

Ask the experts *Leaders of the pack*

You'd be hard-pressed to deny that retail has been in flux of late. But it's not all doom and gloom, as the snappiest brands and most successful players prove. Whether it's understanding how to nurture a personable shopping experience and customer loyalty or comprehending that investing in something that lasts reaps dividends in the long-term, the actions of the retail frontrunners demonstrate a forward-thinking attitude and an ability to adapt.

In this chapter we travel the world – from Brazil's retail capital São Paulo to Seattle, via Shanghai and San Francisco – to speak to the folk with their finger on the pulse. Some simply came up with an enduring idea before anyone else; others have realised that the traditional paradigms of shopping have to be rethought in the 21st century. Their collective expertise means retail is more diverse and decentralised than ever – and the world richer for it.

The mall-maker Carlos Jereissati Filho

Iguatemi Group, São Paulo — *For the man behind this Brazilian empire, success comes from catering to the community.*

The Jereissati Filho family practically invented high-end shopping centres in Brazil and the man at the helm today is second-generation scion Carlos Jereissati Filho. As CEO of the Iguatemi Group he leads a team of 2,700 people and controls three commercial towers, two premium outlets and 16 malls in four Brazilian states. As for his next step? Launching an e-commerce platform, showcasing the select brands that are present in its shopping centres.

How does Iguatemi continue to stay relevant in this market? The key is to always innovate and be very close to your community in order to understand and anticipate their needs. We have a diverse and democratic mix, and our stores and services can be enjoyed by groups with varying spending powers. We want to keep our Brazilian identity and flavour while also offering relevant fashion and luxury brands from other parts of the world.

Many people say that the mall business, at least in the US, is in decline. How do you avoid a similar fate in Brazil with Iguatemi? Customers increasingly expect a high level of service and special experiences. We are known for our excellent customer service and for the intimate relationships we create with our clients. Our shopping centres are platforms for leisure, community and family life. We provide clients with personal shoppers, concierges and lounges and create experiences that can't be had online. We also want to give customers cultural experiences by supporting some of the major events in the Brazilian art world.

Why do Brazilians love malls so much? They're looking for a place to shop, dine and socialise. Iguatemi offers all the conveniences of security, comfort and integration of stores in one place, with plenty of outdoor spaces, green areas and interaction with the city and the community.

The concept store trailblazer Carla Sozzani

10 Corso Como, Milan — *Since defining a new approach to retail in the early 1990s, Carla Sozzani has continued to place an emphasis on shopping as an experience and applied the concept to cities around the world.*

Carla Sozzani is an Italian former fashion editor and founder of 10 Corso Como (10CC) in Milan, widely regarded as the world's first concept store. It was a revelation when it opened in an undesirable area of the city in 1991, selling clothing alongside books, art and homeware, and adding a café where shoppers could take a break from browsing to enjoy a cappuccino. Phrases such as "concept store" and "experiential retail" are bandied about so often these days that they have lost meaning but Sozzani was a pioneer in creating a comprehensive in-store experience. 10CC now has outposts in Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul and New York; the latest addition, in Manhattan, opened in 2018 in the newly renovated Seaport area. It sells fashion from a mix of heavyweight brands, including Margiela, and up-and-coming designers such as Sies Marjan. And as with all of 10CC's shops it's got plenty of other attractions, housing a gallery, an Italian restaurant, a lounge bar and a garden.

How did you come to open 10CC in 1991? I had been a fashion editor for 19 years with *Vogue Italia* and then I launched Italian *Elle*. I grew tired of it so I opened a gallery and then a bookshop but I ended up missing fashion. I decided to create a destination where people could come and meet. I did the only thing I knew, which was editing magazines, except instead of editing pages, I edited tables and racks. I put all my favourite things in the shop. In the beginning, people couldn't understand why there were shoes with books, candles with clothes, photography with suitcases. It wasn't until an Italian journalist wrote a story about my shop that people started to understand. She wrote that 10CC was a new concept in retail; it got translated

into English as "concept store". It became a way to describe places of a certain atmosphere – a marketing tool.

Yours was the first shop to offer experiential retail. Do you think this idea is still as important today? People could drink a coffee, try on a jacket or look at an exhibition. The aim today is still for customers to have all their senses stimulated. It's part of living an experience; a conversation starter. Today I believe that is even more important than it was 27 years ago. Now there is too much communication. But young people come in and don't look at their telephones, instead they sit and chat. I see them. It's incredible.

