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EDGE

ENVIRONMENT DESIGN GROWTH EDUCATION

Retail Vision

Retail Vision

Interpreting Lifestyles with Environments

Specialty retailers serve niche markets with a shopping experience that matches and fulfills a desired lifestyle interest. Because of its total-immersion nature, specialty retailing is the highest form of consumer branding, presenting all elements of the brand. Successful specialty retail creates a strong brand impression by integrating the product, environment, and service experiences. Unlike other buying venues for consumer products, specialty retail must deliver on the brand promise with every aspect of the experience. Achieving a store format match with a high-commitment lifestyle niche is the most successful way to define and interpret a brand and create economic success.

Sense of Place

People want to see their lifestyle interests crystallized into a place that feels like it was made for them. They want to have new experiences, but stabilized by a sense of familiarity. Creating consumer resonance with a lifestyle requires a strong, identifiable place to offer products and services for sale. This is especially true where the niche being served has a high commitment from its target group. Bringing the proper physical interpretation of a lifestyle to high-commitment people allows retailers to bring Italian coffee to Peoria (Starbucks), tropical island wear to Minneapolis (Tommy Bahama), or mountaineering gear to Kansas City (REI). The retail environment's ability to immerse the customer in the brand creates a strong propensity to buy. Sense of place is cultivated by the mutual fit of physical form and behavior, by the integration of activities and physical surroundings, and it results in a special harmony between user and space. We must look at place and person together. The lifestyle of the market and the associated products are essential elements informing design. A place with strong identity sustains change over time without losing the inherent sense of place. Brand and place are inseparable in retail store design.

Information and products

Customers feel and know integrity. They are captured with nothing less. Integrity seamlessly fits together place, products and information. Consumers expect a specialty retail experience that matches their interests. Even when they cannot directly articulate their interests, they “know it when they see it”, and those interests are embodied by the products. An information-intensive store is appropriate for many lifestyle niches in which the consumer has a high level of natural interest. Offering accessible, stimulating information and experience educates consumers towards ultimately demanding and purchasing new products along with more of their favorite products. This constitutes the ever-evolving retail experience in which new products are developed with consumers seeing utility and making additional informed purchases.

These consumers are knowledgeable and demand well-conceived products and greater knowledge of the niche. Education of staff is critical, but products and information in stores offer a controllable and consistent representation of the market. Lifestyle niche consumers have a high level of natural interest served by information intensive stores.

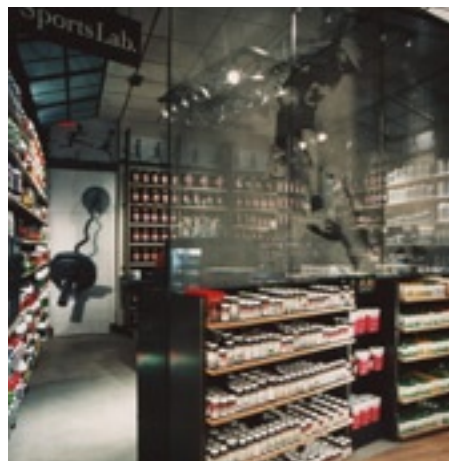
Effectively handling these elements within the parameters of an appropriate sense of place is a key to retail store brand development.

Concept development and execution

The driving force of design innovation is critical in both physical space design and the development of retail concept. The most successful new or re-newed retail projects integrate design innovation from the start of concept development. The resulting concept is held with clarity through the development process. This continuity allows for integrity of brand and transmits the message to consumers in the form of a strong sense of place coupled with integral product and information.

Proven success

This presentation of three projects, in the health and wellness category, is market proof of success predicated on these principles. Retail vision — a strong sense of place, well-conceived and effectively marketed products, and readily accessible information — offer customers the right balances of familiarity and discovery. Early and consistent design involvement delivers brand promise.





