

# GLOBAL DESIGNER ROUNDUP

In this special report, store designers worldwide discuss their home retail markets and the economic and technological influences driving their international practices

Compiled by VILMA BARR

“We see that retailers are searching for tangible ways to be different and attract more consumers to their stores.” This comment from Jeff Kindleysides of U.K.-based Checkland Kindleysides was echoed by the other participants in this virtual international roundtable, conducted by *design:retail*. From London to Brazil, Tokyo to Australia, we caught up with design firms spreading their retail magic across the globe for some insights on what makes today’s international market tick.

**M**ANY INTERNATIONAL BRANDS have expanded into the German market, and the pressure is extremely high. German brands are focused on their products and clearly structure their stores to put the emphasis on the goods—neat merchandising, suitable density of goods and a cleverly devised product range. In contrast, presentation at stores operated by Anglo-Saxon firms stresses values, origin and history, so our job also is to build the brand's image to support their presence in Germany and their marketing efforts to vie for customers.

Our clients are increasingly supporting the importance of using sustainable materials in their new and renovated store designs. When redesigning an existing store, the guiding concept is to rethink the updating of the design without having to refurbish the entire store. Saving energy is one of the prime concerns. Lighting fixtures using LEDs have become the new standard. Their energy efficiency over incandescent and most fluorescent and metal halide fixtures can be established immediately due to the lower cost of operating the fixtures themselves and the reduced amount of energy needed for cooling, as LEDs emit far less heat than other light sources.

In creating a store layout, our clients are favoring selling floors that can be divided into small spaces. This technique is based on the philosophy that customers must be able to explore and be inspired to relate positively to the merchandise on display. The trend is to make the fixturing more individual and to create a homelike environment, more like pieces of furniture than the traditional merchandise fixtures that appear in other shops.

#### SCHWITZKE GROUP

Headquarters: Düsseldorf, Germany  
(with offices in Berlin, Dubai,  
Paris and Krakow, Poland)

Employees: 200

Work: 60 percent in Germany;  
40 percent international



## Karl Schwitzke

Owner and Managing Director  
Schwitzke Group, Düsseldorf, Germany



**O**UR FIRM IS DIVIDED into three studios: architecture, graphic design and visual merchandising. The majority of our work is done in Brazil, which, because of its size and the fact that it is the only country in Latin America that is not Spanish-speaking, is somewhat apart from the rest of South and Central America.

It is a hot and colorful country, with a young and forward-thinking population that is communicative, friendly, relaxed and casual—all traits that are reflected in our fashion, architecture, design and lifestyle. There has been a recent period of steady economic growth above the world's average. Retail in Brazil and other South American countries has been experiencing consistent development. Foreign brands are being introduced to consumers. Local brands are repositioning themselves to protect their market share, and our office has been very busy with projects around the country, including the franchise store prototype for Havaianas flip-flops and for sporting goods manufacturer Penalty. Areas of the service sector are actively creating a strong new consumer image; we are currently involved with two different travel clients who want to totally change the visual presentations of their offices to attract a younger group of travelers while inviting members of other age groups.

Sustainability has been an important issue in Brazil for quite some time. Actually, a sustainable project is typically cheaper here to complete than one that is not sustainable. And at FAL, ecology continues to be important to us.

#### FAL DESIGN ESTRATÉGICO

Headquarters: São Paulo

Employees: 35

Work: 90 percent in Brazil;  
10 percent in other  
South American countries

Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras, São Paulo

Photo by DURVILLE CAVALCANTI

## Manoel Alves Lima

Director

FAL Design Estratégico, São Paulo

# Gary McCartney

Owner/Creative Director  
McCartney Design, North Sydney, Australia



**MCCARTNEY DESIGN**  
Headquarters: North  
Sydney, Australia  
Employees: 12  
Work: 90 percent on  
Australia's East Coast;  
10 percent in other areas



ad Mex, Sydney, Australia  
photo by STEVE BACK

**T**HE AUSTRALIAN RETAIL landscape is rapidly evolving. Two major supermarket groups, Coles and Woolworths, are both on accelerated innovation programs to compete for market share. Of our two major department store chains, David Jones is in the process of a takeover bid by the South African chain Woolworths. Value retail remains strong, while local retailers are facing increased competition from international value fashion chains, such as Zara and UNIQLO.

