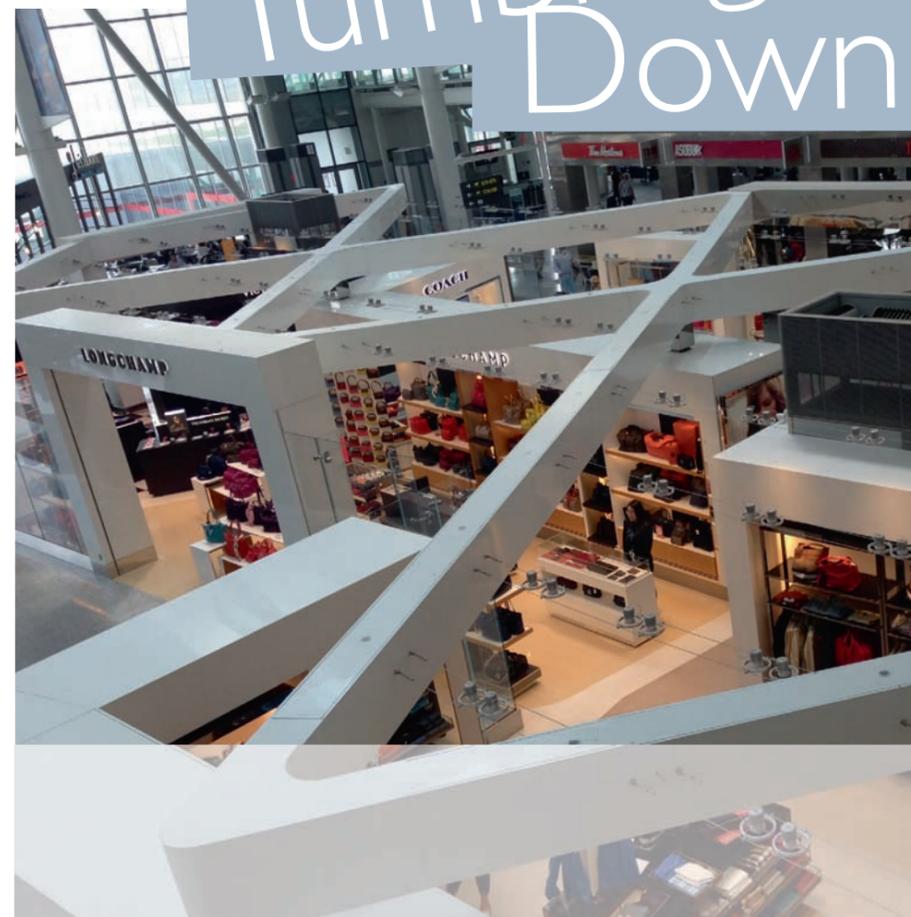




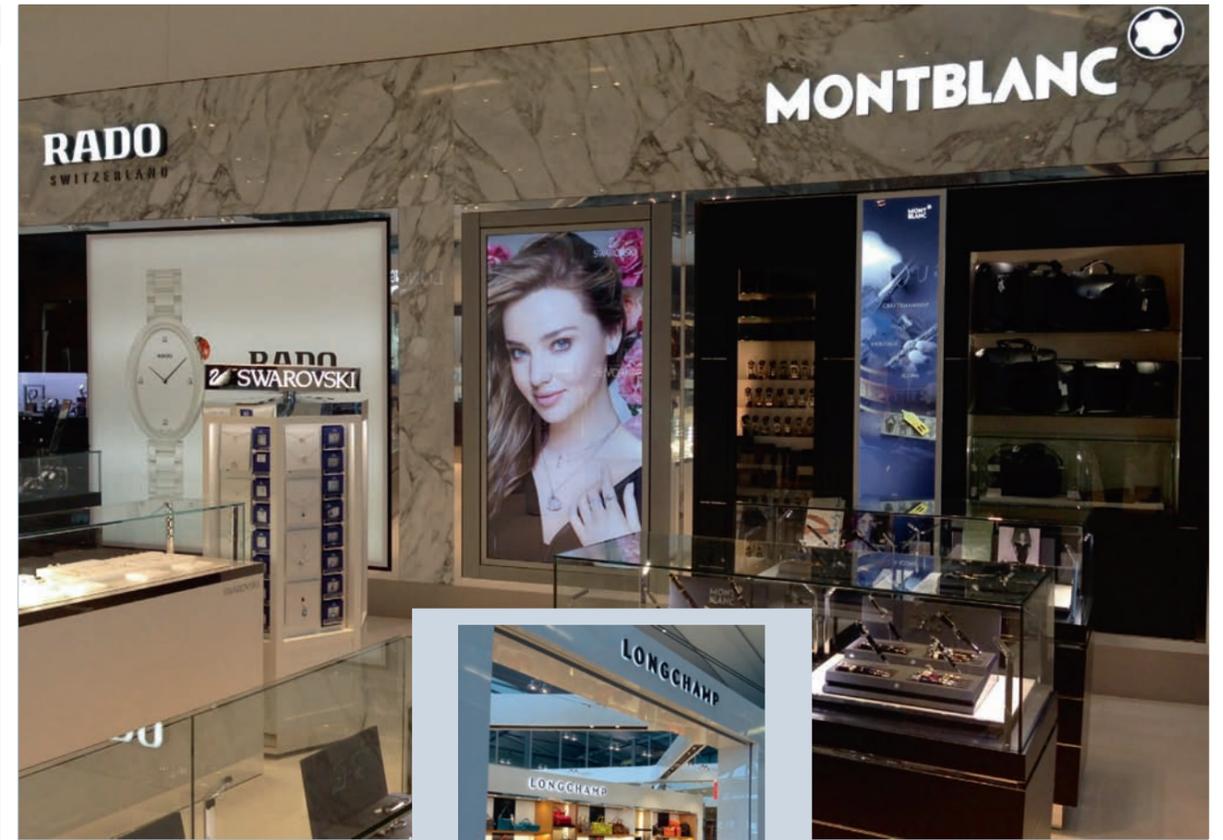
The Walls Came Tumbling Down

Steve Thomas-Emberson talks to A1 Retail about Airport Retailing.



Retailing is all about open spaces, letting the consumer see and experience the product. Walls have their uses, a display facility and holding the roof up and what about windows? Light is an obvious quality but they are about letting the ever eager public see the goods for sale. So keep them clear of clutter! What does the shopper get? Sale signs plastered all over the windows in post box red. On every high street it's the same, a quarter mile long "display" of red and white. Can anybody see the items that are actually for sale? No! For me the worst group of retailers for this are car dealers. They have the biggest windows because they sell the largest consumer products. Can the person driving by see a car? Once again no because they are hidden behind finance signs or per cent this, low cost this. The best one I have ever seen was "New models in stock - Test drive one today" Could you see these temples for speed? No they were all hidden behind the signage. Give me strength!

Let us look at a totally different retailing environment - an airport. This retailing environment starts off with several very large problems; it can have no windows for external light. It can be generally small, especially in Europe. The larger retail "showcases" tend to be in the Middle and Far East. One such



person and "partnership" constantly faced with these problems is Nick Taylor, Director, The Design Solution and their client Nuance, operators of some of the most advanced Duty Free retail environments in the world. It has been a "partnership" that has worked for a very long time and creates some of the most exciting environments found in the world of "airport retailing". Their latest creation is in Toronto airport. This open plan is exciting as Taylor describes. "There are three entrances formed as "portals" into the Duty Free area. We used a pared back palette of predominantly white finishes for each portal. Some of these were personalised by luxury brands like Kors and Burberry. There is a large amount of glazing to the shop-front area which encloses the fashion space".

Taylor is very modest in what he has created for Nuance Duty Free in Toronto airport. The end result is a very elegant store with major brands sitting side by side, not in competition with each other but complementing each other. One of the major architectural features to complement the lack of walls is the "open top" affect; just white beams traversing the area making it feel even larger. This is where lighting can be installed out of harms way and also hidden.