Why did you decide to open in New York? I wasn't interested in opening in New York until I saw the location. It's in a former fish market that was built in 1822; it's a 2,600 sq m space and it's all on one level. Can you believe it? The area is undergoing huge renovations. It's pedestrianised and all the houses around are very low-rise, so you feel like you're in a village.

There are views of the Brooklyn Bridge. It made me feel like I did when I opened in Milan, in what was considered the outskirts of the city.

What defines your space in Manhattan? Well, we are not a department store. We are not a chain. People can come to us to have a new type of shopping experience. I don't think there are other shops like ours in the city, with a gallery and a big café and restaurant and the books. It might be in New York but this is slow shopping. Come and buy a book and have a seat while you pay.



The retail architect Torquil McIntosh

Sybarite, London — *Torquil McIntosh and business partner Simon Mitchell have long had a passion for retail design. Today their work informs the fit-outs of shops the world over.*

While most architects avoid focusing on one sector, when Torquil McIntosh co-founded Sybarite in 2002 he dedicated it to luxury retail and hospitality. Today he is high-end fashion's go-to architect, with a wholesale, hands-on approach to everything from large-scale commissions to small details such as hangers. Projects that his team of 50 have worked on include 250 boutiques for Marni and 750 Stefanel shops, with prefabricated fit-outs designed for franchise owners to customise interiors to their own specifications. Sybarite also transformed the run-down Beijing mall Shin Kong Place (SKP), turning it into an upscale department store with a new name, corporate identity and look. Three years on, SKP ranked as the fourth most successful luxury department store in the world, as measured by sales per square metre in a report it commissioned.

How closely do you work with a brand? Very. If you can't have that kind of interaction with the decision-makers you're not going to get the right results. Alberta Ferretti is a great example. She did her research for three years [to refurbish her shops], then picked up the phone and said, "Guys, you're my architects." She knew we were looking at retail in a different way.

What makes a good store in terms of architecture and interior design? Consistency, authenticity and an underlying thread or style relevant to the brand, its products and its consumer. Every touchpoint the customer is involved with is what we call a house style. The weight of the door handle when you enter the store, the material beneath your feet, the sight lines, way-finding, even the smell – all these things have to be controlled.



What are the most important details for strong retail design? One of our favourite subjects is fitting rooms. It's proven that more than 50 per cent of people who use fitting rooms go on to buy three or more products but only seven per cent like the experience; people dislike fitting rooms because they have bad lighting, there are no hooks, it's stuffy and there's no space for their partner. We're rebranding 130 shops for Thomas Pink and we're tripling the size of the fitting rooms. Decluttering the ceiling space is also something we're obsessive about. It occupies about 40 or 50 per cent of what you're visually perceiving so if you make it beautiful and part of the whole environment, it frames the venue and becomes very important.

What questions do you ask that others don't? Simple things to do with sustainability and provenance of materials. For example, why not stick a drinking fountain in a shop instead of giving customers plastic water bottles? You can make it look high-end. Old-fashioned ideas are informing the future.

Do you have a signature look? I'd say it's the flip side – not imposing a signature look on the retailer. Our greatest asset is that we invest time in our clients and come up with a unique solution for them, not our own stylistic crusades.

How is retail design evolving? Retailers can no longer rely on product and price. Changes to consumer behaviour create new challenges and opportunities. As technology delivers convenient retail, there must be inspirational spaces for consumers to experience the brand on a deeper level. We must out-think ever-more savvy customers.

The interior designer Maria Veerasamy

Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm — *Spending her early career at a company that placed an emphasis on craftsmanship made a significant impression on Maria Veerasamy, who continues to champion quality goods that last a lifetime.*

Maria Veerasamy isn't your typical ruthless executive with nothing but growth on her mind. The Swedish-born CEO of Svenskt Tenn is a tailor by trade and values quality, handwork and consistency above all else. She joined the company in 2011, 87 years after it was founded by furniture and textile designer Estrid Ericson. Although the Stockholm-based label is now globally recognised for its unapologetically colourful and patterned homeware, Veerasamy has been working to maintain its original product-focused ethos and boutique thinking. This entails stoking historic relationships with local manufacturers, refusing to retire the bold designs that the company has been producing since its conception (such as those of Austrian luminary Josef Frank, who joined Ericson in 1934) and promoting a more sustainable production philosophy. Put simply? Quality over quantity.

