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# TREND WATCH

International store design consultant Ken Nisch identifies retail fit-out trends to energise the selling floor and shave operating costs.

In his nearly 30 years in the store planning and design profession, architect Ken Nisch has seen trends come and go – and some that remain part of the visual lexicon. As President of JGA, based in Southfield, Michigan, he travels worldwide to advise clients on strategies to support sales goals, brand imaging, and the development of efficient and effective merchandising facilities.

NZRetail asked Nisch to share with us his observations on fixturing, mannequins and display, lighting, building systems and social media. He selected the following images to illustrate significant trends shown by exhibitors at EuroShop – held earlier this year in Düsseldorf, Germany – where he was a featured speaker, and three projects recently completed by his JGA: DXL, Tapper's, Hot Topic and Cortefiel.

## Fixturing

"Retailers today want more environment for their money. They are more open to consider the store as a gallery or exhibit setting for their merchandise," Nisch says. He believes this movement cuts across price-point lines – from mass to luxury.

Computer-generated designing and fabrication has given shapes the freedom to be released to form both dramatic backgrounds for



merchandise and artfully integrated displays. "All planes are fair game," he believes. "The floor and the ceiling no longer serve only structural end-points to express a product's appeal. An arrangement at EuroShop that had wine bottles climbing the walls and across the ceiling was a piece of contemporary sculpture that pulls visitors into the setting," Nisch says. Multi-dimensional illusory depths heighten the appeal of products on display. "It is an aggressive explosion of the elements that is adding sophistication to display

fixtures, reflecting – it seems to me – trends in contemporary architecture."

Nisch has noted that the visual appeal of produce in food markets has benefited from the advances made in fixture styling and production. "Curved cases impart a subtle style element to the arrangements of fruits and vegetables," he says.

## Mannequins and display props

After a recess of several years when minimalism ruled the mannequin design market, Nisch is impressed

**Top** Retailers are more open to consider their stores as a gallery or exhibit setting.

**Above left** Curved cases impart a subtle style element to the arrangements of fruits and vegetables.

**Above right** Artfully integrated displays shown at EuroShop provided inspiration to attendees.

**Opposite** "All planes are fair game," says Nisch, as illustrated by this display of wine bottles as seen at EuroShop.

*All photography by JGA.*

with their return as silent sales ambassadors of ready-to-wear and accessories. To add a more stylish put-together look, props fashioned from a broad palette of materials,

Nisch says. “Stores that previously didn’t have a place for mannequins in their visual merchandising plans are generating traffic with unique presentations – such as abstracted

“Stores that previously didn’t have a place for mannequins in their visual merchandising plans are generating traffic with unique presentations – such as abstracted human forms.”

including found objects, introduce a life-style message to the settings.

“Leading mannequin manufacturers are introducing into their collections models organised around two themes: eclecticism and sculptural quality,”

human forms. For the Tappers jewellery store that JGA designed, three full height mannequins with elongated necks made a dramatic statement in a front window for the jewellery pieces they selected to

show,” says Nisch. On other occasions, the store will hang a single necklace on the forms against draped fabric.

Mannequins composed of unusual materials, such as stacked wood, recycled papier maché, wire/ wood combinations, found objects (‘green salvage’, according to Nisch), surface decorated nylon, and clay occupied exhibitor booths at Euroshop. “Investing in mannequins and forms that could almost be classified as contemporary art is one way for a retailer to differentiate their environment that is less expensive than a bricks-and-mortar solution,” Nisch says.

He recognises that hanger companies are testing the waters of new hi-tech products to serve as a mannequin alternative, he says. “More advanced hanger systems now have the ability to carry messages,



**Above left** Mannequins are making dramatic statements and are both eclectic and sculptural. *Photography: JGA.*

**Above right** Ladieswear display at Cortefiel by JGA. *Photography by: Paco Alorda Fotografho;*

**Right** Male and female Boutique forms from Mei & Picchi. *Photo from: Mei & Picchi;*

**Left** Display fixture at EuroShop. *Photography by: JGA.*





**Above** Window dressing at Destination XL. Photography by: Mark Steele;

**Right** Advanced hanger systems now have the capacity to carry information. Photographed at EuroShop by JGA;

**Below** Full height mannequins with elongated necks in the window at Tappers jewellery store designed by JGA. Photography by: Denise Schroeder, Tappers.



## THE PLANIT SYSTEM

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have built-in view screens and can function as an extension to the mannequins on the sales floor,” says Nisch.

## Lighting

Retail lighting is still focused on LEDs and its fast-paced technology to augment output, colour rendering and heat dissemination. LEDs already have a track record of energy saving and flexibility for a broad cross-

where light-spill will function in the future as ambient light ‘glow tools’.

“LEDs are becoming more powerful and controllable,” Nisch explains. “Colour rendition is improving as well as focusing ability.”

The key is to locate LEDs in areas where they will do the most good, where needed, and provide the most contrast, he says. Longer life for metal halide, fluorescent, and compact fluorescent reduce maintenance costs.

## Building systems

Building systems that impact energy management have risen to a top slot in the world-wide drive to cut expenses associated with retail store operations. Because lighting accounts for approximately 40 per cent of electricity consumed to run a retail facility, in the past 18 months lighting controls have emerged as an important player in store operations.

“There are over a dozen makers of inter-operable, wireless lighting control products that can be customised for flexibility,” Nisch says. These systems are relevant for new construction as well as retrofit where access to existing wiring and the introduction of new wires can be difficult and expensive.

“...in the past 18 months lighting controls has emerged as an important player in store operations.”

section of store types – from supermarkets to art galleries, apparel stores to jewellery boutiques.