Robert Edson Swain, AIA — Biography

Robert Edson Swain’s career is distinguished by application of design process as a primary tool, thus realizing the economic and creative potential in each project. He is a practicing Architect, Industrial Designer, Landscape Designer, and was recently appointed, Full Professor of Architecture and Innovation at the University of Naples (S.U.N.), Italy. A recent presentation at the Nutracon/Global Supply Marketplace focused on marketing in retail: “a sense of place, personal familiarity and culturally appropriate marketplaces”.

Mr. Swain’s experience ranges from retail to residential, health spas to aircraft interiors, master site developments to landscape design, with emphasis on environmentally conscious and sustainable design. From his heritage in New England boat building to a passion for Italian design, Bob has perfected the utilization of limited space and developed a unique ability to transcend traditional design solutions. Functional, individualized and timeless designs have earned him an international reputation for purposeful innovation.

Bob has received numerous design awards for retail stores, residences, interiors, landscape designs and site responsive architectural and urban projects. Examples of retail awards include two Nature’s Northwest Stores in Portland Oregon: Store of the year – Chain Store Age, 1st in category – NASFM and People’s Choice Award – Portland AIA.

Current and upcoming projects include: continuing development of a resort spa in Massachusetts; store redesigns for the General Nutrition Company; an eco resort in the Canadian Gulf Islands; and ongoing private residential projects. Robert Edson Swain provides visionary design and pragmatic consulting skills in numerous scenarios, from the intimate settings of residential projects to the boardrooms of global corporations.



EDGE, LLC

We integrate the responsiveness and spirit of a small entrepreneurial business with the depth and capabilities of larger corporations. As a focused design studio of creative individuals we are able to work globally in teams of highly qualified professionals.

Clients receive direct individualized attention and leadership with a speed and efficiency uncharacteristic of larger bureaucratic structures. Our flexible team building approach allows for collaboration with professionals that offer the specific skills necessary to achieve project goals.

With a combination of strong face-to-face and virtual communication skills we are able to deliver the clarity of process and product required to achieve success. Our projects are diverse in scope and range from regional to international. We are committed to innovation in design, clear vision and building diverse partnerships. A successful business practice requires active listening, integrity, cost consciousness, deadlines and profitability!



Nature's Northwest

These lifestyle stores range from 32,000 to 44,000 square feet in scale. The concept was developed in Portland Oregon and now has 6 locations under the management of Wild Oats, a national chain of health food retailer. Information and a high standard of service define the concept. The store boldly integrates a natural foods grocery, prepared gourmet foods, health and wellness products (including both a naturopathic & allopathic pharmacy), in store spa services, along with a wide array of high margin products. This mix has transformed the profitability of the category! These stores have continued to be top performers under the stores' original name as an associated part of the buyer's chain.



NATURE'S NORTHWEST

Lifestyle - Marketplace

Lake Oswego, Oregon





A central market hall anchors the retail experience, providing a clear framework in which the individual departments are free to express their functions. Sequential events, linked together by fluid access to information, allow the customer to focus on the changing merchandise. The interaction between the architecture and merchandise strongly reflects and reinforces the products, and develops critical retail branding. By housing Nature's products and services in an environment of ecologically responsible building materials we support the educational and experiential vitality of the Nature's Northwest concept.

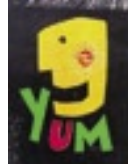


Visual clarity combines with practical considerations to set new standards for the conceptualization and design of our retail environments





Information organizes this diverse new 42,000 sq. ft. lifestyle-marketplace, offering a comprehensive experience through education and entertainment. What results is a uniquely integrated program linking foods, spa services, and conventional and alternative health care products that support an informed and exciting approach to self-care and wellness.



