

In-store innovations from EuroShop 2014

The retail and design worlds descended on Düsseldorf last week for the EuroShop extravaganza. John Ryan reports

The shop equipment-fest drew the crowds to Düsseldorf last week. All were in search of the next big thing to make stores better looking, more efficient – or to just keep them in the race against the competition. And things had moved on since the last show in 2011 in some areas, but not necessarily across the board.

By any standards, this is an enormous show and making the most of it involves a degree of helicopter observation. Delegates must make an attempt to read the store design runes, while at the same time paying close attention to what's actually on show. It's a tricky feat given the sheer preponderance of businesses, organisations and specialist seminars that pitch up to market their products.

Broadly, however, the victor at EuroShop 2014 seemed to be technology, but not tech as it has appeared in stores over the last few years. The impetus on the part of the exhibitors seemed to be towards providing store equipment that incorporates technology but where, for the most part, it is becoming increasingly invisible.

Shops it would appear are being moved towards being shops once more, rather than repositories for large amounts of techno-hardware. And perhaps with this in mind, the visual merchandising community was having a field day as mannequin manufacturers and store display equipment suppliers came up with new ways of persuading shoppers to dip into their pockets.

The other major theme that was evident was the manner in which large numbers of companies are teaming up to create novelty in single units and fixtures where the sum of the parts is greater than the individual pieces.

Also worth noting was the number of Chinese visitors and exhibitors at the show, leading one retailer to note: "I wonder how long before we encounter the ultimate irony, Chinese exhibitors selling to Chinese retailers in Germany."

EUROSHOP 2014

- Location** Messe, Düsseldorf
- Size** Almost too big
- Reason for visiting** Fear of missing out
- Who goes?** Every retailer with aspirations to be better than the competition
- Price** €60 for a day ticket

Given the scale and reach of EuroShop, that seems only a matter of time.

Here are some of the highlights from the event.

Dept Store 3.0

If crowds were any measure of the success of a company at EuroShop then Italian shopfitting giant Schweitzer was a winner. Dubbed Dept Store 3.0, its stand was composed of a two-floor shop with everything from clothing to food by way of a restaurant and hairdresser.

The aim was to show how a department store could function on a human level as a stage for spectacle and making the most of merchandise, while at the same time being 'wired' throughout.

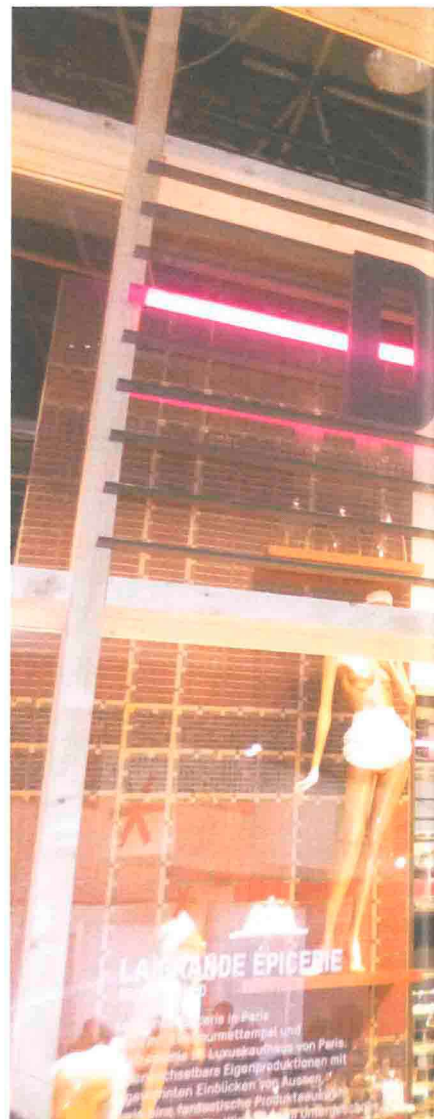
Schweitzer's design arm, Zurich-based Interstore, had been employed to create the blueprint for the store and much of the conversation about this one centred on how much it must have cost.

Chief executive Bernhard Schweitzer was clear about the benefit: "We don't spend any money on marketing anywhere else and EuroShop is once every three years. This represents about 1% of our turnover and we will get between 60% to 70% of our business for the next three years from this." As an endorsement for the show, this was about as good as it gets.

Digital fixtures

Swiss fashion retailer Heidi.com has extended its reach into the physical world with a Zaha Hadid-designed boutique in Neuchâtel. In the store it has collaborated with Samsung to create mid-shop digital fixtures in its 2,100 sq ft premises.

These units were on the Samsung stand and were priced at €18,000 (£14,800) apiece (although Samsung's Thomas Arenz was quick to point out that "this will come down"). They are intended to enable the shopper to select from the garments displayed on the fixture, but should a colour or size be unavailable, an integrated digital screen allows the



Schweitzer's Dept Store 3.0 exhibit at EuroShop

For more pictures of EuroShop 2014 and more store galleries go to retail-week.com/stores



featured everything from food to a hairdresser

Samsung displayed the mid-shop digital fixture it created in partnership with etailer Heidi.com



customer to click-and-collect or have the item delivered.

The fixture was typical of the manner in which shopfitting manufacturers are teaming up with designers and technology providers to create store equipment that is rather more than something on which to hang or shelve products.

Shopfitting giant Vizona was also following a similar path with screens that can be integrated into modular perimeter displays, giving retailers a degree of flexibility in the way in which they conduct their visual merchandising.

Hi-tech mannequins

One of the showstoppers was the Hans Boodt stand in Hall 4, aka 'mannequin world'. The entrance to Boodt's fortress-like enclosure had two glass display cabinets inside which were mannequin torsos and heads from which the faces had been removed. A robot arm next to each of these removed faces from an adjacent display and applied them to the faceless mannequins, one after another. It was a simple, but crowd-pleasing idea.

A rather less self-consciously ostentatious use of technology was on view at UK visual merchandising company SFD's stand. Here, the dimensions of a mannequin in a glass case had been 'mapped' by a computer, allowing different outfits to be projected onto it, creating the effect of a constantly changing fashion show.

This application focused the eye on the mannequin through the deft use of technology, but without making the technology the centre of attention.



Exhibitors showed the best lighting for different products

Lighting

LED lighting was the highlight (apologies) of EuroShop in 2011, but in 2014 its use is more or less a given. Instead, many lighting manufacturers seemed intent on seducing retail design teams with 'dynamic lighting'. Philips' displays were a case in point, using LED lights that changed in intensity, colour, warmth and beam shape to add interest to merchandise displays on perimeter module walls.



As ever, it was at times quite hard to pin down what was being done on many of the lighting displays and the level of refinement was such that there were even stands that offered different kind of lighting for different foodstuffs. If a trend was to be discerned it was that EuroShop 2014 was the show in which LED lighting has come of age.

Why bother?

There will always be a school of thought that asks 'why bother?' when it comes to attending EuroShop. And to an extent that view is understandable as it can be very difficult to discern any kind of meaningful pattern from the vast array of items that are on show.

That said, there is much worthwhile about taking three days away from the office and looking at what is possible and that is what EuroShop should be about.

Doubtless, in 2017, more or less the same question will be asked, but this is perhaps one of those few occasions when a simple counter-argument might be used: 'If you didn't go, might you have missed something that should be in your store?'

Sore legs, heads and brittle expense claims are par for the course at EuroShop, but ultimately this is one that's worth taking time to attend.



Mannequins with changeable faces and clothing projected onto them were big draws at the event

To read more stores features go to retail-week.com/stores