



When one is thinking about opening any type of retail operation you have to prioritise various thoughts. Apart from the money aspect of things there are some key principles. First comes property, it's the most expensive, then staffing and probably towards the end is any form of design let alone packaging! This is probably true even with established retailers because they already have the packaging, a mass of same packs whether it's London or Louth. It can be different. Design can become a top priority, or near the top anyway! The major criteria for putting the design of packaging near the top can be a 'sense of place', the need to make the product personal. As the French writer would have said 'Remembrance of things past'. Here is a story of just how important design is for one retailer.

The North American division of the European company Nuance did just that in creating Luxury boutiques in the Duty Free retail environment for Toronto Pearson International airport. All the products sold had a 'sense of place'. They were about the country and locale they were in. Overall the corporate idea was named 'Tastefully

# Leader is the Pack

Steve Thomas-Emberson talks to A1 Retail.



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The Heritage range had a high quality natural finish textured paper that had a vintage feel to it.



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Canadian' as Kevin Patience, Designer at The Design Solution explains how Nuance's holistic view of the design developed. "The idea was Tastefully Canadian. As we developed the environment we were asked to extend our design services to develop a new brand identity for the idea Tastefully Canadian along with packaging concepts for the whole product range. In order to ensure a consistent design direction Nuance thought it essential for one design agency to handle it all."

The design brief evolved due in part to making it essential for every item whether it is graphics, interior design and packaging to work in harmony. The product range was divided into three ranges. The 'Core' range was the entry level, 'Heritage' the medium price bracket and the 'Artisan' the premium top end lines. Kevin Patience explains the design thinking behind each range. "The Core range was likened to customers buying a great postcard images to take home as souvenirs or gifts. Heritage had a sense of craft such as a beautiful timber box with

engraved wood cut design. The Artisan packaging would be a series of artworks for people to collect, genuine Inuit artists would be commissioned to produce the pieces". This local sense of place design actually went further by having a 'layer' of Canada applied over the top. The Core range had a series of iconic Canadian landscape images across its packaging, A Canadian red transparent sash, known locally as a 'belly band', sleeved each box holding the Tastefully Canadian branding and product descriptors. The Heritage range had a high quality natural finish textured paper that had a vintage feel to it, and the Artisan range had local stories incorporating a city map background with multiple photo images of the areas in Toronto where the various Artisans operate. This packaging too had sashes but in black with an embossed artisan 'A seal endorsement.

How then did this sophisticated packaging hierarchy manifested itself into and within the actual store design? Kevin Patience gives the feeling and

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Kevin Patience, Designer,  
The Design Solution





detail. "Designing the packaging at the same time as developing the store interior gave us the luxury of incorporating finishes into the furniture that perfectly offset the products. The Core range with its bright colour photography and red sashes was presented out of black making the product sing. Heritage ranges were presented out of natural timbers to compliment the natural textured paper packaging of this line. Artisan ranges were presented out of a combination of black and a variety of five Canadian timbers that gave a premium presentation to the predominantly black, white and red colours of this packaging range."

What Patience comments on is true but it only half gets there. The store environment furniture was also designed to compliment and contrast the packaging designs rather than

follow. Environmental graphics were also integrated into the store furniture that had the same feel and look as the packaging to tie the presentation of product and store furniture together. Large black and white photos of the Artisans along with small but detailed biographies of each of them were featured on the gondola ends of the Artisan shop fixturing. All these small details add up to a tremendous feeling of 'sense of place'. You know where you have been, it's in your bag, and it will be with you when you get home - a very pleasant feeling indeed. 🍷

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