught the conventional approach to global retail and its method of rollout, I may not have been able to come to the conclusions and strategies that I formed.

I have been working in this field for twenty-eight years as the CEO of Brinkworth. My responsibilities in this position are primarily those of a Design Director and I work at the helm of a fifty-strong collaborative team. I work on creative concepts and strategies through to the execution of their spatial environments, and guide design directors, associates and the creative team at each stage of the creative process. I also work with the financial and creative directors to shape the business model as well as the creative journey. I enjoy partnering with clients, teasing out design solutions that communicate their brand DNA into built environments. It is stimulating to delve into all process stages, especially the three-dimensional aspect of developing and prototyping the spaces, with their components and materiality. This facet of the design process particularly resonates with me as it ties to my original training as a furniture designer. I believe that there is no escaping the reality of a completed built environment, the ability to interact and critique having

viewed it in the round. This process of research as both a practitioner and an academic has illuminated and distilled a new model for fuelling the challenges of a contemporary retail environment.

Within the industry Brinkworth sits in an increasingly unusual position as a specialist in developing three-dimensional built environments for brands. The company has a broad range of expertise in hospitality and residential design, but is most prolific in the field of retail design spaces. It is also unusual when contrasted with other design practices of a similar size, such as Fitch, D&P and 2021, as it works on a broad range of scale, location and types of brand. The majority of our work in retail has historically been within apparel retail, focussing primarily on three-dimensional built environments.

Brinkworth has completed on average a project every two to three days. We have over 2,500 projects in our portfolio and our breadth of experience extends to more than ninety different countries. Global retail design has dramatically evolved in the time that I have been working in this discipline and, certainly in the past five years, the technology and reach/scope of design disciplines in this area have transformed



dramatically in the way that customers shop, incorporating digital customer-facing platforms. The emergence of digital technologies has made an incredible difference. Contemporary retail environments have all the physical advantages of a store, such as human interaction as well as sensory interactivity, which must be captivating and be able to work with a digital narrative. Our clients successfully deliver effective physical and online retail, thus increasing sales, most recently demonstrated by our work with House of Fraser. Companies that invest both in online and physical presence receive an uplift in the overall retail performance. Nigel Oddy, CEO of House of Fraser, illustrates the importance of interactivity in his interview with *Drapers* magazine:

“Bricks-and-mortar stores are a very important part of our business. It’s very easy just to talk about the great growth of online but to be truly multichannel, you have to have more than one channel. There is still the need for shoppers to touch and feel the product, and we know the shopper who is multichannel will spend more than the single-channel shopper. We need to make sure that each channel works together and there’s consistency” (Oddy 2016).

One of the main motivations for writing this thesis was the desire to define and clarify my personal methodologies for designing retail environments. I have realised that although Brinkworth has a clearly outlined process strategy, there are no succinct instructions on its implementation. This is coupled with the fact that throughout my time teaching at numerous universities, the students and I have not been able to find sufficient published information on how to tackle this subject.

My intention is that this thesis is a contribution to the academic field of interior design to be accessed and utilised by academics and practitioners. In addition, that it becomes a tool to enable the development of further thinking and the creation of further hybridised models of practice. The overarching research question is: how has the role and activity of the interior designer evolved since the intervention of digital platforms, including social media and online shopping?

The answers lie in the exploration of social change and the altered customer behavioural patterns due to the creation of the Internet and social media. As stated in Lynette Saunders’ (2016) e-consultant survey, *Digital Transformation in the Retail Sector: challenges and*

*opportunities*, nearly a third of retail respondents said that optimising customer experience represents the single most exciting opportunity for their organisations to deliver on their priorities for 2016. Further to this: “Consumers still visit stores for more than just transactions, they now expect more from the place they visit. They want informed, customer experience” (Saunders, 2016). It is apparent that the brands, conscious of these changes in customer behaviours, have adapted the way they communicate with their customer communities.

In tandem with this, the physical spaces created by interior designers for retail activity have adapted to fulfil and complement this changing behaviour. This is evidenced clearly in our work with the retailer Rapha, creating engaging stores that serve the customer community in a multipurpose way. These spaces created by Brinkworth satisfy the customer need for connectivity that cannot be deeply fulfilled through online transactional websites and apps. Mobile devices have created a sociological and psychological change in behaviour. This change in behaviour and connectivity is investigated by the sociologist Sherry Turkle and expanded on further in the academic context. The physical retail spaces become a complement to online activity, providing



enhanced activities and opportunities for face-to-face interaction between the brand and customer community, and therefore enable a potentially deeper relationship connection that enhances connectivity and creates community. Social media has become a vehicle for the projected-self. Where it is interconnected with clothing, it is commonly used as a tool to project what we want others to see of ourselves and in addition, what we would like to believe ourselves to be.

The social analyst Richard Sennett (2013) discusses in *Open City* his findings that people develop aspects of themselves through multiple identities and thereby create an emotional image of self, as well as through 'self-narrator' behaviour. This topic is much debated and informs the research question and its outcome. The projected self is a powerful construct within social media and is dependent on the importance of image and the creation of a narrative that users of social media wish to present. This projected image, and the sharing of it, is still evolving and is of primary importance to today's society. One only has to look at Instagram and the actions of being 'liked' and 'followed' to illustrate this point. As previously stated, clothing is a form of self-projection and physical store spaces are how a brand projects its identity.

Brinkworth has forged its own approach to nurturing

apparel brands and then working closely with stakeholders, partnering with them to expand their businesses on a global platform. We have critically outlined and assessed their merits, continually fine-tuning our approach. Trial and error, and listening to all stakeholders in terms of clients, franchisees, and technical and construction partners, have been vital in forming trusting relationships. I believe this integration has been key to successful, well-crafted design solutions that communicate our clients' brands clearly in expression and commerciality.

Customer behavioural patterns of shopping have been revolutionised in recent years, with the development of digital online sales and digital technologies such as mobile tablet, radio frequency identification tags and social media linking to customers' relationships with the product and the brand. We are now witnessing a real change in our design approach to spaces, how they function, how they serve the customer and communicate the brand being sold. I will elaborate on this later in the thesis. In my opinion, it is a myth that the digital online store will kill off the need for physical store presence. This notion was put forward in an academic forum as part of the London Design Festival hosted by Dezeen in 2014. It was called Design Junction and professionals in the field were invited to present their opinion and evidence on

challenging the idea of the death of the high street. I and another director at Brinkworth challenged this concept through the analysis of our own portfolio. We found that the main reasons against this were the physical benefits of human interaction and relationships with the brand staff community, as well as physical interaction with the product itself.

In my experience, physical retail projects have been complemented and invigorated by the digital retail market. It has also led to a broader range of retail types. These continue to develop the relationship between online and physical designed retail spaces. This thesis will include an analysis and critique of current conventional retail rollout methods. The thesis will also discuss global guides to roles and responsibilities of a client and its partnership with a design company. It will chart the delivery process with franchise partners and the construction delivery partners. I will provide clarification on and discuss the role of an interior designer, and outline the work that in my opinion needs to be delivered for a successful branded retail environment. Having discussed and demonstrated the process stages: Discover and Define, Design Concept, Design Scheme, Design Detail, Deliver and Activation Design, I will describe relevant retail project types from stand-alone flagship stores through grades of store,



differentiating between historic and mall sites. It will also study concession 'shop-in-shop' and the relatively new emergence of pop-up and mobile retail. I will spell out what is important in the discipline of interior design when approaching these types, and break down the strategies to be unravelled and resolved. I shall draw on case studies from my portfolio that exemplify each of these archetypes to then demonstrate and clarify these types and design strategies. I have chosen a broad range of clients' spaces in different sectors of the market that have challenged the function of a conventional store.

Brinkworth has specialised in retail design, but it has been crucial for its cultural and creative development that it tackles a wide range of other design disciplines and types. There is cross-pollination from discipline to discipline in a wide range of commercial designs from restaurants, bars, hotels, museums and exhibitions to residential projects. Our chosen approach is to work on bespoke design concepts for our clients and we find it fulfilling to work with a broad range of clients, in scale and location as well as product offer. It is important for us to get under the skin of a client's culture and analyse the product to discover its personality and what is unique in its offer. We then endeavour to create characterful spaces that are in tune with the client's brief and that also express and communicate the brand offer clearly,

resonating with its audience. It should be possible to remove all the signage within a retail store and know where one is and what the brand stands for.

It is also increasingly important that successful contemporary store design can adapt quickly and fluidly with fast developing retail technologies and customer behavioural patterns. It is a fascinating challenge to question how these spaces can work, how they harness a brand and how they can accommodate a range of complementary activities within this space and enhance a brand's narrative and digital online presence. I believe it is important to stay open-minded when tackling a client's brief. For me, it is about the conceptual idea and its well-crafted, localised solution that is paramount. This good idea must not be muddied in the process. I have experienced many ways to create ideas and it is through their nurturing and experimentation, leading to detailing, that a well-designed retail space is produced. To work on long-term development closely with a client and partners is incredibly rewarding, because looking at what has been achieved, and analysing and criticising it, leads to improvements, sometimes major and sometimes minor. Challenging how it performs and its purpose can create a long-lasting dialogue with clients and memorable projects and client partnerships. By utilising a reflexive methodology I am able to constantly

refer back to, reflect on and critique my creative output, thus informing and evolving working practice and methodologies. Frederick Steier (1991) describes reflexivity as:

"... A turning back of one's experience upon oneself... a circular process... This looping back may... unfold as a spiralling, if we allow for multiple perspectives, and acknowledge that 'the same self' may be different as a result of its own self-pointing. Thus included within this focus are issues of self-reference, and how issues of self-reference can inform methodologies and the research process in general" (Steier, 1991: 163).

This thesis aims to develop and demonstrate a new model and way of thinking about retail apparel design evidenced through the extensive portfolio of public works that Brinkworth has undertaken and delivered from concept to completion. It does this by extracting key or critical ideas and using carefully chosen examples of work that demonstrate new methodologies for apparel retail design. The public works that I have undertaken, evidenced by the selected case studies, embody the research process of reflexivity that shapes our core creative strategy to retail. ■

# ACADEMIC CONTEXT

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To put my thesis into an academic context I have researched the literature on retail design and conclude that my studies differ primarily in four ways. Firstly, I have identified a gap in the research documentation on works written from a practitioner's perspective. Secondly, my thesis is specifically about apparel retail design for the interior design industry. In the third place, my thesis breaks down the retail types and discusses how they are approached and the benefits of having these types in place for a sound global retail strategy. Finally, the thesis brings up to date a new retail design model that is tried, tested and proven in the field, as evidenced by Brinkworth's work.

As my fundamental research question addresses how the practice of interior design for apparel retail spaces has changed due to the intervention of digital platforms and social media, I have investigated further afield and more broadly than work written specifically on retail designed spaces. My research has transitioned from books written on contemporary store design to exploring research on technologies and the social changes from a historical, psychological, philosophical and sociological perspective. Through my reflexive professional and academic research practices, this research, its findings

and dissemination have played a key role in the creation of my Model of Integration.

Most of the publications on retail design show a broad spectrum of types of retail, such as hospitality, food and apparel. There is a plethora of glossy retail design books that are image-led and include the author's detailed descriptions of the projects, complemented by quotes from the designer. However, these do not study the discipline of designing these spaces in any detail. An example of an image-led book is *Brand Space, Branded Architecture and the Future of Retail Design* by Sofia Borges (Borges, 2013). It has a broad range of good images capturing some of the most inspired retail designs, ranging from Keno Kuma's Starbucks in Japan to Universal Design Studio's Sony space in Milan. Another book that falls into this category is *Design for Shopping, New Retail Interiors* by Sarah Manuelli (2006). She writes: "What was once the market place is now a zone of experience and lifestyle" (Manuelli, 2006: 6). She goes on to state that 'the customer is king'. Manuelli was an early adopter of this philosophy for retail. She elaborates by saying: "These days good looking retail is no longer enough. The post-shopping consumer expects to be engaged and entertained" (Manuelli, 2006:

6). In principle I agree with this, but I believe that since then the '*customer is king*' approach has developed further - for me it is more about the joint relationship between a brand and its shopping community. Therefore I believe the phrase should read '*community is king*', as it links directly to the technological and sociological changes brought about by digitalisation and social media with its inherent qualities of open sharing and a desire for belonging.

Another notable example of the 'glossy' type is *Fashion Retail* by Eleanor Curtis (2004). She writes: "Fashion benefits as architecture creates a platform upon which it can be displayed and architects are able to realise their work in physical form faster than within any other building type" (Curtis, 2004: 8). Since 2004 when this was written, the matter of pace has not changed. Speed and project delivery has been consistent. However, a broader number of designers are now tackling the challenges of creating retail environments. Branding consultants as well as interior designers, interior architects and architects are competing for this work. Eleanor Curtis also reflects: "Silvestrin's stores for Giorgio Armani for example, are almost identical in every city. This seems to work very well in enforcing the brand concept globally



and brings a sense of harmony to the brand wherever it finds itself" (Curtis, 2004: 62). However, the spaces that are still present from this roll-out now appear as dinosaurs on our streets, and my thesis demonstrates how this approach is no longer relevant and does not resonate with customer culture globally. It is fascinating to see how things have changed and developed in just over ten years, given the substantial impact technological and digital developments have had. This is evident in the closing of stores of this nature. These stores no longer resonate with a contemporary customer, who now enjoys a significantly evolving retail environment that harnesses a physical relationship with place, staff and the customer community. This is enhanced by integrated digital technology that facilitates communication and relationships which have been formed online.

There is a published range of more informative reference books that are aimed at a varying public. If you are a student or new to the industry, both Jenny Grove's (2017) *Interior Design a professional guide* and Lynne Mesher's (2010) *Retail Design, Basic Interior Design* provide a sound introduction to strategies of interior design as a discipline. Mesher writes: "Retail spaces are at the forefront of contemporary interior design because they

are updated regularly to stay competitive and appealing" (Mesher, 2010: 1). Another example of this type of in-depth publication would be *The Handbook of Interior Architecture and Design* by Graeme Brooker and Lois Weinthal (Brooker & Weinthal, 2013). It contains an essay by Drew Plunkett titled *The Profession That Dare Not Speak Its Name* and is an informative essay on interior design as a profession, linking practitioners' outlooks and the need for a consolidated educational establishment. Plunkett is an active member of the fellowship of Interior Educators that is headed by Graeme Brooker, who recently became Professor of Interior Design at the Royal College of Art. I was awarded a fellowship as a result of my contribution to the field as a practitioner. Plunkett's opinion enforces my observations on integrated physical and digital retail. He writes:

"Digital technology has also fundamentally changed clients' needs. Virtual shopping requires real retail interiors to fulfil a more complex branding role than simply providing a place for the prosaic exchange of goods for money. Bars and cafes have to compete with digital socialising and accommodate peripatetic digital workers. In both the private and increasingly the public sectors, outside the well-trampled area of retail and

hospitality design, clients are beginning to recognise the value that interior design can bring to their operations. Its importance as a generator of profit in the commercial sectors demonstrates, with all the objectivity of sales figures, its effectiveness as a means of engaging and persuading customers" (Brooker & Weinthal, 2013: 98).

Plunkett (2013: 98) recognises that: "Virtual shopping requires real retail interiors to fulfil a more complex branding role". This is evidenced in my case study on the Rapha Cycle Club where the retail environment is enriched with hospitality and a plethora of cycle-related activities. These are invaluable to the brand's commercial success, across both online and physical retail platforms.

*Project on the City II: The Harvard Guide to Shopping* (Chung et al., 2001) provides insightful research into how retail has affected cities and their urban landscapes. This reference book has well-documented timelines on historical retail and some resonating observations such as: "Victor Gruen, widely acknowledged as the inventor of the shopping mall, was, in the end, not interested in shopping. Instead, the shopping mall was a vehicle towards his real ambition: to redefine the contemporary city. For Gruen, the mall was the new city" (Leong, 2001:





381). I believe that Gruen's concept of a mall representing a self-contained microcosm of society is now obsolete, due to the intervention of the digital age. The customer community adopts the digital and physical immersion of retail globally, allowing for an omni-channel experience that cannot be defined and constricted by a single location.

Lastly, on retail design reference books not written by practitioners, Philipp Tuefel and Rainer Zimmermann (2015) discuss in *Holistic Retail Design* the concept of a holistic approach to retail design. They identify that: "The future belongs to bricks and mortar concept customised to fit local culture and demography, purchasing power and competition" (Tuefel and Zimmermann, 2015: 51). In my opinion, *Holistic Retail Design* is the most recent and relevant book written about general retail design. It has 'best in class' examples to look at and describes trends in types of retail concepts, given titles such as Simplicity, Storytelling and Fusion. However, it differs widely from my own thesis. Although I support this theory of a holistic approach that amalgamates all relevant disciplines into the retail environment, I state in my thesis that it is important to not just orchestrate these elements but to integrate them. An illustration of this Model of Integration are the Rapha Cycle Clubs, which successfully integrate retail, hospitality and both brand and product education within a single retail environment. What is the benefit of this? It is valuable as it utilises a dynamic model that means

the functions within the built retail environment can move and alter in scale to create an enriched environment that is multipurpose and supports customer community.

An example of a book written by a practitioner, which differentiates itself as being on the philosophy of shopping, is *The Art of Shopping, How We Shop and Why We Buy* by Siemon Scamell-Katz (2014). It has some insightful and hard-earned observations about retail spaces and customer behavioural patterns that he gained through direct work as a practitioner in the field, as well as close research with a neurologist. This information is valuable when designing a retail space – what draws a customer into a space, how can they be directed around and engaged on an emotional level. He employs scientific studies on the brain to chart how a shopper behaves within retail spaces. One of his theories is on cognitive brain mapping: "The brain memorises patterns of space and the routes to navigate them" (Scamell-Katz, 2012: 64). The book looks at the different priorities when shopping for different goods with a range of importance. "Generally clothing purchase is one with high interest, high involvement and strong content... the shopper would spend a long time considering different options; in this situation, extra information a varied or complex assortment or even educational promotions would be appropriate" (Scamell-Katz, 2012: 106). This observation is significant when considering the design of spaces

for apparel brands such as Rapha and Ben Sherman. Scamell-Katz goes on to say: "It appears the stronger the emotional packet, the less likely the shopper is to be rational when finalising their choice" (Scamell-Katz, 2012: 138). In principle, I agree with this, although it is, of course, dependent on character type of the individual shopper.

This leads us to the books that most closely relate to my own research through practice, those of Rodney Fitch (1990) and Rasshied Din (2000). The first book written on the subject is by Rodney Fitch who at that time owned the Fitch design company. The book is titled *Fitch on Retail Design* (1990). The second book from a practitioner's perspective is Rasshied Din's *New Retail* (2000), written while he ran a company called Din Associates. Both books are now somewhat out-dated due to sociological changes in the behavioural patterns of the customer community as a result of social media platforms. Fitch's book professes to be the first book written on retail design from a practitioner's point of view. Although visually the book now looks incredibly dated, there are some principles that still hold today. This also includes some of Fitch's predictions for the future of retail design, which have been realised. He discusses a coherent approach to dealing with the challenges of designing a retail space and charts the importance of continuity: "To avoid a disjunction between the interior and exterior, the design of the outside cannot



be considered in isolation" (Fitch, 1990: 18). Another pertinent phrase, which still resonates now, is: "Think globally, but design locally" (Fitch, 1990: 29). When discussing the future of retail he says: "Recent history suggests that the speed of the change is likely to increase with the changes in society, the economy, technology, and social attitude" (Fitch, 1990: 252). It is intriguing to see that this book was written before any significant digital retail interaction was established. There is also no mention of branded environments in this book, which is now deemed the norm.

Fitch's book has a strong successor, written ten years later by Rasshied Din, who at that point had a successful design practice in London. At the time of publication, this book was considered the bible for retail design within the UK. Once again, some of the fundamental approaches stay relevant but it is strikingly clear that at that time retail digital interaction was not yet apparent in the retail examples discussed in the book. It does refer to ongoing customer relationships with the advent of the loyalty card:

"Why do people keep going back to one place or reject it in favour of another? The answer is not as simple as price, location or products. What is important is a sense of a relationship, which, as with any human relationship, is a complex issue made more so by the assumption

today that shoppers do not have relationships with retailers in the way they used to... Looking forward to the future, which we are told is firmly based on information technology, 'E' commerce (electronic commerce) will play an increasing role. However, I doubt it will ever replace the social experience of shopping" (Din, 2000: 7).

I think this is still true today, but I suggest that Din would be surprised at how much change has taken place due to technology and social change resonating in design-interlinked relationships with brands within store and outside of it. It is also worth noting that Din's book focuses overwhelmingly on retail interior design in the UK. Although the book became hugely influential, this UK-centric viewpoint is outmoded in today's global industry. For example, Brinkworth frequently pitches to international clients and is competing against design studios based not only in Europe but also globally. In summary, this book looks at the broad discipline of retail design from shopping to hospitality, whereas my own study focuses on apparel retail. I also reflect that Din's book is a great looking glass to what was happening in the UK in 2000. I believe that design companies now operate more internationally than ever before because digital technology's reach is wider. In recent years, 50% of our projects are received through interaction on our website and 70% of these enquiries come from overseas.

With digital interaction playing a major role in contemporary retail design, the following research provides a useful insight into the value of digital platforms utilised within today's retail strategy. Scott Galloway, Clinical Professor of Marketing at NYU Stern School of Business, is a digital strategist. His research and contribution to the field of retail are invaluable because of his collation of major data in global digital statistics in sectors of digital marketing, site e-commerce, social media and mobile technology. He lectures frequently on this topic, presenting a summary of his findings as well as providing a forecast for future trends within the retail sector. During his lecture *The Death of Pure-Play Retail & Impulse Buys*, Galloway (2015) discusses the rise of digital integration within retail, specifically relating to physical retail. He discusses companies that operate solely within either the physical or online market, coining the term 'pure play', which is a term describing a singular retail activity either online or in-store and never combined. By charting the performance of retail companies in that year he demonstrated that pure play within the retail sector is dying. While I largely agree with his prediction of vast underperformance for pure play companies, I do not think they will die out completely in the near future. This is because their will always be a market for small, niche retailers. However, Galloway uses statistics to prove that the strategy of integrated digital and physical retail is the way forward for successful global retail. To illustrate this he presented the financial growth



of Warby Parker, Macy's and Nordstrom in 2015, which all saw a 30% uplift in gross turnover that came as a result of the above-mentioned integration.

Galloway demonstrates that 80% of all sales start with the seduction of the consumer by goods through digital media, prior to actually going into the physical store. He also demonstrates that 60% of all global retail is the combination of digital and physical retail stores. He cites that the balance of content and commerce within these retail platforms is the key driver for profit for successful brands. Galloway supports these findings by demonstrating the success of companies that activate these strategies, such as Scotch & Soda as well as Apple. The growth of 'click and collect' culture is also mentioned in his lectures, as this has risen by an average of 50% in Europe and 25% in the USA. He cites the investments of Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple as key drivers in the evolution of retail. The rise of technology is also increasing the convenience of retail shopping through transaction applications that are used by the customers on their mobile devices, with Apple holding 850 million personal credit card details. Galloway concludes that omni-channel retail is the future of global retail strategies. Galloway's research in this field of physical and digital retail aligns with my Model of Integration carried out in global retail design. His research also supports the core ethos of my thesis. I will go on to demonstrate that it

is vital for this integration not only to take place across the digital and physical markets, but it must also be incorporated at a local level.

The personal mobile/smart devices carried by customers are the digital devices that have transformed the ways in which customers communicate brand information on a social level. In his TEDTalk *Why Our Screens Make us Less Happy*, Adam Alter (2017) evidences that within a 24-hour period, once time has been used for sleep, work, commute and survival, the remaining available personal time is increasingly consumed by screen use. Alter's (2017) statistics demonstrate a gradual and significant increase in screen time use during personal time over the last decade, with screen time accounting for 35% of personal time in 2007, increasing to 60% in 2015 and 80% in 2017. This increase in screen time use may also indicate the rise in on-screen interactions between a brand and its customer community. It is important to recognise that this digital communication is a two-way communication process and is fundamentally how a brand targets and communicates with its contemporary customer audience.

How customers pursue information online is evidenced by Google's research, *Digital Impact on In-store Shopping: Research Debunks Common Myths* (Google, 2014), a collaboration with Ipsos MediaCTand Sterling Brands. This study showed that 87% of customers look

online at a brand and their product before visiting the physical store. In addition, 79% look for brand/product information online whilst visiting the physical store. Of those customers who visited the physical store, 35% visited the online store directly after the physical store visit (Google, 2014). These statistics demonstrate the change in customer behaviour patterns and also the value and importance of integrating digital and physical communication devices within these built environments. It also highlights the value of combining both activities to increase connectivity with the customer and thereby increasing commerce on both platforms. This report also noted that: "Consumers still visit stores for more than just transactions, they now expect more from the place they visit. They want informed, customised experience" (Google, 2014).

Brands recognise the value of forming a relationship with their customer community. Holly Ripper, Managing Partner at Green Cave People, also supports this finding in the article *20 years of online retail. How has e-commerce changed marketing?* Ripper (2014) states that: "As customers' shopping activities are spread across more and more different channels, brands need to ensure they have a powerful and emotive story that brings the brand to life and exploits the different strengths of different channels. So for high streets, that means an in-store experience of the product, the environment, and the service, that



the web cannot offer." I agree with Ripper that an emotive narrative is important. The physical store environment can offer more in response to this significant connectivity and activity potential in the physical environment. Examples of customer community building activities are demonstrated later in the case studies, in particular those of Converse and Sonos.

The introduction of social media and consumer collaborative apps encourages sharing and the promotion of products. By extension, the customer is acting as a brand advocate, endorsing products and ratings online as well as sharing them across social media platforms. As such, the customer becomes integral to the marketing and advertising strategy. The discourse on how technologies are affecting social change on a behaviour level is well documented. In his book, *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Marc Auge (2008) highlights the impact of digital technology as well as space on the individual: "The individual is a synthesis, the expression of a culture affected by technology and spaces and experiences they have" (Auge, 2008: 18). Additionally, in his lecture *Understanding Society*, the sociologist Richard Sennett (2013) argues how personality is constructed and projected through multiple identities and self-narration that is facilitated through social media. The physical retail spaces created and products produced by brands are a projection of brand identity and, in turn,

the customer projects through social media their identities in those physical spaces and through the wearing of that brand's products.

An illuminating book exploring architecture and the effects of the emergence of digital culture is *The Digital Culture in Architecture: An Introduction for Design Professions* by Antoine Picon (2010). He observes "in the sociological or anthropological sense, the digital realm can be considered as a culture because it is synonymous with various habits and rituals because it influences our conducts as well as a representation of the world" (Picon, 2010: 50). Picon observes that digital media provides a platform for customers to endorse products. This poses the question, how has this behaviour evolved since Picon's observations? Social media platforms have both developed and increased the pace of consumption through communication between customer communities, while blogs have declined, Instagram use has increased as a powerful source of social media. As evidenced by Statistica (2017), the number of daily active Instagram users as of September 2017 had reached five hundred million, an increase from one hundred and fifty million in January 2017. Facebook currently has over two billion monthly users (Techcrunch, 2017). The brand and customer relationship has evolved through this social connection. Half of the global population is now using social media. Companies are now investing more in their

online advertising and marketing campaigns and less on traditional communication outlets such as television and radio (Galloway, 2017). This change in focus to online marketing campaigns connects brands with their customer community on a more regular basis. So, how has this affected customer behaviour patterns? The reality is that customers and brands are now involved in a cyclical communicative transactional process, from online to physical and back again.

Picon discusses the Internet and its social consequences for society, referencing Ronald Rice's discourse on the *Social Consequences Of Internet Use* which identifies that: "Personal home pages or blogs can indeed be interpreted as an attempt to rebuild a coherent image of self" (Rice cited in Picon, 2010: 52). Picon makes an additional salient observation that: "A growing part of our social relationship has gone online" (Picon, 2010: 52). He further elaborates by citing Anthony Giddens: "We cannot change our physical appearance at will. On the Internet nothing is easier to do" (Giddens cited in Picon, 2010: 54). Building on this theory, it is apparent that the recent introduction of social media, and its behavioural effect on customer communities, has accelerated and its reach is now broader and far more globally accessed than previously. Picon (2010) unravels evidence of this from a talk given by the well-published sociologist Sherry Turkle, who investigates the positive social effects of the





Internet as facilitating better connections with others. It is of value to my thesis and research that Turkle's investigation is considered further and in relation to the recent TEDTalk in 2017, which explores this increased connectivity and also demonstrates the concerning and negative aspects of communication on digital platforms as being broader but on a shallower level. She discusses the sight of her daughter and friends all being together in her daughter's bedroom at home but interacting with their own personal smartphone devices simultaneously. Turkle opens a sociological debate that both real conversations and potentially messy real-life emotional situations are valuable and important in terms of forming and building positive meaningful relationships. She identifies the social implications in the changing practices of communication, citing the example of texting as a more controllable means of communication and therefore a more distanced form of connection, which she believes creates removed and 'managed' relationships. In addition, Turkle observes that this type of communicative interaction is very much about 'doing' as opposed to 'being', and consequently negates space for reflection in order to gain perspective on one's own personality and relationships. Turkle suggests that despite enhanced connectivity there is an increased feeling of loneliness. This is juxtaposed with the reality of the potentially never-ending source of engagement through mobile devices. This continual and

endless stream of communication is in contrast to books and films that have beginnings and endings.

Turkle concludes that the digital age and the intervention of new communication tools such as smartphones are not necessarily a negative thing, but we as a society need to learn how to use these devices in a healthy way to enrich our lives and the relationships we form and nurture. I support Turkle's observations, and by extension believe that the physical spaces created for social connection such as the retail spaces evidenced in my case studies are an antidote to the online world. These environments can create real physical connection and can harness and support customer community. Brinkworth is at present working to re-launch a new store for fashion brand Fiorucci. The design is an example of multipurpose flexible social space, which is intentionally designed to promote a customer community who record and share images of that relationship with its community and the space in which the brand community inhabits. However, we are currently discussing with the client the idea of creating an additional event space on the lower ground floor that would be an antithesis to social media sharing practice. It will support the valued customer community but will ban the use of personal digital devices. The concept is that you have to be there and be present, and you will only take away your memories. My thesis supports the importance of physical retail environments that service and nurture the

relationship between a brand and its customer community. This Fiorucci project concept is a social experiment to discover whether, due to the prolific use of mobile devices at branded events, the customer community will benefit from not having the distraction and broadcasting ability of their mobile devices. My expectation is that a buzz and excitement will be created by this unconventional approach to a brand event and that increased audience participation and personal interaction will transpire.

To broaden this discussion on space, architecture and community, Raymond (2011) identifies in his TEDTalk, *Victims Of The City*, that: "Architecture can bring people together, or divide them...witness the skyscraper, costly, inefficient, and only serving small proportions of the community" (Raymond, 2011). Raymond wants to encourage city governments to let go of old notions of success and consider the balance of environment, economy and society when designing cities with diverse activities and culture, with interwoven public space to create a positive social change on its inhabitants.

An example of community reactivation through social space is demonstrated by Theaster Chester Gates in his TEDTalk *How to Revive a Neighbourhood: with love, imagination, beauty and art* (Gates, 2015). Gates has been delivering community-enriching projects through art community activities and breathing new life into



downtrodden neighbourhoods in impoverished parts of America. Gates has transformed abandoned buildings into community homes that encourage local activation of art and performance, observing that: "Culture can be a catalyst for social transformation " (Gates, 2015). Increasingly, the spaces Brinkworth have been creating for brands have provided a broadening of functionality and capability, with the customer participants indulging in far more than just retail product purchases. The spaces are also used to work in as well as play in. This practice has been expanded on a larger scale by architect Ole Scheeren who gave a lecture on the TEDTalk platform *Why Great Architecture Should Tell A Story* (Scheeren, 2015), discussing the value of collaborative live-work spaces in large-scale, multi-faceted tower blocks. He argues that good architecture and planning create improved social communication and collaboration, and therefore create a stimulating community. As discussed previously, the boundaries between working and living have become blurred, as many of the activities of working and socialising are now interconnected through the actual mobile device and digital connectivity.

In 2014 Alejandro Avavena gave a lecture on the TEDTalk platform titled *My Architectural Philosophy? Bring the communities into the process* (Avavena, 2014), presenting inspiring designs that he had created for cost-effective social housing. His resourceful approach to creating

two-storey shells for domestic premises comprised of an outer weatherproof skin but, as the budget was limited, only 50% of the internal volume was in-filled, thereby providing a modest but functional small family dwelling. As the inhabitants grew and worked they could build the other 50% for themselves and by helping one another as a community this task was achieved. I applaud this long-lasting design and acknowledge the influence of this project on the development of my Model of Integration. The influential parallel being the design principle that facilitates the potential for intervention. Our store designs allow for changes in the use and culture of these spaces as the customer community and the brand relationship grows. An example of this is the House of Vans that has spaces in a few major cities offering social space for the skateboard community. These spaces host skateboarding as well as hospitality and events to drive customer community, and where both customers and the brand can produce content that is shared across the customer community globally.

My Model of Integration has evolved through this PhD research process. It has been informative to survey the literature more broadly than the academic published works on retail interior design. I have researched the discussion relating to social change by sociologists and psychologists and explored the evidence throughout, including works on digital technology and its effect on

the evolution of shopping as an activity. This research supports and contributes to the four-way Model of Integration. It is essential that spaces be designed to be multifunctional, communicate a brand's identity, project its personality and display its products, and resonate with customer participants. A space must be designed in a way to facilitate a customer to feel the sense of space and that they are engaged with that space. Research on space and place lead me to *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard (2014). When considering our relationship to spaces Bachelard observes: "They are in us as much as we are in them" (Bachelard 2014: 21). This suggests that the spaces we inhabit become embedded and permeate our psyches, and therefore influence our emotional reactions to new spatial environments.

