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E(vent)-tailing: The New Age of Window Shopping

In previous articles I have investigated the history of window shopping, the rise of the flaneur and the changing face of high street retailing as a consequence of integrated technologies. It's now time to take these concepts to a whole new level.

In urban retailing in the 21st century we can observe a shift, not away from the product, but to an augmentation of product. Many have discussed the role of experience in contemporary retailing. This article investigates "The Department Store" in Takapuna, Auckland, as a model of e(vent)-tailing to discover why Conde Nast Traveller would identify it as "One of the Seven Wonders of the Shopping World." It is not all about shopping.

E(vent)-tailing is a proposition. It suggests that just as retailing connected with the information age to create e-tailing, successful current retailers are embodying events as part of their retail program. More than a 'sale' or 'give-away' approach, these events are embedded within the culture and nature of the store and, in the most evolved version, intrinsically connected to the community and place within which they are located. As such, e(vent)-tailing is a transaction, an experience, and physical sensorial based interaction with a place. It is the equivalent of the 4-D movie for retail.

The Department Store is used here as an exemplar of e(vent)-tailing. It utilises a curatorial approach to

merchandise and extends that concept to a curatorial approach to events management. While merchandise and transaction remain fundamental to the concept, layers of local, regional and nationally significant events secure the store's place in the cultural landscape of Auckland. Not an anchor to a retail core, the store is the epicentre of life at Takapuna.

The Department Store is a self-described modern take on the traditional department store experience. It has been assembled by the internationally recognised fashion designer Karen Walker together with Stephen Marr and Dan Gosling. Their approach is to create a single environment where one can experience the very best from the

worlds of design, beauty, fashion and interiors. To that end, they have created a purpose built three-storey retail house at Takapuna Beach in Auckland, well outside the established and normalised shopping precincts of New Zealand's largest city. The focus is on destination, support of an existing like-minded community, and avoidance of the generic product and bland shopping experience.

The Department Store is a curatorial experience. Focus is on selection and edit. There is no better way to describe this than to take a virtual tour through the retail house. Arrival is via the Coffee General Tearooms on the ground floor. Coffee General begins the curatorial experience by offering an edited selection of coffee from an array of roasters throughout New Zealand, profiling different coffee beans through variations in origin, roast profiles and blends. It also focuses on brewing technologies and equipment.

Adjacent to Coffee General, Annie O Botanical Stylist provides a twist on the traditional florist. Focusing on botanical styling and indoor gardening, the



The Department Store, Takapuna, Auckland



Coffee General Tearooms

concession pushes the boundaries on how landscape and flora, including quirky terrariums, can be incorporated into the home as well as events.

The ground floor is also home to the brand of Karen Walker. This is a relatively "quiet" experience again focusing on edit and selection, rather than the "house of brand" approach its namesake could easily have taken.

It is coupled with Black Box, which showcases a selection of local and international fashion brands, Nature



Treasure Hunt

Baby, a renowned organic cotton and merino made New Zealand-based children's label, and The Men's Department, which offers, as they say, "all things manly."



A central spiral stair climbs from ground to level one, providing a theatrical connection between the floors. On level one, Lucy and The Powder Room provides pampering, and The Dressing Room displays luxury lingerie and swimwear. This floor is focused on seasonal change, with both the stock and the significantly