What did you do before Svenskt Tenn? I grew up in Hovmantorp, Sweden, and worked in the same glass factory that my mother and father had. It was nice to work with my hands. I went on to train as a tailor then joined a fashion company called Indiska in the 1980s. At that time they worked closely with India, bringing in crafted goods and clothes, and I'm half Indian so for me it felt like home. The 21 years I spent at this company were my schooling in retail: logistics, purchasing, sales – everything.

How has retail changed since your time at Indiska? When I joined there were lots of skilled craftsmen in India, which attracted companies all across Sweden, even the likes of H&M and Ikea. Then everything became about efficiency; you had

to cut costs and have higher margins. Suddenly there were mid-season sales and new collections 11 times a year, which I didn't feel comfortable with because I come from a craft background and quality design takes time. It was no fun working this way – you can't create the complicated styles you want, whether clothes or interiors. We have to really focus on craftsmanship and educate the customers today. The young are not aware of the excellence and complexity within the products that we sell at Svenskt Tenn, and it's my aim to help them understand that they're buying something that will last for a lifetime – and for the next generation as well.



How have you maintained that high quality as Svenskt Tenn has grown? I think we are still small: 95 per cent of sales are through our own shops. When it comes to the Josef Frank designs and the furniture, we are still working with some of the same companies that our founder was working with in the 1940s and 1950s – except now it's the next generation. We work primarily with Swedish producers and 80 per cent of what we sell is in Sweden. The real issue is that this new generation of craftsmen needs more work: there are few of us buying from them, so for me to keep this production process secure in the future there need to be more companies that buy high-quality crafted goods.

What advice would you give to someone who is going into a similar line of business? Recognise that a product can live for a long time. Customers don't need a new plate or new furniture every year. You have to have a long-term perspective and think about the environment.

The department store stalwart Erik Nordstrom

Nordstrom, Seattle — *In a climate where department stores are floundering, Nordstrom is bucking the trend by understanding its customer base and employing a chameleon-like willingness to adapt.*

Headquartered in Seattle and operating since 1901, publicly traded Nordstrom is the US's largest luxury retailer. The Nordstroms are still at the helm after four generations and having family ties has its advantages, argues co-president Erik Nordstrom, who has also been a shoe buyer for the company. "We really care; our name is on the building," he says. "We had generations ahead of us who did some incredible things, not only created a company but a culture." Nordstrom — which stocks everything from high-street brands to luxury labels in its department stores — has opened a large menswear outpost in Manhattan, with even larger children's and womenswear offerings across the street to follow. Its secret is quality stock and knowing both its customer base and the market, which is why it has also invested in a lower-priced Nordstrom Rack brand in the US and Canada, a service-orientated Nordstrom Local concept and e-commerce.



Why the decision to bet big on bricks-and-mortar? Physical assets are an important part of the mix for us. There are some things that can only be done in a shop, such as alterations, and for a lot of customers touching and feeling products is an important part of the buying process, especially with fashion. The people in our shops also continue to be very important.

Is nimbleness the secret to dealing with retail market changes? I think for us, number one is really focusing on the customer. That's a line that any retailer can use but when the customer is changing, the more customer-centric you are, the more nimble you are. Our company has been

around for a while and we've long had a culture that has been focused on serving the customer — so our organisation is, I think, quite nimble in responding to how the customer is changing. We've also made investments in digital capabilities fairly early and before it was crystal-clear how that was going to end up — it still isn't crystal-clear. Things continue to change.

Is customer service the differentiator between you and competitors? In the end it's very simple: it's what the customer wants, and it's our job to know what that is. Customers shouldn't have to fill out surveys and make it obvious for us all the time; we need to be close to them. Elements such as greeting the customer, being well-staffed with great people who really care, and having a liberal approach to returns — those things haven't changed over the years. But we've had to add capabilities: taking friction out of their shopping experience and being able to deliver speed and convenience.

A lot of traditional department stores have been struggling. Why is Nordstrom bucking that trend? It's tough for us, as it is for any industry going through a transformational trend. We've had to focus on a couple of areas. We've talked about service and experience; the other would be fashion experience. That means having the best product in the world — and increasingly that means products not available everywhere, which have some scarcity appeal. That requires us to partner with the world's best brands, whether big and established or digitally native.