In-store communications and store layouts need to reflect that for technical-based purchases, shoppers now do most of their research online, and their store visits are to purchase the product and take it home with them, and not to look around and accumulate knowledge about the products from signage or a sales associate. But, to differentiate the store from online shopping, retailers need to augment the in-store experience with higher levels of personal service. Our clients talk about the "endless aisle," where a product that is not in-stock at the store can easily be ordered by an employee online from the store. It's one example of how the strongest retailers can be "vertical," with the online and the physical spaces totally integrated.

Sustainability's financial benefits by using less materials and recycled materials have been readily adopted by clients. Legislation in Australia is driving the shift to LEDs by limiting the amount of a store's energy use that is translated into illumination. It has made clients cognizant of the process of designing creative lighting solutions instead of simply bringing the maximum amount of light into the store.

Making each square foot of selling space more productive is a basic client concern, especially for large-format retailers. We recently achieved a quantifiable 5 percent increase in turnover just by re-laying out the store, with no additional cost to the client. Customer flow considerations that influence sales are a priority in our office.

Designers are often asked, "Where do you get your ideas?" For us as store designers, the answer is: just about all over. The Internet brings inspiration from sources in the United States, China, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom, among others.



# Jeff Kindleysides

Founder

Checkland Kindleysides, Leister, U.K.

Wrangler, Leipzig, Germany

Photo by DIRK MATHESIUS



## CHECKLAND KINDLEYSIDES

Headquarters: Leister, U.K.  
(with an office in London)

Employees: 100

Work: 62 percent in the U.K.;  
38 percent international

**W**HEN WE DESIGN for brands in a site that has a specific international cultural heritage, our solutions for that region reflect an interpretation of traits and nuances of service and respect for religion or tradition. These elements will more often affect the store layout and service details, including fitting rooms and how consumers are serviced, rather than changing the overall conceptual aesthetic.

Different retailers need different things to happen in their stores that depend on the layout. They typically don't ask questions specifically about the floorplan, but they do expect a map by which to entice shoppers to browse and be inspired, whether it's guiding them around a supermarket or creating a volume of calm space in premium retailing. Once the layout is in place, we can propose fixtures that express the merchant's point of view, that are mobile and are integrated with relevant technology.

We are seeing emphasis in connecting the store to the wider world through technology, live feeds and, importantly, service and training. In-store and online synergy is definitely something that has become part of the store-design process, from in-store communication to transmitting information and knowledge to an increasingly savvy consumer.

The online shopper demands choice, expecting retailers to offer stores with physical spaces that are fresh-looking, engaging and that contribute to a positive shopping experience. Prompt fulfillment of their product needs, either in-stock or online, extends the concept of an excellent customer-focused retail organization.

# Hisae Igarashi

Designer

Igarashi Design Studio, Tokyo



IN THE 21 YEARS since I established the Igarashi Design Studio, the development of large specialty stores and huge shopping malls in the suburbs of big cities has been expanding, while the number of small stores is on the decline. Good, new, creative design for retail, however, isn't limited to big cities. While we have designed stores in Paris, Hong Kong and Singapore, we also have completed projects in smaller areas of South Korea, Taiwan, Kuwait and Qatar.

In our part of the world, people tend to go shopping with their family. They visit different stores to compare price, style and quality, so the layout must be easy to navigate and help provide customers with the information they need to make efficient buying decisions.

Sustainability is important to our clients, and for students entering the design field. I am a lecturer at the Joshibi University of Art and Design, and a professor at Masushino Art University, and creating sustainable environments is an integral part of the curriculum.

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## IGARASHI DESIGN STUDIO

Headquarters: Tokyo

Employees: 5

Work: 85 percent in Japan;  
15 percent in other  
Asian countries

