

Interior innovators

THE 2011 AUSTRALIAN INTERIOR DESIGN AWARDS, STAGED LAST MONTH, SHOWCASED SOME OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE SHOP FITS AND MERCHANDISING TRENDS CREATED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS. HERE, RAGTRADER SPOTLIGHTS A SELECTION OF THE FASHION STORES THAT WERE UP FOR AN AWARD IN THE RETAIL DESIGN CATEGORY.

14 Looking good

Discover why interior designers like Greg Natale were recognised for their fashion fit-outs this year.



17 Living in 3D

Find out how designers such as Adi Setiadi are testing the boundaries of store design in 3D.



Uscari

LOCATION: Mid City Centre, Sydney City
DESIGNED BY: Greg Natale Design
STORE SIZE: 100 square metres

With a 12-month lead time and a budget of \$2000 per square metre, Greg Natale had a long time to conceive and create Uscari's only retail store.

"Krystal Davies, who is the head designer for Uscari, she wanted an industrial aesthetic," Natale explains. "She didn't have key colours but Krystal is drawn to raw things, for example she likes doing shoots maybe at the beach or at building sites where everything's quite deconstructed and raw. Also, she saw brickwork in her shop."

To get ideas on the store interior, Natale looked no further than the clothes that would be hanging inside: Uscari's collections.

"Krystal's clothes are really, really detailed. If I had to describe her clothes, her aesthetic, it's a lot of separates, it's young – someone in their late teens and twenties would wear her clothes – it's very hip, it's very directional. So then I thought how can I interpret this detail? I came up with the idea of having the interior built out of fibro cement sheeting."

The fibro cement – which is a material you'd usually find under the tiles on your bathroom floor or the exterior of a house before it is painted, as Natale explains – was cut into patterns and applied to the store floor, back wall and ceiling.

"We didn't paint it, we just lacquered it and it looks finished," Natale says.

Two side walls feature painted brick while clothes racks were sourced from somewhere far different to a shop fittings catalogue.

"All the racks are made out plumbing pipes," he says. "We've actually stylised them and used all these different connectors so you can have a shelf in between and it becomes more of a prettier shape."

The racks sit on the floor rather than have being built into the walls. "I just felt that felt a bit more raw and warehouse-y."

The point of sale counter has been covered with geometric bath tiles to create interesting texture, while an island display is centred on the store floor to display folded apparel and accessories.

"The piece in the middle becomes a sculptural piece but it's practical as well," Natale says.



Bettina Liano

LOCATION: Westfield Bondi Junction, NSW
DESIGNED BY: David Hicks
STORE SIZE: 110 square metres

David Hicks is no stranger to womenswear label Bettina Liano. The principal of his own design firm has created stores for the signature jeans label in both Sydney city's Strand Arcade and Melbourne's Chapel Street. When Liano was relocating her boutique within Westfield Bondi Junction in 2010, she called on Hicks' services again.

"The brief from the client was to continue the theme of elegant simplicity from the other stores and refine it," Hicks says. "The black and white concept was still retained but adjusted to create a warmer mood within the store."

Among the features used to inject warmth was a "slightly tinted" white paint, applied to the walls and ceiling. Off-white grass cloth wallpaper was applied behind shelving and racks to create interest and texture.

"The black graphite racks were used to create the contrast that we have in the Bettina Liano stores," Hicks says. In fact the black racks are among the very few fittings that Hicks included.

"The idea of this store was to create space over clutter," the designer says of the scarcity of fittings. "The floor racks were used to maximise hanging in concentrated areas allowing free space, or breathing space, around the clothing. We did not want the store to be completely covered in clothing, rather create a more gallery-inspired experience."

Other materials featured include terrazzo in the floor and marble for the sales counter. Hicks nominates the latter as the hero feature. "Simply amazing," he says.

Of the one constraint Hicks and his team had to design around – two large columns within the store's interior – Hicks says he used plasterboard to cover them and make them disappear within the light creaminess of the space. Beyond the marble sales counter Hicks doesn't nominate any other unusual fit-out features, bar one exception: the powder-coated steel sheet that partially clads the store front and that he thinks is "interesting".

"We used this mainly to conceal the column behind the shop-front window and incorporated the circles for semi-transparency and to strengthen the Bettina Liano branding symbol of the O," he says.



Footpoint

LOCATION: Top Ryde, NSW
DESIGNED BY: Morris Selvatico
STORE SIZE: 119 square metres

Footpoint Shoe Clinic is a specialty shoe fitter and retailer in NSW, carrying brands like Asics, New Balance, Adidas and Rockport. The store owners' brief to designers Alex Morris and Lorena Selvatico was to create a sports shoe store with edgy and urban street appeal. "The Footpoint store had to stand out from its competitors and compete with the international brands in the adjacent stores," Selvatico explains. Also pivotal was the integration of Footpoint's 'trac lab' system into the store design, a video tool that records a customer's walking and running patterns to ensure the best shoe fit. Design inspiration came in the form of an Olympic running track.

"We felt this was a suitable point of reference to form the basis of the new Footpoint concept," Selvatico says.

Two wet-pour rubber tracks run down the centre of the store, providing a location for the customer to experience the video analysis of their movement. Elsewhere, concrete panels and black MDF create an industrial feel and the ceiling is fitted with recessed asymmetrical lighting troughs. Red industrial steel acts as the frame to Footpoint's store-front. Concrete panels form the base of the shoe wall while laser-cut concrete signs spell out product categories. Morris and Selvatico sourced merchandising solutions from Mei+Picchi.

"We chose to incorporate the Mei+Picchi Ribbon display system into the store to create a striking design feature within the primary product display area. The track runs through the shoe display area and provides an outlet for visual merchandising of feature shoes or promotional product to be displayed. The Ribbon system was chosen for its track-like resemblance and its flexibility for display." Selvatico adds the shoe display wall is what she considers one of the 'hero' features of the store design.

"The Ribbon display system creates a bold feature within the abundant display of shoes and draws the customer's attention towards the products as they enter the store."

The total approximate cost of the store build was \$220,000.