The shop scientist Bob Neville

New Balance, Shanghai — *Working from a design lab where new concepts and layouts are tried and tested long before they hit the high street, Bob Neville has become a leading exponent of the 'brand experience'.*

When Bob Neville isn't flying around the world, overseeing shop fit-outs, he's often at the Bird Centre, New Balance's clandestine "Alice in Wonderland" laboratory outside Shanghai. Here he and his team design, test and build full-sized shop layouts for immediate use or as forward-thinking experiments. The Hong Kong resident and former Adidas executive has been working in the East since the 1990s. He became global creative director at New Balance in 2008, opened the brand's first "experience store" in Beijing in 2009 and describes one of his tasks as taking a largely wholesale company into high-street retail. When he joined New Balance he realised the company was cobbling together its shop displays rather than taking the same painstaking approach to design and testing that goes into its shoes. The upshot was the creation of dedicated spaces for retail concepts — or "brand experiences" — where everything from lighting to materials can be tested prior to roll out.



What will physical retail look like in the future? There's a lot of physical space out there and there are going to be more and more places to experience brands, try products on and order online. When it comes to physical shops, people need to have an enhanced experience.

Is brand experience just a fancy way to say shopping? No, they are two different things. Today we can buy any brand anywhere in the world so shopping is no longer the domain of the high street. That's where the word "experience" comes in. It's a question of what value we bring to the retail experience and, alongside enhancing online activity, that's about bringing the brand to life in 3D.

How much does building life-sized mock-ups help you as a designer? It seems counterintuitive that in the time of virtual reality we would find the benefit in a big hulking space like this. But I think that only reflects what we as human beings need — and how we can better learn.

Do you possess the tools to turn around a bad location? You can have a great box with all the parts but if it's in the middle of a desert, it's never going to work. There are deserts in any city that you never want to be in and that's why significant high streets charge the rates they do.

Where does technology fit in? Augmented reality is becoming more relevant and real rather than a gimmick. But I can see some techy environments becoming too sterile, so it has to be a mix. There has to be a combination of old-school service and technology to bring brands to life. Tactility, stories, feelings and comfort, combined with technology.

Will your job exist in 10 years? One hundred per cent, yes. It will just evolve as the tools develop; I learned to draw with a pencil and now we can do things with the Apple Pencil. At some point I assume there will be an algorithm that can design but there's a randomness in a creative individual that's hard for a computer to replicate.

What does China have to tell us about retail? People say shopping is all going to happen online. I haven't seen any sign of that here. The way brands present themselves and engage with customers is evolving but I don't see any lack of openings.

The e-commerce ethicist

Michael Preysman

Everlane, San Francisco — *After founding an online retail clothing business, Michael Preysman shunned the idea of a physical shop. Now his business model puts online and bricks-and-mortar hand in hand.*

Michael Preysman founded the US e-commerce brand Everlane in 2010, his goal being to create a transparent business. To that end the clothing retailer employs ethical factories, shares the true cost of everything it produces with its customers and is built on a direct-to-consumer model that cuts out the middlemen (and women), enabling it to sell high-quality essentials at a fraction of the price of a conventional retailer. In 2012, Preysman told *The New York Times*, “we are going to shut the company down before we go to physical retail”. In 2017, however, Everlane opened its first shop in New York, followed by a second in San Francisco. It’s reasonable to be sceptical about the moralising trend among digital retail start-ups but they may be our best hope for curbing the race-to-the-bottom led by online mega-retailers. For that reason alone, they’re worth paying attention to.

When you started, which other retailers did you take your lead from? We took inspiration from three main categories. One was the direct-to-consumer world. At the time Warby Parker was leading the pack in bringing a more transparent and fairer pricing structure to the customer [in eyewear]. Another was design-driven companies such as [US furniture giant] Herman Miller, which has built classics that have stood the test of time. Finally, we looked at companies that have impacted culture in a positive way. Whole Foods, for example, changed the way consumers thought about food.

Why did you decide to use the label ‘Radical Transparency’ and what does it mean? Radical Transparency really didn’t come about until a couple of years in. We always try to do the right



thing for the customer. We try to price our products fairly and openly and use great factories that are sustainable. We also don’t discount too much because we want to offer the lowest price we can every day. Radical Transparency is a way of both communicating this ethic to the customer and enabling them to hold us accountable.

