

EXTREME MAKEOVER

The New Look flagship in Westfield London sets the tone for its other big stores and is causing something of a stir, as John Ryan reports



Two floors and a massive pair of windows flanking an open entrance so high it has a balcony that is the first floor, and from which figures peer down at shoppers: welcome to the new-look New Look at the Westfield London shopping centre.

There's been a large branch of the value fashion retailer at this mall since it opened towards the end of 2008. Walk through the centre today and it still looks pretty contemporary. Like other developers, stringent efforts have clearly been made to keep both the tenant mix and the environment of the public areas up to scratch and relevant. The same is

NEW LOOK, WESTFIELD LONDON

First opened October 2008

Revamped 2014

Size 19,000 sq ft across two floors

Design In-house

Ambiance Product dictated

true of the retailers that have taken space here.

More than half a decade has passed since this centre opened and that is a very long time indeed in the world of fashion retail.

This means that an overhaul of the store was probably a little overdue, but what has been done is an almost complete rethink of what a New Look interior means, and it should stand the retailer in good stead.

For shoppers passing the store, which is on the mall's upper level, the view is eye-catching. As well as the balcony with its glass balustrade, over which a bevy of mannequins stare down, the windows to either side of this are huge and stage-like. Stage-like because each has a black lighting gantry running across its length to which spotlights have been attached. In the right-hand window, reserved for the women's offer, a large





Several digital elements have been incorporated into the store makeover



digital screen serves as the backdrop, in front of which more mannequins are positioned. The men's window is less elaborate (and reflective of the category's importance to New Look when compared with women) and has the same mannequin grouping. A long banner on which a fashion graphic has been printed serves as a backdrop, rather than more technology.

A circular feature to which coloured strings are attached, to create what looks like an illuminated cat's cradle, adds interest to each window, but the real drama begins when the shopper walks in.

This is a store that is first and foremost about fashion. Andy Turnbull, global creative principle and the man responsible for this makeover, comments: "The aim was to present the brand as we see it. This is what we call a top-tier store."

He defines a top-tier store as one that has a "massive footfall reach that needs something

different in order to be on terms with the competition, who also create fantastic stores in these locations." He adds that there are about 20 such stores worldwide and that what has been done in Westfield London is likely to be replicated elsewhere.



There are three elements to our brand - fashion, newness and value. People know about the value so we chose to emphasise the fashion

Andy Turnbull, New Look

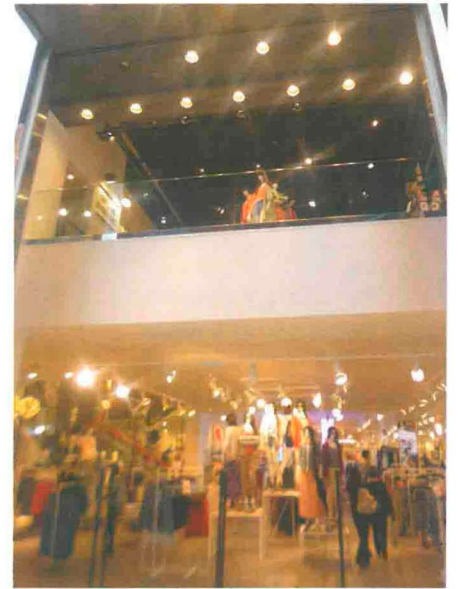
Standing at the entrance to this store, the view is one of distinct merchandise and lifestyle areas. "You start with the product," says Turnbull. "There are three elements to our brand - fashion, newness and value. People know about the value so what we chose to emphasise was fashion."

Turnbull says there are "probably" eight merchandise areas in the shop "so the trend area feels different from the core area, which feels different from the denim area. I'd like to say it was more complex than that, but it isn't."

In store this means a large variety of vistas. These range from the ground-floor knitwear department, where mannequins are backed by coloured fluorescent tubes, to the men's casual-wear and denim area, where wooden gym horses and aged wooden shelving are set against white-washed brick walls. As Turnbull notes, it is a case of the product dictating the shape and form of



Mannequins are key to the Westfield London store's new look



the interior and the merchandise departments.

As far as way-finding is concerned, Turnbull and his team have opted, for the most part, to make things intuitive, with merchandise and layout being used to point shoppers in the right direction.

That said, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that men need a little more help in this department than women. For this reason the wall behind the staircase landing between the ground and first floors bears the words “one small step for men’s” and on arrival on the first floor a large orange neon sign shouts “men’s” in case there were any doubt.

Mention should also be made of the store’s digital elements: mannequins where tablet screens, which change intermittently, take the place of faces and the “click-and-collect” bar on

the first floor. The latter is, as would be expected, about buying online and collecting in store, but New Look has made a virtue of necessity with a monochrome area that is perfectly in keeping with the modish ambiance of which it is part.

In total, this is a long way from the usual New Look and the difference from what was in place before is so great that it would be hard to ignore this one if you had seen it in its previous avatar.

If flagship retailing is about causing a stir, then this one succeeds and on this reckoning New Look continues to be a resurgent force. Turnbull is pleased with how things have turned out: “I love the whole store. It’s us and it’s New Look at its most confident; something that we haven’t always been.”

There seems little cause to disagree with his assessment – this is a good store. ●