Bachelard described himself as a phenomenologist and evidences convincingly the importance of our future relationships with spaces, referencing one's first home. Bachelard notes: "The house we were born in has engraved within us a hierarchy of various functions of inhabiting" (2014: 36). He goes on to state, idealistically "always in our dreams our home is a large cradle" (1964: 29). Bachelard's writings present the conscious notions of space and how one relates to it. He elaborates on how it feels to be in space "in the moment", observing how our historic and emotional memories, issues and dreams affect our consciousness of past



and influence how we inhabit spatial environments.

Murray Fraser highlights the breadth of research in architecture in his book *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview*. He states: "Research in architecture is incredibly broad and can be said to include investigations that might be scientific, historical, theoretical, social, anthropological, psychological, philosophical, economical, political environmental narrations" (Fraser 2013: 8). Whilst recognising this range of factors, my Model of Integration attempts to hone these considerations to create locally appropriate retail environments. In our retail spaces, we create scaled environments to encourage a sense of place. If the design is successful, the spaces created with the customer community in mind will, in turn, increase dwell time and commercial engagement.

In support of Bachelard's position, Peter Zumthor's *Thinking Architecture* elaborates on the important influence of home but also the ongoing change in our relation to spaces as we evolve and inhabit ever-changing new environments. This demonstrates a continuing evolution of our emotional relationship with spaces. Zumthor (2010: 65) observes: "the roots of our understanding of architecture lie in our childhood, in our youth; they live in our biography". When elaborating on his design process he quotes: "Strength of good design lies in ourselves and our ability to perceive the

world with emotion and reason" (2010: 65). He continues: "Producing inner images is a natural process common to everyone. It is part of think architecture, wild, free, ordered and systematic thinking in images, in architecture, spatial, colourful and sensuous pictures – this is my favourite definition of design" (2010: 67). *Reflecting on Poetics of Space and Thinking Architecture*, both Bachelard (2014) and Zumthor (2010) identify that individuals respond to space differently, therefore the stores created must accurately create environments sensitive to the customer community. This is evidenced by Brinkworth's global retail strategy and in particular for Rapha Cycle Clubs. It is crucial for designers to create retail environments that adapt and relate to the consumer community locally.

Patrick Newbery and Kevin Farnham (2013) in *Experience Design: A Framework for Integrating Brand Experience and Value* demonstrate a pragmatic approach to brand strategies, creating a methodology called experience design. Newbery and Farnham question that: 'The evaluation of value is increasingly based on experience - did my experience as a buyer match up with the expectations the brand set' (Newbery and Farnham 2013: 70). This outlines the importance of brand value and the customer's transactional journey. However, they do not take into consideration the digital and physical communication between the brand and its customer community. My research demonstrates the

importance of digital and physical communications when enriching the brand and customer community.

Drew Plunkett (2017) provides an account of the evolution of interior design spaces in *Revolution: Interior Design from 1950*, which offers illuminating discussions with a broad range of design agencies. Plunkett discusses the importance of brand experience in his interview with David Dalziel and John Pow regarding their approach to retail design. Dalziel in Plunkett (2017) stresses that it is crucial to get under the skin of a client and gain understanding and trust. Plunkett references Dalziel's experience that honest and open client relationships are key, and that: "clients that build on integrity and commitment" (Plunkett, 2017: 178) are crucial. Dalziel goes on to add: "clients must accept the necessity of continual investment in continuous development" (Plunkett, 2017: 180). I concur with this point as demonstrated in the multipurpose flexible environments produced and analysed in my case studies. It is imperative that the brands, in conjunction with their design companies, continue to work together on their retail environments so that they are in sync with new technologies and the changing nature of their customer community.

When considering customer experience, Dalziel (Plunkett 2017: 180) observes: "Quality experience is more important



than reputation and product". I strongly disagree with this, as it is apparent throughout this thesis and demonstrated in Brinkworth's case studies, that product quality, reputation, experience and customer community are all crucial in constructing a successful retail outcome. The experiences and memories that are created and resonate are key. However, the effective utilisation of the product in combination with the effective relationships formed with the brand and customer community is paramount. In the digital age where customers generate brand feedback and share their recommendations of those products through social media, both this relationship and trust are imperative for creating a strong brand.

Referring back to the main research question, how has the interior designer's role changed overall since the development of digital technology within retail design, it is prudent to investigate how digital platforms affect the design of buildings and how those buildings relate to their users. In addition, how does this affect the surrounding neighbourhood and community? Jonathan Hill (2013) quotes TS Eliot from 1917: "Context is not only topographical and physical, it is also historical... My concern for context is as an agent of architectural transformation. The place you build actually has formative influences on the nature of the building. And when the building is there it has formative influences and effects on the place (where) it is made" (Elliot cited in Hill, 2013: 27).

I support this idea as internal spaces effect change on a building both in a physical sense and in terms of its user's relationship within it. It has an effect on surrounding buildings and therefore the neighbourhood and city it is located in. However, when considering the digital communicative nature of social media, a building can be considered digitally porous with regards to communication sharing. Its physicality is projected through mobile devices around the globe and can influence a broader customer community. For example, users are bombarded with digital images of new design ideas on social platforms such as Hypebeast. Designers are barraged by images of new retail design and are therefore challenged to create unique differentiating retail environments.

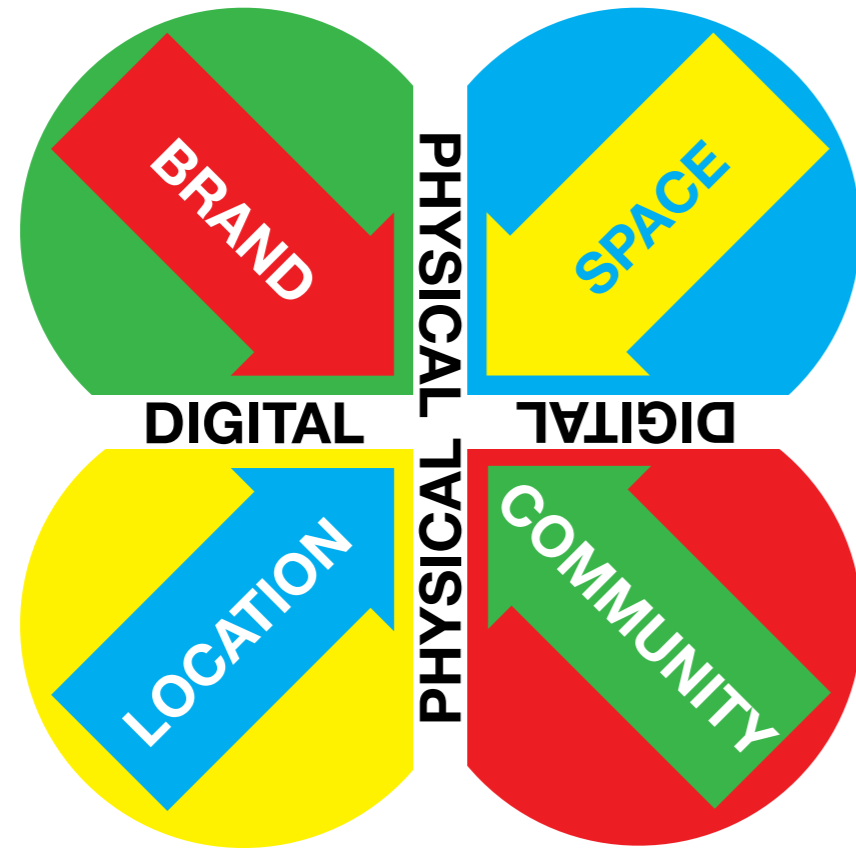
The mutability of built environment is observed by Fred Scott (2008), *On Altering Architecture*:

"A building is usually altered because of a change of use, which may be slight or radical; it is in either case a change in style of occupation. It often accompanies other related changes in the surrounding urban context. Such a brood of changes is in the manifestation of socio-economic changes in the wider society... In this as in other ways, the alteration of buildings has affinities with the alteration of the city. There is an affinity between urban design and interventional design" (Scott 2008: 96-97).

The reference to the interventional design is an accurate description of the nature of spaces being created. As a result of digital platforms the spaces, for the most part, are interventions within a historic building, the change in customer behaviour and brands delivering multipurpose places. These spaces are being treated as ever more adaptable and movable installations within the retail shell, providing dynamically scaled outcomes. Following a store launch and opening, the ability to alter the functions of the retail environments that fuse retail, hospitality, event and brand/product education, is the reason I have named this Activation Retail Environment.

The Activation Retail Environment is supported in the foundation and formulation of my Model for Integration, which is identified by the four sectors: brand, customer community, retail space and its location. This Model of Integration is an approach that fuses customer community and brands together to produce an integrated retail outcome. These environments are branded spaces integrated with the local sociological cultures in which they land, meaning no retail spaces are the same. Each is, if executed correctly, a sensitive, localised, authentic expression of that brand. ■

DESIGN MODEL  
OF INTEGRATION



## A NEW DESIGN MODEL OF INTEGRATION THAT CHALLENGES CONVENTIONAL RETAIL ROLL OUT METHODS.

Three examples of brands using conventional global rollout methods are Gap, Zara and Gucci. All stores follow a generic modular approach. They are globally consistent, offering no additional integrated services such as hospitality. One of the key factors in conventional global rollout strategies is to employ an external design company to create a generic new design concept that is accompanied by a global rollout manual. These manuals have one generic modular design concept that is demonstrated through three scales. In tandem, they have three decreasing levels of expenditure – flagship, main store and outlet. The rollout manual covers universal layout principles as well as typical storefront elevations. Also included are density of product levels and standard furniture schedules. These manuals are protected by non-disclosure agreements and the copyright is held with the retail brand. Brinkworth has been asked to produce such manuals in the past, examples of these being the Nike Running and the Warehouse global concepts. These manuals are then used by in-house design teams to roll out identical stores and used for up to 10 years.

The conventional rollout method offers an economy of scale and time, as it is cost-efficient to manufacture in batch production. It can also be delivered utilising reduced human resource, as there is a much narrower

range of tasks required from the personnel. However, the conventional modular rollout method is less effective at utilising a donor building and is ultimately inadequate at fulfilling the needs of its customer. It is ineffective at scaling into a range of building types, for example, historic and mall, and lacks the versatility to adapt to different layouts over multiple floors. The modular generic design manual fails to maximise the spatial product density and is unlikely to convey a dynamic brand identity. Customers are less likely to want to visit a store that has the same service and product offer across multiple geographical locations. This can also be applied to the homogenous and fixed-product offer that deters customers from visiting regularly. Conventional rollout store concepts often integrate a seasonal changing window display. I believe this is ineffective from a customer's perspective, much like changing the crust of a pie without altering the ingredients of the filling. A seasonal window display is a superficial mask to drive a customer through the doors. However, it is often a disappointing shopping experience to find near-identical product offer inside. In successful store design, the windows and the internal core are in sync and evolve in tandem to genuinely enrich the customer experience through its product offer. In summary, this generic method underperforms when compared with our integration design strategy. A brand's

customer community that integrates retail, hospitality and a physical and digital experience leads to customer participation, longer dwell times and subsequent loyalty. As a successful example, an average customer now spends approximately 50 minutes in a Rapha store, which results in greater sales in-store and online. In contrast, according to unpublished data from Karen Millen (which only offers a retail sales area), their average customer spends approximately seventeen minutes in-store.

We have found that the most successful retail design concepts come from an ongoing relationship between a brand and its retail design company. The creative outcome of this relationship is a global 'toolkit' that is constantly adapting and reacting to the brand and customer culture as these evolve together. We use the word toolkit rather than manual as it defines the inherent ability to proportionally revise the types and quantities of components and materials that can be utilised in any specific location. Brands such as Rapha, Aesop and Arc'teryx adapt their store design concepts to the local customer and the city culture they inhabit. The customer benefits from an immersive experience of the brand as it offers more than pure sales. These brands provide hospitality and brand/product education within their physical retail spaces, all tailored to the local customers'

needs. Being locally appropriate enables the brands to adapt to the changing social shopping behaviour. This bilateral progression involves more internal time and investment but produces the most commercially successful outcome.

Having demonstrated the advantages and disadvantages of conventional rollout methods brings me back to my main research question, how have online and social media platforms affected the interior designer's role in delivering the apparel retail environments. My contextual research has demonstrated that digital platforms have facilitated social change in customer behavioural patterns, as evidenced by Sherry Turkle's and Scott Galloway's research findings. These technological changes have altered how a brand communicates with its customers on a social-commercial level. From my understanding as a practitioner and evidenced in the previous chapter, this transactional journey from the online to the physical store is circular and perpetual. As a consequence of this, customers are engaging as participants rather than as an audience. As well as participating in mutually beneficial activities (as demonstrated in my Converse case study), the role of the customer can be viewed as one of 'brand custodian'.

An interior designer's role has adapted to challenge what is possible in a spatial environment and also of value to a brand in developing a customer community in these physical stores, while integrating appropriate

digital technology. When considering these challenges, it has become necessary to create the dynamic design Model of Integration. When utilised effectively, my model delivers stores for brands, which appropriately project themselves. These spaces then contribute to building customer loyalty and, through reputation, this leads to trust.

My Model of Integration is a concept that I have created myself resulting from my reflexive research methodology, studying creative activities and the work produced by my office Brinkworth Design Ltd. The major research question that forms my PhD thesis is: How has the emergence of digital platforms and social media affected the role of an interior designer for apparel retail environments?

Social change due to the nature of customer behavioural retail patterns has given rise to a particular spatial interior response. My Integration Model is utilised to produce effective environments that cater for the emergence of a new behavioural relationship between a brand and its customer community. I am calling this new type of retail environment delivered using my Integration Model, Activation Retail Environments. I have selected the word 'activation' because it describes the ongoing, changeable nature of the spaces. These retail environments benefit from the ability to be able to morph and develop through activation. In so doing, these environments function as a social platform aimed at a brand's targeted customer community.

How have my Integration Model and the outcomes of Activation Retail Environments affected Brinkworth Design Ltd. as a practice? Brinkworth has adopted my Integration Model as an external and internal facing concept used to create contemporary global retail design, and in the last six months has incorporated the terminology Activation Retail Environments into its interior design practice.

Additionally, my research has identified the need for a six-stage process named Activation Design which is currently being added to my practice's project delivery strategy. The sixth stage of the project design process has given rise to a planned and ongoing design relationship with our clients and the retail environments created that extends beyond the opening date.

Whilst formulating my Model of Integration, I have referred to two notable design models. Firstly, Richard Blythe and Leon van Schaik (2013) present a model for academic research. They observe: "There are four forms of scholarship - one of discovery, one of integration, one of application and one of dissemination - everybody in the community of learning is engaged at different times in different ways" (Blythe and van Schaik, 2013: 60). Whilst this model is suggestive of a sequential process, my Model of Integration is a dynamic method of query with non-sequential entry points. The second model, in juxtaposition to Blythe and van Schaik (2013), is a practitioner's architectural model by Peter Zumthor



(2010), who describes his design process in terms of four domains: synthesis, landscape, practices, scale and proportion. These domains are more suggestive of practical design considerations when compared to my Model of Integration which aims to embed and balance brand values and customer community interests in appropriate measure alongside the necessary considerations of space and location.

My Model of Integration also has four components and, as this is a dynamic model, these four components can be addressed in any order. These four key pillars are fundamental to forming the basis of enquiry and stimulate a series of relevant questions intended to interrogate the client's needs. Firstly, when exploring Brand, and the brand's personality and product offer, the questioning: who, what, how many, how much, and also understanding their USP can then be translated into a 3D brand representation. The next component, which sits directly opposite Brand, is Community. This represents customer community and can be understood by again posing leading questions, including what is the customer community demography, their key interests, and gender mix. The third component, Location, identifies the geographic placement of the retail space. It is vital to understand a city's cultural characteristics. Key questions develop an understanding of the city population: what is the mix between the local customer and tourist trade, what other external complementary activities take place within that immediate neighbourhood where this

building is located. The fourth and final component, Space, questions the physical nature of the host building: what type of building is being accommodated, what is its scale, age and materiality. Early identification of planning and building regulations are essential and significant when the spaces created have mixed use. Once these principal questions have been challenged and answered, they are then integrated and inform the design process, in order to create locally relevant spatial environments that resonate with the customer community.

My Model of Integration demonstrates the importance for a brand to think globally and also to create retail environments that resonate and complement the relationship between the brand and its customer community on a local city-by-city basis. Deyan Sudjic (2017) debates the ethnological study of cities in *The Language of Cities*, presenting a broad analytical study of what constitutes a city's identity, from its buildings to its population. This understanding of the city and the customer community is imperative in delivering effective Activation Retail Environments:

"To make sense of a city, you need to know something about the people who live in it, and the people who built it. You need to ask how they did it and why...we are attracted to cities in part because they offer us the chance to find people and things that we do not know existed, and what we did not know that we wanted to find out before we went there. A city offers chance social encounters, the places

in which new ideas are being shaped" (Sudjic, 2017:32).

The development of social media and digital platforms has facilitated more social connection and access to what the city has to offer. Brands utilise data collection to target their particular customer audience. This digital activity is altering the navigation of services within a city. The interconnectivity between a brand and its customer community has facilitated a behavioural change in the way they engage with one another online and within the physical retail environments. The language of the retail environment, as well as the appropriate brand communication, both need to adapt to become decipherable to the local customer community. This importance is factored into my Model of Integration in the customer community and location sections. Sudjic observes that public space:

"... encompasses the free public library with unlimited information that is Wikipedia. Twitter is the twenty-first-century equivalent of the lavatory wall... The digital world impacts on cities at every level: from street navigation to social geography, from an app to Airbnb, which can transform a residential street into a hotel district, and turn a home into a revenue-generating asset shared by strangers" (Sudjic, 2017:85).

Contemporary brand marketing strategists use the term 'customer community' to describe customer-based brand activity, and the term 'brand tribe' to emphasise the



relationships in the customer community (Vivid Brand, 2018). By extension, brand tribe can also be defined as the members of that customer community who engage with brand-based social activity.

The concept of ‘Neo-tribalism’ was created by Michel Maffesoli (1996) in his book titled *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. He examines the construct of identity as a behavioural return to tribal societies in the wake of the disintegration of mass culture, defining tribes that are based on shared values, lifestyles and interest. This concept of tribe is further expanded by Morag McKerron, who states in her paper *Neo-tribes and traditional tribes*: ‘The basis for election [to a tribe] is emotional and empathetic, the identification with like minded others. It is an intentional community’ (McKerron, 2003:1).

In 1987 the US-based clothing company Stüssy created their own brand identity and by calling it the ‘International Stüssy Tribe’, they positioned the brand in a particular activity-based customer community. They were the originators of a street-fashion lifestyle brand creating a global community, and organised brand social activities that were broader than opening retail stores: hosting their own branded club nights in different venues across the world.

Building on Maffesoli’s neo-tribalism, it is apparent that due to the creation of digital social media platforms, brands such as the Rapha cycle brand and Deus, the

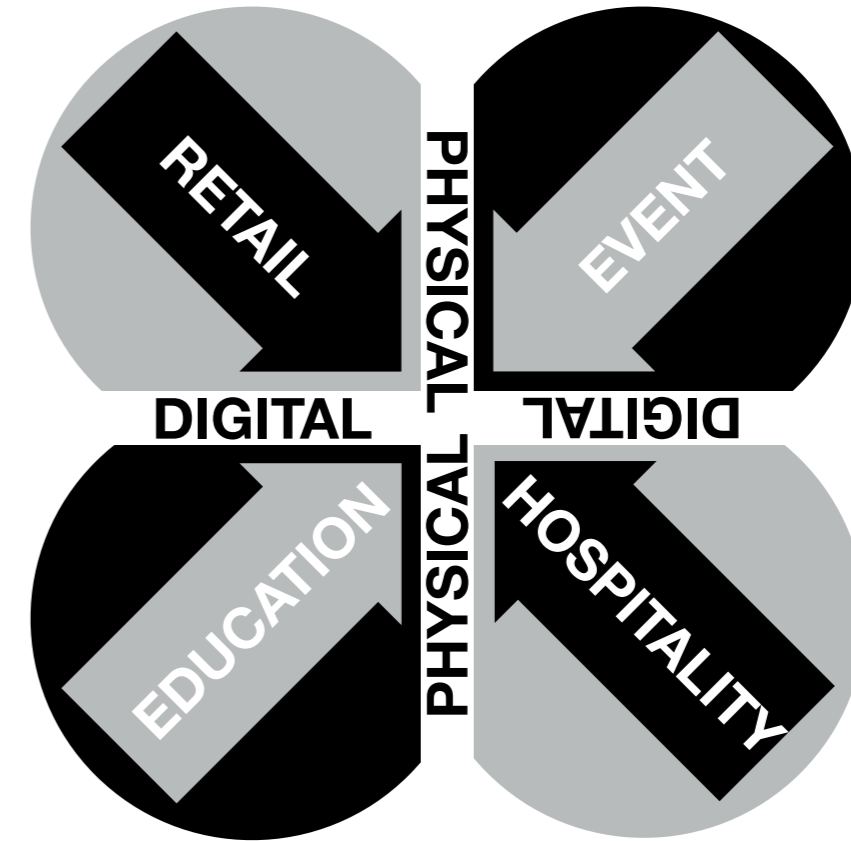
surfing and motorbike apparel brand, are creating local neo-brand tribes. As a result of brand connection with its customer community coupled with the affordability of global travel, local brand tribes are part of a larger global tribalism. These local tribes are like planets within a global brand solar system.

The Activation Retail Environments that Brinkworth create are designed to facilitate and host the physical connection of these local customer community tribes. My Model of Integration facilitates the customer community activity. For example, Rapha’s CEO Simon Mottringham has a weekly cycle club meeting and ride-out with the customer community. Similarly, Deus’ head of marketing, Julian Heppekausen, creates branded activities for Deus’ customer community where he and other brand employees participate in these events. As observed by Kurt Komaromi in his paper *Building Brand Communities*: “We can see a direct link to the concept of brand community in which members get meaning, interact with one another, and build a portion of their identities with other members around the common themes afforded by brand experiences” (Komaromi, 2003:7). The outcome is an integrated community that is constructed of both brand representatives and its customer community.

During this process of PhD research, and testing and prototyping concepts in practice, I have discovered that the interior design solutions have a particular outcome. This includes four areas: Retail, Hospitality, Event and Brand/Product Education. The term Events refers to

complementary activities that promote and encourage customer community. Brand/Product Education, in this instance, refers to product as well as relevant brand and associated interest. For example, the Rapha store may hold a talk from a specialist bicycle component manufacturer. I have chosen to name the delivered retail environments created as a result of using my Integration Model as the Activation Retail Environments. The nature of the mixed-use spaces and the activities hosted necessitate adaptation and change over time; this is my reason for calling it Activation Retail.

Is this a new approach? It is not new to create multi-functional retail spaces. In fact it was Gordon Selfridge who, in his American styled department store in London, provided customers with differentiated retail floors offering both leisure and hospitality areas, and “a blend of elite and mass culture, mirroring the world of Ascot and the amusement park” (Rappaport 2000:160). These new retail department stores competed for customer attention. Selfridge sought to add complementary activities and leisure facilities to his department store, from gardens to restaurants. The early days of the department store relate to the way in which my Integration Model incorporates leisure activities. However, the key difference when considering the Activation Retail Environment is that these activities are undertaken in one space and not across many floors as in the traditional department store and that these spaces, due to the changing use throughout the day, alter in their scale of activity. ■



ACTIVATION  
RETAIL ENVIRONMENT



# SPECIFICS OF APPAREL RETAIL DESIGN PROCESS

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My Model of Integration, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is an essential foundation to theorise the correct questions and challenges that need answering and articulating in the following singular specific retail spaces being designed. This informs a journey which is guided by the following specific retail space delivery process.

The following section aims to respond to the absence of published material on an interior design strategy specifically for the retail design sector. I have been working on and refining a design process within my company through the experience gained in our public works. This analytical, reflexive process has also been challenged throughout the writing of my thesis. For example, Brinkworth's key six-stage delivery process has been refined during this time. The aim is to help us while benefiting our clients' delivery strategy, and I would argue that it in no way decreases fresh creative thinking. It is my belief that it is crucial to stay on track and ensure that the process is, if well managed, a skeleton of good working practice that can assist in forming a positive working relationship between the interior design practice and its clients.

With experience, I have found that road mapping this process and clearly explaining it to clients is crucial. My Model of Integration is presented and discussed with the client at the outset, and the discussed outcomes are the foundation of the design process. The process document charts the development of creative thought and rational delivery for the client. It needs customising and adapting to suit a particular client's needs. It charts stages, roles and responsibilities in terms of action and decisions that aid the working relationship and clearly spells out roles and deliverable outcomes. I have noticed that numerous problems occur if a stage is started before the previous one has met a clear and agreed solution. It is also imperative that the stages are closely addressed to ensure a mutually efficient journey.

I am a fan of clear, frank conversations from the beginning, setting out definitive expectations, with an honest and open approach at the outset, which ask the core questions – 'what', 'where', 'scale' and 'budget'. These are imperative questions that need to be answered in the primary 'define and discover' stage.

The first person I ever employed was a carpenter, and the second a designer. A saying the carpenter used frequently is still relevant today - "perfect planning prevents piss-poor performance". Within the parameters of this thesis I demonstrate our process as a custom-designed project timeline that charts all sign-off stages and the related timeline. The five main pillars/landmark sections are as follows:

1. *Discover and Define*
2. *Design concept*
3. *Develop scheme*
4. *Design detail*
5. *Deliver*
6. *Activation Design*

Although this is the set process for undertaking all projects, the outcomes for the individual stages are different for each client, something that I will explain and elaborate on in my thesis. It is also worth pointing out at this stage that we as a design company prefer to complete a full journey with the involvement of our clients at each stage. We find it fulfilling to deliver a



project from start to finish and then work on a long-term relationship with our client where we continue to question, encourage and challenge new ways of creatively energising their brand. We also feel that when there is a good synergy within our working relationships the brand keeps moving, innovating and staying relevant. This is especially applicable as much of our work is apparel-based, and part of the rapidly changing fashion sector. Having studied the business models of other design companies of a similar size to Brinkworth, I believe that it is often the case that most only get involved from concept to scheme stages. I personally have two clear priorities – first, that the original idea concept is strong, relevant and imaginative, and second – that there is no escaping the truth in three dimensions as a finalised project, and it is difficult to disguise the flaws that may have been missed at the design stage. It is the most important synergy to question the effectiveness of the idea, closely scrutinising and accessing it. Many things can then come to light and be evaluated so as to constantly improve and develop the interior design solutions for the forthcoming project.<sup>7</sup>

## *Discover and Define*

We call the first stage of the design journey Discover and Define. This is constantly being revised and adapted as we evolve as a company. To put it simply, this is our way of working in conjunction with a client, be it new or existing, to formulate a clear brief with goals set out for deliverables. We ask fundamental questions at this stage, such as "who are you and what do you produce?", and "who is your core customer?". We ask carefully prepared questions to discover what is unique about the brand and its product. Our job is to tease out this character and help find appropriate and clear ways of communicating this in three-dimensional spaces.

Another question we ask is "where are you and where would you like to be, in the short and the long term?". Establishing which is the right tone of voice for a brand and also ensuring continuity across all communication platforms is absolutely imperative. With well organized companies we find that this information is well documented by key stakeholders. However, even if we

do receive all this information, it is important to get under the skin of the brand to understand its ethos, because much of the data and information that we receive from each company is generic. By delving deep into a company's method of operation and how it wishes to be perceived we are able, with the participation of our clients, to create a distinguishable design concept that is clearly owned by them.

Establishing expansion locations and the time-versus-cost is important in the preliminary stage. This way we can sense-check the client's aspirations for budget and then successfully deliver a project that is realistic, well-designed and commercially viable. We discuss the ranges of spend and give some experienced insight by showing other projects and what has been achieved within certain cost parameters. At this stage there are no exact prices, as generally sites have not been secured and the design process has not been completed. However, it is crucial that we have a budget and we design to this scale. It is also imperative to study the brand's competition, both domestic and international. Being aware of competitors and their way of communicating to their audience





enables us to establish a place for our client within this market. We also look at what the competition are offering so as to attempt to improve our client's position. We are then able to ensure that the brand we work with is differentiating, thus improving experience for their loyal and new customer base.

We discuss the value and commercial outcome of expressing the brand spatially as well as the subsequent financial implications and gains. Once we have analysed their offer we can discuss suitable scales for all chosen retail types, their formats and their countries of destination. The sharing of client and design company structure along with client responsibilities is also important in order to successfully communicate and navigate the design process. We study how a retailer operates and how it plans to expand its business. Most global retailers have a balance of self-owned and franchise business partners. We have formed a strategy to ensure that a consistent offer is achieved so that our role as brand custodian and provider of an effective global solution is successful. At this early stage, it is important to research the appropriate digital technologies to be integrated into the spatial design solution.

So, having now resolved our Define and Discover

stage, we formulate a brief and relay it back to our client to ensure clarity and agreement between the two parties. We then compile a brief and schedule document that includes an agreed fee, budget and a clear outlined timeline of works. This ensures that the client is aware of exactly what they are getting and when.

## 2. *Design Concept*

Our concept stage is a creative response to the briefing document. This creative stage can and I feel, should be, and approached from many different angles. We endeavour to deliver a clear, memorable, unique global message that resonates in every locality. I find that if a concept at this stage is based on a specific site with its particular specifications; the interior designer may fall into the trap of creating a retail global concept that is unable to flex and scale.

In this concept stage we work out the layering and location of products and their complimentary services. We show how the product will be grouped and displayed, suggesting which product lines to prioritize and emphasise. We chart a customer's journey from start to finish and demonstrate this with mood boards and appropriate materials and samples. As a company we

have to investigate and discover what materials are in this edited palette at concept stage. We concentrate on how they can be edited, customized or adapted individually to our clients. The approach to a concept is initially to always discover a differentiating set of materials for every brand. Materiality is important especially, I believe, in this evolving digital age. The material must fit to the client's budget and contribute to the aesthetic of the developing three-dimensional retail solution. The questions of balance and tone, light, weight, textures, feel and mood are all addressed. The result is a concept of ingredients that can then be assembled in different percentages to have global continuity as well as the required balance to enable good schemes that would resonate in future locations. The concept idea will need to be scaled for all forms of retail space to perform, resolve and invigorate a client's expansion plan. They must also be applied appropriately and sensitively to the specific locations with the duality of still being ownable by our client's brand. For example if we are designing a premium store in certain countries, wood would not be chosen as the flooring because of its un-aspirational, low cost and 'rustic' association there. Therefore, the resulting creative conceptual ideas must be broad enough and fit for purpose within multiple cultural and architectural parameters.



## 3. *Design Scheme*

Having successfully signed off the concept stage with our clients we are ready to progress on to the scheme stage. This is where we take all the concept ideas and functions needed and insert them into layouts that perform. For example, we will take different sizes of stores and sense-check by creating store plan layouts, checking that the product sections get allocated to correct areas in the store. We work on the customer journey and their activity in the store to encourage optimum use of the space. Some aspects to consider are entrance points and destination areas in the store-designed scheme. All this needs to be incorporated into the layout. Encouraging a customer to take a full journey through the space to discover the entirety of the brand's product offer is commercially essential.

There are other functional areas in stores that customers are drawn to aside from the product display areas. It is therefore essential to develop these elements and treat them with equal importance. Some of the generic key areas within the apparel stores are the entrance, fitting rooms and transactional areas. They are key drivers around the space. The correct location with enough space planned when the store is at full capacity is crucial. The

quantities of tills, mobile transactional devices and fitting rooms are vital to making the space perform. We have found, for example, that an average of three to four fitting rooms per 100 square meters is effective for womenswear but two to three is sufficient for men. Of course, this varies depending on positioning within the market, the number of customers and their average transaction figures. Even within the same brand store customers and quantities of purchases vary in numbers; therefore the balance of these functional areas has to be calculated appropriately. Well-resolved scheme layouts are a huge stepping-stone in ensuring a world-class creative design solution. A scheme design stage shows how the design concept ideas fit into a number of locations and demonstrate the effectiveness of these given spaces, from a-grade stores to shop-in-shops.

## 4. *Design Detail*

The fourth stage of the design process is developing the detail. It is crucial that a client signs off the scheme stage before embarking on the design detailing. We have found with great discomfort that if a client has not signed off concept and scheme, one is in danger of wasting time detailing it. In my opinion, this section of the design process is often undervalued by clients and is

also the one many design companies choose not to offer. However, it is the dedication and discipline at this stage that will conclude in the conceptual idea coming to life in a well-crafted manner. I feel that the care taken at this stage means that the end result is good from a distance and wonderful when one's nose is pressed up against it. The completion of this stage results in a construction pack that enables a contractor to build a space accurately. It is also the document that is used to police the construction and make sure our and the client's quality standards are upheld.

It is essential to allow sufficient time at the prototyping stage. This gives the designer and the client the opportunity to check all details and one-to-one versions of all the important components within the store design, such as furniture and fittings. These test for suitability of product, as all dimensions and parameters can be checked to ensure that it is fit for purpose. We have found that all clients have different opinions on exact heights and widths of product displays. Testing for durability and physical feel are key as it is crucial that the materials chosen are durable enough to last the correct period of time set out in the briefing document. This prototype stage is quite often initially overlooked and undervalued by our clients. Given the nature of our work, which is to



come up with bespoke design solutions, what we create for our clients is essentially unique and being done for the first time. It is therefore paramount, at this stage, to sense-check the physical reality of these designs with our clients. Failing to complete the development of the detail can result in a public brand-damaging experience. Also key at this stage are lighting design and specification, both elements of the project that a client often scrimps on. However, the right form and quality of light is key in optimizing all product colour renditions.

