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THE TERRORISTS**  
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# How low can you go?

The rough-and-ready look is increasingly popular with fashion stores, but one US architect has gone a step further with a new boutique in Tel Aviv – a triumph of retail design using low-cost materials. **Clare Dowdy** reports

Consumers love a bit of rough. There may still be plenty of pristine, white-box-style outlets on the high street, especially from the fashion brigade. But that sort of environment often struggles to differentiate itself from its peers, and when all the clothes are pretty much the same, confusion can set in.

Thankfully, every now and then interior designers come up with something raw and wholly unexpected which seems to go against the drive for beautifully clean, sleek finishes. In Tel Aviv, New York-based architect Guy Zucker has designed a fashion boutique that takes the concept of low-grade to extremes by using cheap materials in all sorts of unexpected ways.

It's an approach that appeals to designers in only a handful of scenarios. For example, when the existing environment already makes its own statement, as with D-Row Associates' US debut for fashion retailer Reiss, which made the most

of a disused garage in Manhattan, and Comme des Garçons' guerrilla store in London, which designer Rei Kawakubo filled with found furniture such as old school chairs. Sometimes the product or brand itself is crying out for this look. This was certainly the case with the Delicatessen boutique, a well-considered architectural expression of a specific philosophy.

The outlet represents fashion designer Idit Barak's first foray into retail. After studying fashion design in New York, Barak set up her own label, Delicatessen, back in her native Israel. The instant success of the outlet has meant that a second site – also to be a Zucker creation – is already in the pipeline. In the debut store the design uses low-cost materials to make a statement about the products on display.

As Zucker, who teaches at Columbia Graduate School of Architecture when he is not designing, explains: 'Every consumer of fashion is aware

that they are paying for design rather than material. Furthermore, the pace at which an item of clothing becomes obsolete is dictated by the changing of fashion trends and seasons, not by the quality of the item. Therefore the capital invested in design exceeds the funds invested in quality.' In architecture, on the other hand, the balance of investments is reversed, as the cost of materials far exceeds the investment in design.

Zucker's design for Delicatessen follows the economical logic of fashion design 'in an attempt to invert this typical condition'. The boutique features a lot of cardboard and linoleum, giving Zucker the chance to explore the use of 'thin, ephemeral and ready-made materials, relative to the way they are used in fashion'.

The display elements were shaped according to the structural capabilities of the cardboard tubes, and the display fins use the flexible qualities of the linoleum, says Zucker, who ▶

happily took advantage of both sides of the yellow and grey double-sided lino. And by picking the materials before the design had been conceived, 'The materials dictated the forms and functional possibilities of the elements,' he adds.

The organisational scheme is intended to enhance the physical connection between the production studio of the fashion designer at the back of the boutique, and the store space up front. Through the existing openings between these two spaces three linoleum strips climb over, stretching and wrapping around the cardboard tubes like conveyor belts,' says Zucker. The grey linoleum belts not only carry all the goods; they also serve as a backdrop.

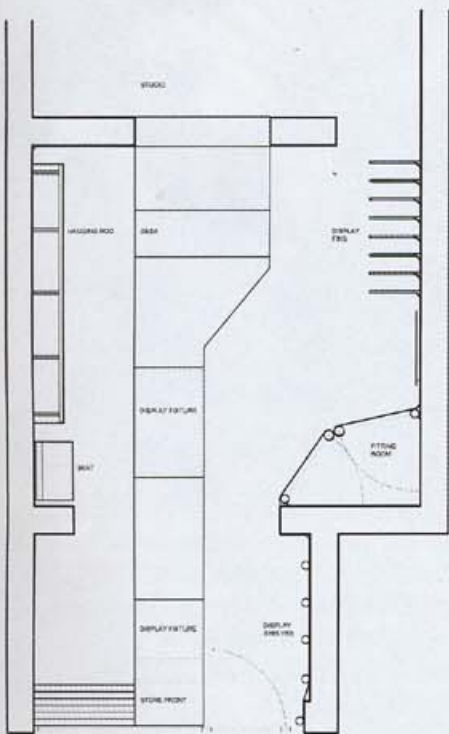
## If we invest less in materials we can place more importance on the quality of design

Fashion outlets are expected to update themselves more and more frequently, it seems. This is a cost which retailers are not always ready for, but Zucker's design positively cries out for change. The fashion seasons themselves 'can induce the redesign of the entire space. The regular customer who is used to a change of goods encounters an immersive transformation,

and the spatial design becomes a commodity that can be consumed on a regular basis', he says.

