



SENSIBLE, SENSUAL SHOPPING SPACES

POINT DESIGN MASTERS THE ART OF CREATING INTELLIGENT RETAIL SPACES

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I had never appreciated the complexity of retail design until I came to know the principal architects behind Point Design, Inc., a New York design firm that specializes in the field. “Retail design is as complicated as, if not more complicated than, the other design disciplines. There’s a tremendous amount of information that you need to digest in order to come up with an environment that makes the merchandise look good, the shopping experience easy and fun for customers, and the store a shopping destination that keeps its appeal for several years,” said Diego Garay, AIA, Point Design president, during my first interview with him last year. “We look at ourselves as problem solvers. An important part of our work is to identify, evaluate and understand the retailer’s problems and needs. Once we clearly understand all of this, we can begin to shape design solutions that accurately target the issues of

that particular retail space. Being thorough at the start of a project ultimately spares the client from the painful experience of constant revision,” Garay explained.

The primary goal of retail design is straightforward—to sell, or sell more. A couple of key objectives must be satisfied: “First, we focus on solving technical and practical problems, addressing how to turn a space into a truly effective selling machine. Next, we go on to consider aesthetics. It is all about creating a platform for the merchandise to sell. If you have a gorgeous store but it doesn’t sell, you’ve failed your mission,” Garay said.

The subject of aesthetics in retail design is not a mere issue of beauty. “Every store is designed to create a balance between efficiency and aesthetics to satisfy the different shopping styles of its customers. Some customers, especially men, tend to shop by way of finding what they need as fast as possible. Others, particularly women, shop through their senses. Depending on the customers’ experience, they’ll come back and will keep coming back,” says Allen Felsenthal, Point Design principal and managing director.

That’s why, on top of designing intelligent retail spaces, Point Design is also known for creating sensual shopping environments that capture the attention of consumers, motivate them to come in, look around, pick something out, and make a purchase.



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- 1 Like the retail projects they design, the Point Design office combines pragmatic solutions with creative design features. The design maintained the open space plan of the interiors which encourages people to interact and listen to each other, promoting teamwork.
- 2 A single printed word in Akzidenz-Grotesk on the back of seven million MetroCards—New York City public transportation transit passes. “Optimism” caught Garay’s attention, and inspired him to integrate the campaign’s motto in the office.
- 3-5 The office design employs a neutral palette of white and gray, providing a serene background for the colorful art pieces and graphics displayed throughout the office.



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1-2 “The challenge in designing the Cortefiel store was to reposition this successful specialty retailer to compete effectively among a younger, fashion-forward demographic while retaining its more conservative customer base,” explains Artigala. “A lifestyle of elegance and sophistication is the foundation of Cortefiel's heritage and its vision for the future. Therefore, the concept of elegance was consciously integrated throughout the different components of the design,” he adds

3-4 The modern black-and-white interiors were made dramatic through innovative lighting, natural textures, and color contrasts to direct attention to the merchandise while creating a luxurious shopping atmosphere

5-7 Etiqueta Negra's store is a playful pairing of contrasts. It is nostalgic but fashion forward, crisp but rough around the edges, traditional but with a modern flair. The ambiance perfectly combines theatricality and drama through textures that you can hear, colors you can smell, and visuals that you can feel. “This retail store is well-balanced in terms of its iconic elements and well-planned merchandising,” Artigala concludes



The design of their office in Buenos Aires summarizes Point Design's philosophy and gives us a preview of how the firm thinks and works as a team. Though it is not a retail setting, the office design is consistent with the concepts and strategies that the firm employs for their projects. On the other hand, their work on Cortefiel in Spain and Etiqueta Negra in New York showcase the firm's ability to design different settings that attract and seduce the customers.

SENSIBLE, SENSUAL DESIGN BEGINS AT HOME: BUENOS AIRES

“Our office reflects Point Design's attitude—hardworking but laidback, intellectual but quirky, serious but fun,” Garay says. “We are young, casual, and playful but we maintain the intelligence and professionalism in our work and in how we relate with one another. This kind of attitude also keeps our design output smart, effective, fresh, fun, and sensual in terms of its look and feel,” he adds.