NATURE'S NORTHWEST

Lifestyle - Marketplace

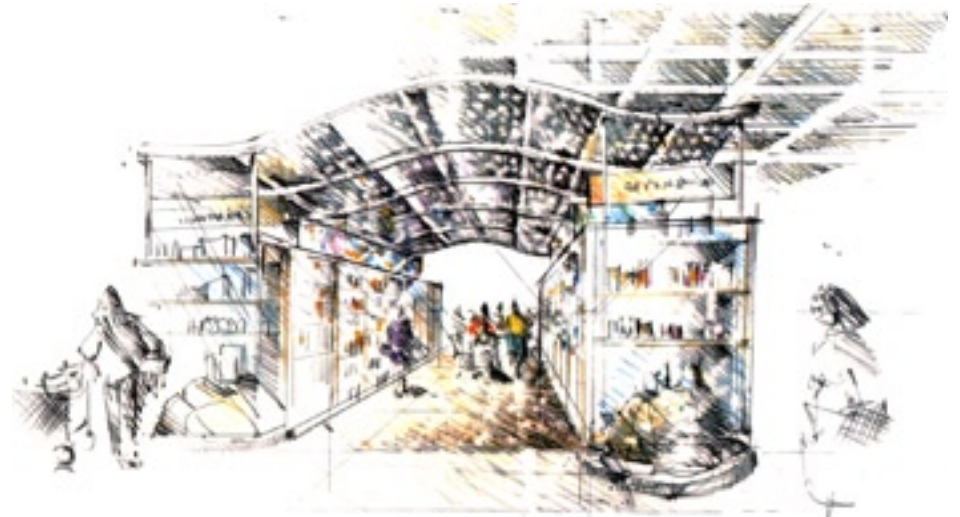
Portland, Oregon



'Nature's Northwest has the potential to be one of the rare stores that redefines both industry and channel boundaries.'

- Retail Watch





DESIGN CONCEPT

The design objective was to create a lifestyle marketplace that takes the natural foods market to its fullest potential in the areas of wellness, spas and groceries. This was accomplished by going beyond conventional attitudes towards program and function by challenging the client and team members to reach beyond accepted paradigms. The

architecture, through indigenous reference, creates a familiar sense of place. Creative and inventive use of environmentally conscious building materials such as recycled and engineered lumber, along with raw, naturally weathering finishes, emphasizes and complements Nature's products and services. A native northwest landscape completes the connection with the regional context.





EDGE LLC

Design Architect:
Robert Edson Swain, Inc.

Project Managers:
Kevin Richards, Richartz Studios

Design Team:
Jim Whitson, Whitson Design
Bruce E. Owensby, Inc.
Gabriel Small
Steve Terrell, Terrell

Photography:
Randy Shelton
Charles Chestnut





General Nutrition Centers

GNC is a leader in nutritional retail and has 5800 stores worldwide. We were asked to develop a new store format for their expansion. Now 1100 of our design formats have been constructed. Originally we created 48 prototype stores, around the US, that resulted in the Live Well theme “Helping You Live Your Best Life”. Products include: personal care, sports and performance, nutritional, diet, herb, supplement, and spa and body products. The GNC/ Live Well stores continue to dramatically outperformed the old format stores.



NEW CONCEPT STORES

The Live Well stores are a revitalization and expansion of GNC's long-established national chain of supplement stores. Our role was to develop flexible store models (1,200 - 3,500 sq. ft.) through a complex, 48 store prototyping process that would revolutionize the nutritional supplement category by capturing the spirit of living well.



Live Well - a national chain
General Nutrition Corporation
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania





CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

We created a welcoming, natural experience, housed in a retail format that provides the resources to promote self-care. Core customer values have been translated into a retail space in which graphics, fixtures, layout and merchandising are integrated. Categorical place-making, interactive environments, and prototypical fixturing in natural birch and cherry veneers, accented with steel and glass create a warm, inviting, and creditable environment.







*1998 Store Fixturing Honorable
Mention Award - Institute of Store
Planners/VM+SD Store Interior Design
Competition*





The strength of the materials and the refinement with which they inform the market experience reminds us that peak performance is available and accessible to us all





EDGE LLC

Design Architect:

Robert Edson Swain, Inc.

Project Managers:

Bruce E. Owensby, Inc.