The detail stage incorporates material specifications and gives illuminating information on maintaining them. This is of great value to a client in that it ensures that the store keeps looking good in the long term. Detail design and construction packs give exact costing and are then honed to check that all creative solutions are equal to the correct spend. A balance of specification and spend ensures that the client can expand effectively. It is the company ethos that a creative design solution must be grounded in good common sense. Once the prototype testing and detailed design pack are completed we are set for the final stage, which is to deliver the physical store.

### 5. *Deliver*

Like-minded, competent, trustworthy and appropriately scaled partners, as well as an interior designer's interaction with them, are all key to the successful delivery of a project. Our detail pack is signed off by the client and goes out to contractors for a tender process where we help the client choose the correct partners. Our company controls this tender package, time and set-up so we can compare costs. At this stage we quality-control the craft and quality of the specified materials being costed. We encourage that all materials for global expansion are sourced locally. This reduces the impact on the environment and additionally ensures that in the case of any problems or changes the material can be supplied quickly and efficiently. An intelligent selection of this tender process is judged not only by price but also takes into consideration time and quality. It is my belief that good partnerships are founded in good teamwork between the designers and contractors. It is also a voyage of discovery, especially when embarking on new sites. This is because it is usually impossible to survey and uncover all aspects of the shell prior to demolition stage. At demolition stage, unforeseen design and

construction issues arise and it is the positive relationship between designer and contractor that allows for effective problem-solving.

Efficient communication and decision-making are crucial in working towards deadlines. To demonstrate the importance of this: a week in delay of opening is often equivalent to 20% of the build budget. For example, an average womenswear store's weekly taking for 200 square meters is £70,000 and the equivalent budget for the build-out is £350,000. An early priority is to supply physical controlled samples and specifications to enable partners and franchisees to source local alternatives while we manage this quality-controlled process. The more a brand custodian or interior designer lets go of the correct controls at the fundamental agreed strategy, the weaker the solution. Clear contractual agreements, especially when dealing with franchisee partners, must have defined roles and responsibilities. The correct lines of communication and the appropriate number of site visits are necessary to produce a well-executed project. It is also imperative to listen to franchise partners and to take into consideration the wisdom of the local market and absorb customer shopping behaviour and habits.



At the end of a store delivery it is important to post-analyse what works well and what needs improving. This constructive analysis can help to inform the process and the design solutions moving forward. I have found that at this present time even with the benefits of email and video-conferencing tools, a face-to-face relationship with all partners aids a healthier design and resulting outcome. A good, open, clear relationship means more understanding and is an imperative part of bringing all parties together towards a common goal to create the best version of the brand expression in any given situation and any location around the world. I believe it is good to structure timely analysis to keep a store relevant and the design and client relationship forward-looking.

### 6. *Activation Design*

This developmental stage evolved through working practice and this academic research, and also in response to challenging conventional retail roll-out methods. It became apparent that this stage of delivery was absent from our practice process. A decisive question asked when a store is delivered is: is the design journey completed? At this stage, it is important to evaluate and

disseminate the effectiveness of the design and what could be improved on and developed for the particular store as well as subsequent new stores. The spaces created by our office benefit from this process. However, as customer behaviour and expectations change alongside the impact of technology and competition the question becomes: should a store remain the same and for how long? I have come to realise through experience that a store is an 'activation space for retail'. It is apparent that a space created needs room to grow and breathe with its evolving function.

I discuss the merits of an ongoing relationship with the client as the end-user's relationship with both the brand and the space give rise to the evolving need. At this point, I would ask the following questions: how might a product as well as the customer community and technology develop in the future, and how can the retail environment host these activities? It is because of these questions that it is crucial to incorporate some 'flex' within the design of the physical space. Staying ahead of the competition and anticipating future change is key to engaging customers online and in the physical space. As a result of these findings, we will be offering

our clients a proactive service of minor and major design development meetings scheduled at three-month to six-month intervals dependent on the scale of the brand. This new schedule of service will improve the performance of the spaces. It will engage with and create change in response to consumer behaviour and desire and also encourage a two-way creative communication process between the brand and us as designers.

Our approach to this process, with my Model of Integration, marks a new contribution to the academic field as well as to the professional practice. It differs to the usual process in retail design in that we do not use a single global manual that is then dogmatically rolled out with the same specifications across the globe. This may indeed be the cheapest way, but through experience, I have learned that our own custom-built approach to design and implementation is fundamentally a more effective solution. This is because the stores are designed sensitively to the local market. In the long term, they are vastly improved branded design statements that increase commercial productivity in the commercial environment and function to increase online sales. ■

# OUR APPROACH OVERVIEW

We utilise an industry-specific project framework to shape our design practices and to ensure that our projects are professionally and effectively delivered.

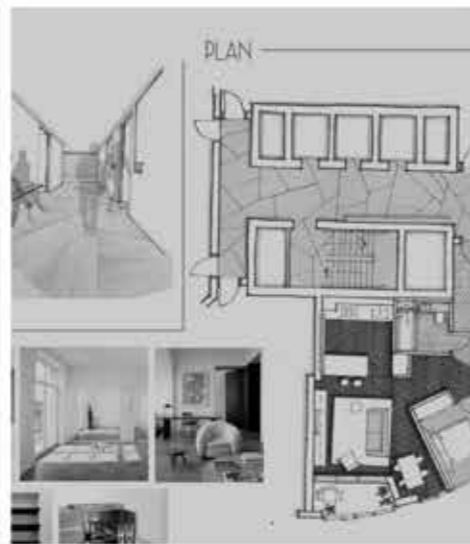




## 2. DESIGN CONCEPT PHASE

### CONCEPT VISION, LOOK & FEEL

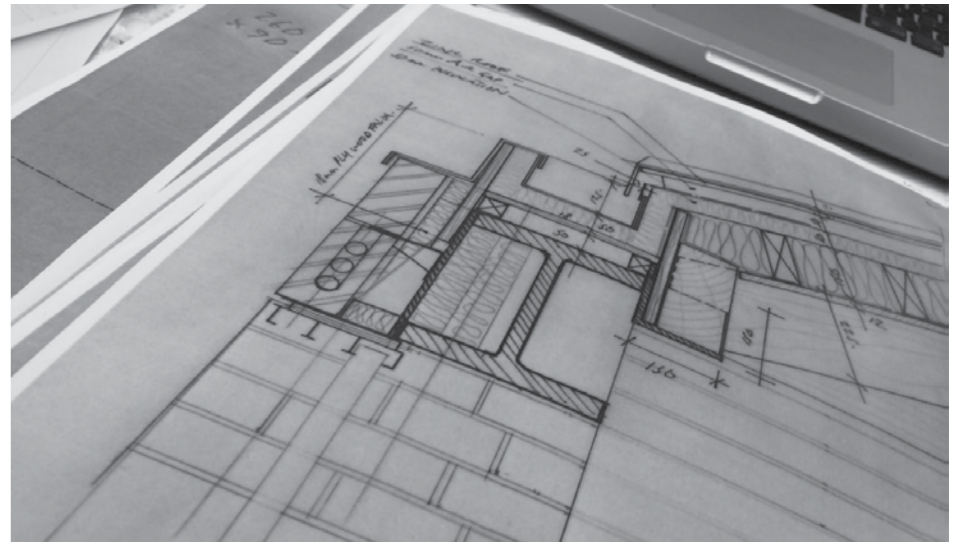
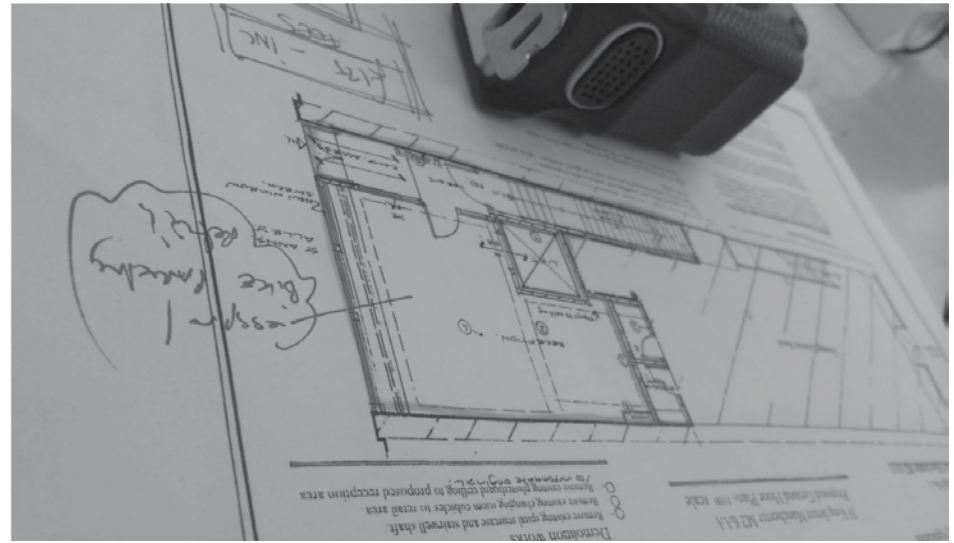
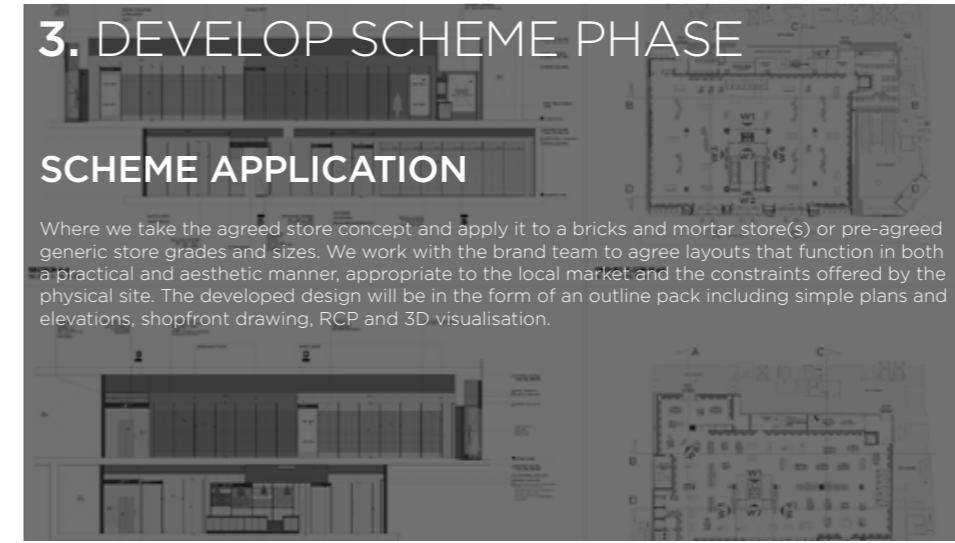
The beginning of the design process, where we explore the brand and create a concept for it, in collaboration with the brand's key stakeholders. Where we will look to create a concept that is unique to the brand, which includes the strategy direction, aesthetic language and initial planning. The method of communication will be appropriate to the brand and stage of work and may include mood imagery, 2D plans, hand sketches, 3D renders, model making, material samples, small scale prototyping of details and junctions, and presentation pack.



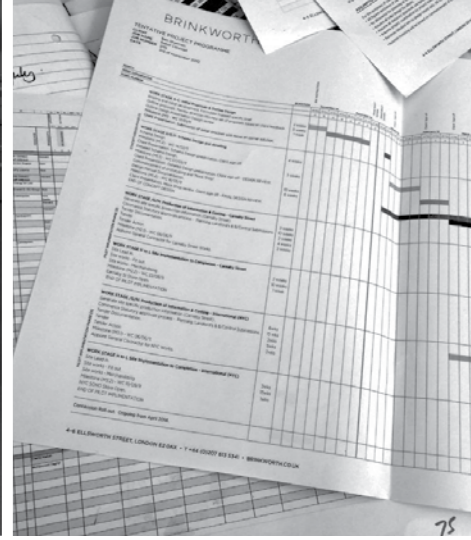
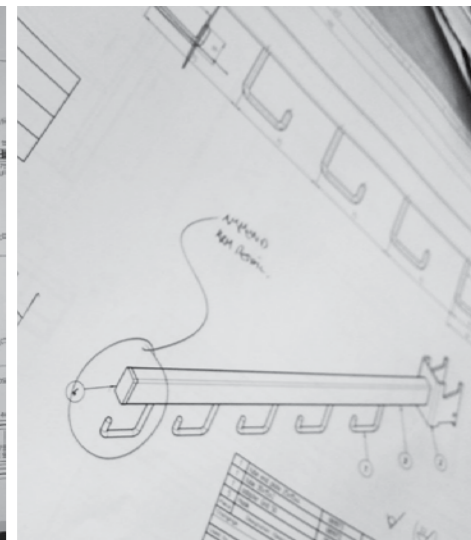
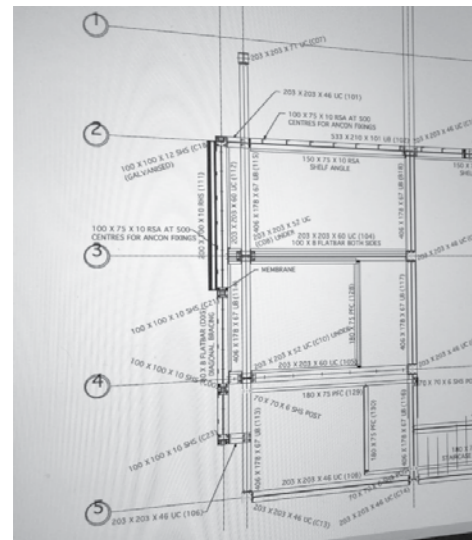
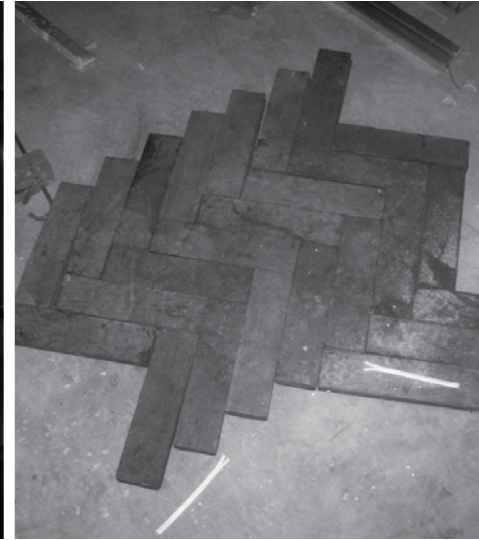
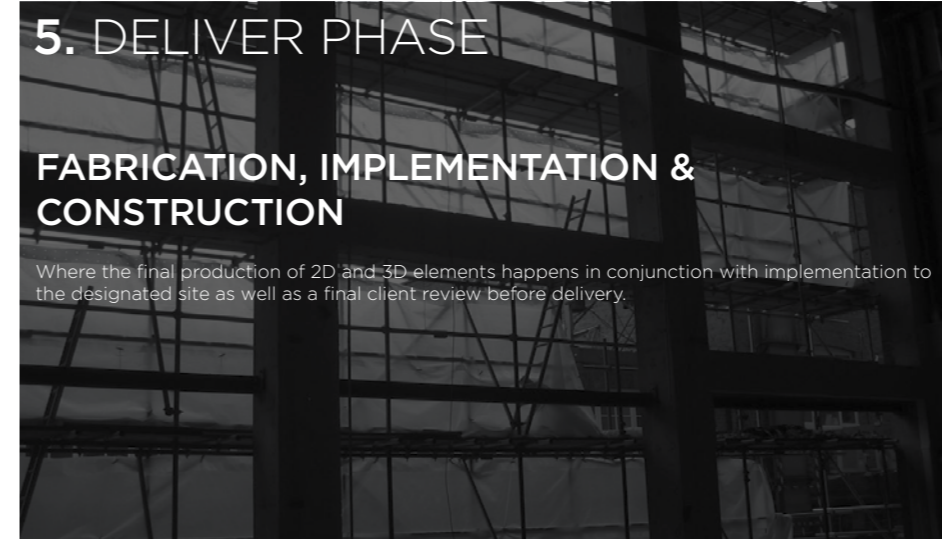
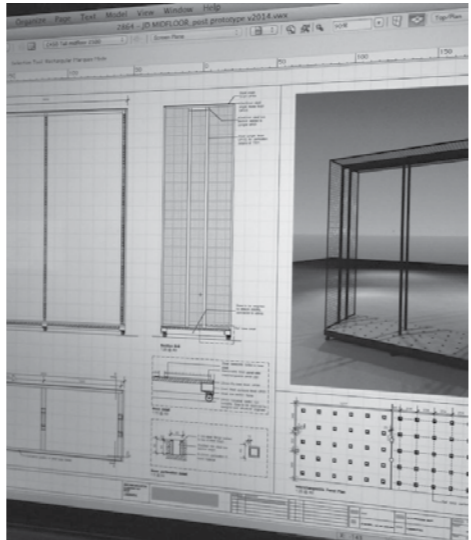
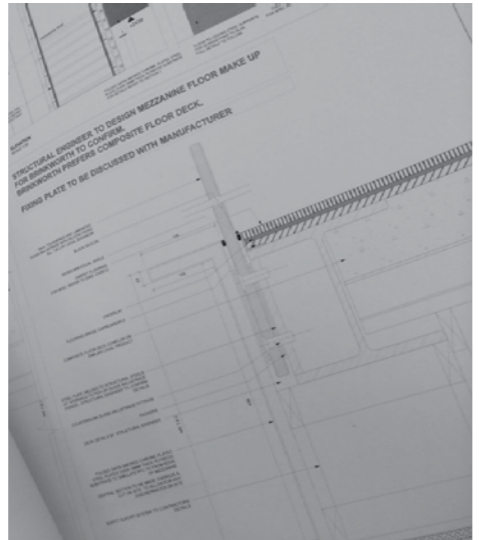
## 3. DEVELOP SCHEME PHASE

### SCHEME APPLICATION

Where we take the agreed store concept and apply it to a bricks and mortar store(s) or pre-agreed generic store grades and sizes. We work with the brand team to agree layouts that function in both a practical and aesthetic manner, appropriate to the local market and the constraints offered by the physical site. The developed design will be in the form of an outline pack including simple plans and elevations, shopfront drawing, RCP and 3D visualisation.











OUR APPROACH ACTIVATION PHASE



# TYOLOGIES AND STRATEGIES

## Flagship Store

Although the term ‘flagship’ originally acted as a term for the ship that carried the commander of the fleet, it can now be applied to the most important product or idea for a brand. In the case of retail, it means the store that acts as the embodiment of a brand’s identity within a single site.

My personal opinion is that flagship stores have been viewed with greater importance in the last 10 years as they are supported by digital sales, marketing events and a full product range. The journalist John Ryan states that “a flagship should be a range of experiences that make a store a destination” (*Barber Design*, 2015, Online). A contemporary, large flagship store must be flexible to stay relevant and be able to flex with activities such as hospitality, sales and education. It must also flex in terms of product areas because these are likely to change seasonally. It must be designed with the brand message at its core and the product must look its very best. To rewind, a flagship store must be appropriate in terms of architecture, scale and location. A good and successful

retail design concept must be able to adapt and project a clear brand statement that encompasses the brand’s essence regardless of the type of building it is in. Retail spaces are constantly evolving and changing the building’s shell to appropriate and populate it with a new purpose. This activity is documented and discussed in Edward Hollis’s *The Secret Lives of Buildings* (2009: pp71-91), particularly in a chapter that charts the evolution of the Ayasofya in Istanbul across 1,400 years. Its purpose changed dramatically, from a Christian church to a mosque to a secular museum. When it comes to adapting an existing building for the purpose of becoming a retail space, particularly flagship and mainstore, the shell is often a landmark, historic building.

The design must have an impressive and impactful solution that uses the challenging restrictive scope in its favour. For example, the façade design will have to radiate the brand’s message from within because an historic flagship store in an historic city will have many restrictions. These may be limited structural, colour, materiality, signage and branding changes as well

as little or no digital displays. As an example, in London’s Regent Street the shop fronts must be in Portland stone with bronze window frames and no illuminated signage.

Communication to customers has to be very clear, and they must be enticed and seduced to shop in a particular store. When designing successful façades and stores it is important to take into consideration local and adjoining properties, because a flagship brand statement must portray the brand’s identity. The façade needs to stand out, be honest and differentiate itself from its neighbours, be this in a subtle or loud way. Customer service and the journey through the brand sale experience must be well staged and executed, especially when designing a flagship store. In my opinion, the staff members must be fans of, and believe in, what they are selling and be great ambassadors for the brand. Sales techniques must be orchestrated impeccably within the space. I cannot stress this human element strongly enough, as it is one of the crucial difference between online and physical sales. Impressive presentation and human relationships can thrive and subsequently



nurture effective long-standing relationships between the customers and staff. The physical space and this customer relationship are harnessed in-store and online as part of the customer’s cyclical retail engagement. Loyalty and trust are key, as most people benefit from receiving great knowledge and advice from approachable members of staff. The well-delivered brand retail design incorporates successful tools and strategies for its staff.

An effective flagship should nurture clear way finding and fluid product areas. In flagship design, as with all scales and types I will write about, layout is crucial when putting functional aspects of retail areas in their correct locations. The design solution for the space must consider clearly what flow and complementary service it is delivering. I often refer to it as a triangle. This is simplistic and not always appropriate, but a careful layout is vital for a store’s commercial success. The triangle in a clothing store consists of the customer being encouraged to take as long a journey as possible through the shop floor in order to be seduced by as many product offers as possible. For example, if they go from the entrance

towards rear right-hand fitting rooms followed by rear left-hand payment areas, a customer is taking a journey from front to back and side to side. It is important to service the needs of a customer and encourage discovery and desire in products. This varies with the complexity of the donor building, such as the number of floors, overall shape or form of the space, as well as the specific product offers and complementary activities. Product placement and arrangement, as well as the landscape of the space, are vital elements of design to consider when ensuring that the product is displayed efficiently. This also establishes a clear viewpoint for the customer, who is able to see across the store and its product range without any obstruction. It is crucial to select appropriate product areas with correct densities.

All brands will have a sweet spot in terms of density. In my experience, it is possible to put too much in - pile it high sell it cheap - and it is also possible to put too few garments in a store. This needs careful strategies that should be included in the first discover and define feasibility stage when choosing an appropriate property. The look, feel

and premium nature of a flagship store should have the best-quality materials that are appropriate to the brand. The flagship store is a brand’s best foot forward and is an exciting design prospect. I believe it is important to have design features that authentically communicate a brand’s DNA and have service and selling offers which are of advantage to the customer. It is easy for designers to slip into the trap of gimmicky and quickly dating solutions that are, in marketing terms, often referred to as “wow” factors. A flagship store enables a brand to communicate physically and digitally in the highest retail terms. Solutions will entice, inform and educate on the brand’s philosophy and what is impressive about its product lines. A successful store design helps to make the customer feel an integral and central part of the brand. It nurtures community and the want to visit regularly.

## Main Stores

Much to most people’s surprise I consider main stores, or b-grade/ grade-2 stores as they are referred to in the



industry, to be the most important and interesting from an interior design perspective. Most designers expect the response to be an a-grade or flagship store. The reason that it is vital to get main stores right is that they form the greatest part of a brand's presence, and on average most stores are of this type. It is also where the design and commerciality are often best balanced. Most design concepts start as an aspiration a-grade and then are de-specified down to scale range, ending in outlet stores. We often find that it is best that a retail design brief starts with the most common type. For example, if one starts with the main store, incorporating a good quality, well-communicated store design, it becomes a platform with the perfect basis for any future transformations. By including additional 'flamboyant' ideas it can transform into an a-grade, whereas carefully paring the main store back would result in a successful c-grade store. This way all three types become appropriate, impressive and effective spatial schemes. If a concept starts with an a-grade, there is often a danger of the main stores and c-grade stores looking bare and lacking substance once

the florid features are removed. This is the mainstay of most physical retail. It needs to be successful in terms of brand statements and a well-crafted selling space. The design toolbox for main stores must work in both historical and mall stores. Mall store design is a key part of global retail for most brands.

There are often extensive guidelines or restrictions to façades, such as signage and construction, or mall finish material limitations, as well as given bulkhead dimensions. The rules and guidelines must be understood for the creative thinking process to deliver successful, bold and surprising solutions to these restrictions. It is also worth pointing out, from a design perspective as well as a brand perspective, that the store will not have to withstand any of the outdoor elements. Hence solutions can utilize non-outdoor materials creatively and can, in some instances, project out. The boundaries can be more vague than what would be possible to achieve on street store sites. Of course, it is still crucial for the design of the store to stand out

against its adjoining properties while remaining within the context of the mall.

One of our clients once set a simple but fulfilling design challenge that required the redesigning of the global retail solution for the façade. They asked us to "design a storefront that people do not walk past". A successful main store design solution must be able to land in any mile site across the world and stand out clearly and appropriately. In my opinion it must be locally appropriate and relevant to a family of stores that, as a group, have an inherent brand DNA. I have also realized that mall architecture often competes with the individual store façades. Features such as escalators, atriums and customer dwell areas are visually noisy, so the store façade's design language must be able to hold its own and have a strong presence that will stand out. The expressive nature of the individual brand store façade will need to be enhanced to effectively compete against its surroundings.



We have a client who understands these challenges and as a result has commissioned his own 'fake' mall where a similar situation of competing design elements is created and the client's seven different brand concepts are prototyped. This was a successful investment; it facilitated rigorous testing of the interior design solutions. It also facilitated staff training and educational programs. Seasonal campaigns and visual merchandising solutions can also be prototyped and tested for effectiveness. It is a great advantage to be able to experiment and make mistakes behind closed doors rather than within the public domain. Mall stores often have additional specification needs in terms of air conditioning, sprinkler layout and fire strategies, all of which need to be taken into account when one is embarking on this creative design process. Also critically important is to take into consideration the nature and context of the existing shell when expanding global retail concepts. An historic building often has more character and personality through its architectural language. Features such as façades, columns and mouldings need to be evaluated

and sensibly incorporated into the scheme. Sometimes restrictions can give rise to great solutions when looked at and addressed in a positive manner. In one's global retail toolbox there will need to be additional tools to cope with the design challenges of a mall as these are typically rectangular spaces: simple boxes with concrete floors, block-work walls and metal ceilings. As these elements are relatively characterless, the concept design solutions for these spaces will often need to work harder to portray the vitality of a brand's communication.

#### *Concession/shop-in-shop*

Concession design, or what we often refer to as shop-in-shop, is a type of retail that forms a very important part of global retail expansion policy. It offers the potential for brands to expand into global markets. It is fundamentally an effective strategy to gain brand presence in a new territory that does not have the same financial outlay. It can be an efficient way of sense-checking a market. It is also an additional sales opportunity within the majority

of markets. Typically, a concession budget is in the region of 25-50% of a freestanding store's build-out cost. It also has the benefit of having the long-term commitment to property or leases. The contract for a concession within a department store is reviewed annually. We have also noticed that a department store customer base often differs from a stand-alone store, so the two do not compete with one another - therefore broadening the total customer base.

However, a successful design solution is not as easy as it may first appear. Many retailers approach concession design by putting their standalone, store-designed furniture and wall finishes into these spaces, resulting in disappointment from lack of brand presence and weak weekly income. This is because they have not understood the restrictions and the challenges of a department store space. Some of the key challenges of concession store design need to be tackled with a broadened global retail box with additional ingredients and tools. These challenges are mainly due to the fact that concession



spaces given to brands vary hugely, ranging from corner sites to island-located retail sites without vertical surfaces. These spaces are full of brands competing for attention in large rooms, meaning that new brands will have to stand out among the main customer flow points. In some instances it's not possible to control your own floor and ceiling finishes. I have learnt that as an interior designer it is crucial to define your space. This can be achieved by a resourceful approach to boundary furniture and display by pushing the local department store guidelines as far as possible. A bold design statement dominates the competitors and creates the feeling of a storefront without restricting access. Product densities are typically higher than those in street stores as the size of the footprint is smaller, and the retail brand's profit margin is smaller due to a percentage of the profit being taken by the landlord. Financial takings of a concession can range wildly and the design solution specification of materials must be sensitively chosen to fit appropriately and therefore deliver a profitable concession store.

Successful department stores such as Selfridges, Barny's

and Galeries Lafayette trade as well as most flagship stores per square meter. But the global commercial average for b- and c-grade concessions is 25-50% of the equivalent standalone store profits. This balances itself out because, as mentioned before, the outlay is less. However, as department stores are constantly evolving in terms of brand offer and retail structure, it is commonplace for concessions to change in size and location depending on trading figures. This leads to interior design solutions that must have inherent design flexibility that permits this spatial and scale adaptation and configuration. Regulations vary from department store to department store globally, but typical central island furniture and fixtures are of a maximum height of between 1350mm to 1550mm and perimeter furniture is restricted to a height of 2000mm. An interior designer's solutions will need to landscape product offers and pay attention to the sight lines across a room and within its own concession formats. Mannequins or taller display features are an effective device for framing a space - key to defining and owning your area. We have noticed that it is advisable to have the interior designer as well as the global retail director

from the brand to both push at the department-approved stage. We have worked extensively for department stores' own brands as well as external brands that are located within. Intelligent department stores push retailers and their interior designers to create the best expressive retail solutions. I have noticed over the last 10 years that department stores are increasingly more likely to accept bold designed solutions and strategies. An example is the installation of large light-bulb installations in All Saints that dominate a concession presence. We have also discovered that it is easier for an interior designer to push the regulations when you are working for one of the department store's own brand. For example, for the Selfridges' denim department we lined the entire ceiling with strips of neon lighting, something that I am certain would not have been permitted for an external brand.

#### *Pop-ups*

With the emergence of digital retail in the last 10 years, retail brands have had to be resourceful and maximize the



value of marketing online and physical retail. Originally called a guerrilla store, the pop-up store has now become commonplace and has taken approximately 15 years to establish itself. It would appear to coincide with the advent of the Internet through improved communication and the ability to generate traction through social media. Generally, a pop-up store describes a temporary store that serves the purpose of offering a capsule collection or particular range of product. It has been successfully designed when the site-specific nature, the relation and the direct link to the retail offer in this space are synchronized. When approached, it is a great transient design opportunity to create a space that functions ephemerally and is a tool to sell as well as market an event. This in turn causes footfall and brand awareness both in this physical space and online. An example will be given in one of the case studies.

The temporary nature and short show aspect of a brief means that the project statement does not necessarily have to be a long-lasting one and also that a much wider range of materials are available, as durability is not a

deciding factor. The pop-up store offers the designer a creative brief that has spaces not usually tackled by the conventional approach. The given locations are intriguingly off the beaten track and in spaces that couldn't be inhabited by permanent retail. Brands now offer synchronized events and retail. An interior designer's task is often to come up with these concepts themselves. This consistently creates ever-evolving creative design opportunities. The bespoke nature of the function gives rise to unique and expressive projects.

#### *Mobile*

Linked to pop-ups is mobile retail. This is a phenomenon that has developed rapidly over the last five years. This is a wonderful complementary activity and can be a great additional tool for a retailer to implement. Generally speaking, mobile retail is based on vehicles. A mobile store is able to travel to its clients and penetrate new markets, involving themselves in and playing a part within events, festivals and the like. A mobile store is a fantastic tool for communication on social media and also a great

opportunity for a brand to demonstrate new products and new retail promotions. I will go into greater depth in my chosen case study to illustrate these points. I have learnt that to guide a client well in terms of strategy and creative solution, a platform or appropriate vehicle must be chosen. It is important for the designer to be aware of what trends are emerging and make sure the solution has not been previously over-used and that logistically the service and related retail is knitted into the concept at the early concept stage. When designing these mobile stores it is important to factor in the weight and journeys to be taken - a vehicle must be fit for purpose. Effective design solutions for mobile retail clients also need to perform within many different events, from beach to cross-country. Retailers are seeing the value of such an endeavour and aligning themselves with other activities such as festivals, thus reaching out to a potential new customer base. ■

## INTEGRATION AND ACTIVATION DESIGN CASE STUDIES

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From our extensive portfolio of public works, the following case studies have been carefully selected as they exemplify each typology within this thesis. These are examples of each type that have a new way of looking at and crafting the activity of retail design, paving the way for a new model that can subsequently influence the industry. My Model of Integration is a dynamic model that is utilised and investigated through these case studies. Examples of Activation Retail Environments are demonstrated in each case study, accompanied by a percentage measure of the utilised space which compares the differing functions. The interplay between the case study works also highlights the fast moving adaptive change, which needs to be challenged and addressed.

# BEN SHERMAN

## *Scaled Retail concept: Flag - Concession*

I have chosen to include Ben Sherman as a case study for multiple reasons. It is an example of the successful integration of a brand's heritage with a contemporary customer base through in-store brand/product education. Its global retail concept utilises my Model of Integration to adapt to the donor building as well as local culture, whilst retaining a strong sense of identity and brand DNA.

Brinkworth designed Ben Sherman's new store concept in 2010. I realise with hindsight that although it follows the new design Model of Integration, Ben Sherman's scaleable roll-out method created by Brinkworth gave the valued outcome of being an effective version of the brand suited to the location and the customer culture. These spaces were created at a time prior to the intervention of social media such as Instagram.

It is critical to a brand's development that the product and the brand's special concept fuse and are on the same page. The CEO wanted to make the brand successful on a global scale, which at this point it was not. The brand's position was also scheduled to move into a more premium bracket at this time. Ben Sherman's brand perception in the UK was at low ebb from

continued cut-price, unimaginative retail behaviour. I think it was perceived more as a historic mod brand as opposed to a contemporary fashion brand. However, Ben Sherman had some brand communication success in its New York store where customers seeing it for the first time had aligned it with premium British labels such as Paul Smith.