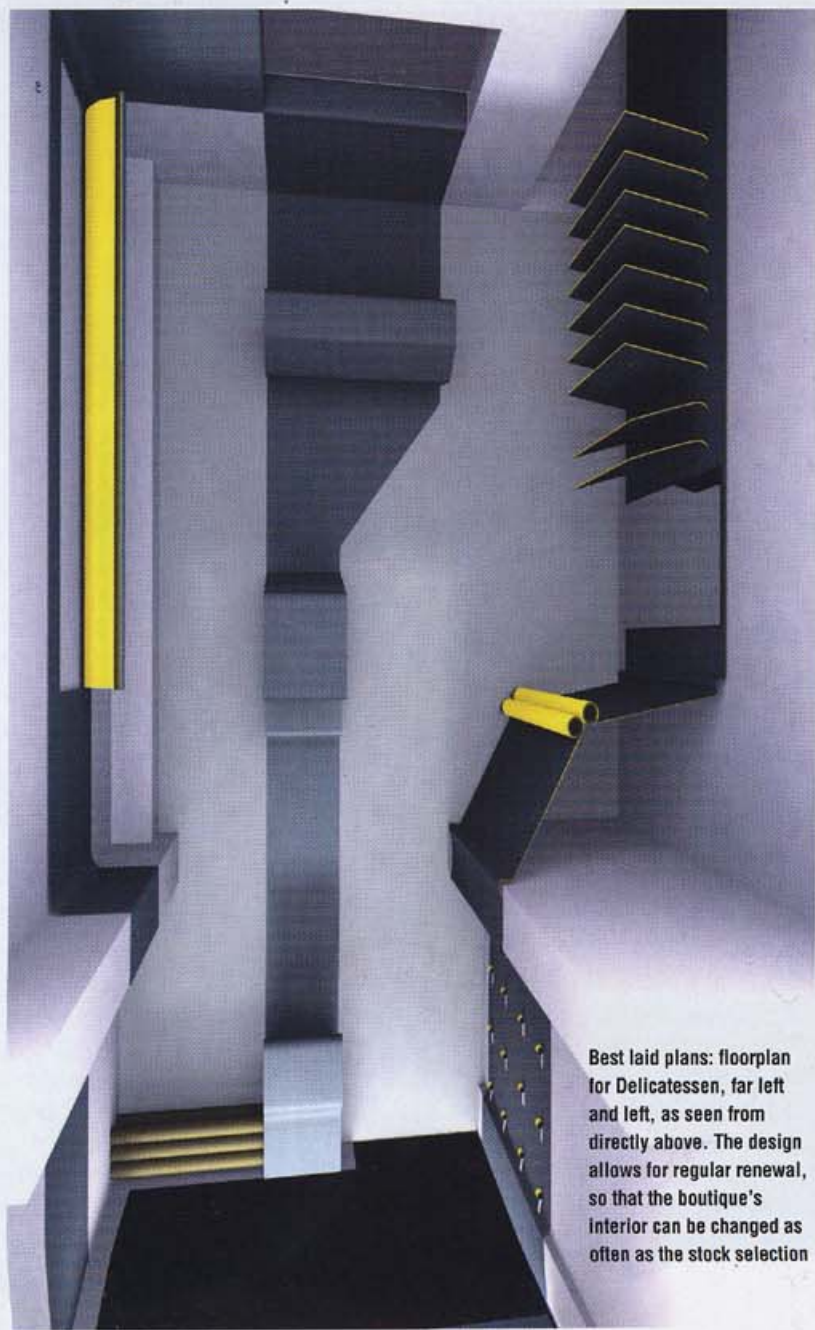
And this is where Zucker's choice of materials come into their own. They don't blend in by producing minimal detailing or elaborate features – rather, they are draped over the space for easy removal

By focusing on cheap materials, there is a potential upside for the designer. Or at least that's Zucker's view: 'If we don't expect all architectural products to become monuments, if we can invest less in "high-end" materials, we might be able to give more importance to the manipulation of material and the quality of design, rather than the cost of matter, to the designer rather than the contractor.' **FX**



### Details:

**Project:** Delicatessen boutique, Tel Aviv  
**Designer:** Guy Zucker [www.guyzucker.com](http://www.guyzucker.com)  
**Client:** Idit Barak (fashion designer)  
**Cost of project:** \$3,000 (£1,600)  
**Length of project:** Five months  
**Size of project:** 90 sq m  
**Materials:** Double-sided linoleum and recycled cardboard tubes



Best laid plans: floorplan for Delicatessen, far left and left, as seen from directly above. The design allows for regular renewal, so that the boutique's interior can be changed as often as the stock selection