



## RETAIL

# Concretizing retail: WAA illustrates why bricks-and-mortar stores are here to stay

**BEIJING** — Despite the general upswing of virtual technology in the physical world, retail is heading in the opposite direction. After designing the first bricks-and-mortar Beijing store (*Frame 108*, p. 121) for one of China's most popular e-tail sites, We Architech Anonymous (WAA) was called in for the second. AnyShopStyle promotes the transition from Made in China to *Designed* in China. The store's mission is to make fashion more inclusive and to democratically display the garments of more than 300 up-and-coming Chinese or China-based designers, from Luvon by Liu Lu to Alicia Lee. 'The small market surrounding emerging local design requires engagement from like-minded communities, whose attention is no longer focused solely on large brands,' says WAA cofounder Jack Young.

Both of WAA's AnyShopStyle interiors conceptualize the notion of a generic landscape, but the second store privileges experience over things and presents shopping as a social event. 'We want the consumer to feel that offline shops are social places, more than places to buy,' says Young. He and his team drew inspiration for the new retail

environment from the most primitive form of social space in which humans first interacted with one another: the Neolithic campsite and its rudimentary architecture.

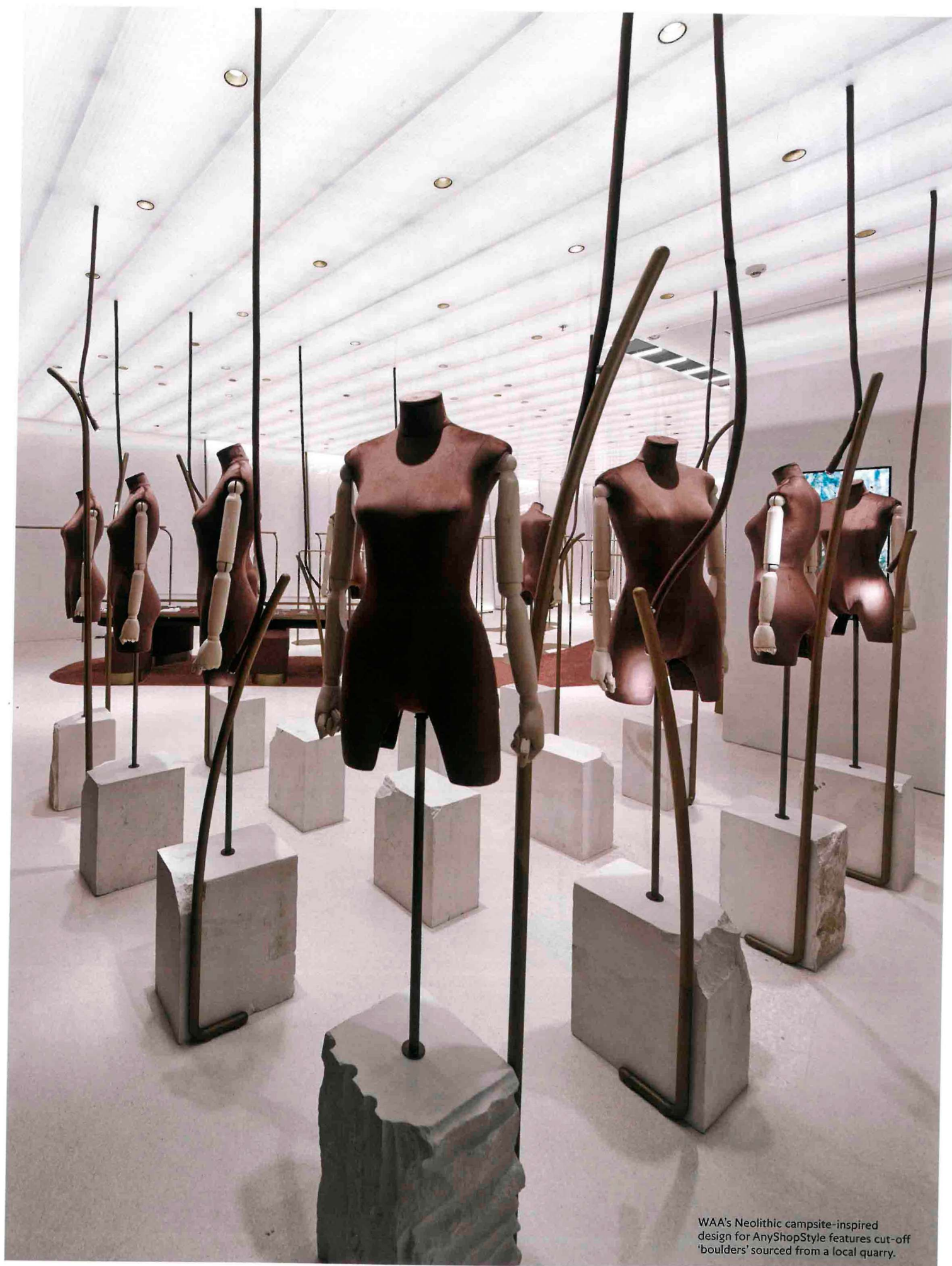
Intriguingly abstracted elements found throughout the brass-trimmed, cacao-brown-and-white interior include the fence — a series of curved display racks composed of stainless-steel tubing, bent and segmented to mimic branches and twigs. The ceiling is a contiguous series of bright skylike polycarbonate panels, while cut-off 'boulders' sourced from a local quarry are scattered on a concrete-based terrazzo floor. A bespoke table with rotating seats in titanized brown stainless steel, glass and suede serves as a central jewellery cabinet — a nod to the campfire over which our ancestors began to cook, tell stories and socialize.

