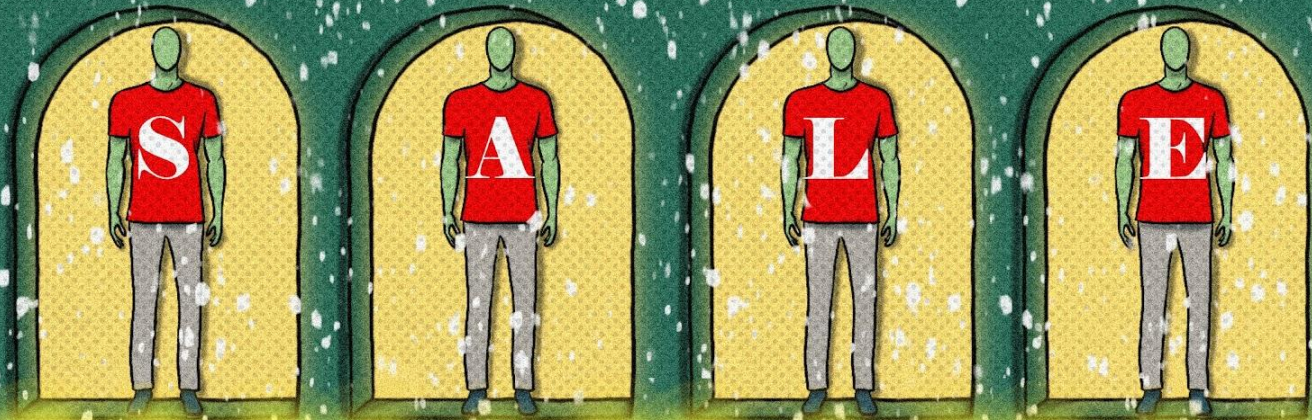


# SHOP

KNOW  
WHY  
ARE  
THEY  
ART?