When Garay and Artigala were looking for a space in downtown Buenos Aires, they were excited to find a spacious, open-plan loft space in a brand new building. They immediately saw how the empty box filled with natural light

located in Palermo, Hollywood, one of Buenos Aires' trendiest neighborhoods, would be a fantastic setting for the firm.

The design of the office was inspired by the space itself. It is simple and austere, but complex at the same time. Clean lines and spaces are a comfortable backdrop for the team's daily interactions. The interiors make use of a variety of sustainable and industrial materials. The open space plan allows everyone to move freely around, and offers room to set up the materials library, bring in a massive conference table, sit down for a meal together in the kitchen, and spend time out on the expansive balcony. One floor up is a rooftop terrace

deck facing west, where the sun sets behind Buenos Aires' dramatic skyline. It's a beautiful outdoor space that the Point family uses frequently for team barbeques and outdoor meetings.

“One of the most popular objects is the vintage, red BMW toy car that everybody wants to take home! Along with a vinyl Astroboy figure, there is a colorful dwarf set in a reading position situated at the front facade, and an iconic Keith Haring barking dog graphic along the staircase,” Artigala shares. “There's also an image from the ‘Optimism’ campaign, the non-traditional public art project created and launched by graphic artist Reed Seifer in New York City in 2009.”

SENSUALITY IN THE ABSENCE OF CURVES: CORTEFIEL, SPAIN

Contrary to its usual association with curves and soft, rounded forms, sensuality is also sometimes expressed in sharp lines and smooth, hard finishes. Elements like fixtures, lighting and color are used to convey a lifestyle that ties in with a brand identity, to set a mood or to respond to customers' aspirations. However subtle its application, effective design always directs customers to focus on the merchandise. Cortefiel, one of the brands in the Grupo Cortefiel portfolio, Spain's second largest apparel retailer, was redesigned to appeal to a relatively conservative

cliente. And it does this well. Since Point implemented its prototypical store design, sales per square foot have increased dramatically.

Natural finishes such as stone mosaics and fine woods reflect the store's conservative yet opulent heritage, while the neutral architectural background of clean, sharp lines that showcase the merchandise provides a more contemporary, forward-looking aesthetic that still maintains the brand's classic appeal.

THE SEDUCTIVE APPEAL OF VINTAGE: ETIQUETA NEGRA, NEW YORK

When it comes to fashion and clothing, most people desire little else than to be sexy, smart,

and stylish. Argentinean luxury brand Etiqueta Negra, which means “black label,” successfully communicates these characteristics in Point Design's sensual and edgy design in its SoHo New York store, which juxtaposes the brand's identity with the look and feel of a century-old building.

“Etiqueta Negra is known for its modern take on masculine, equestrian and sporting style,” Artigala says. “The launch of their new men's collection last year was inspired by classic vintage cars—one of men's favorite things. The brand's founder, Federico Alvarez Castillo, is an avid car collector. It was only appropriate to integrate the vehicles into the design of the store,” Artigala adds, referring to

the 1938 Alfa Romeo 158 on display.

Vintage décor gives the store's impeccably crafted merchandise a chic, sexy attitude. Furnished with vintage leather luggage, racing helmets and handmade riding boots set against a background of dark wood paneling, iron beams, black and white photography and vintage-inspired industrial lighting, the store is a fierce mixture of contrasts.

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE WHEREVER THEY GO

As the three projects demonstrate, Point Design's broad knowledge of retail design enables the firm to deliver successful solutions, regardless of location, style or concept.

Point Design's diverse portfolio includes projects ranging from malls, banks, and corporate offices, to department stores, supermarkets, restaurants and boutiques. The firm has completed projects around the world, including the U.S., Russia, Argentina, Spain, Malaysia, and Indonesia to name a few. Here in the Philippines, Point Design is behind several retail establishments under the SM Group of Companies, including the recent stylish makeover of Toy Kingdom, Our Home, and the SM Department Stores. 

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