The strategy was to rebrand the company, design the clothes to align with a more fashionable and affluent customer but not alienate existing customers, while at the same time staying true to the brand's heritage of a forward thinking, heritage British fashion label. We researched the brand history and interviewed key stakeholders within the company. We visited and interviewed customers and analysed existing stores. Ben Sherman was established in 1963 and became synonymous with the mod movement and then with the skinhead subculture of British '70s youth. In *Fashion Retail*, Eleanor Curtis states: "Store design reflects the style of the clothing" (Curtis, 2004: 6), and I agree with this. However, in Ben Sherman's case we wanted to expand further where the provenance of the product and communicate its inherent character within our conceptual store. From a product point

of view we found it inspiring that all the fabrics for manufacture are designed by Ben Sherman. It is often the case that fashion businesses select from stock designs. However, since their conception Ben Sherman have very carefully chosen their stripes and checks as well as specifying all colours.

Our conceptual approach was a simple one. We decided to look into historic British social spaces. These spaces were iconic British pubs, social clubs, underground stations, snooker halls, fish and chip restaurants and London cafes. Our material palette was drawn from iconic materials such as the brown glazed tiles of pubs to the enamel and crackle-glazed architectural language of tube stations. We felt the 'Brown Betty' teapot was an iconic symbol that Ben Sherman could align with. This also provided a contrast to the introduction of coffee stores popping up in all on-trend clothing stores at the time. The 'Brown Betty' summed up the brand virtues and underlined the DNA in the regeneration of Ben Sherman. As designers, we also believe it is not enough to utilise original heritage materials. It is how one assembles them as a palette and customises them to create a memorable and bespoke design that becomes a clear and recognisable language. In this instance, the



brown glazed tiles were combined with a black and white pinstriped border detail that wrapped around the store façade and travelled into perimeter walls internally. The staggered heritage tile detail was revised so as to be intentionally historically incorrect. Tile as a material and its development was a crucial piece of the brand interior design solution puzzle. It has a hardworking, maintainable finish and can be ordered in batches relating to global expansion. We worked on grades of specification so it could be deliverable at a relevant cost.

Our concept pitch and subsequent work would be to redesign and refurbish the existing store in Carnaby Street, a large store spread across two floors. In my opinion, it was important to take into consideration all future stores and not approach this challenge singularly. The design concept for Carnaby Street was to take influence from historic British social spaces (such as pubs), as already discussed, but additionally, it was to pay homage to the brand's history and educate the customer about its product. The iconic Ben Sherman product is its button-down shirt. The concentration on and attention to the shirt was the highest priority when designing this space. We set out to make the Ben Sherman shirt, with all its historic invention and

originality, the hero within the store. We achieved this by having a destination shirt bar area at the centre or the rear of the store. This is a strategy we adapted into the global concept for Nike Running. We also combined this with an interactive shirt display at the front window display. We worked alongside a specialist mechanical engineering company to produce spinning, moving shirt display rails that could be activated externally via movement sensors by passers-by. We designed it in such a way that its look and feel was deliberately analogue and not digital. The shirts on display were numbered and push-button selector boxes were fitted to the outside of the store and embedded into the window frame design. A customer could select a shirt from the rail by pressing the button and the shirt would mechanically move to the centre of the rail while the other shirts would move away. It would then rotate 360 degrees in front of the customer, allowing the selected shirt to be seen from all sides.

This became an overt and memorable part of the store. It created crowds at the window display and had the duality of gaining excitement around the core product. This also competed effectively with all adjoining stores in Carnaby Street, as their window visual merchandising solutions

were static. Having been seduced by the shirts in the window, customers could enter and be drawn towards the specialist shirt bar with its trained shirt bar ateliers. Through physical interaction and visual merchandising displays, these experts could help the customer to select the most suitable shirts for purchase. The Carnaby Street store layout was also key to driving commercial sales and creating a fulfilling customer journey. Another solution for its improvement was the relocation of the store entrance, which was originally in the centre of the façade and had a single step that caused a trip hazard. It had large, cumbersome, circular stainless steel columns that were a physical, visible barrier. We removed them in our scheme and the entrance was relocated to the left in front of the stairs in the lower ground floor. This was an important investment as it gave a generous window display area, heightening the impact. It also made it clear to a customer that a lower ground floor existed.

Placing the correct product areas in the relevant locations and organising the product into correct densities are also a crucial part of designing an effective sales solution. Another creative and key feature in the store is a less commercial one, but meaningful as a brand communication strength. On our research trips we were



inspired by visits to local low-cost fabric stores and their simple display premise that consisted of extensive walls of full tubes of fabric. It reminded me of an inspiring film made by Ray Eames, *Goods. From a three screen slide show made for a lecture on The New Covetables* given by Charles Eames during his tenure as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard, 1970-71, (1981) that spoke about a material's beauty and the wonderful description of a new, unused bolt of cloth. We decided to feature this approach as an architectural element within our store design because it related to the care taken in making Ben Sherman products.

We took rolls of Ben Sherman-designed fashion fabrics, from current collections and historic archives, and designed Ben Sherman rolls of cloth with cast iron end details to cap them. These were stacked vertically in a selection of colours and housed in dark wood display cases that ran from floor to ceiling. These brand design elements were utilised in the staircase as a feature running directionally throughout floor changes and were also used in creating segment areas in stores such as tailoring areas and fitting/stock zones. They demonstrate gregariously an insight into Ben Sherman's manufacturing heritage as well as the beauty of the raw, designed materials before they become garments. The furniture design took reference from the 1960s domestic shelving systems. These were contemporised with steel frames and had a simple but flexible cantilever system

that allowed for product and seasonal changes. They were also designed to be dressed with complementary product artefacts. It was our approach to orchestrate product layouts that were fluid and varied in their heights and densities and would not be uniform. The in-store lighting was also a bespoke and important design feature. It created different heights within the store and framed areas, drawing attention to products displayed beneath. We used historic wire glass sheets housed in simple steel pressed frames. These took inspiration from British snooker hall lights. The other lighting that was created was chosen to project a narrow focus on to the product to accentuate it. These designs were a version of a historic Anglepoise lamp. These could be clipped into the system to create an environment of domesticity. These lighting details were incorporated into the fitting room areas that had reeded glass doors with Crittall-framed structures (industrial window system). These referenced the same structural language used in the façade. These fitting room areas and their lighting blended with the adjacent lounge-like dwelling area, projecting comfort and benefiting customer service.

Ben Sherman's retail rollout method demonstrates the emergence of the new Model of Integration. It is apparent on reflection that the spaces created for Ben Sherman are not Activation Retail Environments. The retail environments are static and unable to flex and adapt, and lack the ability to synergise customer community

and hospitality. The Ben Sherman stores would benefit from remodelling to make them relevant to their customer community. Only two of the four components of retail, hospitality, brand/product education and event have been delivered as only the functions of retail and brand/product education have been utilised. Neither do these retail environments effectively integrate digital technology and therefore do not play a part in complementing the online retail activity.

However, because of its age, it is strategically compared in the thesis to the following study, Rapha's store concept. In addition, it highlights the evolution of Activation Retail. Therefore, I conclude through deeper investigation and research undertaken in both my professional practice and the PhD process, that the development of social change in the customer communities' behaviour caused by the effects of digital social media platforms had not influenced retail spaces at this time.

My Model of Integration needs to address the sociological change. This is demonstrating that due to the effects of digitisation, the Activation Retail Environment has evolved in a short time. An interior designer's role has evolved in sync to become a multi-disciplinary practice. ■

## BEN SHERMAN ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT





# The King Of Shirts.

Use authentic materials and references to create an immersive brand experience conveying an emphasis on design, not tailoring.

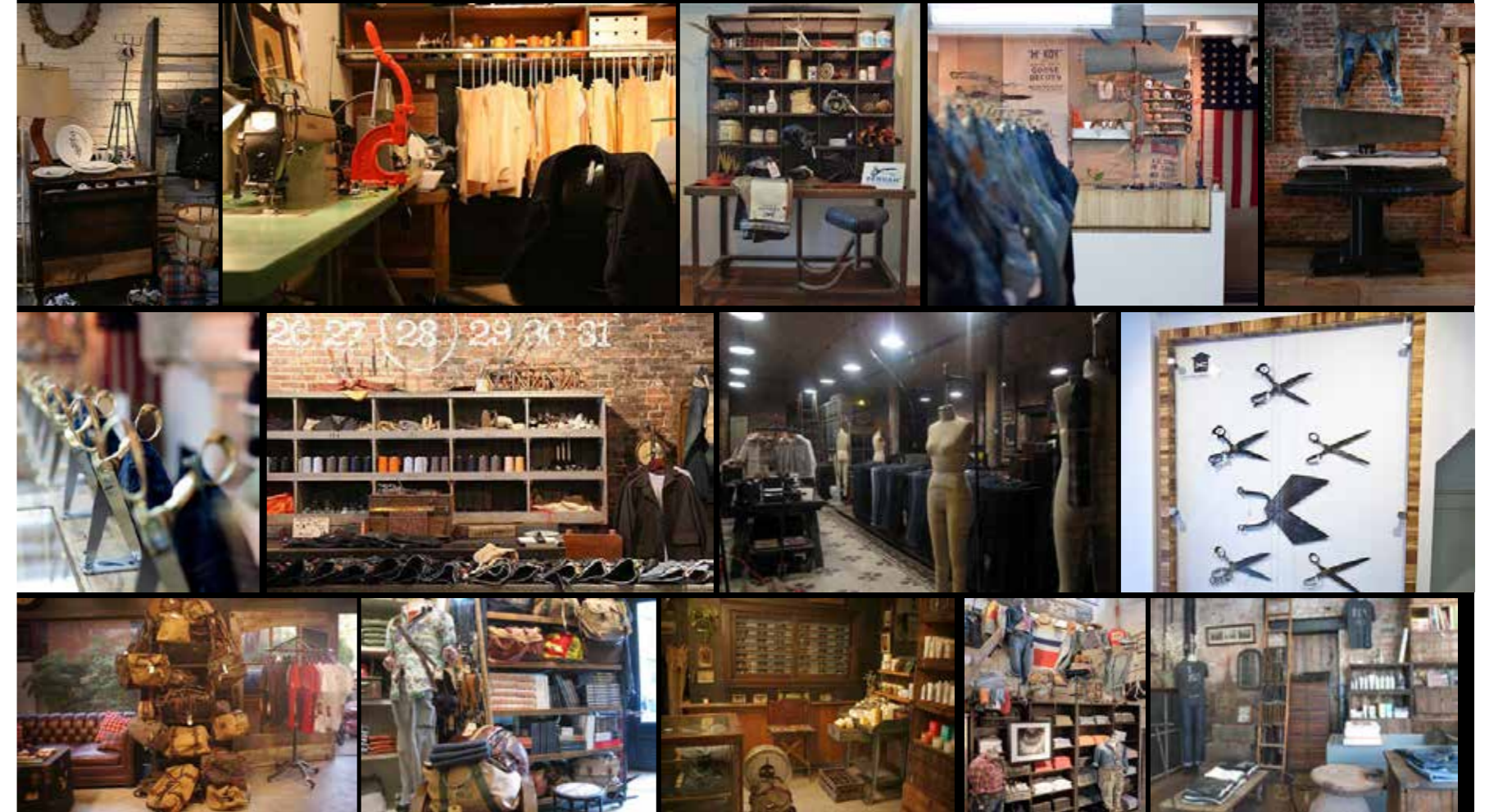


Ben Sherman®

© Brinkworth

# The Benchmark.

Take cues from denim heritage VM and re-appropriate to amplify the 'King of Shirts' message.



Ben Sherman®

© Brinkworth



## Zoning Principles.

Three Zones to form clear communication.  
Camaby Street Store.

### Impact.

Create drama and visually exciting displays to draw attention and attract customers.

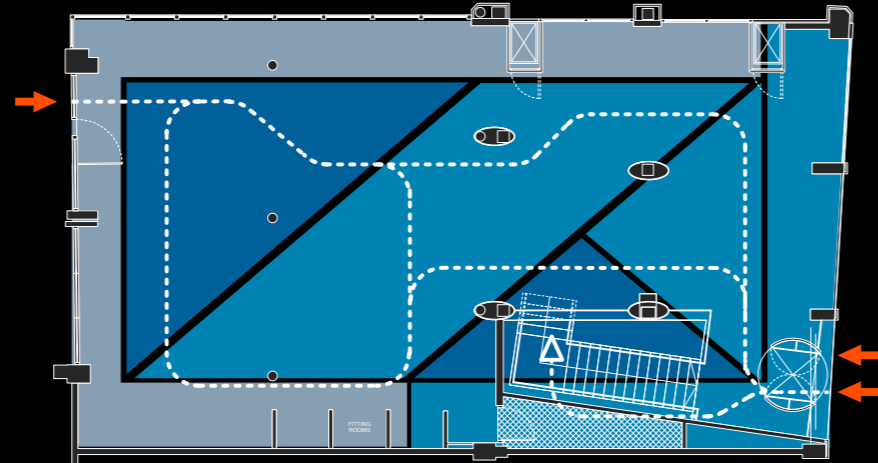
Focus on product details, brand history and product presentation to create an immersive brand experience which communicates the DNA of the King of Shirts.

### Inspire.

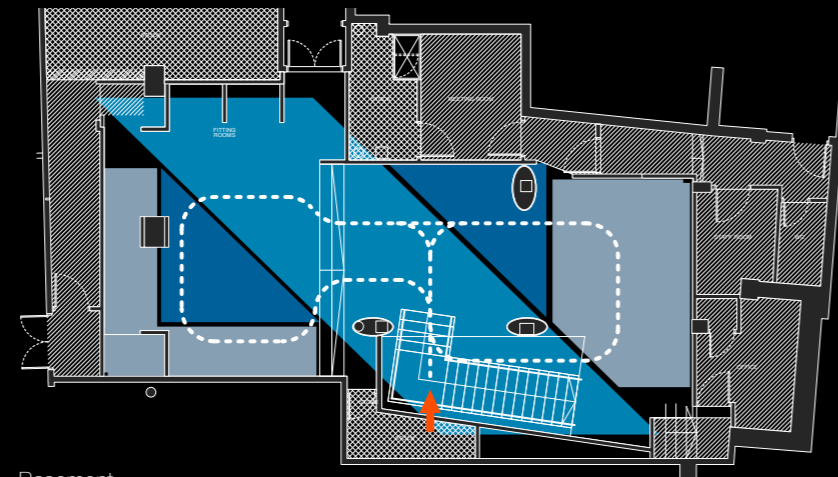
Shopable display highlighting a mix of styles and stories to display the product at its best.

### Choice.

Display product stories collected together to best display choice and range of product offer. Intersperse with VM props to convey the emphasis of the King of Shirts.



Ground.



Basement.

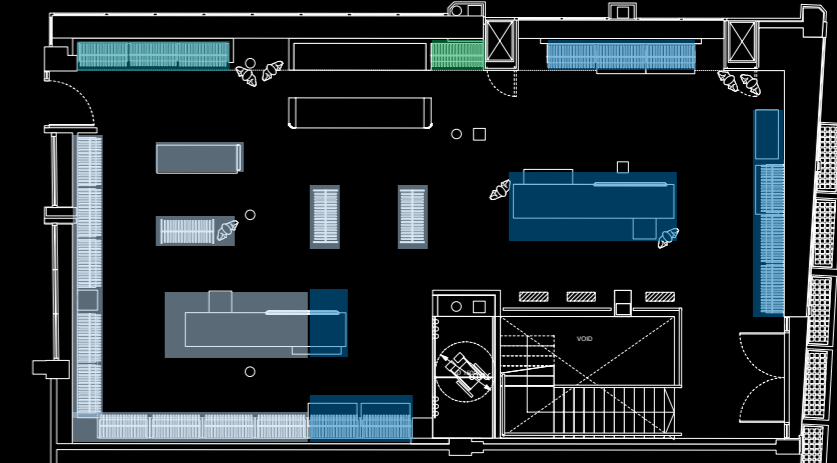
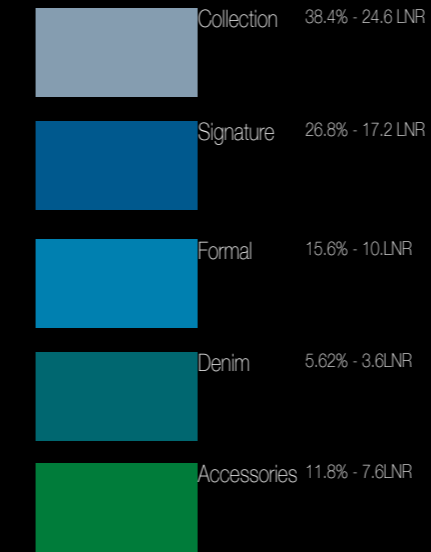
Primary circulation routes.

Ben Sherman®

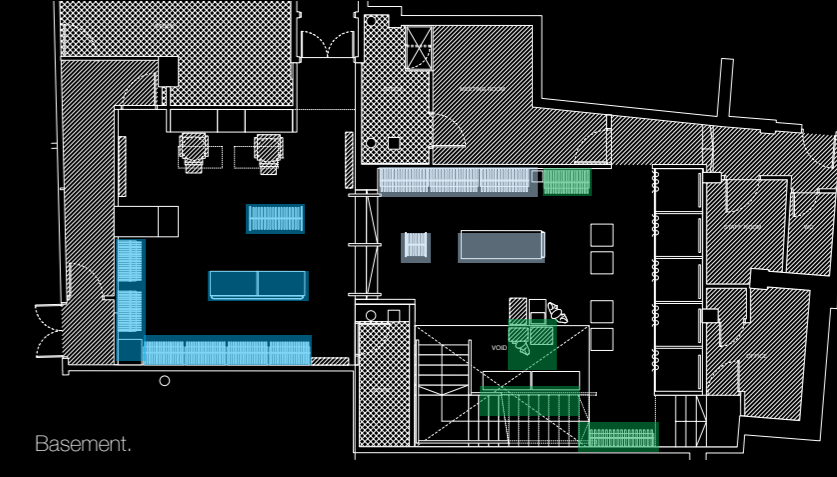
© Brinkworth

## Product Densities.

Distribution of product categories.  
Camaby Street Store.



Ground.



Basement.

Ben Sherman®

© Brinkworth

Ben Sherman®

Retail Concept Proposal.  
brinkworth - 3rd of March 2011



brinkworth

## Local Reference, Globally Recognisable.

Using authentic materials and references is still important to produce an experience that is recognizably born out of long standing quality.



From the classic 'Brown Betty' English teapot, to London pubs and buildings, a breadth of references for the palette that are undeniably British.

Ben Sherman

brinkworth

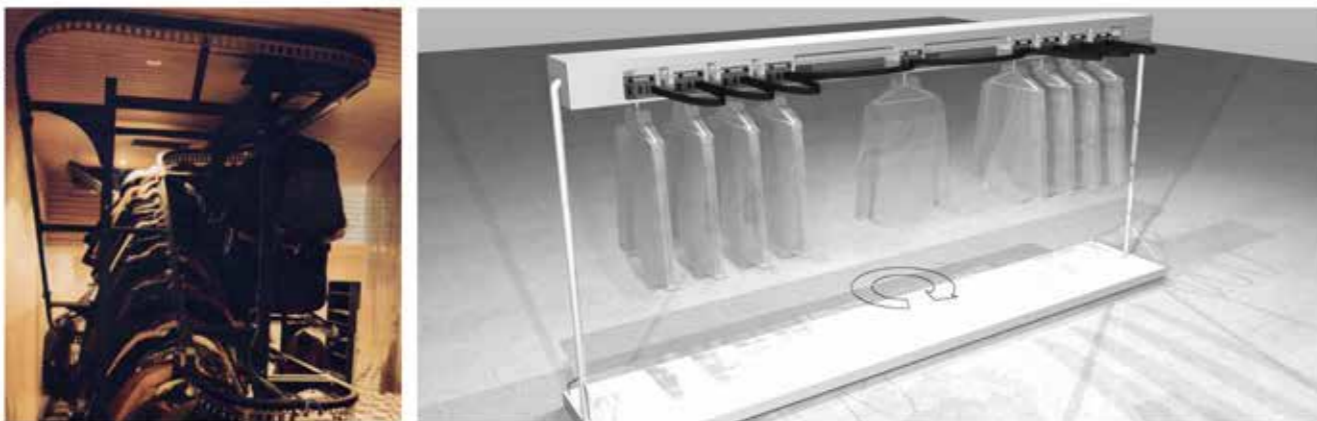


## The King Of Shirts. A Dynamic Shop Window Display.

Movement, Automation, Interaction - Captivate passers by.



The shop front display needs to be eye catching. A touch of engineering brings a twist to the palette that lifts it beyond the expected. Customers can select the garment's they want to bring to the front or the system can revolve autonomously.



Ben Sherman

brinkworth

## The King Of Shirts. A Dynamic Sales Method.

Whether manned or not the Shirt Deli should offer a unique shopping experience.



Ben Sherman

brinkworth



## Mid-Floor Furniture.

A round up of the range of standard furniture pieces used across the store formats.

Forma/ Perimeter Table.



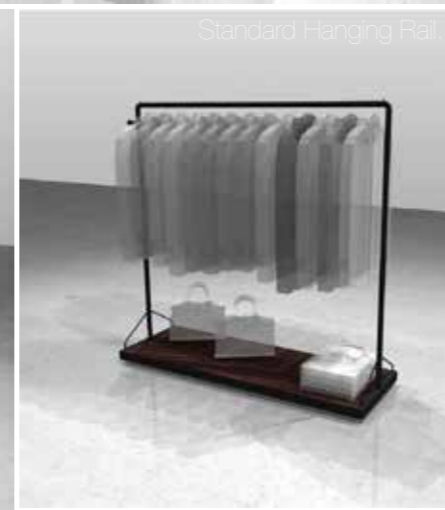
Mid Display Table.



A selection of core pieces that maintain the characteristics of Mid Century pieces whilst ensuring the flexibility and functionality of practical retail systems.



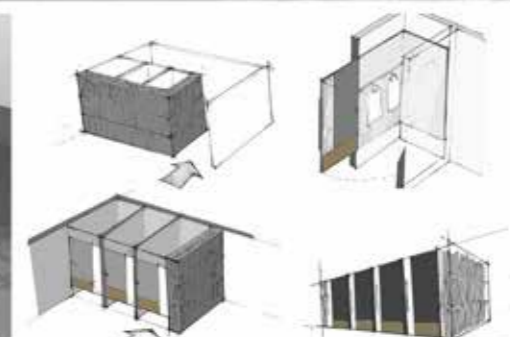
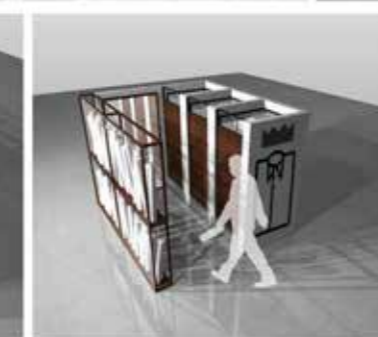
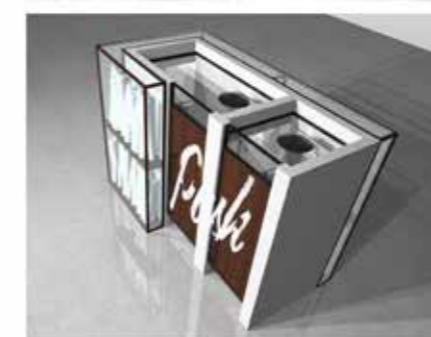
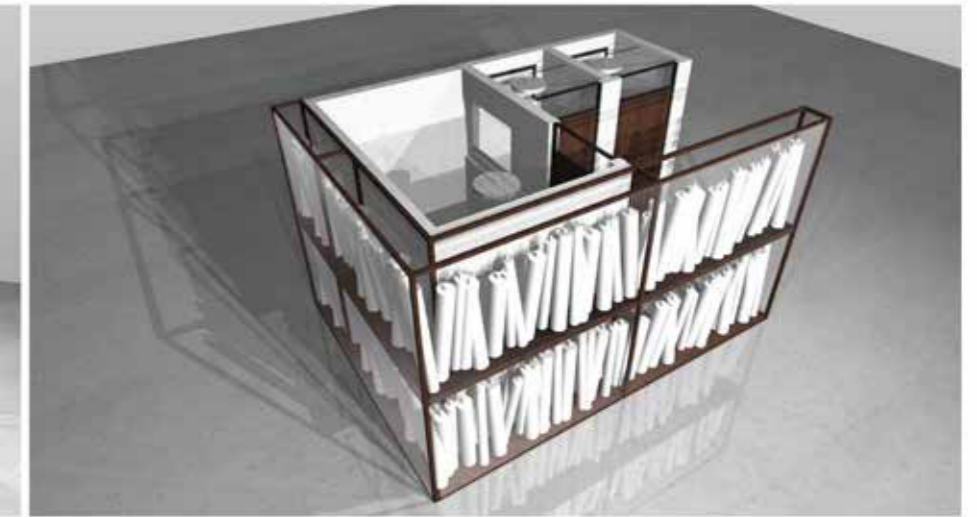
Large Display Table.



Standard Hanging Rail.

## Fitting Rooms.

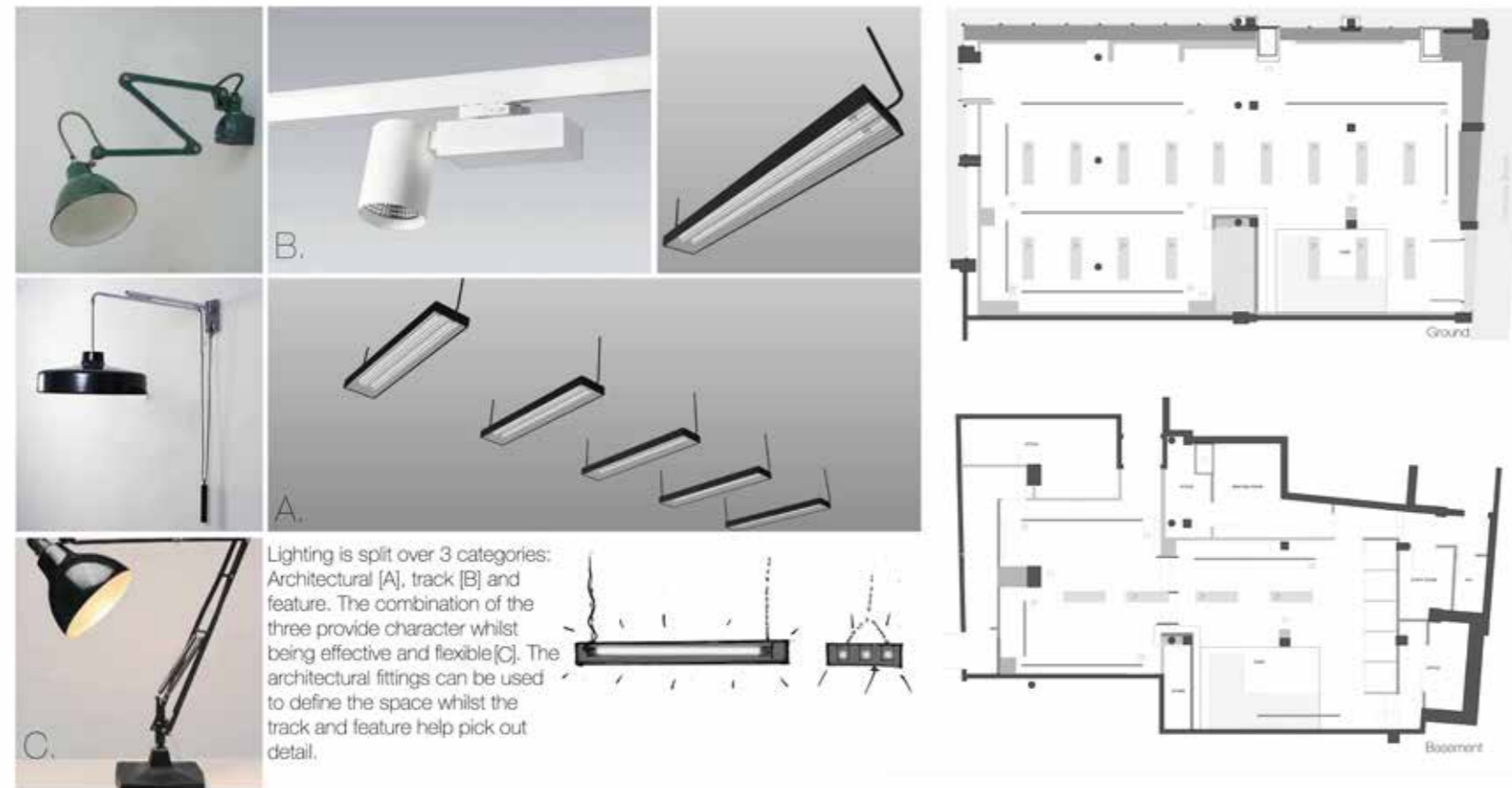
Scaleable and functional changing rooms utilising rolls of fabric as a feature partition.



The Rolls of fabric are used to form a partitioned area. The glass cabinets make the bolts of fabric feel precious and lift the quality of the customer experience whilst using the fitting rooms. The rolls could be changed seasonally to reflect the drops.

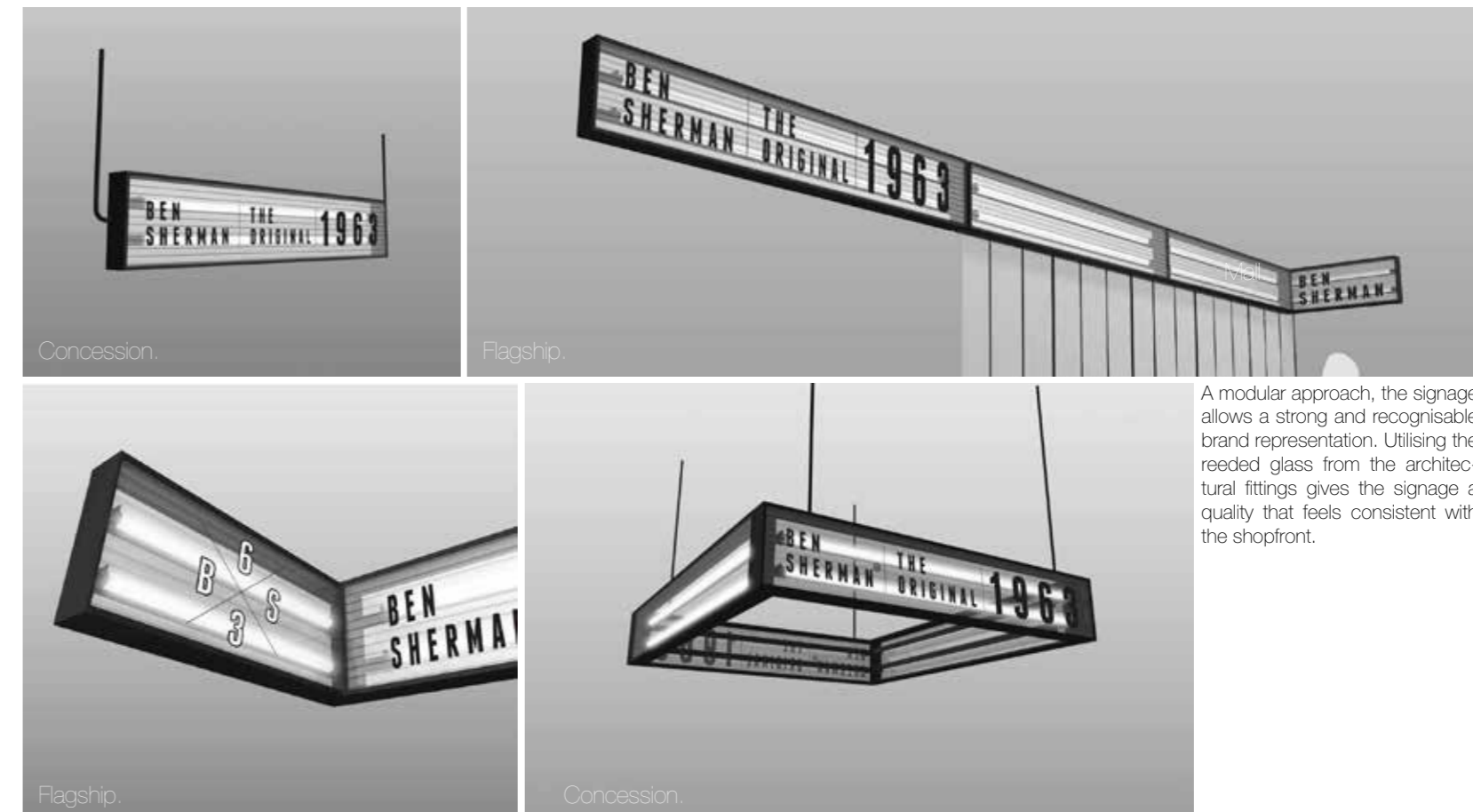
# Lighting.

Use of found and designed lighting objects to create a unique experience.



# Signage.

Modular back lit signage that retains a material constancy.



# Concept Summary.

Four key elements that go together to create a single, bold and unique store environment.



1. Tile wall treatment.

2. Architectural Lighting.

3. Mid-Century era inspired furniture.

4. Display Fabric Rolls.

# Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St. [3000ft<sup>2</sup>]

Typical Layout Plans.

Ground Floor:  
Overall hanging 14.5m Linear.  
Overall Folded 40m Linear.

Lower ground Floor:  
Overall hanging 9m Linear  
Overall Folded 45m Linear

Total:  
Overall hanging 25m Linear  
Overall Folded 85m Linear



Ground Level.



Basement Level.



# Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.

Typical Sections



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# Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.

Street View.



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Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.  
Entrance View.



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Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.  
Rear of the Store View.



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Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.  
Shirt Deli Area.



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Type 'A' Store Format- Carnaby St.  
Basement Area.



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# Type 'B' Store Format- Mall Store. [2000ft2 ]

Typical Layout Plan.