Now, Nisch foresees increased use of LEDs in fixturing. As a result, he sees a movement away from ambient lighting in retail stores. “We will begin to depend more on spill light from counters, wall cases and cove lighting to provide sufficient illumination for customers to move safely throughout the store and still be able to examine merchandise – with added accent lighting,” he predicts. He calls elements

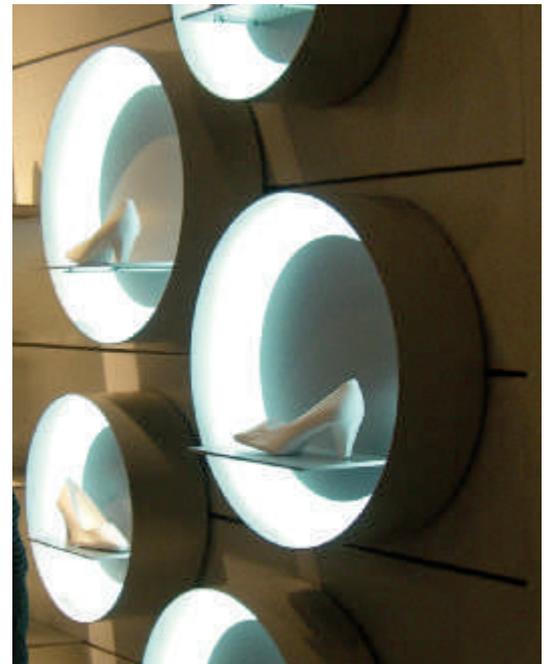


**Top and above right** Added accent lighting enhances products on display as seen in Destination XL. *Photos by: Mark Steele.*

**Above left** Light accented product on the Ombelico Mei & Picchi display units.

**Left** The elaborate light fittings provide an ambience atmosphere – and a talking point. *Photography by: JGA.*

**Right** The key to LED lighting is to use it in areas that benefit from sharp contrast as shown at this GlobShop stand. *Photography by: JGA.*

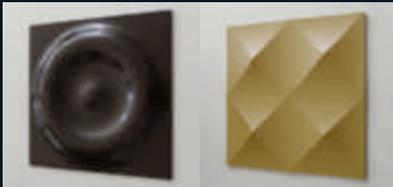


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Integrated features and functionality operate in this trendy fashion chain inspired by music and pop culture. Product displays in Hot Topic store, designed by JGA. Photographed by Paul Bielenberg.

The non-profit EnOcean Alliance, based in San Ramon, Calif., was established to promote automation solutions for sustainable buildings by standardising and internationalising wireless technology ([www.enocean-alliance.org](http://www.enocean-alliance.org)). Recently

**“LEDs are becoming more powerful and controllable.”**

introduced is RETScreen International, an energy monitoring and reporting system developed collaboratively by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership and the NASA Langley Research Center. The forthcoming ‘Performance Analysis’ module will enable users to monitor, analyse and report key energy performance data.

## Integrating social media

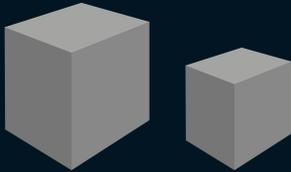
Increased use of tablets and iPads by always-on and empowered consumers has a growing number of retailers experimenting with mobile and social initiatives. “It’s an intimate use of technology,” Nisch explains. “Consumers are intuitively comfortable with it.”

By contrast, he has noticed fewer flat-screen, plasma screens programmed with content ranging from runway fashion shows in speciality and department stores, to hourly pricing announcements in big-box stores.

Nisch’s observations were corroborated by the findings of a study conducted by Forrester Research for Shop.org, a division of the National Retail Federation. In a 68-company survey, 91% of retailers queried said they either have a mobile strategy in place or in development – up from 74% last year. Nisch says that the pre-shopping



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Left Sculptural bench and 'tree tables' inject a high level of interest in this EuroShop display stand. Photography by: JGA.

Below left An example of the Mobile plus Ombelico system from Mei & Picchi.

Below The versatile ALU Slider display system from Mei & Picchi.



## KENNISCH



Architect Ken Nisch has specialised in the planning, design and design management of retail facilities. He became president of JGA, an architectural and interiors design firm

based in Southfield, Michigan, in 1987 and chairman in 1995. His responsibilities include developing project strategy for retail operations ranging in size from boutiques to department store chains around the world, including Godiva Chocolatier, Jaguar, Hershey's, LittleMissMatched, The North Face, Verizon Wireless, SP Market (Brazil), Fantasy World (Kuwait) and Cortefield/Springfield (Spain).

He was recently named a 'Retail Luminary' by the retail environments magazine, *Display & Design Ideas* and was inducted into the Retail Design Institute Legion of Honor in recognition of his outstanding career achievements in the field of retail store design. In 2010, he was presented with the Retail Leadership Award at the Asia Retail Congress in Mumbai, India.

Nisch is a frequent speaker at major industry events, including the National Retail Federation annual conference, GlobalShop, and EHI.

experience offered by mobile devices before heading out to the store is an increasingly significant driver of buying decisions.

Forrester's report agreed, recommending that retailers should be working to integrate features and functionality into the physical store experience. Such services as basic store information, transparent pricing, and easy checkout capabilities are likely to be the most pressing opportunities for most sites in the near term ([www.shop.org/soro](http://www.shop.org/soro)).

Mobile apps, the study emphasised, can make brands seem current, entertaining, or fun, creating a unique opportunity to connect with more shoppers. "Learning about a product can go anywhere.

"For example, when a customer e-mails themselves a picture of a product they are considering, it is an interface on a one-to-one basis that typically becomes a positive shopping experience," Nisch concludes. ■

□ By **Vilma Barr**, a Philadelphia-based freelance writer and a regular contributor to *NZRetail*.