Clive Pohl, Pohl & Pohl

Colin Brandt, Brandt Designs

Design Team:

Judy Lewis, JHL Designs

Heather Barrett, Habitat Design

Jim Whitson, Whitson Design

Corey Johnson, CTJ Studios

Stefan Wynn, Indigo Environmental
Design

Photography:

Tony Treu

Sam Gray





The Amphora Company

A retail chain focused on self-care products through Aromatherapy and the use of essential oils, bath and beauty products. We designed the prototype and then extended the design for a 10-store rollout, in Washington State and expanding to California. A national retailer readily purchased these stores based on design and perceived economic potential.



THE AMPHORA COMPANY

These stores express the Amphora image of the mystique, wisdom and appeal of the ancient Greek and Renaissance cultures. Our role was to design and develop a concept store that would express this image in a refined, efficient small-store configuration. By fusing the ancient with the contemporary we provided a unique and exciting shopping experience. When the concept made its transition towards a national chain, we held the design intent while moving towards rollout capability.

*West coast
mall stores
Seattle,
Washington*



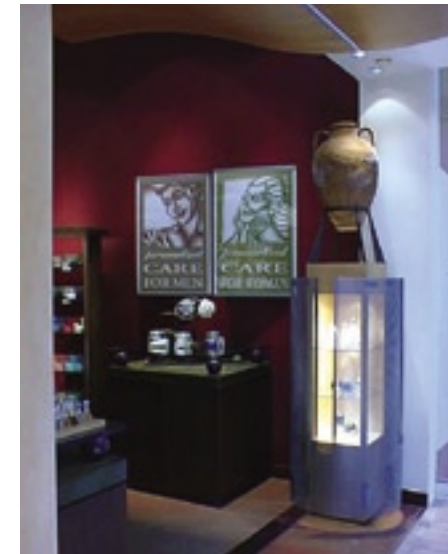
Amphora specializes in aromatherapy, herbal, homeopathic, and other self-health products marketed in a simple, elegant and ecologically responsible manner





DESIGN CONCEPT

The store environments are balanced, harmonious and reflect the natural, self-care product line being sold. This theme is reflected in the transitional experience of moving from a highly active mall environment into a place of serenity and meditation. A rich and harmonious material palette of natural maple, mahogany and birch, and raw copper, steel and glass are used to detail the fixtures, shelving and lighting.





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Heather Barrett, Habitat Design

Gabriel Small

Photography:

Colin Brandt



Merchandising and lighting create colorful visual impact

By Dave Goodell

In the atrium mall of Seattle's tallest office building, Columbia Seafirst Center, office workers can't resist stopping to look into the floor-to-ceiling windows of AMPHORA, a unique store filled with a colorful array of natural body care products and gifts. Dramatically lit displays beckon shoppers. Many come inside "just because it's so beautiful" and are surprised to discover the retailer's customized "scenting" service (at affordable prices) for made-to-order soaps, lotions, shampoos, perfumes, candles, and aromatherapy products.

"We knew that lighting would be an essential ingredient in our merchandise presentation," says Rob Klegler, president of AMPHORA. "We wanted well-designed lighting to create an upscale look and comply with the state energy code."

The energy code challenge

In the state of Washington, retail store lighting is governed by strict regulations: "No more than one-and-a-half watts per square foot shall be allowed for lighting a retail space." To promote the use of efficient lamp sources, there is an exception to this rule:

"Adjustable tungsten halogen and HID (High Intensity Discharge) merchandise display illuminaires are exempt."

A creative solution

After an exhaustive search for the "right lighting and someone who would work with us," Klegler and partners Paul Cardoza and Rod Dejong selected a miniature, low-voltage system: Trac 12 from Juno Lighting Inc.

A quick comparison of the miniature track system versus traditional 120-volt track indicated that the small track could handle the lighting needs of the entire 750-square-foot store — including both merchandise displays and service areas.

Because the Trac 12 low-voltage system accepts only halogen and other low-energy lamps (no incandescent lamps), it is exempt

from the code. The energy code calculates standard 120-volt track at 90 watts per linear foot no matter what spotlights you attach to it.