# THE RETAIL DESIGN ISSUE

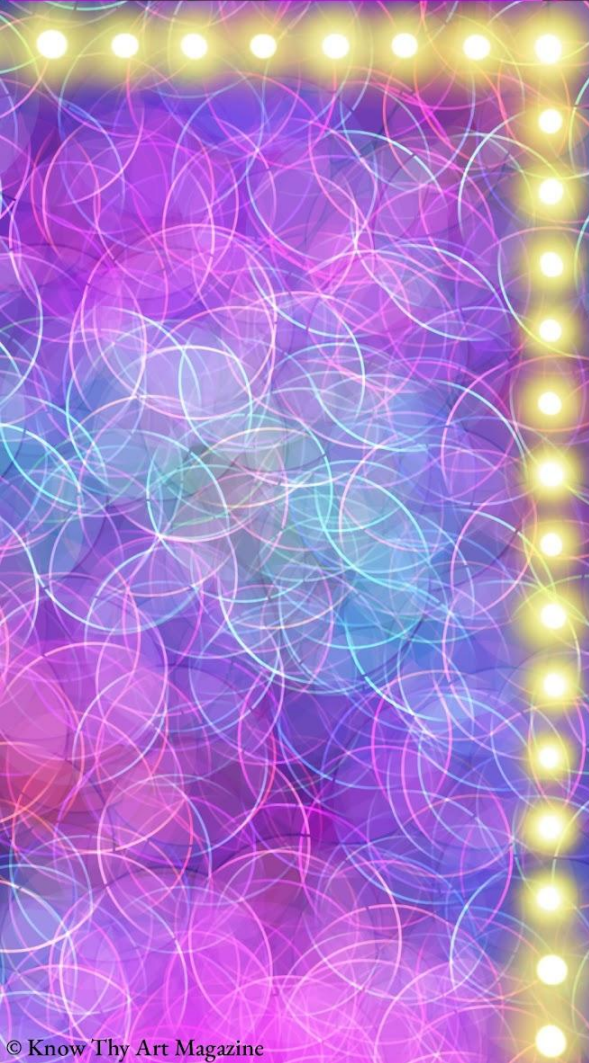
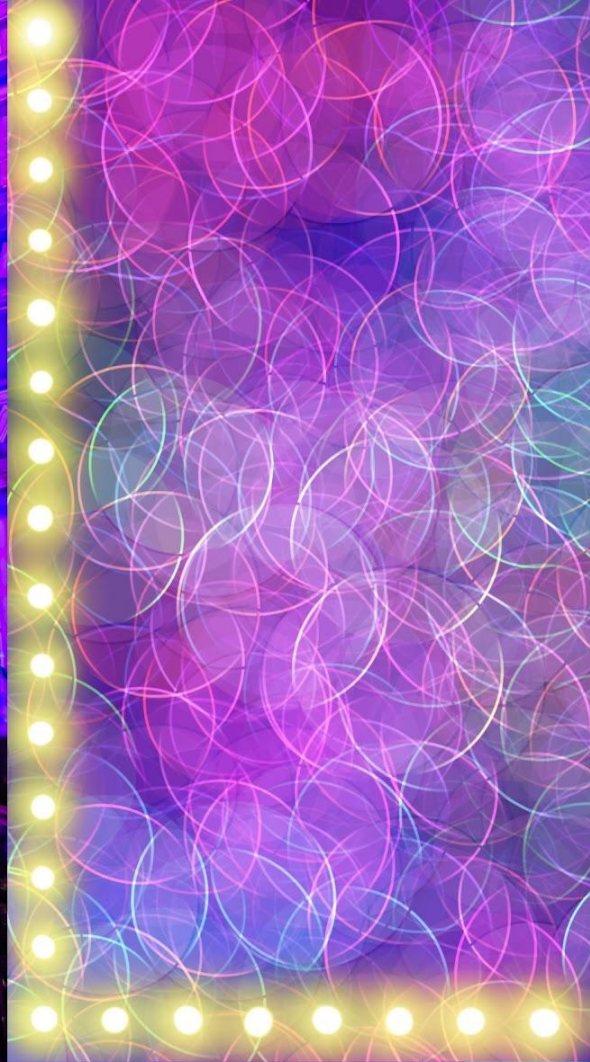
Ever looked at the charming decoration in a shop window? Admired the surreal art of mannequins with television heads? A Christmas tree made of the latest handbag collection? Well, you been admiring retail design. In this magazine issue, we'll explore retail design, how it started, where it is today and what it might look like in the future.

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# HISTORY OF RETAIL DESIGN

There are many watershed movements in social, economic and political history that have had an impact on design. One such historic moment was the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. Before production and textile machines were invented, making a simple cotton blouse took weeks. This is not counting the months it took to grow and harvest the cotton without industrial grade farming equipment.

Needless to say, that the cotton top was time-consuming and expensive to make. This meant that people would probably buy clothes as you would luxury items. Shopping trips were few and far between. There was no need for shop owners to use too much advertising to attract shoppers. People would simply buy only if and when they needed to buy. Whether it was clothes, shoes, personal care items and even mass produced foods like a bar of chocolate. Without quick production through a factory's conveyor belt, everything took ages to make and was priced accordingly.

But life was about to change forever. Machines started to change the face of production. Now, you could make 100 chocolate bars or pairs of socks in the same time that it took you to make just 5. Supply increased and so things became cheaper. Patrons were open to the idea of shopping even if they didn't necessarily need the goods. And when Christianity already had a traditional "gift-giving" season, shop owners needed to attract buyers around that time. Posters and newspaper adverts were a good way to advertise at that time. But what do you do when the patrons are already walking on a shopping high street? Simple, you just make your shop window look as attractive as possible.

Francis Place, an English social reformer, has a tailoring shop at Charing Cross in London. During the Industrial Revolution, he dressed up the window front of his shop to attract visitors. While this wasn't widely accepted by traditionalists at the time, Place, stuck to his guns. He claimed his decorative display earned him plenty of patrons. He said that he, "sold from the window more goods...than paid journeymen's wages and the expenses of housekeeping."

