

FINANCIAL TIMES

# christmas unwrapped

NOVEMBER 21 2009

how to spend it  
special christmas edition





# POPPING MAD

Here today, gone tomorrow, a proliferation of pop-up shops promises to enliven Christmas shopping, says Lucia van der Post. **Illustration:** Chris Burke.

**P**op-up shops aren't new but it's amazing how they're proliferating. And it's not just small, funky designers who are going for them – all sorts of established names such as Gap, Fred Perry, Terra Plana, Nike, Yohji Yamamoto and cult designer Rachel Roy have explored the notion. They're everywhere from a high street near you to the toniest American summer resort – The Hamptons – which, during August, was awash with pop-up shops, including the very upmarket Hermès.

Restaurants, galleries, clubs, theatres, even an ad agency, are latching on to the concept and opening for limited spells in surprising locations. A fresh phrase has even been devised to make them seem newer than they are – "Limited Edition Experiences" is the latest moniker. Once upon a time, when *Comme des Garçons* first came up with the idea, they were called "guerrilla" stores. The idea was that they pounced on an empty space, arrived fast and often secretly, laid out their wares and then, when the fun was over, folded up their tents and were gone. As Linda

Hewson, Selfridges' head of creative, puts it, "Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s people were looking for special pieces in small runs, so now we have the pop-up, which is really the same idea, just in a different wrapper. It provides a walk-in experience or retail moment that causes a stir and then disappears. It feeds into that desire for discovering things that not everybody knows about and for buying things that no one else has." It's also, as many a commentator on the retail scene has observed, a wonderful way of breaking up the uniformity of the high street, of feeding little surprises into the shopping monoculture.

It's a notion that fits particularly well with the current rather tricky times. As businesses, alas, go broke, so there are vacant spaces available, often at extraordinarily low rents, and their owners are happy to have something hip and happening roosting there to give the building some life. Almost more importantly, many shopkeepers have sensed that they have to try harder for their share of the retailing cake. Cutting prices isn't the only answer. They need fun and games. Theatre. Experiences. Surprises. Pop-up shops give

established businesses the chance to reinvent themselves and new ones the chance to create a buzz. They allow both to take risks, to be experimental and spontaneous, to see what works and, above all, psychologically, they add an element of urgency to shopping – if you don't buy it when you see it you know there won't be a second chance.

Which is no doubt why all through the early autumn, during London Fashion Week and the September Design festival, pop-up shops enlivened the scene, bringing little-known designers, avant-garde creations and charming offbeat notions to the attention of those with the energy to track them down. Back in August, 15 British brands – including Beyond the Valley, Concrete and Twenty8Twelve – went to New York and played shop while in October 11 boutiques from New York's Lower East Side came to London's Newburgh Street.

Then, too, queen of handbags Anya Hindmarch has recently been energising her stores with "miniature pop-up shops", offering customers complimentary manicures by Cowshed, ice creams from William Norris, flowers from Scarlet & Violet,

cakes from Primrose Bakery, makeovers by Chantecaille and free make-up lessons. The idea is to keep customers' curiosity alive and to entice new ones in. Hindmarch invites in other brands that she herself is fond of and believes her customers would love to know about. As well as bringing life to her stores, it seems they also boost her own sales.

Selfridges has been exploring the notion for quite some time, showcasing small and exciting one-off events, including a pop-up shop curated by stylist Katie Grand. Others have focused on innovative design, art and ceramics. For Selfridges the pop-up shop has clearly become a way of life – all through December there will be pop-up pantomimes every Saturday near the Christmas Grotto (itself a sort of annual pop-up shop) whilst on Fridays there's going to be Gay Bingo (gay as in "happy" as well as "gay" because that's how the compere describes himself).

Meanwhile, officialdom has got in on the act. A scheme funded by Camden Council and Camden Town Unlimited gave free space in empty premises during the summer to artists and designers to showcase their wares, making the high street look

much livelier at the same time. Meanwhile, Boris Johnson and Wayne and Geradine Hemingway (of Red or Dead) got together to form KioskKiosk, which gives budding entrepreneurs or designers a chance to have a kiosk entirely free to showcase their ideas. It was such a success in the summer that it has moved to Nottingham where, until December 31, adventurous citizens can do some interesting shopping for anything from art, furniture and books to jewellery, handbags and clothing. The website lists exactly who is selling what and where.

London will see a host of pop-up shops in the run up to Christmas. Traditionally, there are lots of fairs that only pop up for Christmas (anybody going to Ascot today, for instance, will find The Travelling Souk is there with its eclectic collection of charming products) but getting advance notice of what's opening where isn't easy. Their very nature – here today, gone tomorrow – means the keen shopper needs to be quick on his/her toes. There are no long lead times and often they open on the spur of the moment for as little as 24 hours (Selfridges' October Jimmy Choo shoe event lasted just 72 hours) or as long as several weeks. Websites are usually best placed to react fast to the news, with DailyCandy.com keeping its members up to date with daily bulletins, and LeCool.com including news about pop-up shops in its general updates. Lots of designers and makers with peripatetic outlets can be tracked down through www.jotta.com, which could best be described as a MySpace for artists.

