

Sense of Time

Steve Thomas-Emberson tells us all about the new Duty Free Athens airport.



Influences for retail design can come from many things and it often does, but imagine a cultural backdrop of a recorded, and that word is important, of three and a half thousand years. Where does one start and with what? Greece has been in the news recently for all the wrong reasons. So they owe a few Euros and they cannot pay back as quickly as some people want. Let me remind you dear reader that the Bonds, in other words “debt” of the Battle of Waterloo were only settled two months before its two

hundred year anniversary, food for thought there.

Athens airport has had a major design rethink in its retail sector, especially Duty Free and the influences came from “sense of place”. This is not as easy as it sounds anybody who has read anything on Greece or visited the country will know just how many “influences” there are. At a quick look, Athens, where the airport is situated, is one of the oldest cities in the world, Plato’s Academy, Aristotle’s Lyceum, the purest white marble, and the

birthplace of democracy. I could go on but we want to know about retail design.

The Design Solution architects and designers of the new Duty Free area at Athens airport came up with the overarching principle of “the olive branch” which is the ancient symbol of Athens, legend has it that the olive tree was given to the people of Athens by the Goddess Athena and in her honour Athens was named after her. The whole retail area was based around an olive branch leaf shape. The lighting units



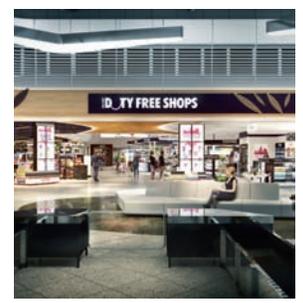
“ Another impressive area, and one for the ladies in particular is the perfume and cosmetic area designed in the style of a “Marine Spa”. Here there are various sub-sections such as skin-care and wellness, each with their own brands. The Design Solution have been very clever here as they have used some of the colours and shades that represent Greece but surprise, surprise can double up as the colours of the area. The retail offer is set in a backdrop of blue glass at high level and also at fascia level is the subtle affect of blue pin-dot lighting.

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feature a leaf shape canopy for the lights and are dispersed across the ceiling from the central “branch” walkway. Within this olive branch layout there is clever use of colour as a further sense of place influence. Here the use of warm tones combining timbers, terracotta, blacks and olive green provide a suitable back-drop for displaying Liquor, Tobacco and Food. Adjacent to this area is a colour wash

of blues and clean white tones. All of these colours represent the sea and form the display for perfumes and cosmetics. All the colours used in the retail-scope are firmly anchored to the colours of Athens and Greece.

The entrance to the shopping mall area really kicks off the sense of place feel to this development with very abstract leaf shapes set upon a wooden fascia. In a way it is a gentle





tease of what is to come. As previously mentioned the housing for the retail lighting has sense of place influences, and very clever too. Here the leaf shape comes into play, sometimes as a backdrop to the lights and at other times as a lighting “raft” which cleverly contains many of the down lighters. One area which had significant architecture thought in where it would be situated and its design is “The Hellenic Gourmet” retailing the very best of Greek produce such as fine olive oils, feta cheeses, and many other delicacies. It somehow resembles life in a traditional Greek town or village even with its own olive tree. A step into the past maybe but one instinctively knows

where you are. Another impressive area, and one for the ladies in particular is the perfume and cosmetic area designed in the style of a “Marine Spa”. Here there are various sub-sections such as skin-care and wellness, each with their own brands. The Design Solution have been very clever here as they have used some of the colours and shades that represent Greece but surprise, surprise can double up as the colours of the area. The retail offer is set in a backdrop of blue glass at high level and also at fascia level is the subtle affect of blue pin-dot lighting.

A significant use of digital screening has been used within the whole retail area from the entrance “pillars” on either side of the entrance main pathway through the store. These “pillars” are made up of multiple digital screens providing a high impact promotional space for products and in-store information. The height of these screens allows them to be visible to passengers passing through security. It



also enables them to become more engaged with the retail once they have entered the retail world beyond. The use of these screens can be changed in order to promote certain offers or products. Due to the height of the retail space in certain parts there is also situated on the back wall very large digital screens. This gives further opportunity for brands to showcase their wares. Combining both these sets of screens, front and back enable their use to be maximised to a greater effect. The digital presence also includes personal touch-screens giving the shopper a truly interactive shopping experience.

This is truly a “state of the art” shopping experience, international brands, digital feedback superb shopping design, and it’s not raining. 🌧️

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