Unlike 120-volt track lighting (which uses a transformer mounted at the base of each spotlight), an entire circuit of Trac 12 is powered by just one transformer hid-

continued



Seattle's AMPHORA uses miniature spotlights focused on merchandise to create a look of calm and elegance.

"concise store layout and unique display cabinets designed by architect Robert Edson Swain..."



June's miniature track lighting, the versatile Trac 12 low-voltage lighting system, is used to highlight custom displays and illuminate the customer service areas throughout the AMPHORA store.

den from sight above the ceiling. Small spotlights available for the system can be snapped into the track — and repositioned easily to highlight changing displays.

Last, but not least, the miniature 12-volt track lighting is about half the cost of regular track and less expensive to operate. Without transformers attached to each spotlight, less heat is emitted. This helps keep the store cool, an important consideration for the scented oils.

Specification details

The concise store layout and unique display cabinets designed by architect Robert Edson Swain called for a detailed, integrated lighting plan. Working from blueprints and product samples, the store owners and a specification specialist from Juno determined the location of each track and the transformer loads to be used.

Next came the selection of 65 miniature MR16 spotlights and the appropriate beam spread and wattage for each one. This attention to detail resulted in highly focused lighting that accents merchandise displays as well as the graceful, curved service counter of natural



Black miniature track lights cantilever off the top of display cabinets and tiny halogen spots provide highly focused light and beautiful color renditions.

AMPHORA — Aromatherapy for the '90s

When you step into AMPHORA, a world of fresh, natural scents greets you. It is a timeless place of sweet scents, calm and renewal. A rainbow array of soaps stands beside aromatherapy candles, essential oils and artfully designed perfume bottles.

So, what is it all about? Natural body care products custom-scented to suit and soothe your senses.

At AMPHORA, the customer is aided in choosing a scent which can then be incorporated into body care products such as lotion, bubble bath, shampoo, moisturizers and perfume. If you have a favorite scent, they will do their best to develop a similar one just for you and keep track of the formula on their computer.

The image of the store is high-end, but the prices aren't. Gift box combinations of scented soaps, lotions, loofahs, brushes, eye pillows and other natural body care products retail from \$10 to \$45. Art glass perfume bottles range from \$18 to \$65.

Is it a risky business? Not according to the three entrepreneurs who brought together their varied business experience and expertise. Rob Klegler has a high-tech background in computers at Kodak. He makes sure all store management details are computerized. Rod Dejong has a degree from a leading New York school of design, and creates product packaging and displays. Paul Cardoza comes from a retail background in the perfume and essential oil trade. He creates the store's custom and premixed scents. All three participate in polishing the store concept and share the American Dream of building their own business.

According to AMPHORA's well-researched business plan, the store, which opened last February, is exceeding sales projections and has been "running in the black" since the first month of operation.

From the start, AMPHORA's visual presentation is credited with jump-starting the business. Even before the grand opening promotion, the engaging windows and merchandise displays acted like a visual magnet to the 900 people per hour who pass by the store.

With a large potential customer base of "people who take care of their bodies," AMPHORA is creating its own specialty retailing niche.

—Ruth McNin

wood. The look is clean and uncluttered.

Most Trac 12 components specified were in stock at Seattle Lighting, a well-known lighting distributor in the area. Within three weeks, the Trac 12 system was designed, delivered, installed and ready for business.

Each track section operates on a separate transformer, which is individually switched. This allows flexibility in lighting the store attractively at night when the store is closed but people are still in the mall.

"We're extremely pleased with the lighting. We can move the spotlights so easily. It's a vital part of the AMPHORA store image," concludes Klegler. □

Editor's Note: AMPHORA is located at Columbia Seafirst Center, 701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 303, Seattle, Wash. 98104, phone (206)623-9480. Visit it on its internet home page at <http://www.amphora.com/>

Reprinted from Retail Store Image, October 1995