Today, "Retail Design" is one of the most interactive, mixed-media, design forms. Retail designers are no less than film set designers. They take small spaces like shop windows and store lobbies to create magical installations that make shoppers want to buy.









# RETAIL DESIGN TODAY

Today window displays have many types of arrangements. Depending on the budget, resources and the products, retail designers can be just as creative as installation artists.

From Oxford Street to 5th Avenue, Hamley's and Harrods to Cartier and Magnolia Bakery, shop displays add magic to the festive season all around the world.

## Types of Retail Design Today

**Layering:** This is typically where designers do a foreground and background of elements, decoration, props and the product itself. Paper flowers in the background and the fashionable slippers in the foreground.

**Focal Point:** Balloons all around the window and the limited edition candy box in the centre. This is how designers pick a focal point and have props accentuate the product in focus.

**Grouping:** Pyramid grouping, mannequin rows, balance, product clusters on plinths and many more creative ways of grouping the products. These optical techniques help patrons get a good "window shopping" experience.

**Props and Narrative Design:** Making a night-sky background, Santa Clause on a papier-mâché sleigh with a big red sack of the store's signature products aesthetically pouring out. This would be a good example of telling a story through retail design.

## What is used in retail design?

Just like any mixed-media artwork, anything that can be used, will be used for the installation. Paper props, plastic fixtures, mannequins, screens, neon lights, mechanical parts, plinths and so much more.

## How are retail designs made?

For a professional retail designer, a sketchpad and pencil is the best place to start. 2D rendering will generally suffice for simple installations. If the design is more elaborate, designers can even use 3D rendering software. Ideally, from the sketch pad to photoshop or any sketching application is just fine.

## What does it take to be a good retail designer?

For retail design, spatial awareness, design thinking and concept creation to fulfil the requirements in a client's brief are more important than using fancy software. Like most jobs, retail designers get better with experience. This is because they learn about materials, weight, estimations, practicality and so much more with time. For example, a novice might think it is fine to use real daffodils in a shop display. But an experienced designer will know that real carnations stay fresh for longer and if the client insists on daffodils, then paper flowers are the way to go. Electrical insulations, fire hazards, appropriate site inspections with all these factors in mind come easy to an experienced retail designer. This is also why retail designers tend to work in teams as it is a truly collaborative form of design.