Overall hanging 23.5m Linear  
Overall folded 85m Linear



# Type 'B' Store Format- Mall Store.

Typical Sections



Type 'B' Store Format- Mall Store.  
Entrance View



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Type 'C' Store Format- Concession [800ft2]  
Main View.



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INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



# RAPHA

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## *Main Street Store concept*

Rapha's Main Street Store concept is a successful rendition of my Model of Integration, integrating retail, hospitality, events and brand/product education physically and digitally within a single retail environment. Each activity within the main street store concept is adapted to merge harmoniously with the local cycling customer community.

Rapha stores utilise the new design model and are examples of Activation Retail Environments. They are a response to the sociological change in customer community behaviour as evidenced in my research. A contemporary retail space is evolving due to the intervention of digital social media platforms and how they have changed customer behaviour patterns. This in turn, has altered the way in which Rapha communicates online and within its physical environments. The interior designer's role is to create spaces that respond to this evolution and facilitate an environment that serves customer community. The diagrams above demonstrate Rapha's ability to adapt its internal store functions. For example, the spaces can exist as hard-working retail and

hospitality environments during the day, but also become large event venues in the evening.

Rapha has become an iconic, world-leading cycle apparel brand. The CEO, Simon Mottram, is an avid cyclist and left his previous professional career to start a brand that was aligned with his passion. He had witnessed the growth in popularity of the activity but had noticed that it was impossible to buy good quality, simply designed product because all of the available brands embellished their garments with garish race-related visuals. He had also noted that the quality of these garments was not premium. In London, Simon would go for rides around Regent's Park, a popular location for road cycle training. His next destination was an authentic Italian café in Soho for a quality cup of coffee. The aspiration was to combine these activities within a store that sold well-designed premium cycle apparel to a discerning customer who could have a place to hang out, have a coffee and share riding interests with like-minded cyclists.

By the time Brinkworth became involved, Rapha was a successful online retailer. Wholesalers of fashion goods who are keen to develop into retail in order to gain the related extra profits regularly approach us. However, they usually fail because of the inability to adjust an initial mindset and fixed inherent structure of the wholesale business. Over the last five years, we have discovered that savvy online retailers such as Rapha are able to successfully approach their own retail. I believe this is partly because a brand such as theirs needs to be fast moving and react to the challenges of an ever-changing technology that is inherent to online business. They also have to react quickly to the changing market and customer shopping behaviour patterns. It is also essential to create and own an online retail arena within the web and social media. Online retailers also have direct access to the customer behavioural shopping patterns, thus enabling them to provide exactly what is required. In Rapha's case, they are adept at creating strong relationships online by utilising devices like narrative films to promote synergy with the customer while illustrating and advertising the



product in a slick and seductive way. Rapha is now a fully immersive brand with a full omni-channel strategy to design, market and sell to its audience. Journalists and brand experts often refer to Rapha as 'the Prada of cycling'. It is an activity-based brand and its success lies in the task of aligning customers to that particular activity and all its related functions.

Rapha store environments harness the physical interaction between brand and the customer community. Rapha's online relationship with its community is driven through digital devices and therefore not as rich as face-to-face relationships with the staff and the customer community that is activated within these built environments.

Rapha's brand identity was already designed and established, with an elegant logo that for me harks back to historic brands such as Campagnolo. The conceptual approach simply lies in the name of the shop - The Rapha Cycle Club. The spaces we design are as much of a club as a store, it is space that serves a premium cyclist's needs

and has three main functions within the club spaces. The first physical store we designed was located on Brewer Street in Soho, London. It was intentional and strategic not to follow fashionable areas. It was chosen because of its proximity to a cycle route and the location had passers-by from early morning to late at night. This Rapha Cycle Club is a stone's throw away from Bar Italia. The retail space has an area of 180 square meters and we carefully calculated the necessary product density needed to give a healthy return on investment. But the magic lies in the activity that is housed in this space and complements the product. The space is designed for retail and hospitality purposes and can also function as an event and brand/product education space. It is a social club to entice staff and customers to take part in the Rapha cycle movement. As mentioned by Terence Conran in Sarah Manuelli's *Design for Shopping*, "the restaurant is really a form of the shop of the future" (Manuelli, 2006: 133).

The club has been designed with flexibility in mind, the central furniture being on wheels so that the retail

space can flex to events such as hosting large parties to watch televised cycle races. It can also host guest speakers and educational talks. In addition to this, the space provided food and beverages that depended on the specific occasion. Normal working hours and daytime events could be supplied with quality coffee, whereas in the evening there was wine and food, all to encourage customers to come in throughout the whole day. This approach has been known to increase sales because customers will always be enticed to look at the product that surrounds them, especially if there is a reason for them to continually return for particular functions. The store concept has been so successful at the Brewer Street site that it was extended after one year of trading. The store traded incredibly well and tripled its estimated sales. I am impressed that Rapha decided to improve its food and beverage offer dramatically and only its retail in a small way. It is a bold and visual approach to allow cycle parking within the store, as of course it loses prime retail area. This is an effective strategy because it not only serves the customers' needs but also stops the



store from being all about the hard sell, thus improving customer relationships. Including this area in our schemes communicated that Rapha respects and cares for the customers and seeks to provide secure storage for their most precious of possessions - their bike. The design has been approached in a way that gives continuity and constancy to all areas of the store from the branded coffee cups to the Lycra shorts.

The creative design solution for the space was to create a space that was functional, well-detailed and modest. It was primarily to act as a backdrop to the product and not be a dominating feature that could distract. Dressing the space was crucial in our scheme; the tables, walls and rails were designed to facilitate ever-changing educational and informative displays as well as Rapha products. They incorporated up-to-date information on cycling-related activities locally, as well as displaying a rich variety of cycle paraphernalia. The use of historic equipment and parts, as well as displaying a broad selection of printed material, creates an impression of establishment to the space, making it feel “lived in”. It also helps to contextualise the space and places Rapha as the cycling cultural centre for aficionados in

that neighbourhood. We worked closely with Rapha to incorporate digital technology into its product offer. Most Rapha customers had already invested in a mobile device such as a smartphone, therefore it made good business sense to communicate through this device using the instore Wi-Fi. The customer uses this device for additional information and some brands communicate promotional offers to the customer. This leads to a physical versus online relationship that complements each retail activity. Human physical interaction and service are fundamental differences within a physical store environment.

Staff are carefully selected to be approachable, keen cyclists who have preliminary knowledge and enthusiasm for the Rapha brand. This way they are able to act as genuine brand custodians. The staff are equipped with tablets, as are the product displays, which can both inform and delight about the unique aspects of a particular product or how well it performs out on the road. If a product is not in the store it still can be purchased and delivered to the store or another location. These tablets also help to show a larger product range if the store is only able to display a limited capsule collection. The physical store promotes online sales and vice versa.

Although it is still early days in this development, it is cross-pollinating more and more. Another unexpected benefit is that international customers who do not have a local store are able to try the entire range so that they know what size they are when they return home and continue to buy product from Rapha over the Internet. It is imperative that a brand embraces online and physical retail if it is to perform on a global scale. This can be achieved by building on social change in customer brand communication that in turn creates a relationship that can lead to brand loyalty.

The new Model of Integration utilised in the creation of Rapha Cycle Clubs manifests itself by creating unique Rapha spaces that importantly adapt to the local customer community. A clear example of this is that the store in Seoul has been designed to immerse and educate a naïve cycling community as the customers are not aware of cycle road racing and therefore more space is dedicated to educate on historic and contemporary cycling, such as the history of the Tour de France. This space differs from Rapha’s store in Majorca that is tailored to communicate to a highly informed cycling community.



When we create a global strategy and retail concept it is absolutely vital for it to perform across a broad range of cultures. The toolkits we have designed for the Rapha ‘palette’ of ingredients are broad enough to produce an authentic Rapha Cycle Club that is locally relevant to any cycle customer. We have completed twenty-five Rapha Cycle Clubs in different countries; all have been designed with clear, consistent Rapha branding but are varied in their layout and scheme designs, as well as in their use of locally sourced materials and appropriate food and beverage offers. We have successful, open relationships with franchise partners and establish a balance between listening and delivering their needs with communicating and approving of designs by the main brand headquarters. Customers can become club members of Rapha CC and get additional offers and services. There is a set of criteria to become a member - Rapha has now started to promote this membership in many countries and then reward members by building them a club in that city. Our approach is to investigate the host building, its location city and the cycling culture that surrounds it. I strongly believe that a good retail expansion plan cannot have a singular approach and its success lies in an articulate and sensitive product that

is manifested from true brand DNA but which is then curated and created for that location.

Having now discussed the major outline approach taken, and highlighted the relevant components of the prototype store, this concept must now develop and travel to other key cities. The same, easy-to-manufacture furniture components need to be reoriented into different configurations, depending on their global location. An added bonus to our approach compared with the conventional rollout method is that minor tweaks can be made to further improve detailing in every subsequent journey. The proportion of café to retail varies from location to location. These fundamental areas vary across the customer journey and may need a different order of play. This is due to a combination of factors such as the given shell building and its layout or related regulations. For example, in the Meatpacking District in New York, local regulations and restriction to changes meant that the store layout has the food and beverage section mid-store and the consumables are then enjoyed to the rear of the space, with a large screen as a back wall showing live races. The retail is interwoven along the whole length of the store. In the following New York store the locations are

reversed - café first, shop to the rear. It is of course, critical to investigate all planning and regulations restrictions before embarking on the store design. It is also useful to treat this as an opportunity to push the boundaries of the regulations to find a coherent solution that may end up strengthening the overall store design. An external bike rack for customers has been used on the street to give additional lockable parking, while simultaneously acting as a sign to draw people into what is, clearly, a Rapha bike store. In this instance, it was a crucial device because treatments and illuminated signage were forbidden at this location. We also added seating to the external shop front to encourage people to relax and hang out at the store. When there are large organised ride-outs it functions well as a secure environment for the Rapha community to shop and refuel.

The given vernacular of the New York building, as well as its streetscape, is very different when compared with the Tokyo store. The Tokyo site is a two-storey store that runs across the ground and lower floors, with an internal and external elevation that is double height. Internally, the elevation was utilised to display a large cycling image in monotone; a simple signage strategy that made the





space inherently owned by Rapha, as well as bold and in keeping with the simple and cold machine-like aesthetic of the actual building structure. It has an impressive scale in comparison to the relatively small store. The ground floor has been designed to house the social area with a café and merchandise displays, offering coffee as well as Japanese single malt whisky to align its offer with locally appropriate tastes. The downstairs floor has retail, with the clearly positioned stairwell and product displays acting as visual leads that notify the customer of the retail nature of the lower floor. The careful adaptation of the furniture landscapes, the placement of product on a series of levels, and the grouping of related products, make it easier for customers to match outfits. The pink Rapha pinstripe band travels around the perimeter space and frames the product area. This device is used in all stores and is one of the unifying components that give the store its unique and easily identifiable 'Rapha' feel.

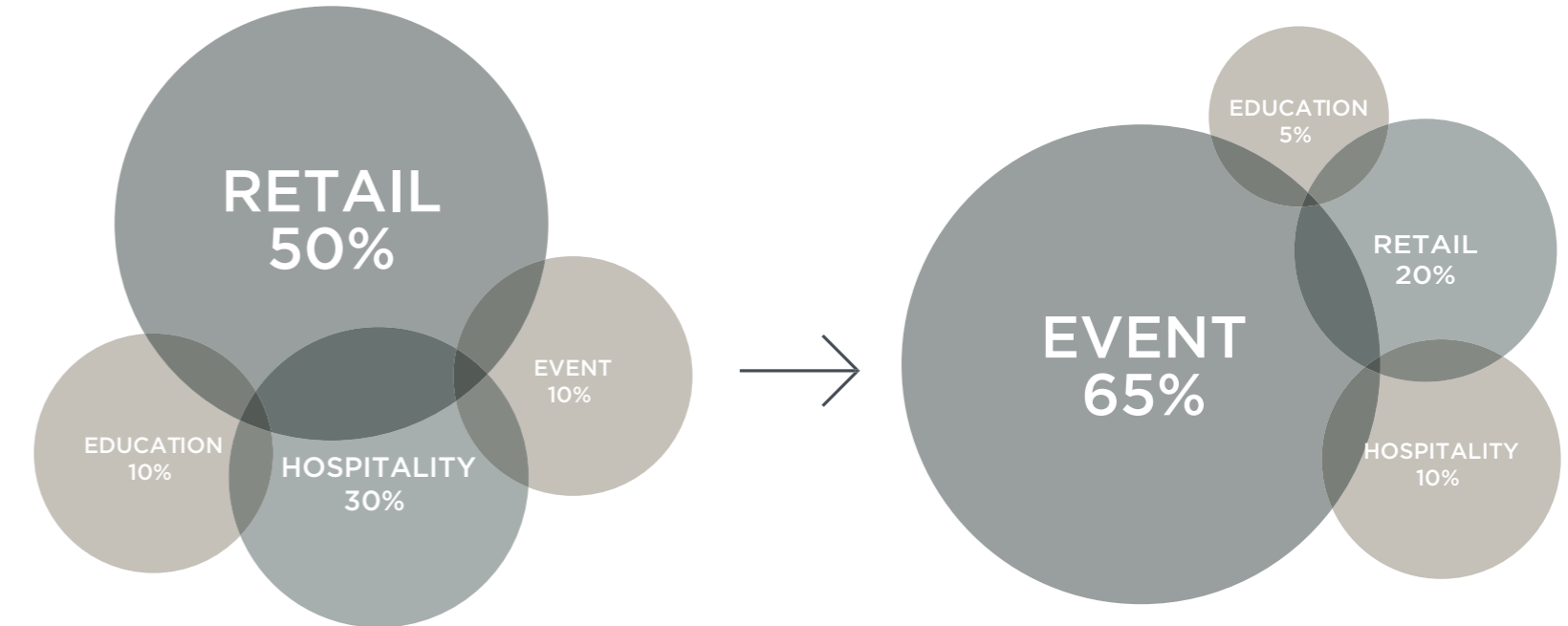
One of our most recently completed projects for Rapha is the Spitalfields store. It was important to ensure that it was not a repeat of the Brewer Street site. It was essential

to maintain its appropriateness to the city as a whole but also to its direct locality in the Spitalfields area, which differs greatly in its culture to the Soho neighbourhood of Brewer Street. The primary difference is that the shell of the building is set within a historic Victorian market, whereas the Soho store is a Georgian building with modern retail façades. This East London site has customers from the nearby financial district as well as those from the local creative industry. What was once an important fresh produce market for London has now become a hub for fashionable stores, eateries and ever-changing multiple market trader stands. The impressive cast iron structure and glazed roof give multiple design opportunities. The store has a ground and lower floor and we were also granted permission to take a section of the space in front, within the actual market floor where retailers usually display clothes rails and occasional seating. Here we decided to build a skeletal, lightweight pavilion structure that effectively framed the space and designated an additional external Rapha area. The illuminated signage across two elevations relates to traffic flow in the market. The frame's construction

was inspired by the manner in which a bicycle frame is made. The pavilion houses seating for hospitality, events, lectures and exhibitions as well as acting as additional product display and cycle parking.

This unglazed, steel pavilion stands independently of the listed building structure and can support huge screens. These can then be used to screen live events and launches. Rapha frequently hosts charity sponsored rides and these integrated store elements are the perfect setting to further develop the Rapha cycling community. Another key element of the store design is a fitting and testing climate area that is housed on the lower ground floor. It enables customers to try products on a bike that is fully adjustable to suit the customer's dimensions. It is also a quality-training bike so a customer can try the garments in different climate changes from winter to summer. The Rapha store is an effective, immersive brand retail destination that works in fitting in and adapting to the given architecture whilst simultaneously pushing the service and event potential of the brand. ■

## RAPHA ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT





INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK







INTRODUCTION OUR WORK

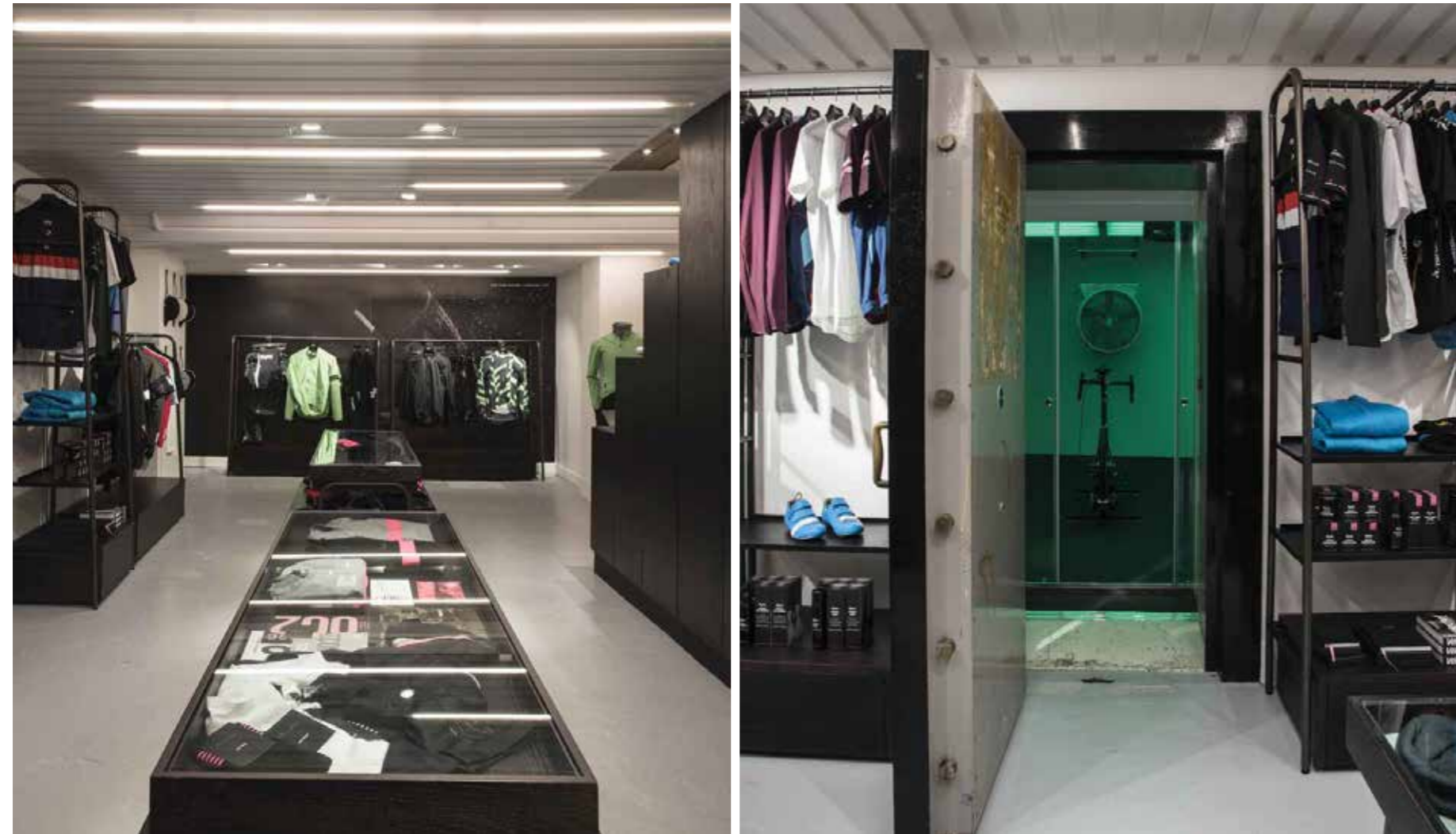


INTRODUCTION OUR WORK









INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK







# SONOS AND BROWNS

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## *Showroom concept*

I have included Sonos in my thesis because it is an innovative form of retail in a fixed location whereby the customer could not purchase Sonos product on site. The client's brief was to create a space that demonstrated and promoted the creative use of their products. This activity would in turn create traffic and profitability for their online business. My Model of Integration was utilised alongside Activation Retail Environments. However, the client's brief stipulated that there should not include a retail section. Therefore, three of the four pillars of the model were carried forward in the design: brand/product education, hospitality and event. The space on average was divided 40% event, 40% hospitality and 20% brand/product education. The scale of these activities could, however, proportionally transform depending on what was required during trading hours.

The Sonos showroom concept offers a valuable insight into how new approaches can be taken to successfully integrate multiple strategies and selling techniques into a single, global apparel retail strategy. Rodney Fitch says: "The creation of a memorable experience for the customer must be a prime objective for the retailer or for the retailer designer" (Fitch, 1990: 29).

The original conceptual idea for this project was that the client's products, when combined with the customer presence, created a by-product of its own – for example, the music created by the participating visitors. Sonos sells premium sound equipment that enables customers to operate their sound systems and speakers using personal mobile devices. These interactive sound systems are tuneable to suit room and listening preferences. Sonos approached Brinkworth to create their Sonos London hub. Having already established hubs in Europe and the United States, they were keen to showcase their range and give customers the opportunity to experience Sonos products. This would generate interest and, in principle, result in an increase in online sales. Sonos chose a site on Club Row in Shoreditch, an area with a lot of recent investment and regeneration, an established fashion centre of East London. Club Row branches off Redchurch Street, which is full of premium apparel stores such as APC and Aesop. This street is an important link to Spitalfields, meaning that there is a broad and plentiful customer base and constant flow. It is imperative that a location is chosen that complements the brand and its atmosphere, including what is offered by neighbouring stores.

The site is a turn-of-the-century, two-storey brick warehouse building with metal-framed Crittall windows, an imposing corner site adorned with graffiti. The brief, as well as the subsequent design concept, was to create a signature, locally relevant space as a vehicle to showcase the performance of Sonos products as well as what could creatively be achieved with their help. The ground floor was a large space designed to act as a recording studio and a live performance venue that could cater for a wide range of music, from a full philharmonic orchestra to rap and spoken word. One arrives through an existing aperture to a loading area, redesigned as a meet-and-greet zone for events and housing plenty of secure bicycle parking and storage systems. This space is covered, but the bi-fold doors peel back to expose a generously proportioned, plant-filled lobby. It incorporates sound-insulating materials in its shell, as well as acting as the transitional line on the ground floor between the performance space and the upper floors. The right longitudinal wall is constructed of high-performance acoustic glass with additional fire protection functions. This sound-insulating wall is crucial to reducing sound pollution from other areas of the building and acts as a blanket to any noise that may disturb neighbours.



Brinkworth worked closely with specialist acoustic engineers Milco, headed up by Nick Wataker. As a result, the sound barely penetrates the glass, and it is not until the doors are opened that the intensity and clarity of sound can be appreciated. The sound wall is pivotal in disconnecting the noise from the first floor, and the building has passed the necessary regulations on noise pollution standards. The main ground floor space is designed to be an acoustically tuneable environment. We worked with the sound engineers to create a space that could be adjusted to specific types of music, scale and pitch. This was achieved by installing acoustic sound panels in the ceiling that were interchangeable, as well as a long, louvred, adaptable acoustic wall designed to pivot, deflect and soak up sound where necessary. These panels could also be controlled to adjust the amount of light coming into the building along its north-facing axis. It is a rich opportunity to produce new types of interior design and furniture that have to perform specific function and performance objectives. In this case, new design language and solutions are often created. A simple concrete bar and seating complemented these newly designed acoustic features. The space is a social community building that is also used locally for performances, talks and screenings. It is open all day to

the public and has a food and beverage offer. Much like Rapha, retailers are finding it valuable to have an open-door policy where people can congregate and socialise, as well as work away from the office.

Another key feature of our conceptual approach was to take references from famous music venues and recording studios, such as Abbey Road. The existing building was sensitively restored and quality authentic finishes incorporated into our architectural shell. The floor was sourced from a salvage specialist and was originally the hardwood timber floor from the first BBC recording studios. Harry Amos of Lassco is passionate about the sources of his product. I was impressed with his poetic words, he felt his floor was living and that it had an important story to tell as a silent witness to speeches given by prominent figures such as Winston Churchill. This floor has a good sound quality and contrasted well with the modern interventions in the space.

The newly installed staircase in the south-west corner of the site was a transitional space designed to act as a break and separation from the ground to first floor studios. The approach was to use a simple, bold structure of blackened steel, incorporating a black steel

perforated mesh balustrade. The neutral white decorated shell had a Barrisol ceiling panel that had integrated light. This transitioned through a colour wheel to create a dynamic contrast and a breath of fresh air to the two very different floors.

The central area of the upper floor is designed to have a domestic and eclectic atmosphere. The mix of furniture and fittings creates a low-level lounge that consists of carefully selected pieces; from Eero Saarinen to Vitsoe systems. This central space is stocked with books on music history and props that nod to music culture and developments in music technology, from Bakelite radios to hip-hop beat boxes of the '80s. The signage for the space is internally and externally formed out of slimline neon, and the word 'LISTEN' is incorporated in white neon on the main wall. A variety of Sonos products are dotted around the space, all available to discover and test out. The area to the right, on the east side of the floor, acts as a workshop and has a pull-across yellow acoustic curtain. This workshop is a creative zone to encourage testing, customisation and invention of new speaker devices. The workshop is configured with a bespoke feral peg wall system that shows and stores all relevant tools. The hub of this space is a central workshop



table designed by Andrew Stafford and manufactured in conjunction with Rocky Alvarez. The starting point for this table design was a photo Stafford found from the 1960s showing a street party and sound system outside the actual premises on Club Row. The DIY nature of this sound system, with its cabinet speakers, is picked up in the design of the table.

Behind the lounge area are two listening rooms. One is of an intimate scale for small groups to sample the listening experience emitted by Sonos speakers. The shell is clad in acoustic and timber slats from floor to ceiling, while the shelves and seating are in polished brass and soft grey felt. These surfaces complement the hard aesthetic of the product as well as eradicating vibration from the device. This listening room was designed to have a warm, softly lit and intimate feel. In contrast, the second larger listening room is light and bright, with large-scale speakers and a screen. To acoustically assist the space, as well as to offset the neutrality of the décor, there is a large, heavily patterned rug sourced from the Middle East. The Sonos hub at Club Row creates a cultural centre that facilitates the creation of new music as well as a space to develop and test its own products. Its purpose is to benefit the customer as well as Sonos as a brand. The design and function of the hub are the polar opposite from the usual retail spaces that it is in competition with, such as the multiple stores in Tottenham Court Road, which have become obsolete with the emergence of online retail. This space and its

physical functions complement the brand's online retail rather than compete with it.

In the case study, the Sonos store demonstrates that it is possible to drive customer traffic to a space that is off the beaten path by staging events that complement the brand's offer. By using its digital platforms and engaging with customers via social media, a brand can facilitate seductive participatory events that reinforce the connection between that brand and its customer community.

However, this Sonos space closed after two years of trading. Sonos as a brand decided (as evidenced in its new store in New York) to incorporate product sales into their retail space. This underlines the importance of securing sales in-store whilst a customer is excited about the product. We had the feedback from visitors to the Shoreditch store that although they enjoyed the space and the events there, that they would have liked the opportunity to purchase smaller products and arrange for large items to be delivered and installed at their convenience.

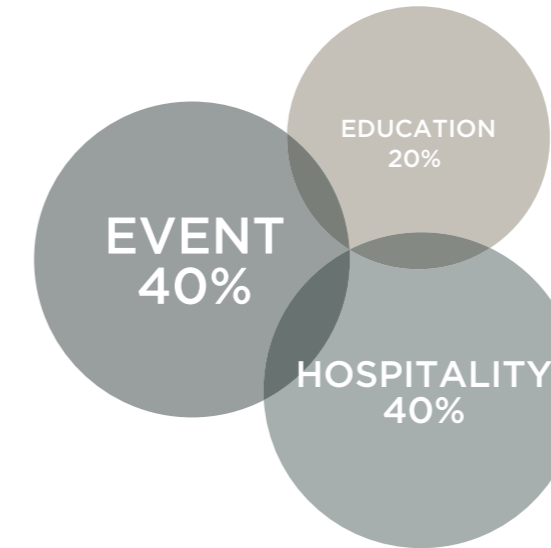
Brinkworth has been fortunate enough to be approached by Browns, an iconic independent fashion multi-brand company, to create a retail environment now housed in the space previously occupied by Sonos. The design of this space for Browns utilises Activation Retail Environments and on this occasion included retail. The

proportional spaces are: 65% retail, 20% hospitality, 10% event and 5% brand/product education. The space is laid out to proportionally transform according to activities. For example, it is possible to have 10% retail, 20% hospitality, 50% event and 20% brand/product education.

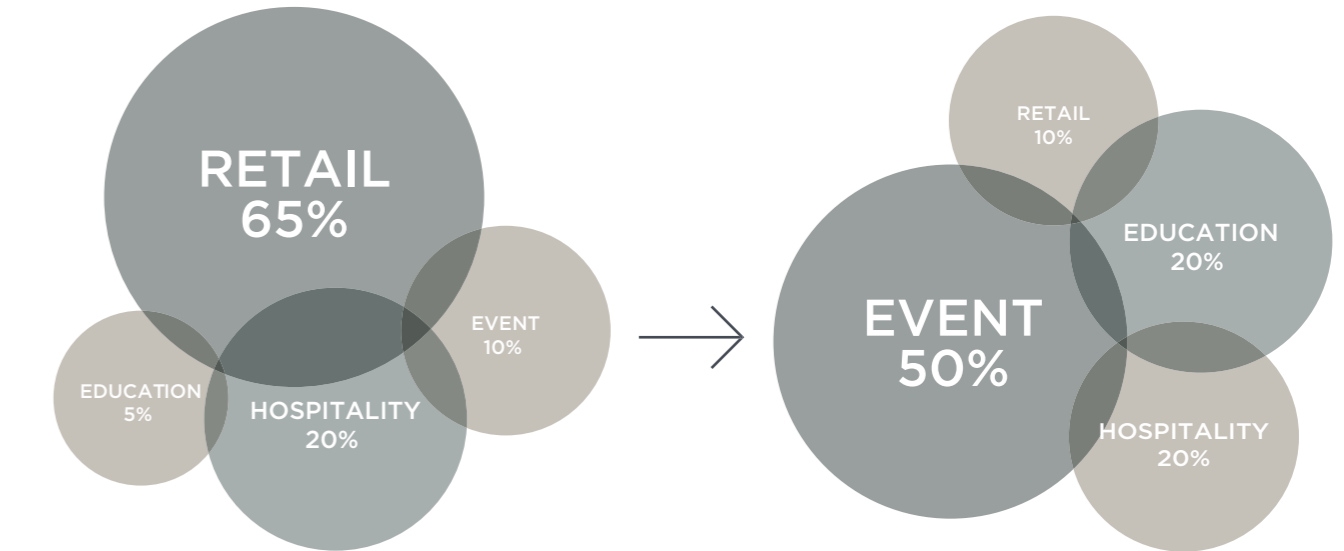
The Browns space has a landing area that is dedicated to displaying installations by independent creatives. The client refers to their space as a 'store of the future', the idea being that the space is ever changing and incorporates the most recent digital technologies. In response to this brief, the ground floor utilises the existing shell with a gridded ceiling from where garment rails can be suspended in numerous configurations. Freestanding mobile sculptural screens allow the space to be transformed into multiple arrangements. The first floor houses accessories and, to reflect the premium price of the product offer, two huge cylindrical fitting rooms have been designed to slide open in sections that once again create flexibility of space.