'In a country where your whole life can be organized from your sofa, shopping becomes a social activity that cannot be replaced or substituted with online activities,' says WAA cofounder Di Zhang. 'This shop understands the act of disconnection as the urge for social interaction.' — SM

w-a-a.cn



**‘We want the consumer to feel that offline shops are social places, more than places to buy’**



WAA's Neolithic campsite-inspired design for AnyShopStyle features cut-off 'boulders' sourced from a local quarry.



Andrew Meredith

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# Built by robots: London is home to the world's first 3D-printed store

**LONDON** – A project of this scale has never been 3D printed with recycled plastic,' says Oliver Wayman, director of Bottletop. The sustainable accessories brand teamed up with Krause Architects and Ai Build for a London flagship with a difference: the Regent Street interior developed over time, 3D printed by robots.

Serving as a microcosm of the growing circular economy, the store is a blueprint for a responsible, zero-waste approach to construction. The project also reflects the brand values of Bottletop, whose bags are produced using recycled bottle-tops and ring-pulls from aluminium beverage cans. With nothing but filament made entirely from upcycled plastic waste (the equivalent of 60,000 plastic bottles), Kuka robots printed the retail interior. 'Using recycled plastic wasn't without its challenges,' says Wayman, 'in particular, maintaining the consistency of the plastic filament as it's being reworked.' The floor, meanwhile, is fashioned from 75 upcycled rubber tyres.

To demystify the production process, a robot was displayed in the window for the first four months. 'The public could see how the wall panels were being printed,' says Wayman. 'As it's a world first, we wanted people to feel like they were part of the process – and for Londoners who walk by regularly to see the store evolve organically.' He adds that 'live projects can be both educational and inspirational. If we were to just have the finished product on the walls and ceiling, there would be no way for the customer to understand

the complexities and intricacies of the work undertaken and the exciting future that we can create.'

The distinctive, sinuous design of the space has direct links to nature. 'We infused biomimicry into the design process to learn how we can improve our own production methods by emulating nature's evolutionary learning curve. There's something beautifully poetic about the way in which we are now looking back to nature to give us the answers to some of design's and construction's greatest challenges, having destroyed our natural environment for near on 200 years.'

The project may have generated hype, but was it *really* zero-waste? 'Every innovation must go through a process of trial and error to achieve quality and consistency,' says Wayman. 'We did produce some test panels, which we will reuse on a different project. We're now confident that we can develop close to zero-waste projects going forward.'

The three collaborators are already developing the method to suit other projects, such as hotels, restaurants, offices and event spaces. 'We're looking beyond our own stores to things like festivals, conferences and exhibition centres. There's a huge amount of waste generated by temporary events, and we have a responsibility to harness new technologies and creative thinking to better use our resources.' – BL

bottletop.org  
krausearchitects.com  
ai-build.com