# THE FUTURE OF RETAIL DESIGN



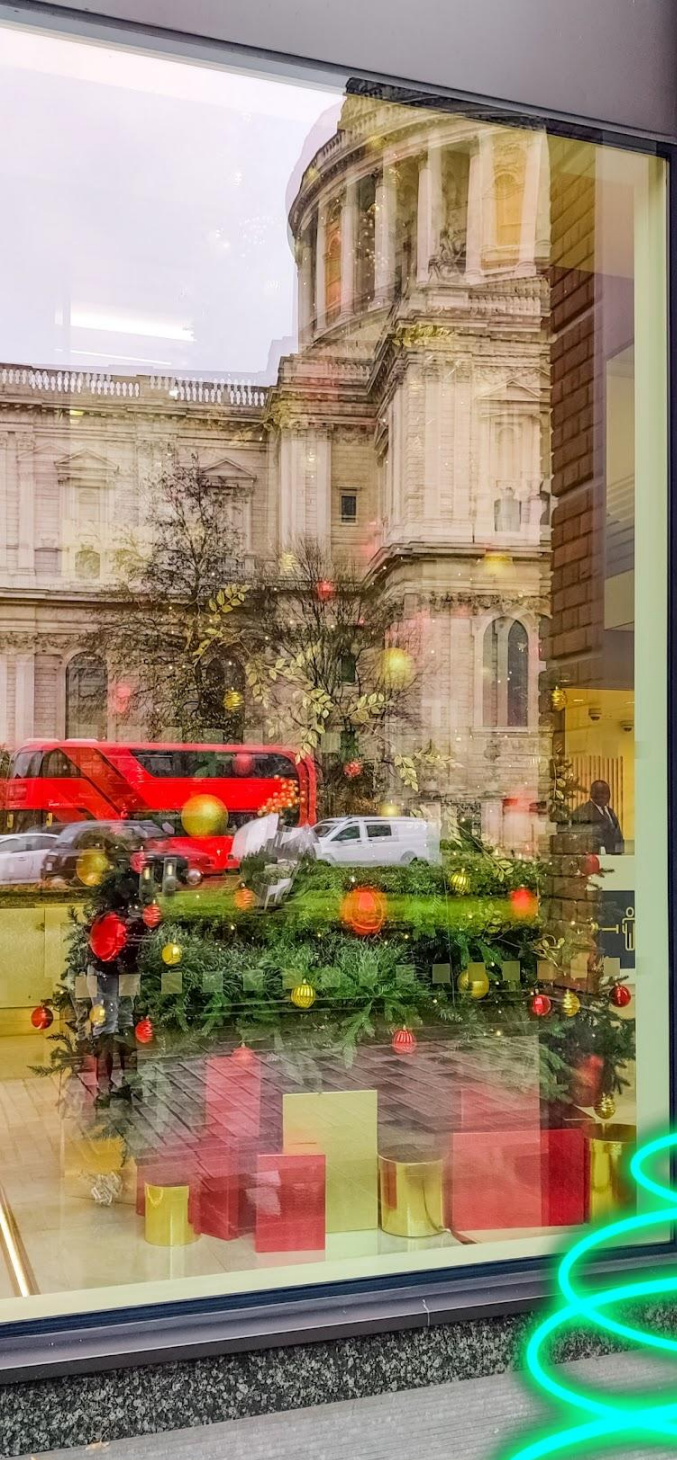
Like most things, even the shopping experience has changed today. We mostly shop online and UI designers for e-commerce sites are the new retail designers of modern times. However, brands and businesses still love departmental stores and shopping malls. In fact, even consumers sometimes want the occasional outing where they can shop, eat and get entertained, all in one place. Almost like a retail circus, designers have to use their installations to lift the spirits of the whole mall. This is because businesses know that shoppers will still crowd malls around Christmas, Diwali, Black Friday, Valentines day and what not.

So what is the future of retail design like? Well, for this you have to ask yourself why you do leave online shopping to visit a store? It is mostly because you wish to actually see the product or a demonstration before buying from a glass touch screen. Just like mannequins are a good example for sartorial demonstration, “live-action” retail design, similarly, helps you visualise and evaluate.