In Sonos and Browns, Brinkworth created environments that were complete at handover, but the spaces were designed to continue to be activated as their functions dictated. Both retail concepts integrate each brand's product and their complementary retail activities to enhance relationships with their respective customer communities. The activities within the space breathe life and richness into their retail environments. ■

## SONOS ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT



## BROWNS ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT





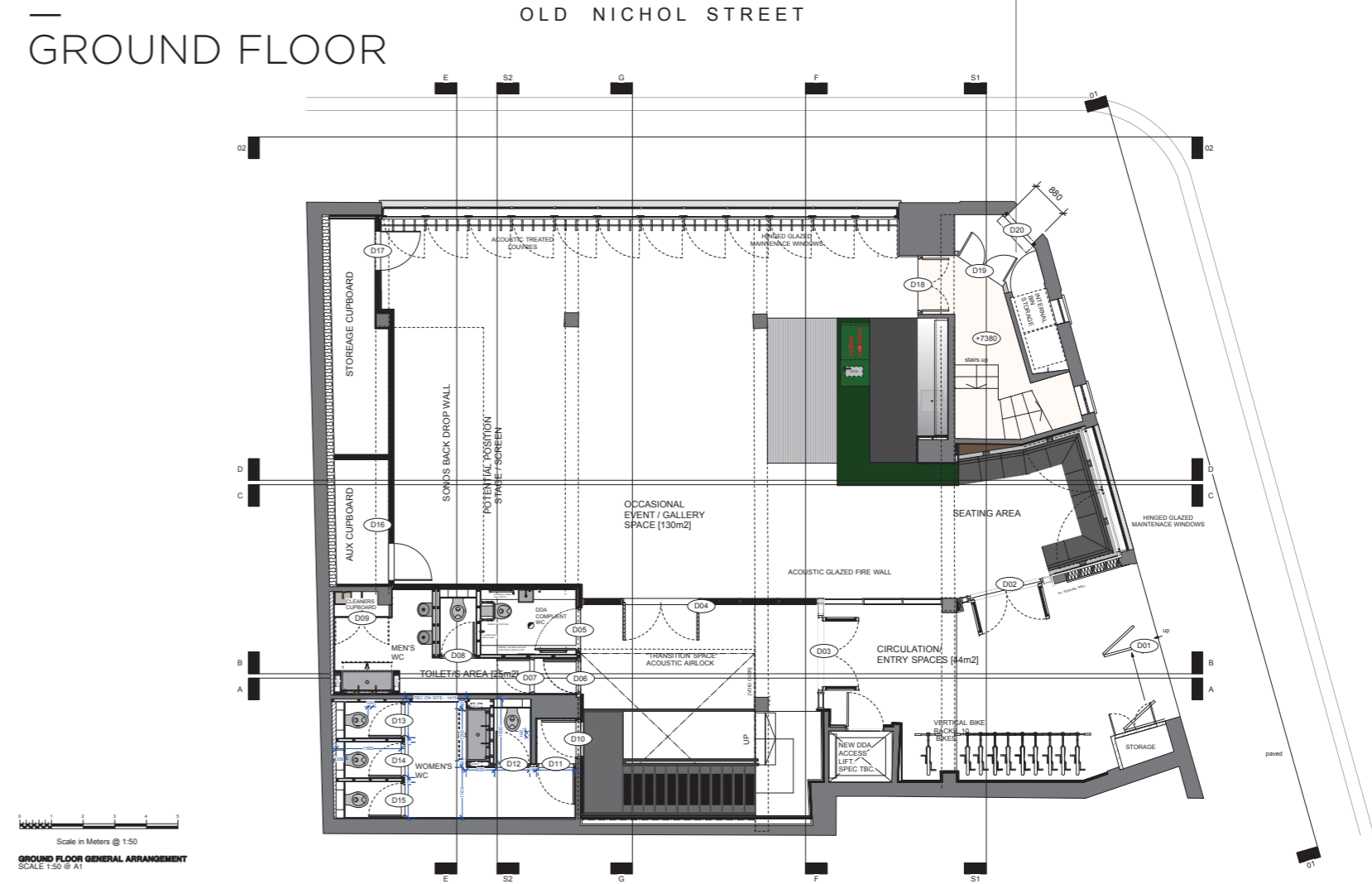
# GROUND FLOOR

- A SOCIAL SPACE WITH A WARM AND INVITING COFFEE BAR
- A 'TUNABLE' PERFORMANCE AREA WHICH CAN BE ADAPTED TO SUIT EVENT TYPE
- A FLEXIBLE ART AND SOUND GALLERY SPACE WITH INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

# FIRST FLOOR

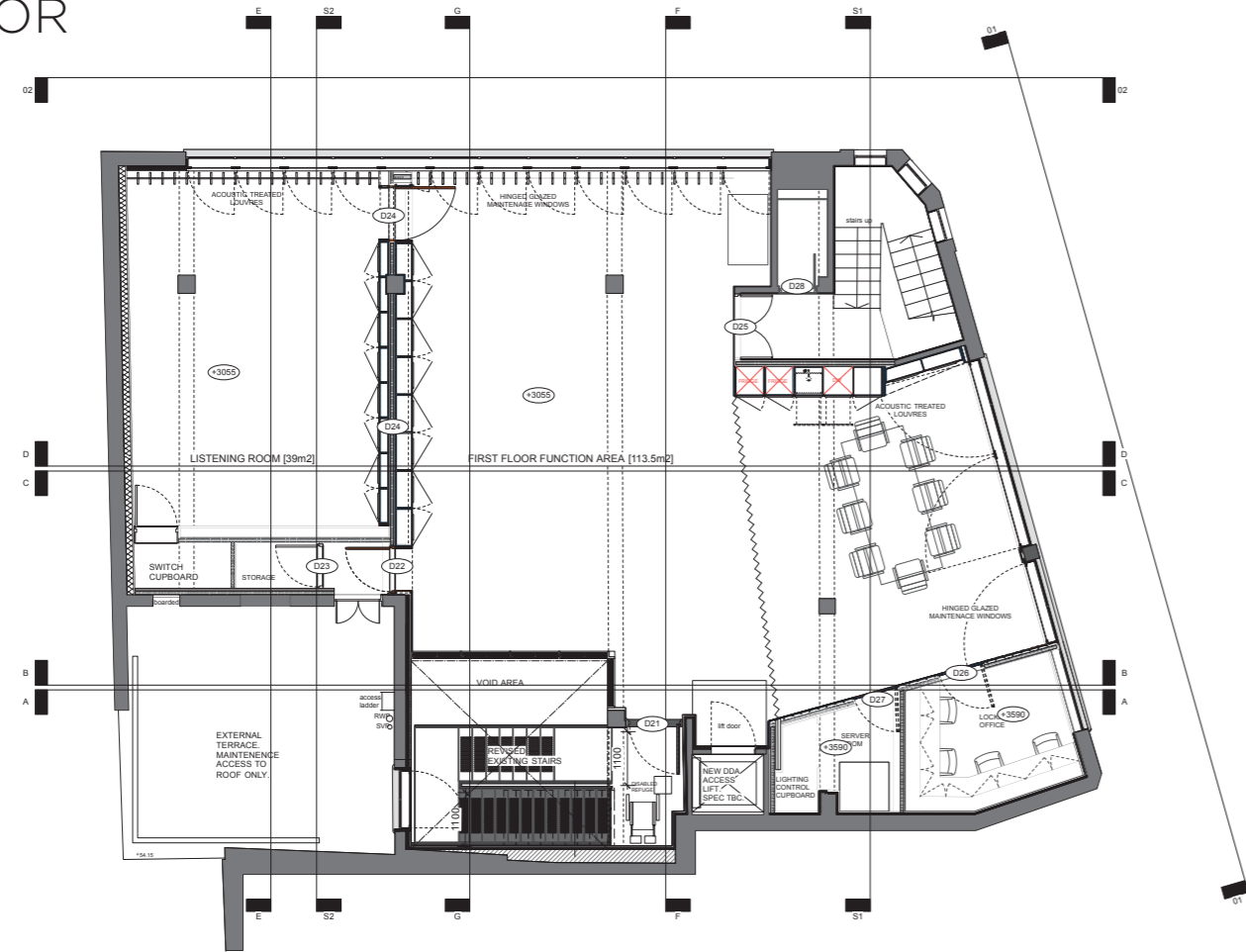
- A LISTENING DESTINATION TO EXPERIENCE THE SONOS PRODUCT IN AN ASPIRATIONAL ENVIRONMENT
- AN OVERALL MORE DOMESTIC FEEL - SOFT FURNITURE, MUSIC BOOK LIBRARY AND A WARM MATERIAL PALLETTE
- A FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE/WORKSHOP TABLE

# GROUND FLOOR



Scale in Meters @ 1:50  
**GROUND FLOOR GENERAL ARRANGEMENT**  
 SCALE 1:50 @ A1

# FIRST FLOOR



Scale in Meters @ 1:50

FIRST FLOOR GENERAL ARRANGEMENT  
SCALE 1:50 @ A1

SONOS STUDIO LONDON

# ENTRANCE



NEON SIGNAGE

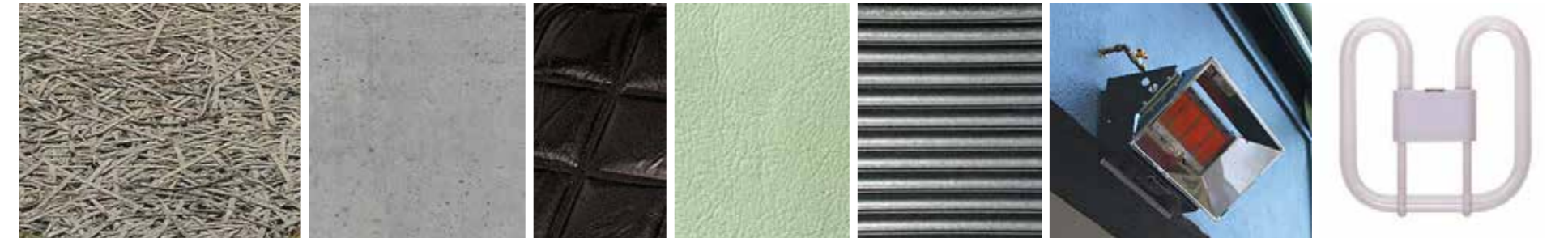
EXPOSED MATERIALS

FEATURE LIGHTING

BESPOKE BIKE RACKS

LED DISPLAY

SURFACE GRAPHICS



WOOD WOOL PANELS

POLISHED CONCRETE

LEATHER SEATING

ROLLER SHUTTER

EXTERIOR STYLE HEATERS

TRADITIONAL NEON

SONOS STUDIO LONDON



# GROUND FLOOR

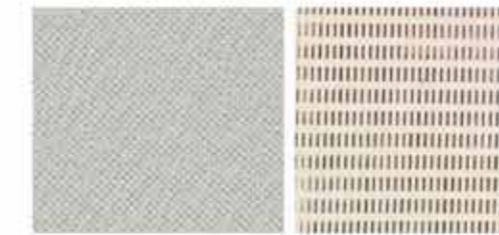


GLAZED WALLS    RELAXED SEATING    ACOUSTIC LOUVRES    CEILING RAFTS    EXHIBITION SPACE    SONOS EVENTS

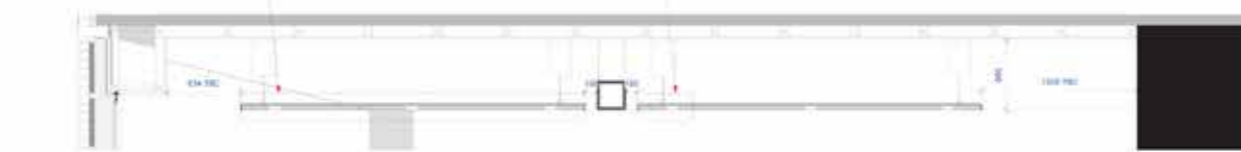


PARQUET FLOORING    FUMED OAK    BLONDE TIMBER    TONAL & FEATURE FABRICS    PERFORATED PANELS    DISTRESSED LEATHER    GREEN MARBLE

# CEILING RAFTS



**ACOUSTIC LININGS**  
The ceiling rafts allow sonos to have a tunable space - customisable to each event.  
Double sided, the ceiling rafts will provide absorption to one side, and tunable enhancement to the other.

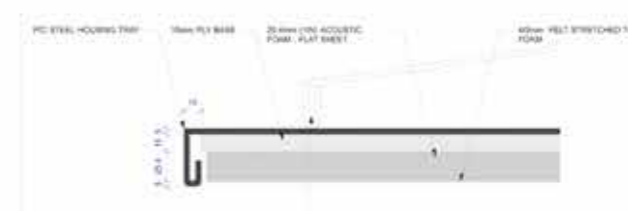


**RAFT DETAILS**  
Melatec infill  
Perforated metal sheet  
Breathable fabric wrap  
Winch or pulley system for adjustability



DETAIL 01 SCALE 1:10

DETAIL 02 SCALE 1:10



FLUMED OAK

# LOUVRES



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

### ACOUSTIC LOUVRES

The acoustic louvres line areas of glazing to create a fully tunable space. Acoustic foam to one side, perforated timber to the other - each louvre rotates 180 degrees on a central pivot allowing maximum flexibility.

Track mounted, the louvres can be stacked and moved to one side when more daylight is desired.



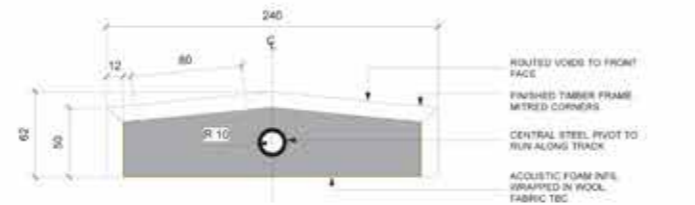
CLOSED



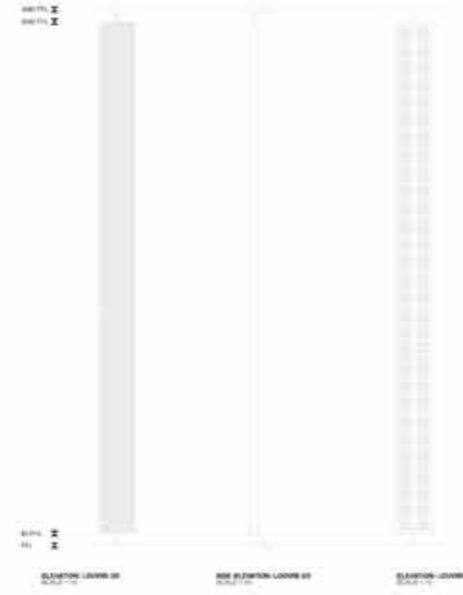
OPEN



MIXED



LOUVRE DETAILS:  
Perforated Timber frame  
Melatech infill  
Breathable fabric wrap  
Floor to ceiling track mount



# CAFEBAR COUNTER AND SEATING



NEON SIGNAGE



BOOTH SEATING



LIGHT BOX DISPLAY



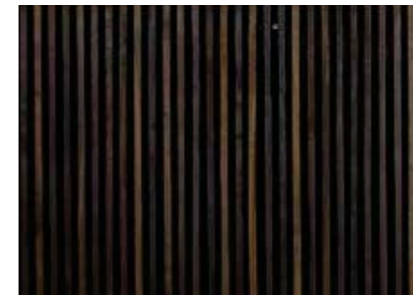
WARM TEXTURED SURFACES



STAINLESS STEEL EQUIPMENT



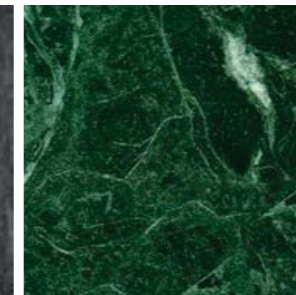
AMBIENT LIGHTING



FUMED OAK BATONS



DISTRESSED LEATHER



GREEN MARBLE



STAINLESS STEEL



PARQUET FLOOR



PLANTING



STAIRCASES

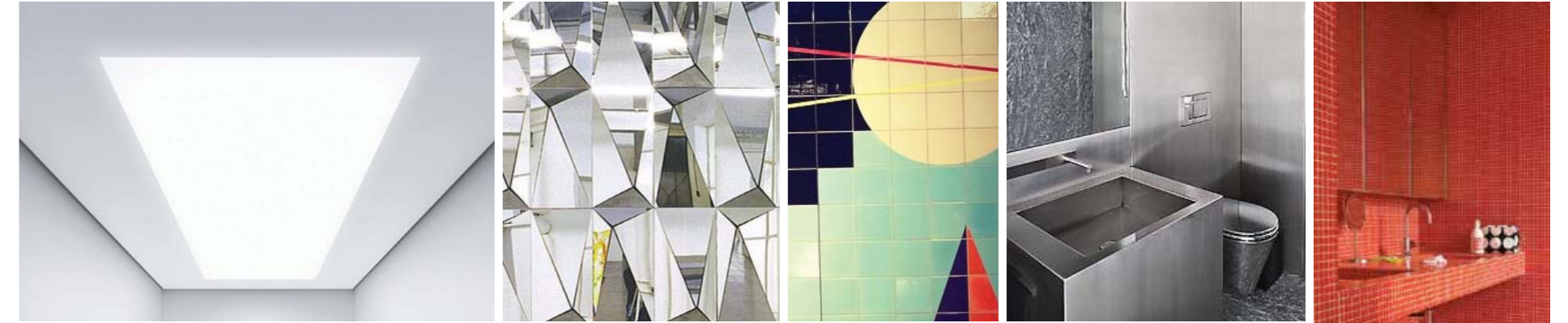


STRUCTURAL TREADS    EXISTING DETAIL - MAIN    FEATURE LIGHTING    INSTALLATION SPACE    EXISTING DETAIL - VIP



BEIGE TREAD    ORANGE DETAIL    DETAILED REVEAL    TEXTURED SURFACES    BLACK STEEL

BATHROOMS



CLEAN CEILING    FACETED MIRRORS    BOLD TILING    STAINLESS STEEL FIXTURES    COLOUR BLOCKING



STAINLESS STEEL    CERAMIC TILE PATTERNS    COLOURED TAPS    BLOCK COLOUR    VINYL TILING TO CUBICLES    BELL NEONS



# 1ST FLOOR OVERVIEW



RICH TIMBER

LOUNGE FEEL

ACOUSTIC LOUVRES

CURATED LIBRARY

WORKSPACE / WORKSHOP



BLACK MDF

CHERRY WOOD

VINTAGE RUGS

RESIN FLOOR

TONAL COLOUR PALETTE

RESIN FLOOR

RESIN FLOOR

GREEN MARBLE

STAINLESS STEEL

BLACK PEGBOARD

## INTRODUCTION OUR WORK

### SONOS • BRAND EXPERIENCE

Brinkworth have completed the first Sonos Studio in London, a social, collaborative hub for the music and creative communities.

The brief was to design an acoustically tunable space, offering an unprecedented listening experience, where anyone can go to hear music as it should sound and where artists can experiment and share new ideas.

Brinkworth have transformed the prominent corner site on Club Row, Shoreditch into a 'home' for the brand. The building offers a fully immersive experience of Sonos, comprising a gallery, performance & social spaces downstairs as well as a lounge, workshop & listening rooms upstairs, all designed to deliver the best possible listening experience.

Interchangeable ceiling panels and rotating wall louvres both fulfill the acute acoustic requirements, and determine the feel of the interiors.

Sonos required an area to host prototyping events with artists and music partners. Brinkworth installed a fully fitted, utilitarian workshop to enable these events and the customisation of the products.

The entire design scheme is steeped in subtle references from various legendary music landmarks including BBC Broadcasting House, Abbey Road Studios, Stax Studio, the Ministry of Sound and Graceland.







INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK







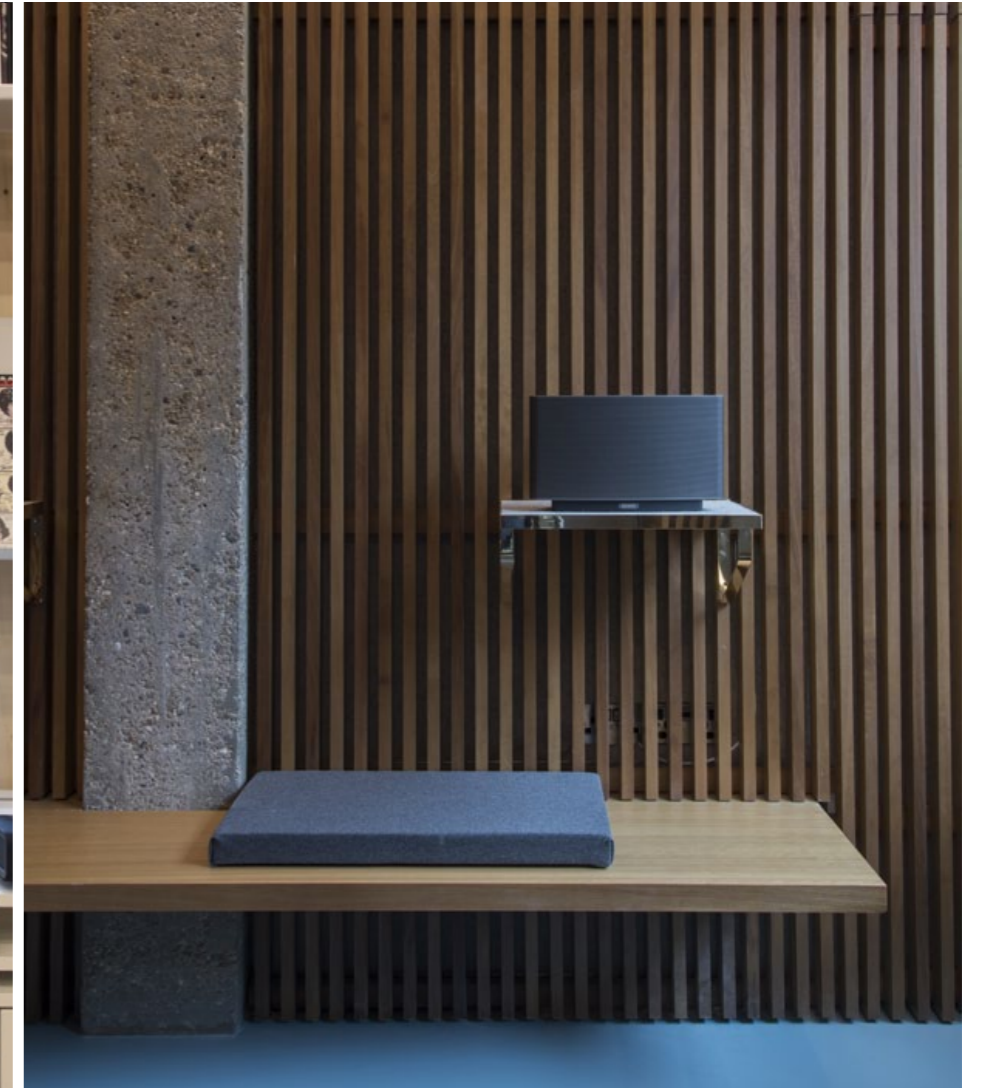


INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK





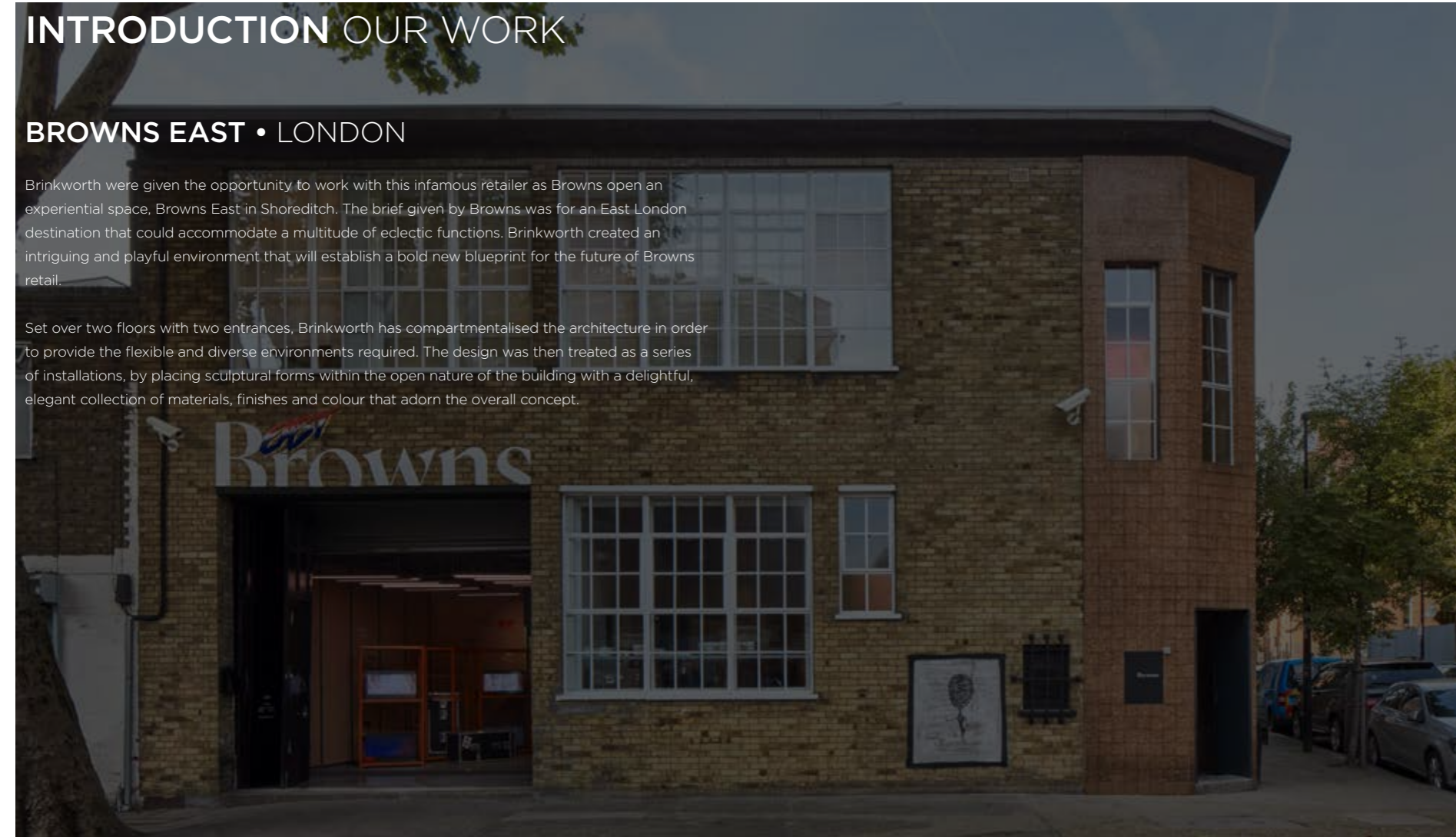


# INTRODUCTION OUR WORK

## BROWNS EAST • LONDON

Brinkworth were given the opportunity to work with this infamous retailer as Browns open an experiential space, Browns East in Shoreditch. The brief given by Browns was for an East London destination that could accommodate a multitude of eclectic functions. Brinkworth created an intriguing and playful environment that will establish a bold new blueprint for the future of Browns retail.

Set over two floors with two entrances, Brinkworth has compartmentalised the architecture in order to provide the flexible and diverse environments required. The design was then treated as a series of installations, by placing sculptural forms within the open nature of the building with a delightful, elegant collection of materials, finishes and colour that adorn the overall concept.







INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK





# DIESEL VILLAGE

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## *Pop-up concept within existing retail*

As part of the case studies in this thesis, I will be discussing four major types of pop-up store strategies. They differ in terms of product offer and retail location type, as well as in commerciality; each balancing a differing proportion of retail sales versus online and marketing outputs. Diesel is a fixed pop-up in an existing store space. This particular concept for Diesel was named Diesel Village. This name was given by the client and relates to its conceptual approach. The store is a conventional pop-up in terms of location but what makes it different is its size, with the area measuring 500 square meters.

The client's brief instructed us to create an exciting pop-up shop with focused design direction. Diesel wanted to promote intrigue within the store: big-impact, high-concept design that makes a statement as well as creating an environment that becomes a talking point and attracts media attention. The brief wanted to drive footfall both in-store and online, creating a product

display to show off the range, applying a creative approach to all elements of the space. Also, we had to retain the essence of a pop-up store on a large scale and defy convention, establish a real wow factor, employing simple artistic treatment to the shell to provide a clean backdrop for design, channelling limited time and budget resources to make the most of the space.

Although the Model of Integration had not been formally realised at the conception of this project, the four pillars of brand, community, space and location were considered. During discussions with the client at the briefing stage, it was noted that Diesel's spatial communication had lost the unique dynamism of the distinctive store design and complementary advertising campaigns of the 1980s and early 1990s.

The marketing team identified the demographic customer profile as Millennials through to Generation X

with a 60% male and 40% female customer split. The high footfall of this store's central London location had at that time a mix of 40% tourism to 60% domestic customers. The four pillars of integration were challenged and these findings were utilised to create the design concept. I will elaborate further as part of my conclusion of this case study on how the Integration Model relates to my Activation Retail Model. We worked collaboratively with the Wilson Brothers while our approach to the brief was to look closely at general movements in Diesel retail and study denim stores as a whole. We noticed that most denim stores had become formulaic in their approach to denim sales, and a uniform material pallet existed. These stores employed clichés such as creating dark, masculine spaces adorned with a faux vintage, antique concept and made abundant use of raw aged timber, rusty steel and distressed leather. Many stores also utilise vintage gym equipment and antique shop-fitting equipment.



We decided to break away from these conventions - also being used by Diesel in their main store - and challenge the standard layout of their product within these spaces. The timing of this project would leave us with only seven weeks to design the concept and implement the project, with the aim of creating a pop-up store in time for Christmas and twelve weeks beyond. The project was further complicated by the fact that the building had a Grade II listed status meaning that no external changes would be granted within this store schedule, and there could be no major internal structural modifications. The budget for this temporary store was also very limited. Our concept approach was to study Diesel's complete product line and then separate it out into isolated ranges. We decided to give each product its own home within this pop-up store. We called this "space within space".

As budget and time were extremely tight, we decided to create structures from readymade garden greenhouse

systems. We chose to adapt and customise a range of different-sized greenhouses to enable us to show the different product ranges in an appropriately scaled space. To clad the structures we chose materials that would best complement the inherent quality of the product, such as the iridium-glazed room that housed metallic and reflective watches. We also carefully placed these structures independently of the shell architecture to create a customer journey that encouraged a layered display of the product range.

In the Diesel pop up case study we were instructed by the client to place menswear downstairs and womenswear upstairs. Retailers who observe that their male customers are less likely travel to floors beyond the ground floor have regularly requested this. To make the greenhouses look like part of a village and isolate them from the shell interior, we took the cost-effective approach of spraying out the existing shell in two tones of grey - one darker for

the men's area and one lighter for the women's area on the first floor. This neutralised the shell finishes so they did not over-compete with the installation structures. Due to budget, time and planning issues we decided to neutralise and disguise the existing staircase by over-cladding and relining it with black medium-density fibreboard. This then sat quietly against the greenhouses.

The structures incorporated standard but adapted shelving details, and were clad in a series of different materials, creating a variety of different spaces, some open and others small and intimate. The materials vary from recycled plastic and rough-sawn timber to iridium-tinted, coloured glass. A single material was chosen for each greenhouse. In some instances, we adapted the greenhouse structures to have alternative openings, so it was possible to travel into one space while the clothing rail would then extend past that pod up to an adjacent greenhouse with its contrasting atmosphere and product.





Small accessories such as watches were housed in the colourful; iridium vinyl-coated rooms that changed colour depending on the angle the customer viewed the space. The spaces were scaled proportionately to the size and nature of these small accessories.

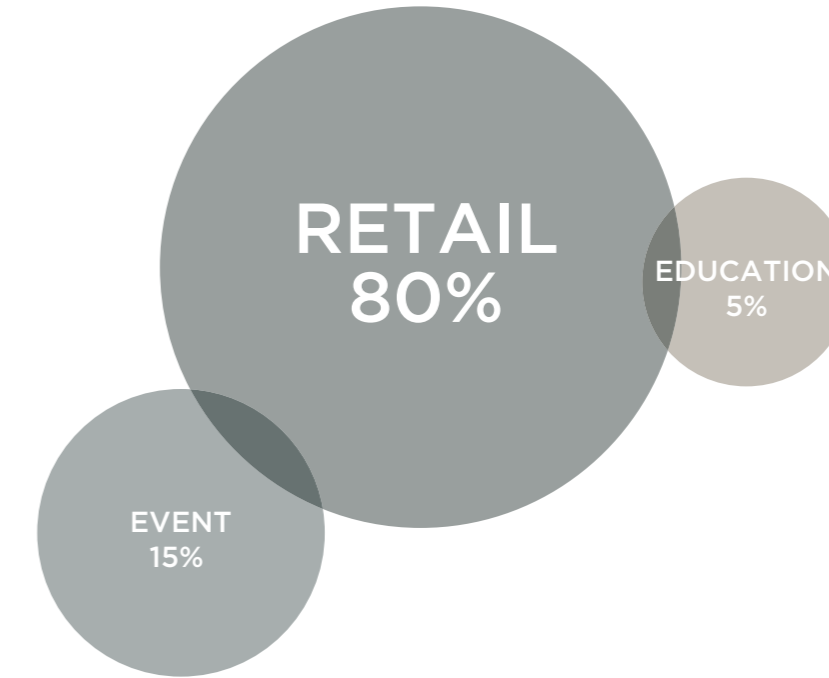
Wayfinding and graphic signage were created using simply designed, self-adhesive vinyl in combination with low-cost fluorescent strip lights. These lights were effectively incorporated into a large bridging structure at the top of the stairs, which gave a clear, enticing draw to the first floor and its womenswear department. It is crucial to get footfall throughout a retail space, and eye-catching pieces are an effective method for enticing and persuading shoppers to navigate through it. This resourceful approach overcame many obstacles and transformed the space into an expressive and coherent

bespoke vehicle for Diesel to demonstrate and delight with their product offer. An indication of its success was that trading figures were strong and the longevity of the store was extended by an additional month. Also, it is interesting to note that this solution looked radically different from the seasonal activity in other stores. All of Diesel's neighbouring competitors had Christmas decorations at this time as well as the large 'sale' signage afterwards.