Lighting is one of the biggest



headaches for all retail designers. Is there enough, does it show and is it the right type? These are just a few things to be taken into account... Taylor explains the style of lighting employed in all the Nuance Duty Free shops. "Lighting, like design is critical to any store environment. We plan the lighting in all the Nuance stores using the same principles, Toronto was no exception other than it has the added challenge of no ceilings over the luxury fashion zone. We used a combination of LED lights as we all know are more energy efficient than traditional light sources. These we use to give the overall ambient levels of light. Then we used metal halide to illuminate the column displays as it gave a more punchy quality of rendering which you need on vertical displays. When planning the lighting, we ensure that each facing of each gondola has a light source directed at it. We don't want to illuminate the floors or blank surfaces - just the product. The colour temperature of light is as important from an ambience perspective. We used a colder white light over the perfume and cosmetics areas and sunglasses to give a fresh feel so that customers can

clearly" read" colours or indeed the lens quality of a pair of Ray Bans.."

As Taylor has commented upon the lack of wall and even ceiling albeit looking fantastic to the consumer has design drawbacks. The Design Solutions work for Abu Dhabi airport was both highly creative in what was a vast building but it had to "fit in." Have a sense of place - know its place in the culture of things. Failure would have created an airport with two visual elements competing with the size of the building winning but at a cost. Taylor shows his enthusiasm for the project. "It had organic interior architecture, a white palette, and generosity of space. These were some of the key characteristics which we identified as making up the personality of this iconic building. What we did was to create an equally contemporary interior which looks like as though it was always planned to be there as opposed to having been beamed in and alien."

Both these airports are fantastic for their space, an "open plan" space devoid of walls, barriers and the like. Consumers like this design approach. It gives them freedom to roam and a roaming shopper is a happy and interested shopper.

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