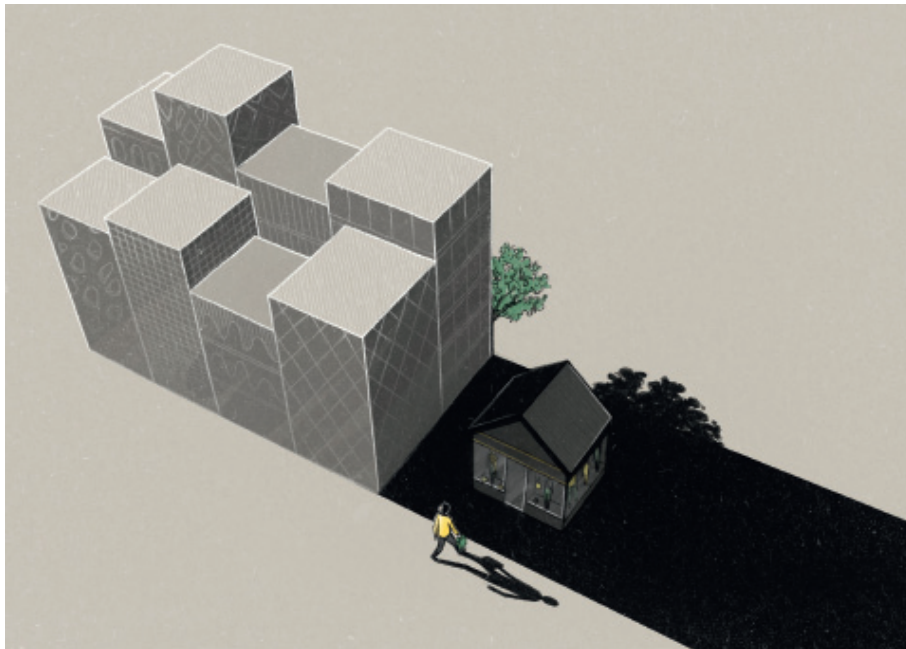


THE VINSON VIEW

Inside man and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING MULTI-BRAND STORES TO VISIT

- Andreas Murkudis**
Potsdamer Strasse 81E, Berlin, Germany
- Antonia**
via Cusani 5, Milan, Italy
- Bernardelli**
Corso Umberto I 27, Mantua, Italy
- Ikram**
15 East Huron Street, Chicago, US
- Maxfield**
8825 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, US
- Mouki**
29 Chiltern Street, London, UK
- Pollyanna**
14-16 Market Hill, Barnsley, UK
- Ratti**
via Gioacchino Rossini 71, Pesaro, Italy
- Sugar**
Corso Italia 19, Arezzo, Italy
- Tiina the Store**
216 Main Street, Amagansett, US
- Farfetch.com**
Online home for many independent boutiques

01 Brand new heavies

Fashion's big players are calling time on the multi-brand store

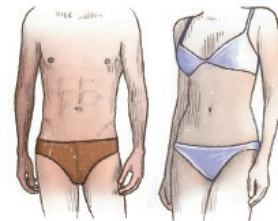
Nothing gets me more excited than a spanking new temple of luxury retail. During Milan Fashion Week, I actually attended more shop openings than fashion shows (11 of the former, ten of the latter) and that was totally fine by me. Brands are hiring and spending big, and the spaces, fixtures, fittings and site-specific art (no new store is now considered complete without some) are bigger, bolder and more beautiful than ever. The new Azzedine Alaïa store in Paris has Martin Szekely racks, Marc Newson lighting and Pierre Paulin shelves; Bottega Veneta in Milan comes with a garden and indoor pool (just don't call it a shop – it's a 'maison'); and Prada's new home is an entire quadrant of Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. Only a tiny fraction is open, but later phases will include a restaurant and exhibition spaces, designed by the likes of Rem Koolhaas' OMA and Roberto Baciocchi.

This fearless building frenzy, on a scale never seen before, is not just happening in the fashion capitals, but across Europe and beyond. However, like all good things, there is a downside and that is the demise of the multi-brand store. In Düsseldorf, one of Germany's most celebrated luxury multi-brand retailers, Eickhoff, which opened in 1961, is to close. Maendler in Munich, Möller & Schaar in Frankfurt and many other key German retailers are also gone.

In Italy, the situation is even worse. In Florence, both Gerard and Raspini have closed, the latter soon to be replaced by Prada, which also took over the space in Turin vacated by San Carlo after 40 years in business. Many more are struggling. The saddest loss of all is the demise of Papete in Riccione, run by the number one tastemaker Anna Maria Meris. It was often said that if you sold to her, all other Italian retailers would buy too.

Influential tastemakers like Meris edit the best of collections, search out new labels and put together a dynamic mix of products. But ballsy brands insisted on bigger and deeper buys, dictating not only how much stores should spend but how and on what. Then their focus shifted to developing own-store networks rather than nurturing wholesale business (hence all the beautiful new stores). The multi-brands have also been affected by the growth of online shopping (Net-A-Porter alone delivers to five million regular users across 170 countries). Meanwhile, the brands' appetite for select locations in key areas, themselves a finite resource, has pushed up rents so that no one else can afford to operate.

It's Darwinian, of course – survival of the fittest and all that – but surely a bio-diverse ecosystem is more desirable for the greater fashion good? More of the same is just more of the same.



02

On the 2014 radar...

A wider product offering and an expanded store network for Tomas Maier's eponymous line of understated swimwear and cashmere, currently only tucked away in Easthampton and Palm Beach; a major creative shake-up at Loro Piana; and a new look and David Chipperfield-designed stores for Bally.



03

Out of Africa

Lagos, Nigeria, might just be the latest hot fashion and design destination. This March, the David Adjaye-designed 965 sq m Alára store opens in Victoria Island, Lagos, bringing together a mix of fashion, accessories, furniture and art showcasing European brands alongside designers and artisans from all over Africa.