In hindsight, it is clear through examining the percentage usage of this store with its 80% retail, 5% brand/product education and only 15% event space, that the customer community aspect was not addressed. This built environment does not house the function of hospitality and lacks sufficient event space. The question arises as to why these proportionate functions are out of sync with

my Model of Integration? The evidence reveals that it was due to the date this project was completed, i.e. prior to the influential power of social media platforms. The physical store space was seen as an independent beacon to raise brand awareness but although this was marketed online, the change in customer brand relationship had yet to transpire. Therefore, I do not class Diesel Village as an Activation Retail Environment because it does not need major activation. Had this project been briefed today, the outcome of integrated flexible hospitality and events space would have harnessed and encouraged brand and customer community. In the 5 years since this project was conceived and delivered, it demonstrates how the emergence of digital platforms and social media have affected the role of an interior designer for apparel retail environments. ■

## DIESEL ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT



## OVERALL CONCEPTS // EXCITING POP UP SHOP WITH A FOCUSED DESIGN DIRECTION

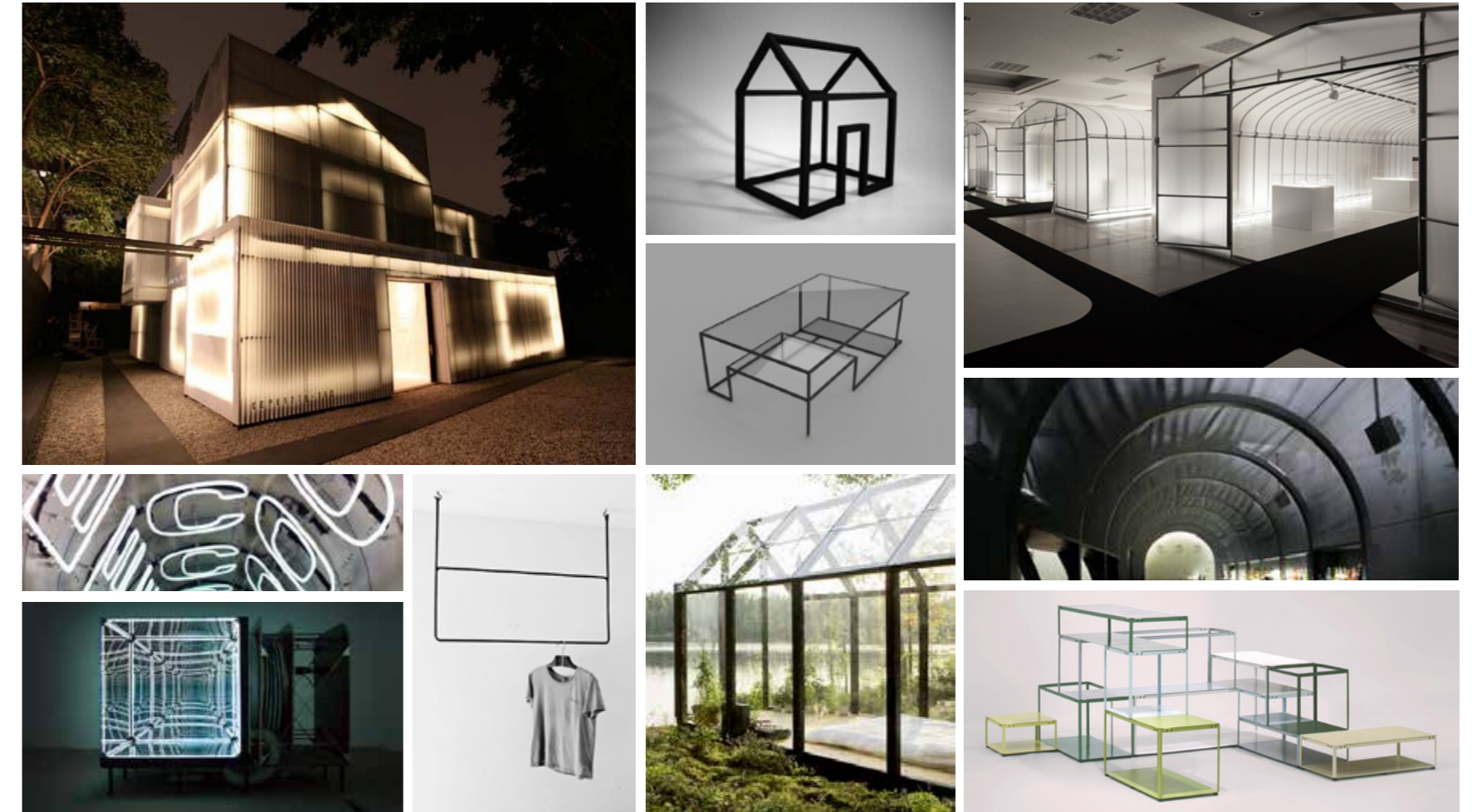
PROMOTE INTRIGUE WITHIN THE STORE/ BIG IMPACT, HIGH CONCEPT DESIGN THAT MAKES A STATEMENT/ AN ENVIRONMENT THAT BECOMES A TALKING POINT AND ATTRACTS MEDIA ATTENTION/ DRIVE FOOTFALL BOTH IN STORE AND ONLINE/ CREATIVE PRODUCT DISPLAY TO INCREASE SALES/ ATMOSPHERIC LIGHTING TO ESTABLISH MOOD/ FOCUSED PRODUCT LIGHTING TO SHOW OFF RANGE/ CREATIVE APPROACH TO ALL ELEMENTS OF THE SPACE/ RETAIN THE ESSENCE OF A POP UP STORE ON A LARGE SCALE AND DEFY CONVENTION/ ESTABLISH A REAL WOW FACTOR/ SIMPLE ARTISTIC TREATMENTS TO THE SHELL TO PROVIDE CLEAN BACK DROP FOR DESIGN/ CHANNEL LIMITED TIME AND BUDGET RESOURCES TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE SPACE



DIESEL © brinkworth

## OPT 2: SPACE WITHIN SPACE // DIVIDE SPACE FOR FOCUSED PRODUCT DISPLAY

UTILISING PRE FABRICATED MICRO ENCLOSED SPACES TO DIFFERENTIATE AREAS OF THE STORE/ GREENHOUSES/ BLACK PAINTED SHEDS/ POLY TUNNELS/ TRANSLUCENT, OPAQUE AND MIRRORED SURFACES USED WITH BATON LIGHTING CREATING REPETITION/ SPACES USED AS THEATRICAL LAB CHEMICAL DENIM TREATMENT ROOMS

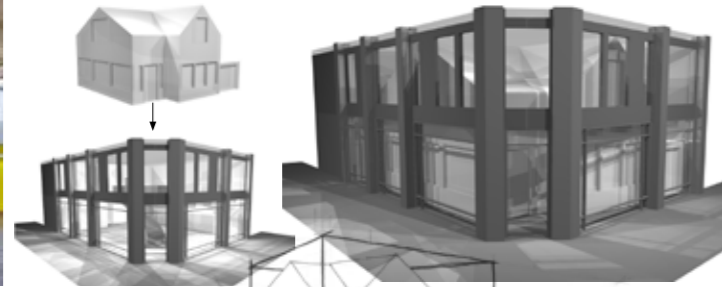


DIESEL © brinkworth

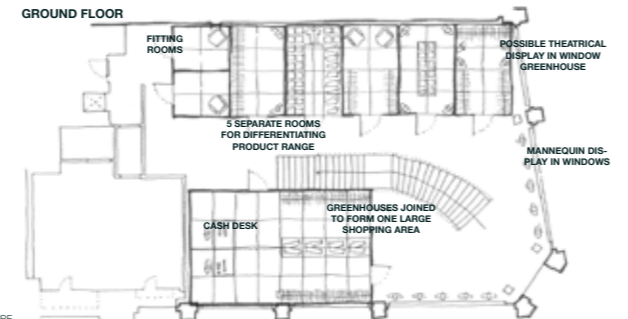
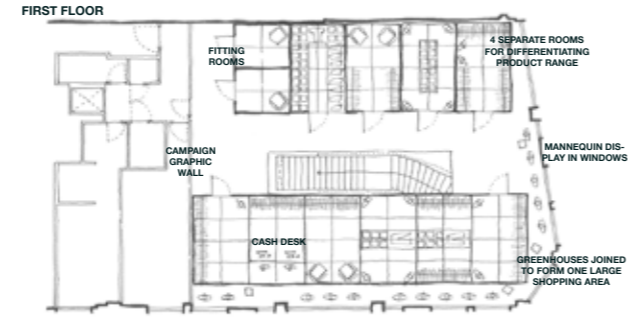
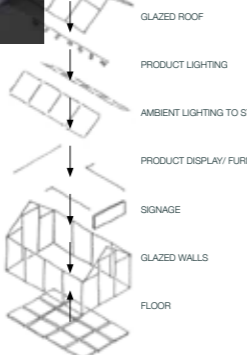
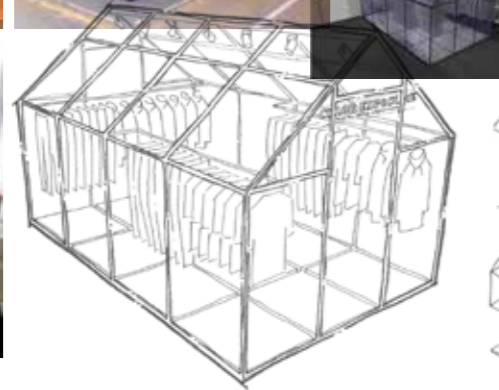


## OPT 2: SPACE WITHIN SPACE // DIVIDE SPACE FOR FOCUSED PRODUCT DISPLAY

UTILISING PRE FABRICATED MICRO ENCLOSED SPACES TO DIFFERENTIATE AREAS OF THE STORE/ GREENHOUSES/ BLACK PAINTED SHEDS/ POLY TUNNELS/ TRANSLUCENT, OPAQUE AND MIRRORED SURFACES USED WITH BATON LIGHTING CREATING REPETITION/ SPACES USED AS THEATRICAL LAB CHEMICAL DENIM TREATMENT ROOMS

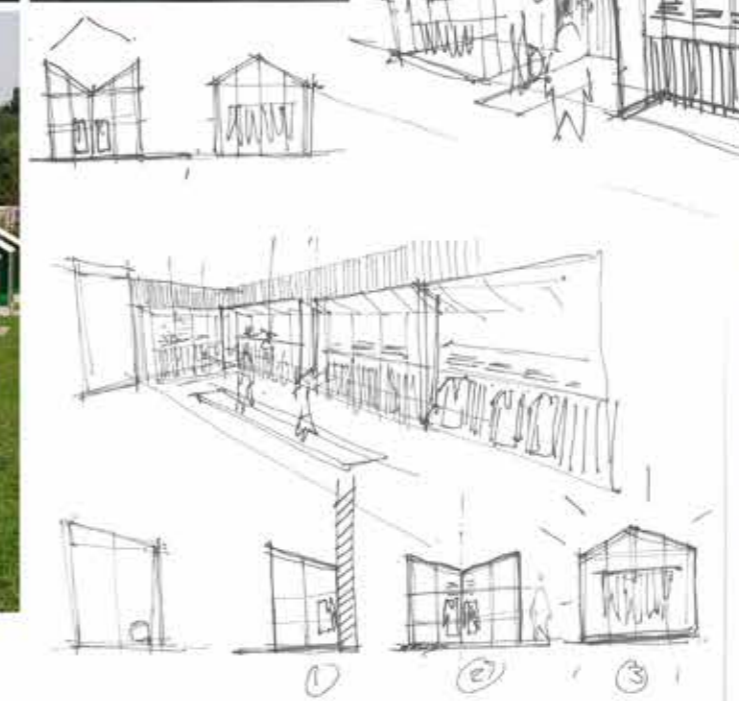


PUSHING THE CONCEPT OF SPACE WITHIN SPACE, SIMPLE SITE BUILT TIMBER/STEEL FRAME 'HOME' CONSTRUCTED OVER TWO FLOORS WITHIN SITE. HOUSE LIKE ROOMS SETOUT TO DIFFERENTIATE PRODUCT RANGES AND BRING AN UNEXPECTED AIR OF DOMESTICITY TO THE SCHEME AS WELL AS AN INTERESTING CUSTOMER JOURNEY. STRUCTURE TO BE CLAD IN TRANSLUCENT POLY CARBONATE AND LIT FROM WITHIN CREATING IMPACT FROM STREET LEVEL.



UTILISING PRE FABRICATED OFF THE SHELF GREENHOUSES PAINTED OUT BLACK AND SET WITHIN A WHITE WASHED SHELL. GREEN HOUSES FORM SEPARATE ROOMS FOR DISTINCT PRODUCT RANGE SEPARATION AND CAN ALSO BE ADAPTED TO FORM LARGER ROOMS WHERE REQUIRED. INDIVIDUAL SPACES ALSO FORM FITTING ROOMS AND CAN BE USED FOR THEATRICAL DISPLAYS, INCLUDING PRODUCT MANUFACTURING PROCESS DEMONSTRATIONS. ALL LIGHTING CONFINED TO THE GREEN HOUSES TO PROMOTE ATMOSPHERE AND ENCOURAGE CUSTOMERS TO EXPLORE SPACES.

## GREENHOUSE // APPROPRIATING GREENHOUSES IN CREATIVE WAYS





**FURNITURE DISPLAY // SUBVERTING GREEN HOUSE FURNITURE**



**DIESEL** © brinkworth

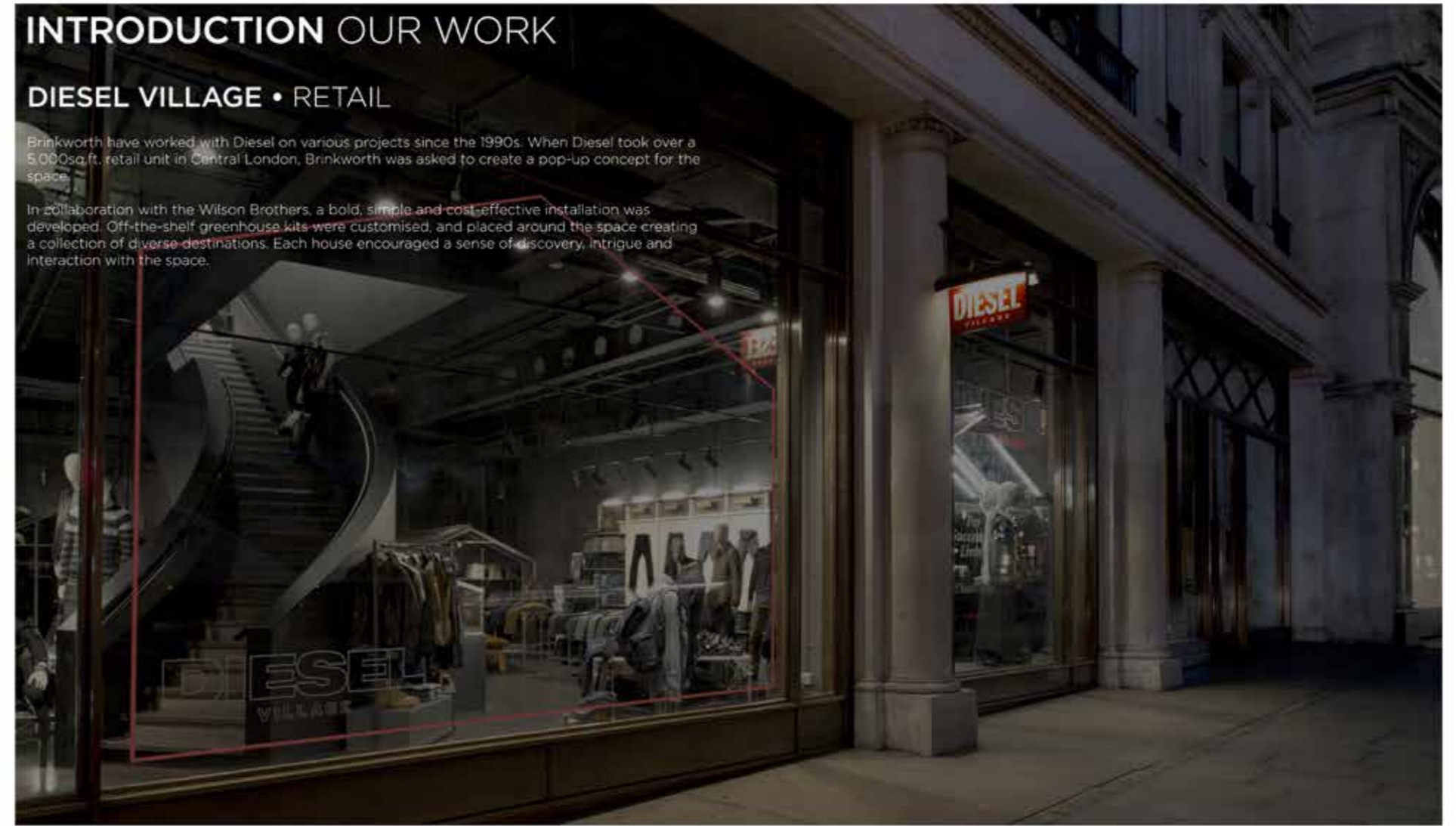
BRINKWORTH

**INTRODUCTION OUR WORK**

**DIESEL VILLAGE • RETAIL**

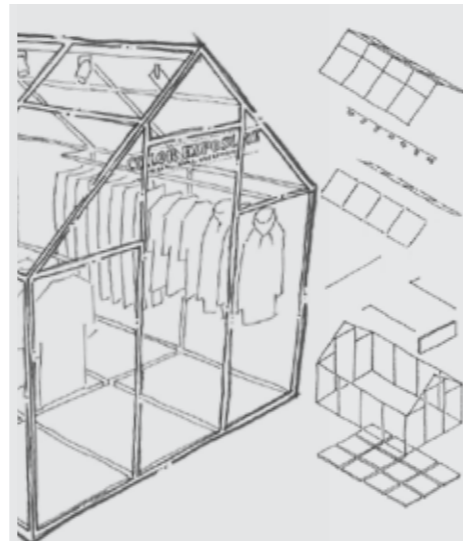
Brinkworth have worked with Diesel on various projects since the 1990s. When Diesel took over a 5,000sq. ft. retail unit in Central London, Brinkworth was asked to create a pop-up concept for the space.

In collaboration with the Wilson Brothers, a bold, simple and cost-effective installation was developed. Off-the-shelf greenhouse kits were customised, and placed around the space creating a collection of diverse destinations. Each house encouraged a sense of discovery, intrigue and interaction with the space.



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK













# CONVERSE

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## *Pop-up Music Festival concept*

This Converse mobile pop-up concept travelled to events attended by their potential Millennial customers, offering live customisation of their products in a creative collaborative process. This was a unique and groundbreaking approach to pop-up retail. My Model of Integration with its four pillars of brand, community, space and location were challenged within the design process. The key driver was the creation of a pop-up that builds on a customer community. This case study highlights the question regarding how digital and social media platforms have affected the interior designer's role in creating apparel retail environments. In this instance, the conceptual approach was to create a space that promoted the creative interaction between the brand and its customer community. This approach to creating brand-building customer community spaces is an early example of this typology within Brinkworth's portfolio.

The consumer was perceived as a partner and this pop-up event harnessed the creative collaboration between Converse and its customers, so that they could produce a bespoke, customised product. Activation Retail

Environments produced an outcome that integrated 15% retail, 60% event, 10% brand/product education and 15% hospitality, with the effective integration of physical space with digital technology. The event pop-up is able to proportionally transform and scale as it moves from a range of different locations. On reflection, I would relish the opportunity to create a solid building that could telescopically alter its plan and elevation as the internal retail activity demanded. In Din's New Retail, Victoria Radica, director of the Selfridges department store, claims: "We want to be stimulated by new ideas, music, fashion, art, invention and food" (Din, 2000: 213). We felt that this statement was a useful starting point for the development of the Converse concept, which was at the time a new ethos of approaching pop-up retail. It facilitates immediate customisation of its products by its target audience by stimulating interactivity between product and customer.

At first, Converse approached Brinkworth to act as a consultant for their global retail strategy. They then issued a brief for the creation of mobile pop-up stores/experience centres that would be placed at strategic

brand-building music festivals in London. The client had a clear idea of what their brand DNA was; an edgy, youthful, independent brand closely aligned to music and the relevant changing youth subcultures. The target audience they wanted us to reach out to was a younger, fashion-conscious customer. They identified two music festivals and decided to become major sponsors of these events. The first event was Hoxton Festival in Shoreditch, East London – a festival aimed at Millennials, which at the time was a trendy, alternative and creative part of the city. After EFestival, Converse would then relocate to a seasonal music festival called the Underage Festival in Victoria Park, also located in east London. I have chosen to feature this project in my thesis as it is an example of a pop-up mobile store that moves with changing events and has a freestanding pavilion with an adaptable independent structure. I have also become aware that the business of creating bespoke installations in a variety of ways within retail has become increasingly more influential in broadening retail markets.

Our creative process when working on the project was to look at Converse closely while being aware of Nike,



which had just purchased Converse. It was important for us to come up with a solution that would be radically different from anything that Nike was offering in order to retain Converse's individual brand identity. More specifically, we scrutinised the original, black Chuck Taylor basketball boot, which was Converse's first product and was incredibly popular at the time of the brief. This product accounted for the majority of their footwear sales. We had noticed the ankle protector on the inside with the Converse star, originally a purely functional detail that became the most iconic and recognisable part of this key item.

At Converse headquarters in Boston, we were shown a new digital clothing printer that had been developed by a partner company. This machine could recognise the rubber and canvas elements located on the Chuck Taylor shoe, and print digitally using indelible ink on the appropriate canvas surface. We were inspired by the possibilities that would be achieved by transferring a variety of illustrated images directly on to the product as a bespoke offer. At the same time, Nike had launched a concept called Nike iD. This was located within Nike

Town stores where a customer could come in and order a bespoke pair of trainers with a custom colour and surface choice. This process took one month to deliver. We, however, were looking at the exciting prospect of having this customising process completed within ten minutes. We thought it would be exciting to offer customers the ability of a much broader customisable opportunity. We felt the door was open to creating a customised product that was inherently more individual and suited to the Converse culture. We called the concept "The Star On The Inside", as is it was felt that it represented the aim of encouraging customers to implement their own creativity and their individual expressive nature.

Another influential factor was the fact that the Chuck Taylor was a low-tech product, the polar opposite of the Nike Airmax. We were inspired to mate the high-tech process of this 3D printing method with a low-tech, hand-crafter application. The activity of customising was to be at the heart of the Converse pop-up stores. The approach was to make the printer available to all and allow the product to be directly customised by the individual using simple processes to complement the

printing, such as painting, drawing, stamping, riveting and creatively weaving laces on to their shoes. We also saw the staff as important creative partners who could play the role of mentors to help tease out ideas and guide the customers through the process. The staff were employed because they had the added skills of being artists, graffiti artists and illustrators directly taken from street culture. The sites had very different layouts – the first being rectangular in shape, while the second was an L-shaped space. A decision was therefore made early to design a modular platform that would enable the pavilion to scale and flex for relevant sites in the future. We also chose the predominant materials to both be high-tech and low-tech, which would relate to both the nature of the shoe and the high-end technology to be housed in these structures. Budget and time were a constraint and both had to be outlined to the client from the outset, as initially they did not know how much to spend. This is unusual and challenging for a designer; in most instances, a design brief encompasses both scale and location, aligned to a clear and relevant budget. In this instance, we put our finger in the air and designed three scaled concepts of low-, medium- and





high-bracket options. The client then chose to spend within the lower bracket.

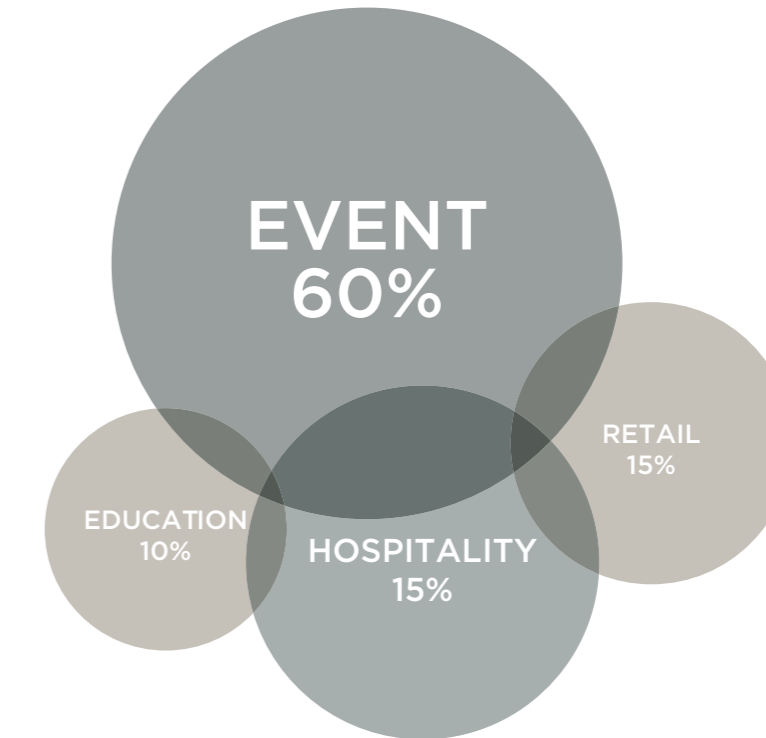
We created a structure from simple, hard-wearing key clamp metal frames in a galvanised finish and contrasted this with a recycled wood-chip moulded pallet, taking inspiration from the classic Chuck Taylor shoe. This stackable pallet material, usually used and moved by forklift trucks, is a great component that has lots of character. It is fit for purpose; the only alteration being made was to stain its natural wood colour finished black. This readymade item had a very strong three-dimensional compound form. When laid up in vertical surfaces, the protruding shapes create a very impressive and almost sci-fi articulate pattern. The creative use of this material gave the Converse musical festival stores a unique language of their own. As designers we enjoyed the parallels of the original intended use for the pallets and the subsequent need for the structures that they now created to move and adapt to new venues. The main structure was designed to have a covered weatherproof area to house and protect the digital printer, as well as staff and customers, from the elements. This was placed at the heart of the piece and the ceiling was used to display hanging examples of Chuck Taylors that had

already been customised. The hanging trainers also acted as a nod to the American street-life culture of hanging trainers on lampposts to identify drug-dealing corners. Also present was an integrated tower structure with an internal staircase. This had the dual purpose of acting as a lookout tower to house a DJ and also being a way for the pavilion to be seen clearly from afar. Its purpose was also to hold all the stock safely for the duration of the event. Also fixed to the side of this structure was a basketball hoop. The Converse logos were in keeping with popular stencil graffiti, simply sprayed on to the black surface with white paint, intentionally left with overspray and defects. They were a clear callout to the recognisable Converse brand.

This structure and its steel exoskeleton literally 'framed' a larger area. This outlined the designated three-dimensional area and gave a clear demarcation of the space. This frame also allowed for a white, semi-opaque triple ceiling panel to be added, helping to create rain cover and shade from the sun. However, it was not dark or foreboding. The furniture that surrounded the pavilion had continuity with the rest of the structure by being constructed from sterling board. Sterling board also has flecks held together in resin, so had a very similar

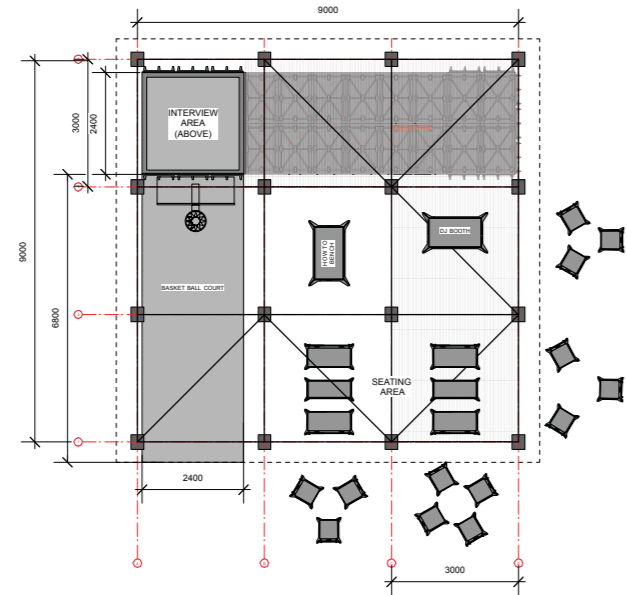
surface appearance to the pallet components used on the rest of the structure. These flat boards were also treated with a black finish to unify all of the components. This consistent finish clearly identified the pavilion and all its components as a single structure, and stood in contrast to its park surroundings and other neighbouring stalls. The furniture and fittings that we created had an aesthetic that was consistent with the design of the structure, but they were also intentionally proportioned to be unusually low and wide in stance. This was a functional solution as the grassy surface on which they stood was soft and uneven. Another contributing factor in the decision to make this somewhat squat furniture was the fact that, as the event was a music festival; the potentially inebriated customers were far less likely to fall off them! Again these design challenges created a unique language enabling them to be fit for purpose. The whole concept of using utilitarian materials resonated through the entire design process, from the broader architectural shell down to the paintbrushes used by the customers. All of these elements reflected the construction of the Converse product, and its simple monochromatic design complemented Converse's brand DNA at the time. ■

## CONVERSE ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT



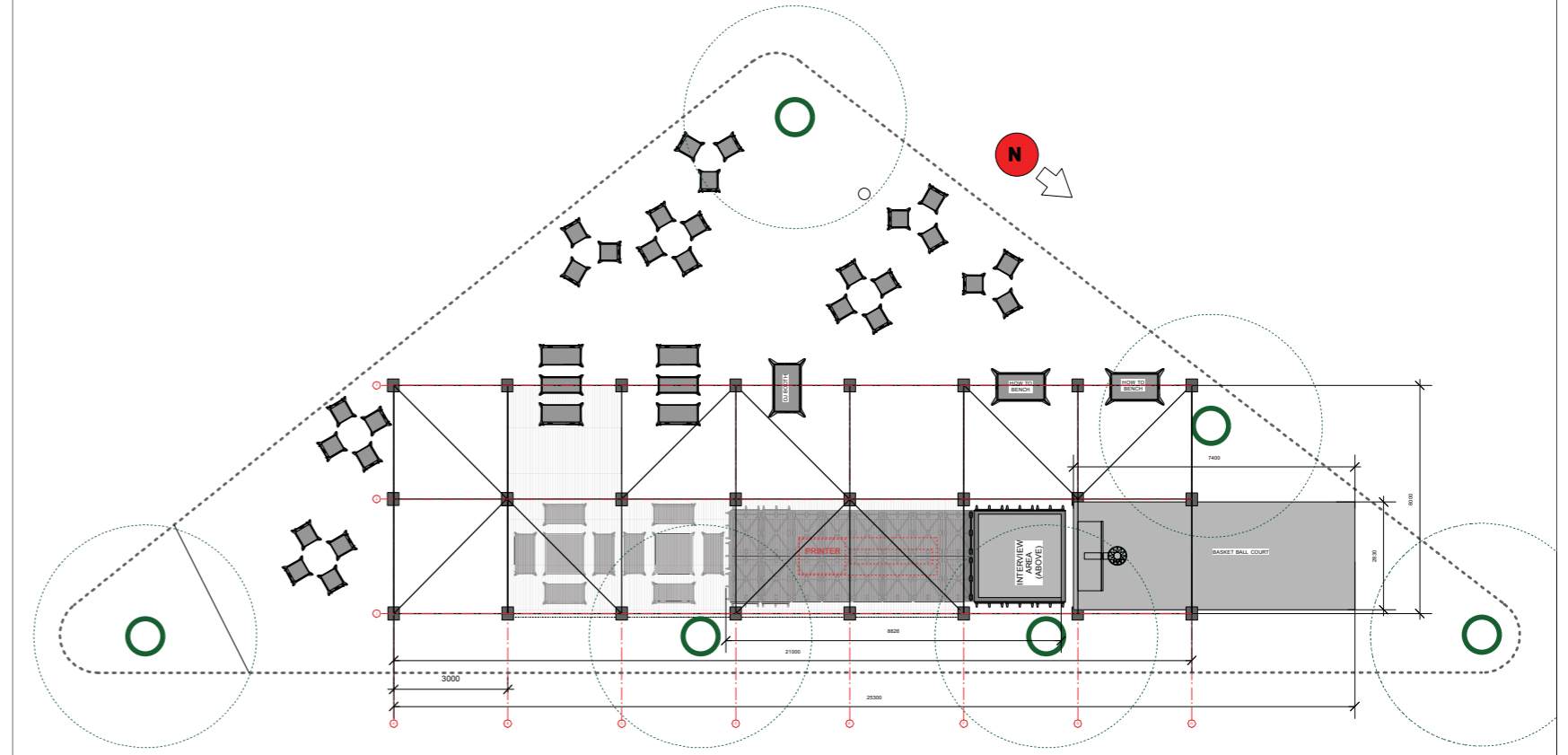






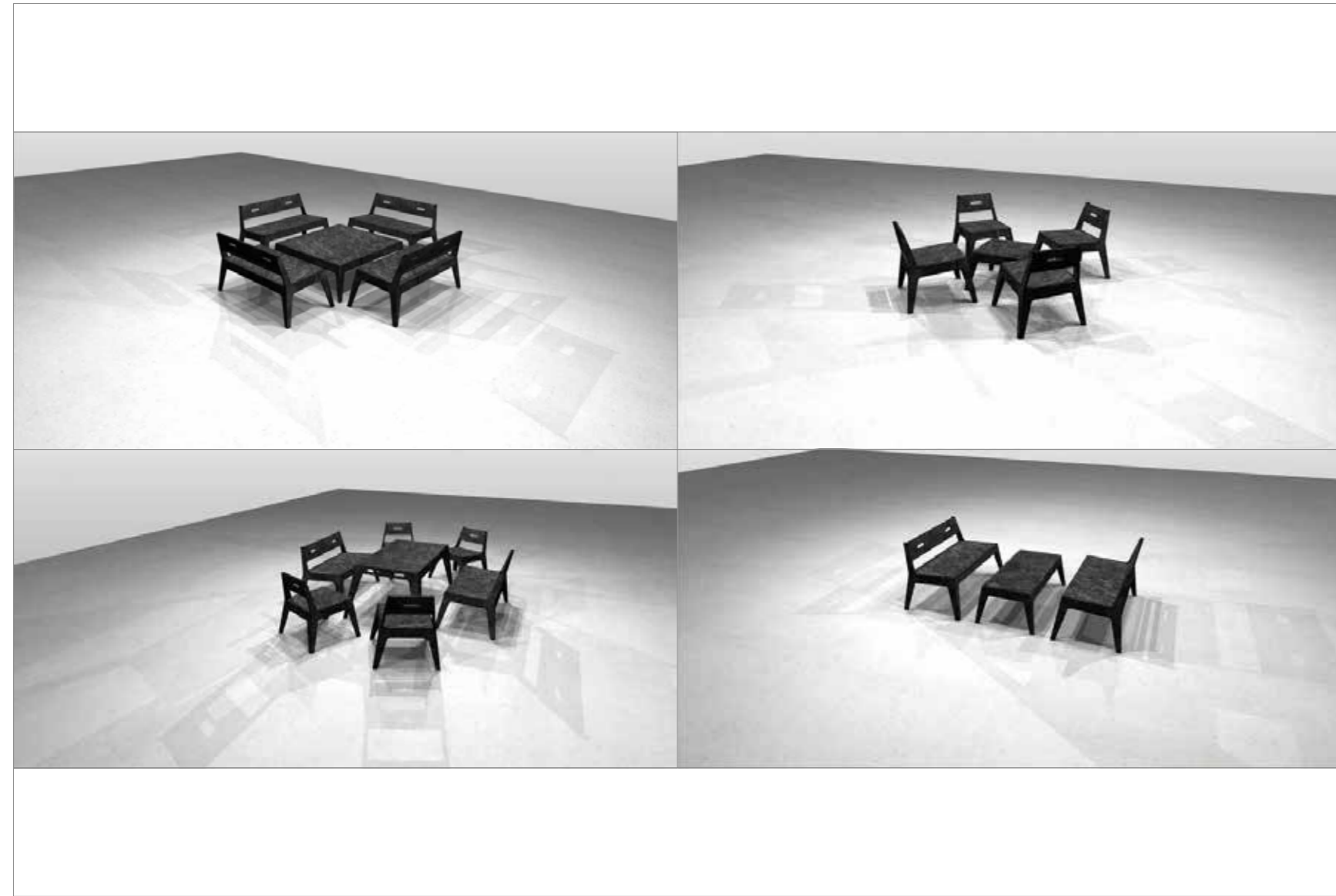
**CONVERSE** **THE 1-2-3-4** **brinkworth** **1000 Festival**