Why did you change your mind about shutting down before opening a shop? When we made that statement – which we believed in – it was because retail at that time was driven by discovery. Our view was that discovery was moving online and Instagram has proven that to be true. But the world of retail is now different again: it’s driven by service. You want to return items, try on as many things as possible, order online and pick up in-store, order in-store and receive at home. By building our own point of sale we can integrate all of these components. We also believe that great architecture can inspire, and we’ve invested in spaces that bring people together and create a feeling of transparency that goes beyond the product itself.

Do you see e-commerce evolving in a constructive way? I don’t think about it in terms of constructive or not; I think there are trends in both directions. E-commerce is putting a lot of pressure on delivering things really fast at the lowest price possible, and ultimately that’s dangerous for both the long-term value of the product and the world. Not everything can be fast and cheap, and it comes at the expense of both the people making stuff and the environment. There’s a balance to be struck and Everlane tries to strike that balance.

The shopfitter

Ruth Toechterle

Interstore, Zürich — *Ruth Toechterle firmly believes in the future of bricks-and-mortar retail and delivers shop design with an emphasis on customer experience. For her, the key is shaking up the shop floor.*

Ruth Toechterle is the managing director of Interstore, a Zürich-based retail-design agency under the umbrella of global shopfitting company Schweitzer (see page 271); she joined Interstore and its parent company in 2011. The agency has been developing award-winning concepts for the retail sector since 1987 and has a worldwide network of clients, from supermarket conglomerates to family-run boutiques. With a team of 30 across four locations, Interstore offers everything from shop and interior design to visual marketing and branding for more than 90 international clients, including La Grande Épicerie de Paris and Dunnes Stores. The company’s philosophy lies in reimagining retail via innovative, engaging formats, in collaboration with clients.

How is Interstore reimagining retail? Reimagining means keeping your eyes wide open, mixing up teams and disciplines, combining old with new, working with experts and customers. We try to create an open dialogue. It’s not only about creating a compelling story, it’s also about sales. It’s about talking with our customers, constantly watching global trends and always being willing to challenge currently held ideas.

What elements are central to good retail design? Focus on the experience you are creating. The right light is always important but it’s not what will make or break the experience. Start by looking at the brand’s DNA and ask yourself: what do I want the shop to be like? Then translate that into the brand experience, selecting materials and colours that create a space embodying your brand. The challenge is to push a new idea and make change.

How are high streets changing? All the changes we have talked about for a long time – from shrinking retail spaces to shops as showrooms – are slowly happening but it’s not a fast process. We will see retail formats move to different locations – away from the high street and towards traffic hubs and residential areas. Retail has to go where the customer is. But whatever happens, physical shops are here to stay. We have to re-evaluate the role of the person in the shop. Service is important and design is part of the experience too.



What does your ideal shop look and feel like? I love small shops but I also love big shops such as Selfridges. The question is what are you getting out of the experience? I want to experience a product world and good service; it has to be authentic. One of my favourites is Victoriene in Bolzano (see page 66). [Owner] Charlotte Marschall has an amazing product selection and is a great consultant. It’s a good example of how you can establish yourself as a small boutique in the middle of nowhere. You don’t have to be located on Oxford Street.

Should we integrate technology into bricks-and-mortar shops? Why overload a shop with technology when you should work on what online can’t offer? With online you can’t create, taste, smell and sample a product. In a shop I can walk out with the bag; if I order online I don’t get the product immediately. Shopping is about trying things, mixing things up and being with friends. More and more people are happy not to have their phone or tablet with them at certain times of the day. Shopping should be a relaxing, luxurious moment in which you are not connected.

The brand revivalist

James Daunt

Waterstones, London — *Brought in by the biggest chain of bookshops in the UK to save it from extinction, James Daunt introduced individuality to the chainstore concept and in the process gave it a new lease of life.*

James Daunt's eponymous bookshop was born on London's Marylebone High Street in 1990 and has since become more than a city institution (see page 102). Wielding a Daunt Books tote bag identifies Londoners not only as purveyors of great literature but also as supporters of the kind of wholesome independent retail that this six-location mini-chain embodies. Daunt's experience in running characterful spaces (not to mention his nose for business) is what led the owners of Britain's largest bookshop chain, Waterstones, to hire him as managing director in 2011. At the time, beleaguered by the rise of Amazon and Kindle, the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. By allowing each of the 293 branches to develop its own identity and books selection – and so foregoing deadening uniformity – Daunt has turned the business around.



