



## JOHN RYAN'S **STORE OF THE WEEK** **AH XL** Leidschendam, Netherlands

At 40,000 sq ft, the revamped Albert Heijn XL (AH XL) in Leidschendam, South Holland, is a large supermarket and part of Dutch food retail group Ahold. It is not, however, a typical AH XL store. The overwhelming majority of supermarkets bearing that name are white box superstores of the kind that can be found with different logos in almost every country in Europe.

In Leidschendam things are different. Working with London design consultancy Twelve Studio, the retailer has unveiled a store that seeks to put personality into what is on view for its customers and to make the business of supermarket shopping less of a chore and more of an experience.

This is a bold attempt to get away from the somewhat homogenous generic supermarket interior that characterises so many stores.

Practically, that means a heavy emphasis has been placed on hero categories, such as the individual fresh counters and wines and spirits area and by making the store more warm and inviting. In its previous life, this too



was a white box, but all traces of that have been stripped out and the perimeter has been taken back to the concrete block walls, helping to emphasise the size of the format and improving views across the store.

To all of this, an open ceiling grid and new lighting system featuring

pendant light bulbs has been added, again making more of the space. The other point is that what has been done is a relatively straightforward refit. It was undertaken in less than three months from idea to opening, meaning that it should be simple for any future roll-out to be effected.



At a time when many in the grocery sector are wondering how to hang on to their shoppers, this looks a practical and cost-effective answer.



For more images of the AH XL store visit the website at [retail-week.com/sotw](http://retail-week.com/sotw)