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DESIGNER: [Name]	DATE: [Date]	DESIGNER: [Name]	DATE: [Date]



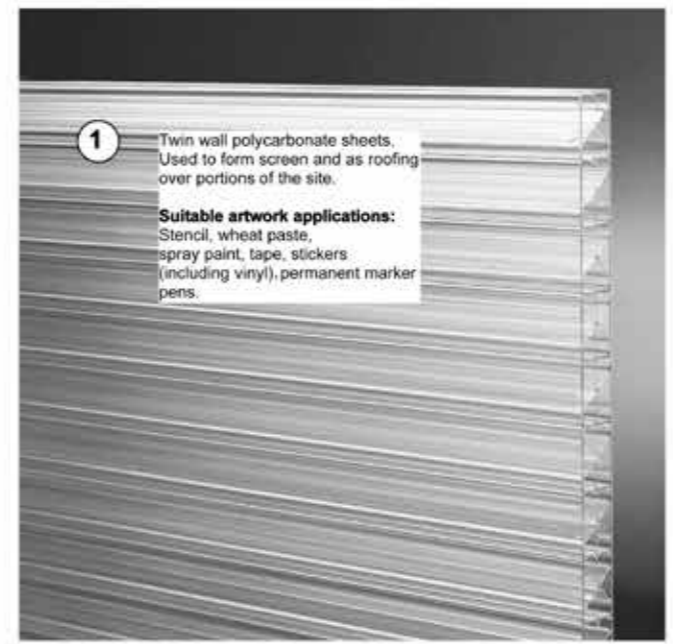
**CONVERSE** **UNDERAGE FESTIVAL** **brinkworth** **1000 Festival**

PROJECT: 2112	DATE: 2012	PROJECT: 2112	DATE: 2012
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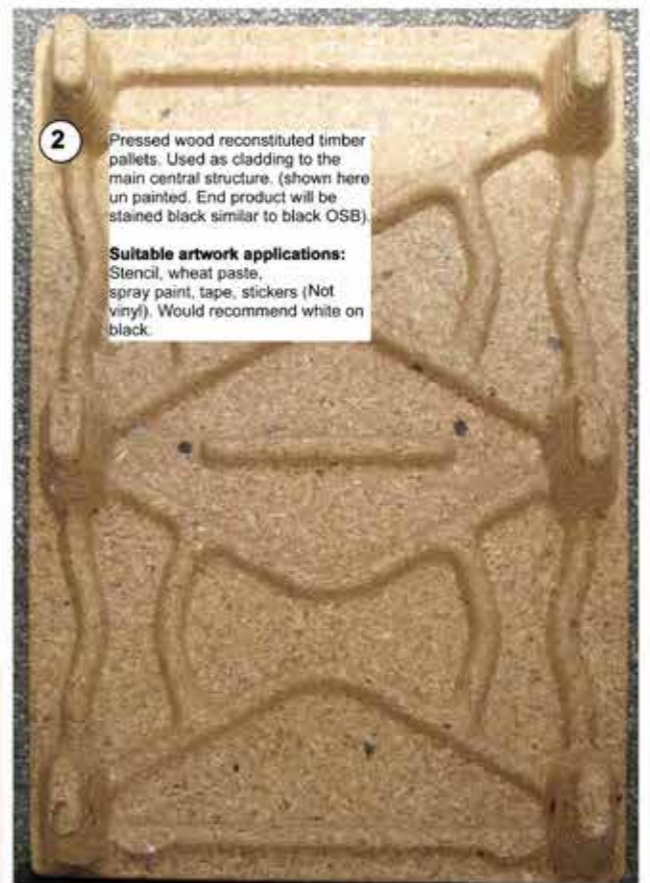


CONVERSE

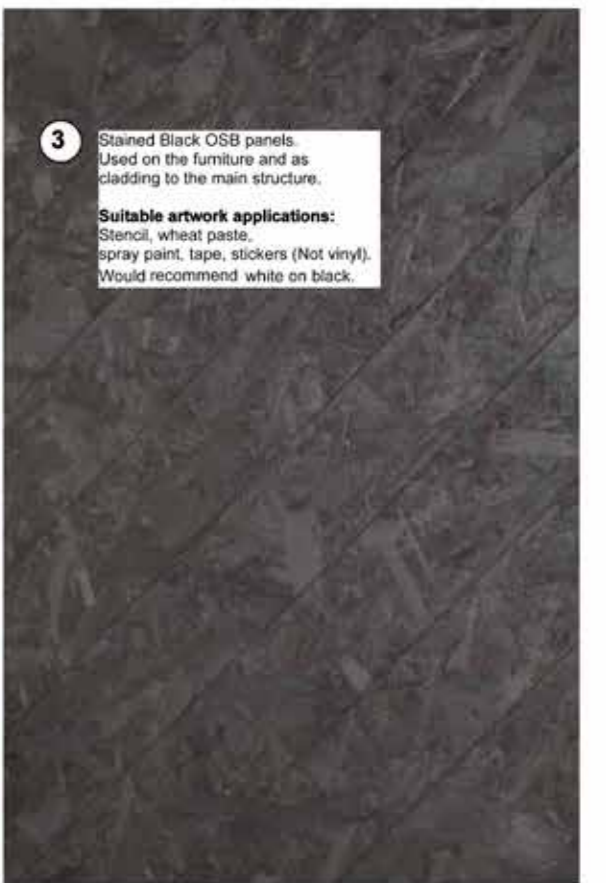
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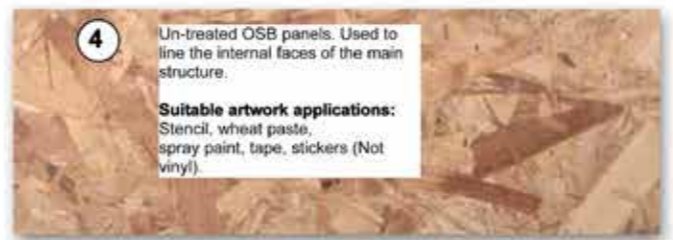
**1** Twin wall polycarbonate sheets. Used to form screen and as roofing over portions of the site.  
**Suitable artwork applications:** Stencil, wheat paste, spray paint, tape, stickers (including vinyl), permanent marker pens.



**2** Pressed wood reconstituted timber pallets. Used as cladding to the main central structure. (shown here un painted. End product will be stained black similar to black OSB).  
**Suitable artwork applications:** Stencil, wheat paste, spray paint, tape, stickers (Not vinyl). Would recommend white on black.



**3** Stained Black OSB panels. Used on the furniture and as cladding to the main structure.  
**Suitable artwork applications:** Stencil, wheat paste, spray paint, tape, stickers (Not vinyl). Would recommend white on black.



**4** Un-treated OSB panels. Used to line the internal faces of the main structure.  
**Suitable artwork applications:** Stencil, wheat paste, spray paint, tape, stickers (Not vinyl).





INTRODUCTION OUR WORK



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK









# RAPHA MOBILE

## Mobile concept

The mobile pop-up vehicle was destined to travel to a series of different cycling events. Its customer community is a well-informed, passionate one that will benefit from the services the mobile vehicle has to offer. It was key in the design approach to utilise the internal volumes as well as the external facing area. Due to the vehicle's 'nomadic' purpose it develops and alters during its activation. In Sophie Borge's Brand Spaces, when being asked about the future of retail, Dennis Paphitis, the director of Aesop, states: "Perhaps the only solution here is a store on wheels that can be transferred from state to state and set up as required" (Borges, 2013: 58).

One of our successful and fruitful collaborations is that with the Wilson Brothers, which has been going now for ten years. Ben Wilson is from an industrial design background while his brother Oscar works with illustration and three-dimensional design. Both brothers have an incredible and broad set of skills and when they collaborate they produce a remarkable creative outcome. This is particularly exciting when combined with Brinkworth's own design solutions. At present they are collaborating on a series of different projects with Brinkworth, including Google, Puma and Supreme. Ben and Oscar were tasked with designing and delivering a mobile vehicle-based store that complemented Rapha's physical street store. We had previously discussed with

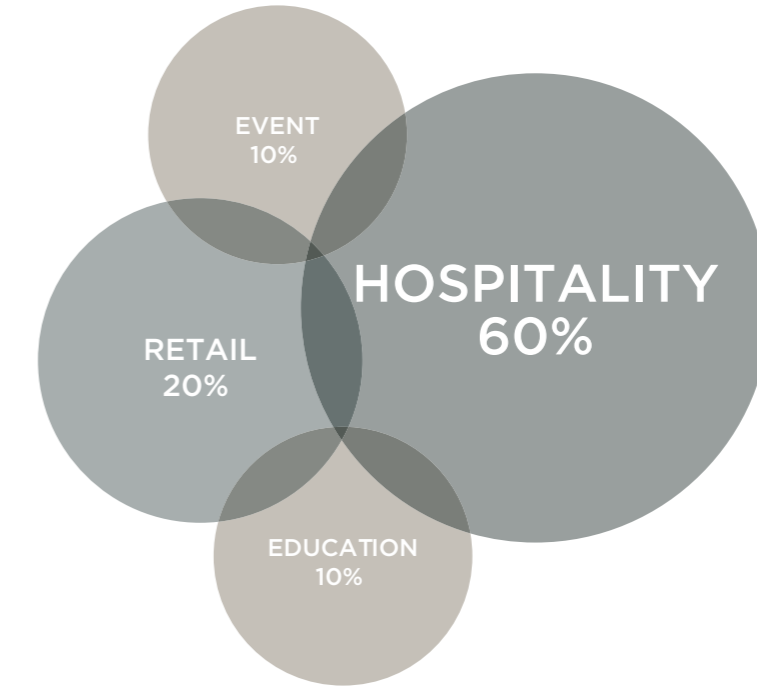
the client the merit of combining both physical store presence with pop-up and mobile stores in order to activate a very broad client base.

The Rapha mobile solution was designed around the concept of adapting a seven-and-a-half-ton horsebox to become a mobile store that would enable the brand to travel, following premier cycling races and events. The truck functions as a store, carrying product and display tables. It utilises the horse tie brackets that are usually found inside as external clothing display devices. Aside from the retail offer, the vehicle also serves food and drink, further reaching out to its audience directly at the target event. The Rapha mobile store also has a large television screen embedded in one side elevation, with a pullout awning to protect from the elements. The screen is the focal point of the vehicle, and enables it to become a venue to watch the race either live or as replays. A designer needs to ensure that the vehicle chosen is completely fit for purpose in terms of reliability and ongoing maintenance. In this particular case, I believe this resourceful solution engages customers and communicates the passion and DNA of the Rapha brand. It is crucial to engineer and consider weight when designing a mobile solution. In this instance, all furniture was designed to be stacked inside the truck, so the interior design reflected this, taking into consideration that the space needed

to be laid out to accommodate the stackable furniture and durable enough to withstand daily loading and unloading. In order to utilise the little space available within the truck, the furniture had an integrated display system on its surface. This combined tables where visitors could eat and drink with the display of capsule collections, visible underneath. The Rapha vehicle has a monotone, printed, digital image of the mountain road-riding scene on the rear of the vehicle and the rest of the vehicle is painted a graphite finish. The only small nod to the brand is a small, laser-cut metal sign on the front grille of the truck that emulates vehicle-manufacturing language. The approach that Rapha has taken to the creation of this mobile pop-up concept resonates with its overall 'toned down' visual identity, and it allows the brand to travel with its customers and thus be associated with the most exciting cycling events.

Through hospitality and service, the mobile store harnesses proactively the changing nature of the relationship between a brand and its customer community. This is driven by the social change due to digital media platforms as previously discussed. It achieves this by facilitating a mobile social hub that mutually benefits Rapha and its customers by building on physical bonds through the mutual love of road racing. ■

## RAPHA MOBILE ACTIVATION RETAIL ENVIRONMENT



## RAPHA MOBILE CYCLE CLUB • MOBILE RETAIL CONCEPT

The Rapha Mobile Cycle Club is a unique combination of gallery, shop and café.  
 A meeting place where riders can share their passion for road racing.  
 The Mobile Cycle Club visited a different event every week including the Paris-Roubaix Challenge, the two Etape du Tour sportives, races in the UK and the World Championships in Copenhagen.

Wilson Brothers converted a 7.5 tonne truck to create the Mobile Cycle Club. The vehicle is equipped with a retractable awning, beneath which a set of 6 glazed-top oak and steel display tables house Rapha product, publications and ephemera. Partnered with 6 (stackable) benches, these double as café style tables from which to view race footage on a satellite-fed 60" TV screen whilst enjoying a free coffee.  
 An exterior display system, comprising a grid of ring-hooks fixed to the side of the vehicle, enables the Cycle Club environment to change at every stop, displaying special jerseys alongside framed photography and race memorabilia.

**About Rapha:**  
 Rapha creates the finest cycling clothing and accessories in the world. Designed without compromise for the most discerning rider, Rapha products blend style with optimum performance. A passion for road racing means Rapha is more than just a product company. It is an online emporium of performance roadwear, accessories, publications and events, all celebrating the glory and suffering of road riding.













## *Launch and marketing pop-up concept*

Fresh Britain, a branding agency, approached Brinkworth to collaborate on launching a new apparel brand, UVU. This brand aspired to be a premium performance-running brand, making specialist technical apparel for running in extreme climates. We were informed that the brand DNA values were clean, functional, technical and monotone. The strategy in launching this brand was twofold. The first part was to design a branded environment that housed a small screening area and a presentation showroom, to sell the product as a concept to the press as well as potential retail partners. The second stage would be a pop-up store, but with dramatic impact. I have included this project in my thesis because it is a drastically different type of pop-up store to those already discussed. The Model of Integration is utilised to produce a pop-up store concept that includes a showroom and a marketing suite whose purpose was solely to generate interest and sales for its online business. The separate elements would be able to take advantage of the chosen locations for the marketing event and pop-up showroom to optimise brand awareness through direct contact with a prospective customer community. These two elements

would then pave the way for the launch of online and physical store retail activity. As the purpose of the display was to demonstrate how incredibly functional the garments were, the brand embarked on the ambitious task of creating and sponsoring a marathon in the North Pole as well as setting up pop-up stores at the start and finish lines.

The National Geographic Society was chosen as the venue for the launch event in London. This was deemed an unconventional but relevant choice of venue because of the notions of endurance, exploration and the 'great outdoors' that the society evoked, all closely fitting to the product being launched. Our conceptual approach for how to build the pop-up was to study lightweight structures, subsequently choosing two different iconic tent structures to give simple forms to our designs. This approach is functionally relevant because of the nature of the project. The society's Georgian Room provided a grand atmosphere that also acted as a stark contrast to the simple, dark, triangulated tent structure that was ultimately chosen. This tensile structure would

support the product and incorporate all necessary lighting to illuminate the product housed within. These structures were made to stand independently from the listed room. Taking influence from the seasonal advertising campaign, we reduced the illumination to create an intense, dramatic atmosphere. The tensioned structures with their black fabric provided a large surface area to display the printed monotone graphics that gave an insight into the technical speciation of the garments and their performance statistics. Technical climbing straps suspended the product. The soft multi-coloured character of the lighting gave a 'radioactive' illumination. The simple but restrained triangular structures mirrored the UVU brand DNA - they were graphic, tall, elegant yet effective. A great advantage was that they were easy to produce, assemble and collapse. A key feature of the room was the blacked-out windows and the installation of a deep, soft rubberised floor. The interlocking tiles gave an incredible softness for those walking on it and greatly reduced the noise, creating a dark and somewhat ominous atmosphere. A crucial factor to consider when installing this floor was that



it could be removed without causing damage to the existing floor finish.

Having completed the first part of the launch we moved our attention to the other tensile structure to be erected at the North Pole. For this we worked closely with a company called Shelter Systems, who are experts at the erection of temporary structures in extreme environments. To contrast with the triangular design of the showroom tent, a white dome structure was selected for its inherent advantages of being able to withstand very high winds and freezing conditions.

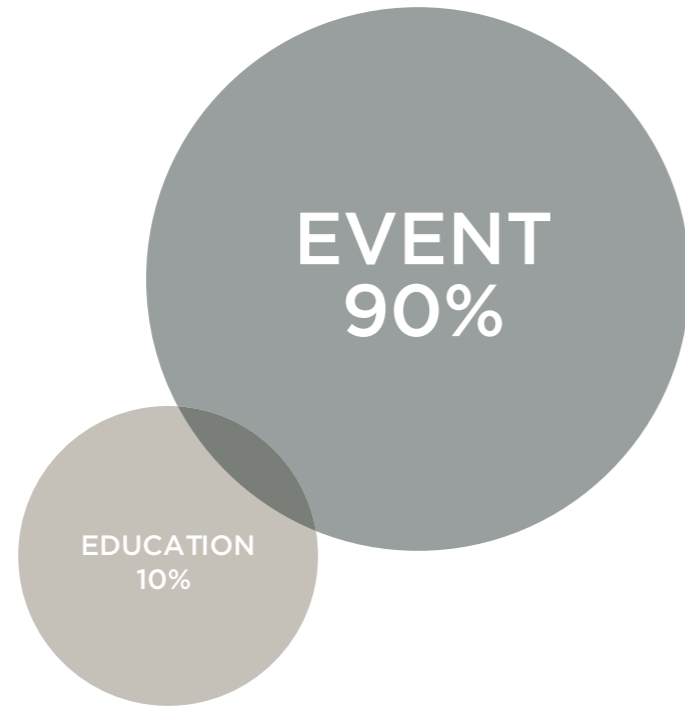
This 5.5-metre yurt dome had a ceiling height of 2.8 metres and would take approximately thirty minutes to erect and ten minutes to take down. Its overall dimensions when flat-packed in two parts was 144cm x 25cm x 25cm and 92cm x 41cm x 41cm. As the structure would need to be taken by air, the overall weight was also a factor to consider - these two flat-packed boxes weighed a total of 34.5kg. Our pop-up store somewhat resembled a contemporary installation of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic

dome. Its simple white structure sat quietly within its snow-covered surroundings, with strong contrast being provided by the black logo stating 'UVU Shop' and the black garments placed within the store shell. Rather than utilising a set of furniture, we designed a more befitting and intriguing solution by employing an ice-carver to shape large cubes of ice in the form of plinths and tables to display. This contrasted well with the product, and gave a sense of how well the product performed at such low temperatures. The event was captured in a film that later served to create a narrative on the brand website and social media pages. This white yurt became a symbol for UVU and was synonymous with the brand.

The incorporation of the Model of Integration in UVU's instance creates a striking contrast to the physical space evidenced by my case studies. With the exception of Ben Sherman all case studies presented are examples of Activation Retail that build and promote a physical relationship between a brand and its customer community both in-store and online.

The UVU North Pole concept is a satellite operation. In contrast, my Model of Integration with its components of brand, community, space and location was investigated and as an outcome space does not promote social integration as the location and the space are within a harsh sub-zero environment, which is bereft of the local customer community. When consideration is given to the Activation Retail Environment, this design features 90% event with only 10% brand/product education, the space created is solely to market the brand and promote in a digital landscape. The North Pole installation for UVU has an adventure and performance narrative, which is designed to be shared across digital media platforms, promoted through marketing outlets. This endorses UVU as a credible product and encourages customer recommendation and sharing activities through social media. ■

UVU  
ACTIVATION RETAIL  
ENVIRONMENT



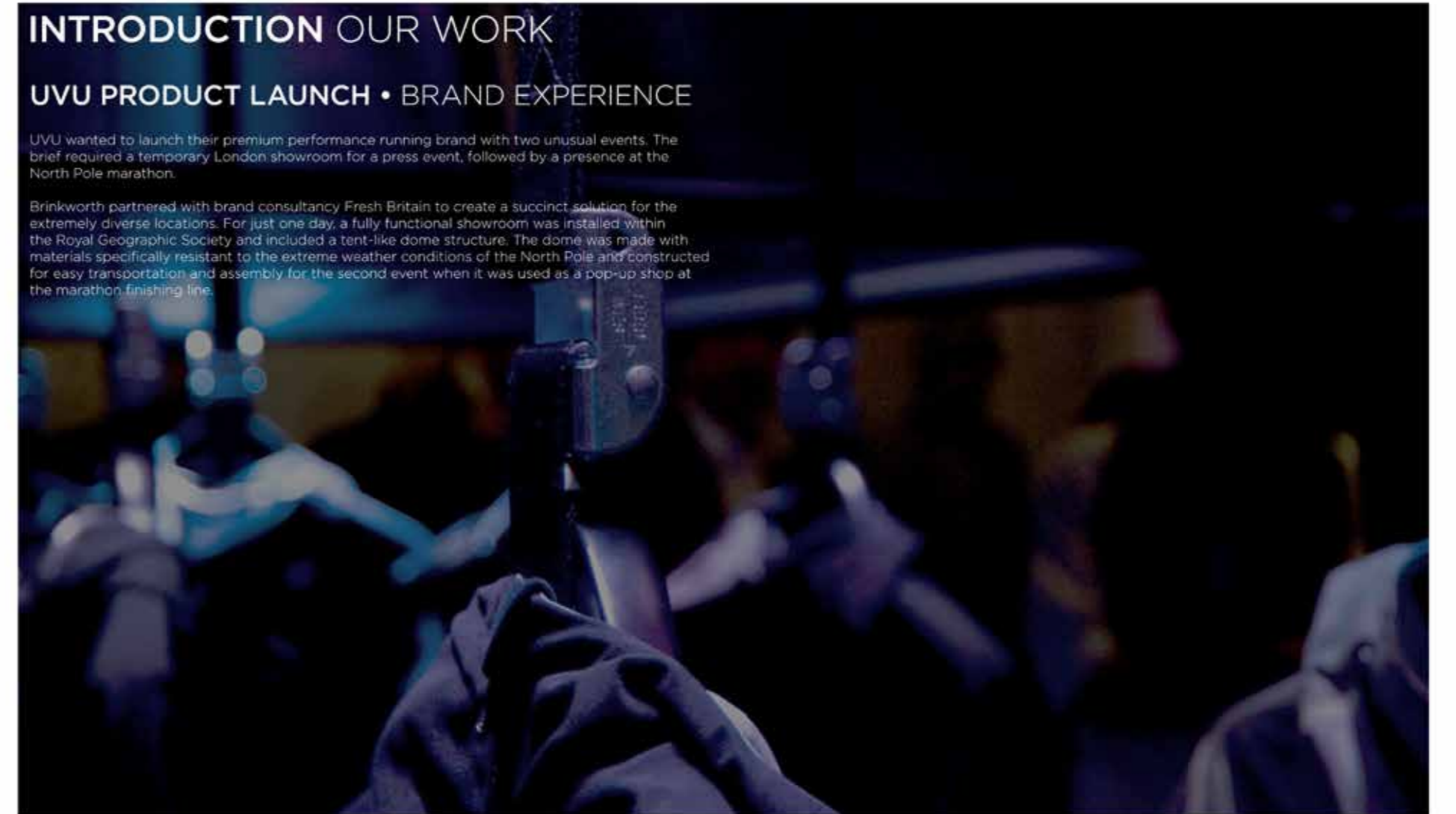
BRINKWORTH

## INTRODUCTION OUR WORK

### UVU PRODUCT LAUNCH • BRAND EXPERIENCE

UVU wanted to launch their premium performance running brand with two unusual events. The brief required a temporary London showroom for a press event, followed by a presence at the North Pole marathon.

Brinkworth partnered with brand consultancy Fresh Britain to create a succinct solution for the extremely diverse locations. For just one day, a fully functional showroom was installed within the Royal Geographic Society and included a tent-like dome structure. The dome was made with materials specifically resistant to the extreme weather conditions of the North Pole and constructed for easy transportation and assembly for the second event when it was used as a pop-up shop at the marathon finishing line.



INTRODUCTION OUR WORK











# CONCLUSION

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Having begun my journey as a designer with studies in the 1980s, establishing Brinkworth Design in 1990 and following this through to the present day, I have come to realise just how much our industry has been changed by digital technology and the Internet. This has had an impact not only on the way we work but also on the type of clients that we work with. My generation was the last to leave college without extensive computer studies and now, twenty-eight years later, it is precisely this technology that has dramatically altered the way we live, work, relate, share and communicate.

With the development of social media platforms our relationships formed online are being carried out in the spaces we inhabit. As previously stated, the buildings we occupy are becoming more porous and

our domestic spaces are becoming public. It could be argued that the retail spaces Brinkworth are creating can be considered as a new type of public space. This thesis set out, through reflexive research methodology, to explore how the role and activity of the interior designer has evolved since the intervention of digital platforms including social media and online shopping. The research has shown that customer community behavioural patterns have altered sociologically due to the intervention of social media. It has also demonstrated that a brand's selling and communication with its customer community has also evolved due to the intervention of digital platforms. As a consequence of these two factors, the way in which a brand relates and communicates with its customer community has created a demand for physical built retail

environments that are multipurpose social platforms for social interaction. These Activation Retail Environments provide a platform for physical relationships between customer community and that specific brand.

Therefore, my Model of Integration as a theorised basis for tackling the challenges informs an interior designer's practise. In addition, it has a number of important implications for future practice. My Integration Model of brand, community, space and location, forms a particular outcome which I am choosing to call Activation Retail Environments, whereby these built environments facilitate retail, hospitality, brand/product education and events. The case studies evidenced in this thesis demonstrate the effectiveness of this new model. In addition, they show that my model is dynamic and needs to be proportionally



effective to respond to the requirements of the type of specific retail that is being delivered. This model is used throughout these case studies consistently and has facilitated successful retail outcomes.

As evidenced in the case studies, retail success is demonstrated by brand loyalty, quadrupling the amounts of visits and dwell times to these physical spaces and increased brand profit in those spaces and online. These multipurpose and flexible spaces are designed to harness a better customer community relationships with the brand. These spaces created by interior designers are multifunctional and maximise the spatial resources as they adapt their behaviour throughout the day and week. They have used my model demonstrating unique outcomes. For example, Rapha utilises this model and

the environments created for that brand harness the four Activation Retail types: retail, hospitality, brand/product education and events. These built environments are a valuable living and breathing incarnation of a brand. They sit as part of an essential activity that is cyclical in nature. The cycle involves the customer community shopping online, shopping and socially connecting in these physical stores, returning to communicating with the brand and returning to the physical space for an altered experience.

The consumer community is not an audience to a brand activity; instead they have become an integral participant. As presented in the Converse case study, the retail spaces become a hub for real connections and physical relationships, which in turn build brand community. To me these commercial spaces are evolving from public

spaces to hybridised public, customer community spaces. I believe these environments have the potential ability to evolve further into spaces that the common customer community can utilise as their own. It is notable that in the presented case studies, my model has been applied to existing buildings, except for Converse and UVU, which are both pop-up stores. It would be fascinating to apply my Model of Integration to a new build for retail; a building concept that could house multipurpose activity and which could adapt its scale according to its function.

I conclude that my new integration design model challenges conventional global retail and its dogmatic approach. My new model supports an integrated approach, as evidenced in this thesis, has been adopted in our current work with recent clients such as Rapha,



Puma and Google. The new location of the physical retail store is at the heart of a brand's multichannel global retail strategy. I believe this is the direct influence of digital e-commerce and social media, both of which are constantly changing the way we shop and interact with the brand.

The challenges facing an interior designer are now broader, and the ability to create constantly adapting retail environments is key. The required skill set now encompasses more specialised disciplines, such as digital interaction and catering. Retail interior design has had evolved simultaneously, fusing these online and in-store experiences to create a cohesive multichannel retail landscape. In conjunction with this, types of stores and the way a brand relates to its target audience have also evolved and multiplied. These client briefs can be taken and evolved by a design practice to create a mouth-watering opportunities for the retail interior design industry.

As a result of the impact on multichannel sales and brand promotion, brands once again have increased build-out budgets. I can only see more future developments in independent brands that continue to develop their own e-commerce and self-owned/ partnered physical retail. The ability to directly link with customers and control their tone of voice will generate effective and profitable commercial models. As a result I predict the amount of the wholesale market to become a less important factor. Quality retail designers have the ability to draw on creative inspiration to understand the product offer and the personality and offer of a brand. They successfully harness and communicate this through specific design to reach out to, and engage with, the end user. The talented designer has the ability to holistically orchestrate all the required solutions to produce effective stores around the globe. They establish great partnerships and relationships to encompass the digital, architectural and construction industry. In my opinion, this thesis has been written at a pivotal time, globally and culturally.

Through this process of academic research, this has now contributed to the internal shaping of Brinkworth as a practice. I realise there is a synergy in my dynamic Model of Integration which is enabling Brinkworth to expand internationally. In April 2017 we opened a new Brinkworth office called Brinkworth Inc., based in Brooklyn in America, using the same retail model as a way of opening a locally appropriate version of Brinkworth. The additional skills and services offered by the American office support branding identity strategy and digital content. It is also important for us to employ both British and local employees.

This academic reflexive research has led me to the paradigm shift of my own business. We are now planning the development of our European headquarters using my Model of Integration to create a community space for clients, collaborators and ourselves to come together. We will create a multifunctional space that enables our own creative process, and also hosts events and exhibitions



whereby brand/product education can be promoted. I discuss in my thesis the necessity of brands to establish and maintain a relationship with its customer base. It is the aim that our clients and collaborators can use this space, which mirrors how my Model of Integration is externally utilised and embedded internally within the Brinkworth approach. It is intended that our client and collaborator community use the space as their own. By providing these communal office environments I hope this will improve the quality of the space and therefore the quality of our professional working relationships.

It is fascinating to chart these changes but it is important to note the elements that remain constant. The customer not only wants a product that is fit for purpose but that also takes into consideration how they feel about themselves and how they are perceived. The desire to look the best you can is still part of the motivations of a store. I think it is a time of change, as we are social creatures with a desire to be intimate and have a sense

of belonging to a community. We are confronted with a newly developing culture of social sharing through digital platforms such as social media. We are already adapting our purchase habits for food, transport, music and film with the introduction of subscriptions, led by companies such as Spotify, Netflix and Apple. How long before we go to a store to exchange or upgrade rather than to make a new purchase? This is all guesswork, but it is now clear that a contemporary apparel store is no longer just a space with product rails and shelves. It is a living and evolving space that breathes vitality and activity into its store's community and communicates beyond its walls.

The process of writing this thesis has enabled me to broaden my knowledge of this subject and to define the essence of the creative work our company undertakes in the retail sector. Without the perspective that I gained on the subject from undertaking this thesis, and utilising a research method of reflexivity, I would have been unable to establish my Model of Integration.

It has added clarity to the model and assisted in the projection of the company's ethos as a conceptual approach when working with clients. It contributes to the professional practice and academic body of knowledge within the field of interior design for retail. I fully anticipate that due to the fast-changing nature of this environment, this 'integration' model will be constantly advancing through the relentless evolution of technology and customer culture. Therefore, this thesis marks a moment in time. ■



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# AWARDS, JUDGING & TALKS

Brinkworth have received awards and nominations for more than 40 projects. Highlights include:



Wallpaper Design Awards 2013  
Best New Restaurant - Dabbous



Retail Week Interiors Awards 2006  
Best Shop for Casio  
D&AD Awards 2006



D&AD Awards 2003  
Best Room for Whitehall Park



Retail Week Interiors Awards 2012  
Best Retail Interior of the Year for Ben Sherman



Best design for Exhibition, Museum  
and Installations - Greenspace



Retail Interior Awards 2003  
Best In-Store Theatre - Charles Jourdan



Restaurant & Bar Awards 2010  
Best Independent Restaurant - Tinello



Retail Interior Awards 2005  
Best UK Retail Interior for All Saints,  
Long Acre



FX International Design Awards 2002  
Best Office Design - Bite Communications



Design Week Awards 2009  
Best Workplace Environment for Lbi - Finalist



D&AD Awards 2005  
Design for Retail Services - Firetrap



FX International Design Awards 2001  
Best Showroom for Bulo



FX International Design Awards 2007  
Best Workplace Environment for Venture 3



D&AD Awards 2003  
Best Retail Concept - Source



Blueprint Architecture Awards 2001  
Best Residential Building for Fashion Street

Continued...



FX International Design Awards 2000  
Best Store for Karen Millen, Brompton Road



FX International Design Awards 2000  
Best Retail Product for Karen Millen  
UV bonded furniture



Chain Store Age (USA) Annual Awards 2000  
Best International Store - Karen Millen



Chain Store Age (USA) Annual Awards 2000  
Best Storefront for Karen Millen Brompton Road

Judging & Talks



Adam was a panellist at the Global Retail Congress in Berlin, 2011 and talked at the Retail Interiors Seminar at the NEC on Shopfront design.

Adam has been a judge at the D&AD Awards, the FX International Interior Design Awards, the Design Week Awards and the Hong Kong Design Awards. He has also chaired the National Association for Shopfitters Awards.

Adam gave the opening lecture at the Interior Educators International Conference 2012 at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, gave a talk at the Surface Design Show 2005 and was a judge at the Vitra Scholarship Awards 2004. Adam has also been a judge for the Blueprint Awards.