Can you run a chain bookshop like you would an independent?

Should you? I think in the case of a bookshop, you have to. One of the curiosities of bookshop chains is that they don't work if you try to do all the things that a conventional chain does. I think that's the nature of the product: we have literally hundreds of thousands of books to choose from, so you're always curating. How you curate one place needs to be different to the next. Because we've allowed each shop to be different, collectively we've done much, much better.

Do you think people are coming back to physical bookshops because they make them feel good about themselves?

I think independents certainly do and a branch of a very good chain will too. That's partly because bookshops are about

ideas, values and culture, and that resonates well in the world we're in at the moment – certainly with younger people. If you look around you at Waterstones, there are a few grey hairs but generally it's an astonishingly young customer base. We have the most difficulty with our older customers, which you would have thought is slightly counter-intuitive. They use Amazon much more, they use Kindle much more, they often don't think – as we have to make our customers believe – that the book bought from a bookshop is a much better book than a book bought from Amazon.

Why have some of your new branches opened without the Waterstones branding?

I've opened 30-odd shops in the past few years. We've opened a lot as Waterstones but they're all big shops that I expect and identify as Waterstones. When I open small ones, I call them something else. For me, Waterstones has a strong brand: you expect to come in and have a complete range of books. If you go to a small shop that has an idiosyncratic and small range, it shouldn't be called Waterstones.

So having a consistent look is not important?

I don't think it needs to look consistent but you have to give the shops the best possible tools, and there is a consistency to what those should comprise. You need good lighting, decent floors, furniture that is solid and the right size. Whether it's grey or orange, I think, matters far less. Customers want a harmony within bookshops, which means the textures and the fabrics you use have to be consistent with books. If someone starts using really bright lights and artificial materials it won't work, because the book is not that.

The pop-up player

Mohamed Haouache

Storefront, New York — *With bricks-and-mortar retail taking a hit from online competition, and high streets littered with empty shops, Haouache's scheme to make pop-up spaces readily accessible is helping to revitalise the retail landscape.*

Launched in 2013 by Frenchman Mohamed Haouache, Storefront aims to make the commercial real-estate world more connected, agile and accessible. The business now offers retail space for rent in 17 cities from Paris (where Storefront was originally established) to New York. The concept has made getting a shop as simple as booking a flight: a brand can find and secure a space online and launch a pop-up shop for as little as a few hundred euros, rather than investing much more in a permanent home. Haouache believes that though the future of retail sales may be online, brands will always need bricks-and-mortar to connect with (and delight) customers. Storefront is oiling the wheels of the pop-up movement and tempting e-commerce brands into shopkeeping. It has shown the often-byzantine world of real estate how easy the transition can be while giving a platform to small brands with big ideas.



How did Storefront come about?

Through pure luck. I worked on Wall Street and decided to leave finance in 2012 with no back-up. A friend contacted me and asked me to help her find a pop-up shop in Paris. I spoke to a property broker and he had nothing. Because I am kind of contrarian by nature I decided to start a platform that would make booking retail space as simple as booking a hotel room. Back then it was almost impossible for a brand to book a space for a day. Now you can do so up to 18 months in advance without even meeting the landlord.

Your business seems like a reaction to the crisis in bricks-and-mortar retail. What went wrong? The truth is that bricks-and-mortar

didn't collapse, it just wasn't that exciting or innovative anymore. The degree of sophistication of customers is getting higher and higher – and retail needs to keep innovating to keep up.

What will the high street look like 10 years from now? I think we're going to see more hybrid retail spaces. We're already seeing a number of projects selling clothes and combining that with a co-working space. There will be more of that kind of thing, plus exciting and collaborative pop-up shops. We could move to a model where the owner of the retail space will offer the space for free.

Are developers beginning to think differently about the value that good independent retail can bring to commercial projects?

Developers are trying to bring a new kind of entrepreneur into their retail mix. One way to bring excitement into a project is to bring in a young business. We've seen a similar trend with shopping malls.

There's a social factor at work here because Storefront makes

it easy to use would-be vacant sites. How does an empty shop affect a community? An empty row of shops can create a vicious circle and have a negative impact. It can have an impact on the residential market. It can create a feeling of anxiety and stress when people walk down the street.

What do you say to people who dislike pop-ups and prefer to build relationships with permanent shops?

We're not here to challenge the conventional shop. We're democratising access to physical retail.