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The future of retail is hybrid

How can the retail sector respond to the changed requirements and wishes of customers of all generations and what retail concepts show perspectives for the new 20s? In the new **Retail Design International 5**, experts venture a look into the future and see a decade of collage that merges different spheres of life—hybrid spaces.

Read an **excerpt**:

Hybrid spaces have the potential to allow retailing to rise like a lucrative phoenix from the ashes. Hybrid spaces are geared to actively experiencing products, brands and values, thus transforming the Point of Sale into a Point of Experience. In this way, the retail industry is reasserting its exclusive quality for thrill-seeking consumers in search of new experiences. After all, every event needs a physical venue before images of it can be shared and liked in the virtual cosmos.

Experience so far has shown: retailers who use hybrid spaces to increase the experience factor of their customers are rewarded by rising sales density. The hybrid store of the future no longer places its focus on direct selling. Rather, it is the anchor of the brand experience. Tomorrow's customer expects a brand to be genuine, transparent and to have a meaningful influence on social values. To achieve this, the store must be rounded off into a place where a customer likes to be and that offers unique experiences which the customer wants to share with others. And precisely that is what contemporary retail spatial design aims to do.

The hybrid store no longer places its focus on direct selling.

Light and shop design are the key elements in the creation of these hybrid themed spaces. Only light can zone spaces without construction barriers, can give spaces a

specific function and guide attention. In addition to this, shop design must create an authentic world which strengthens the genuineness of a brand through a consistent identity.

Light and shop design are the key elements in the creation of hybrid themed spaces.

Curated spaces

Successful hybrid concepts always follow an overarching design principle in order to combine a whole range of functions. The result are highly individual shops with a mix of products and suitably themed spaces for different functions and events.

There are essentially four ways of maximising the experience value. As the goal is always to provide as unique an experience as possible, mixed forms tend to be the rule rather than the exception.

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- Along the products: The provider combines products from different categories. These complement each other in the way they are used or can be linked ideologically into themed worlds, e. g. knives and tongs together with barbecue books in a book store.

- Along the function: The basic function of an offering is supplemented by other related offerings. Shops selling running shoes can offer coached courses, fitness training, healthy food or medical advice.

- Along the values: Values can also form the basis of the hybrid concept. Via the value sustainability, cosmetics, clothing and food can form a convincing symbiosis as natural cosmetics, fair trade apparel and organic food.

- Along the experiences: The conceptual focus here is on the creation of actual experiences. The store is conceived as a place of social interaction. An example might be the testing of new surf boards together on an artificial wave in a sports department store.

Hybrid spaces are the future.

Hybrid spaces are the future—a brief look back in the past makes this even clearer. In medieval times, the market was always both a trading place and a centre of social life. Having relinquished its monothematic specialisation, hybrid retailing is now experiencing something of a renaissance – the rediscovered strengths of the past are guiding the bricks-and-mortar retail trade into a future full of experiences and strong sales.

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Hybrid systems not only revolutionise our mobility but also provide a fresh breath of air in retailing with the layering of various functions. Large-format building structures such as department stores and shopping centres are revitalised in line with climate optimisation and supplemented with small-scale mixed uses. Shared spaces for young start-ups and established brands offer greater variety and the opportunity to liven up too extensive spaces with new experiences and inspirations. Retail sharing has developed into an effective recipe against decreasing frequenting.

The fifth edition of "Retail Design International" pursues the phenomenon of hybrid spaces between new work, leisure and retail worlds. It presents collaborative concepts from the European, Asian and Pacific regions that reveal opportunities for the transformation from a point of sale to a point of experience.

The editor Dr. Jons Messedat is an architect, industrial designer and author. His expertise regarding the built identity of companies and brands –from design to management and realisation– is in demand among global companies, as a jury member in architecture and design competitions, as well as at universities in Germany, Switzerland and the USA.