Possibly one of the most exciting pop-up events to look out for in London is The Old Truman Brewery's emporium in the rather



unromantic surroundings of the first floor of F Block. This is not for those looking for the sedate or classically elegant, rather for those wanting something edgy, contemporary, quirky and probably one-off. The only certainty is that what you find there – arts, crafts and fashion – few others are likely to have come across.

In London's Covent Garden The Shop of Delight opens on November 24 in the market place. It's aiming squarely at the financially canny shopper, with a big emphasis on the home-made. It'll be part funky retail experience, part educational workshop, with each week having different hosts demonstrating how to create anything from Christmas decorations to presents easily and affordably.

Across the pond in Miami, where Art Basel and Design Miami are about to host the annual design and art fest, Craig Robins, its co-founder, has

**Top: KioskKiosk is a new initiative that allows designers to present their work in a free pop-up kiosk.**

taken the idea of the pop-up to the most sophisticated plane yet. He's a property developer whose company, Dacra, has turned an 18-square block neighbourhood into an area buzzing with artists, architects, designers, fashion houses and the like. He aims to take pop-ups to a new, superior, more culturally orientated level. "It's all about reclaiming the notion that things that are special have more meaning. It's about allowing the paradigms to shift and the Design District is the perfect place to push the envelope further and to experiment a bit more."

If you're wondering what all this means in practice, the Gucci Icon-temporary will consist of what it calls its Flash Sneaker Store which will sell trainers specially designed by music producer Mark Ronson – 16 styles for men and two for women will be specially packaged, tailored to the city the pop-up store is in (it kicks off in New York's Crosby Street, then moves to Miami for two weeks in November, and next year comes to London) and will be accompanied by a track of Ronson-selected music. Duncan Quinn, a fantastic menswear designer (think Savile Row gone wild) will be doing a two-storey "town house" where he will offer ready-to-wear, accessories and bespoke suits, with a private room for dinners, meetings and invitation-only poker games as well as an indoor

croquet court. Handbag designer Katherine Fleming is giving 20 artists a handbag to transform in any way they wish. Those 20 one-of-a-kind pieces will be sold in a silent auction in aid of Bas Fisher Invitational, an artist-run alternative art space in the Design District. Fendi will be offering a collection of limited edition accessories, while one of Argentina's best-known fashion designers, Jessica Trosman, will bring some of her pieces, and Cynthia Rowley will sell her special collection from a tricked-out DHL lorry. Yohji Yamamoto is creating an installation in the (permanent) Y-3 store.

Clearly, it's all going to be a riot but it's not for the cautious or reflective shopper. If you want it, you'd better buy it. And just remember: you had better be sure you like whatever it is a lot because you won't be able to take it back. ✦

#### POP GOES THE BOUTIQUE

**Any Hindmarch**, 157-158 Sloane St, London SW1 (020-7730 0961; [www.anyhindmarch.com](http://www.anyhindmarch.com)) and branches. **Design Miami Limited Edition**, from November 30 for a limited period, Miami Design District ([www.miamidesigndistrict.net](http://www.miamidesigndistrict.net)). **KioskKiosk**, Nottingham, until December 31 ([www.kioskiosk.co.uk](http://www.kioskiosk.co.uk)). **Old Truman Brewery**, November 26-December 20, F Block 1st-floor entrances from Ely's Yard, 15 Hanbury St and 81 Brick Lane, London E1 (020-7770 6007; [www.trumanbrewery.com](http://www.trumanbrewery.com)). **Selfridges**, Christmas pop-up events until December 24, 400 Oxford St, London W1 (0800-123 400; [www.selfridges.com](http://www.selfridges.com)). **The Shop of Delight**, November 24-December 24, 26 The Market, Covent Garden, London ([www.coventgardenlondonuk.com](http://www.coventgardenlondonuk.com)). **The Travelling Souk**, at Ascot today (01865-821 835; [www.thetravellingsouk.com](http://www.thetravellingsouk.com)).



**TORANJ**  
LONDON

"By Appointment Only"

55 Park Lane, Mayfair, London  
Tel: 020 7629 8594 [www.toranjondon.com](http://www.toranjondon.com)

ROYAL  
**ASSCHER**

THE STARS OF AFRICA



Royal Asscher<sup>®</sup>, the legendary Dutch diamond and fine jewellery house launches the new collection 'Stars of Africa'.

The rings have been created to benefit the company's Africa focused fundraising in which \$150 are donated from each sale.

**HETTICH**

Jewellers since 1900

Hettich Jewellers Ltd, 1 King Street, St. Helier, Jersey JE2 4WF  
Telephone: +44(0) 1534 734491 Facsimile: +44(0) 1534 759853  
[www.hettich.co.uk](http://www.hettich.co.uk) email: [info@hettich.co.uk](mailto:info@hettich.co.uk)