

Retail, the credit crunch and design.



Hawkin's Bazaar; Pope Wainwright developed an all-encompassing design language for new and existing store-types.

To maintain the integrity of the design concepts PW acted as principal contractor.

Every time you pick up a paper these days you're hit with another dreadful statistic of how bad the retail sector is and how there is 'worse to come'. It's all very negative and the media don't exactly help, stirring up the emotions by consistently hammering us with shocking headlines that lead us to believe we are about to enter a recession and that the industry may never fully recover from the downturn.

The simple facts are that people are belt tightening and you could argue that we've been very fortunate to have had so many years of prosperity and that the markets are merely correcting themselves.

Additionally the retail sector can't just take a deep intake of breath and hope that it will all go away. Retail is a competitive industry and is constantly changing but we seem to have this defeatist mentality that if we sit tight everything will be ok sooner or later.

Customers will start to make more informed decisions and become less impulsive when it comes to their purchasing habits and brands need to communicate just what it is they stand for. If retailers don't continue to develop their offer and their retail environments then customers really will disappear.

So where can design help? I believe designers need to take far more responsibility for their actions and engage with the entire design process if they are to offer real value to their clients. We must recognise the entire challenge before us; this includes, not only, understanding who our customer is and the competition but also the manufacturing and build processes that are involved in delivering a project on time and most importantly on budget!

Successful design should be able to use limited resources and budgets creatively and rise to this challenge. Too many design consultancies won't embrace the manufacturing and installation process and don't understand the complexities involved with delivering projects through to implementation.

By investing in design, brands should be able to continue to develop fascias and in store environments whilst keeping a close reign on additional spending.

Don't lose sight of long-term goals, but do review those you invest with!