

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

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