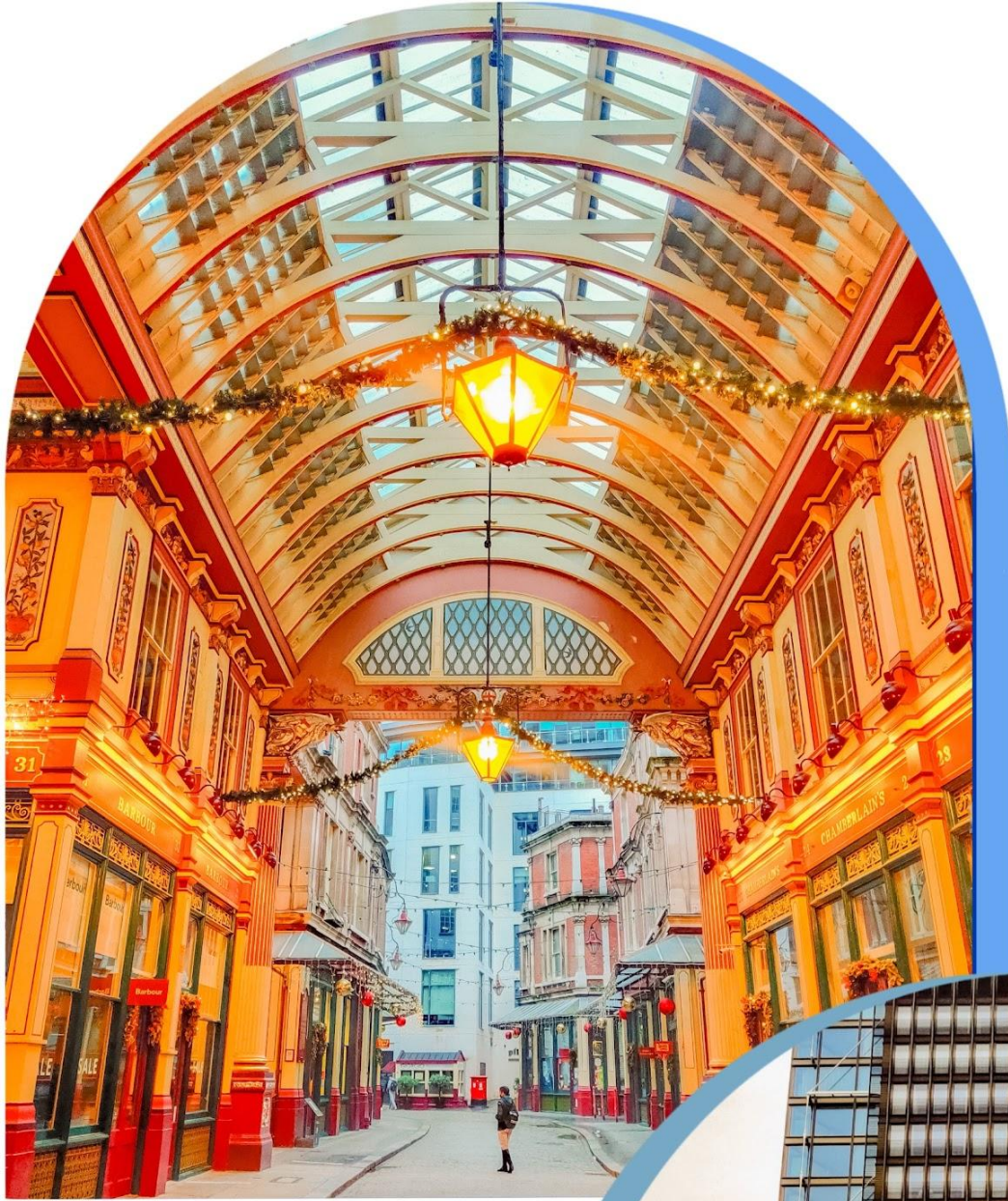
Imagine a shop set of a small messy kitchen, the vacuum cleaner you want to see in action before you buy and a man purposefully spilling cereal crumb in an otherwise charming kitchen set only to clean it up with the vacuum cleaner. This is what live action retail design is like. You come to the shop to get what even a 100 well meaning reviews and ratings just won't satisfy... seeing it with your own eyes.

Retail Design is nothing but design focused on visual experience and the future looks as though it is about to even more focused on both visuals and the experience.









## SENSEI SPEAKS

You walk into a retail store, whatever it is, and if there's a sense of entertainment and excitement and electricity, you wanna be there.

— Howard Schultz,  
Former CEO - Starbucks



The thing is, I don't want to be sold to when I walk into a store.

I want to be welcomed.

— Angela Ahrendts,  
Former SVP of Retail - Apple Inc.









## FREEBIES

Free download of 2 digital prints.  
 Street photography.  
 Sign up for the Know Thy Art monthly newsletter  
 to access all our free downloads.





## ASK THE EDITOR

I intern as a Graphic Designer and I would like to switch to Retail Design. How do I do that?

Carrie,  
Ohio

Ideally, the best way to get into retail design is to start working at a studio that does retail marketing. Sometimes a full service studio will work on projects like brand design, packaging design and many more. One of these could be retail design.

If you manage to get a job in film production, then set design is your best bet.

Knowledge of architecture and interior design along with CAD design is a great benefit. As with any type of design career, a good portfolio that showcases your creative and technical skills is an absolute must.





**Northfield Farm**  
Borough Market Butchers since 1999

If Only  
Vegetables  
Smelt As  
Good As Bacon



@tatesh



# SNEAK PEEK INTO THE NEXT ISSUE

## Creative Retrospect Issue

In the next issue we will take a look at all of the important moments in art and design that happened in 2023. Catch this cool issue that comes out next month!

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