
Need to Know

TOP 10 UNMISSABLE STORES OF 2016

10.

Samsung 837 New York

2016 certainly was a time of big changes! But it was also another amazing year for retail. It's easy to forget just how far and fast things are evolving, so here is our top 10 round up of our favourite stores...

We start, of course, with Samsung. It may have had been a more 'explosive' year than they expected, but they also managed to open the best tech store on the planet; the stunning 837 Flagship in New York's Meatpacking District. This single handedly put New York back on the map as the world's number one retail city.

This unique concept, designed by Wonderwall, is an 'unstore' - a giant, social gallery lounge where you can explore Samsung's cool VR and connected technology, or just hang out and grab a coffee or artisan doughnut.

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9.

B8ta Palo Alto

Whilst running a retail safari in San Francisco, we headed to Silicon Valley to visit a cool new concept, called B8ta.

B8ta isn't just another Internet of Things technology showroom; it's an entirely new type of retail model.

Founded by ex Nest executives, B8ta is a 'retail lab' for innovative startup products, which rents space to the brands and tracks how customers interact with them.

The store and digital point of sale monitors how long customers watch product movies, where they click and how they browse the space - information B8ta then sells to brands.

The products are awesome; from phone controlled drones, to smart luggage. B8ta is now growing, with new stores in Seattle and Los Angeles.

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8.

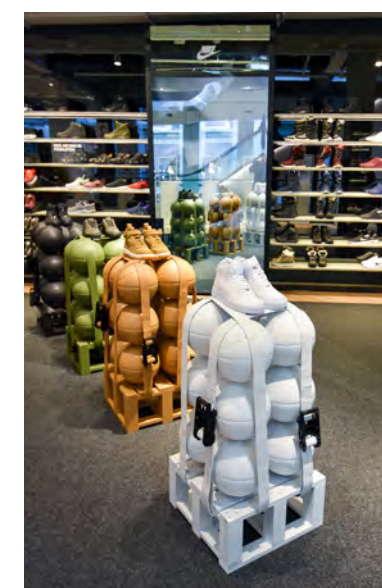
Nike SoHo Flagship New York

Alongside news that Nike's online sales are up 48%, came the opening of Nike SoHo, the eagerly anticipated flagship that is already generating complaints from local residents as it is so popular.

Designed to be the ultimate expert experience destination, the store combines digital with physical in some of the best ways we have ever seen: The Nike running Trial Zones are standard treadmills with wrap around augmented reality screens, which allow customers to run in VR around New York. On the top floor, the basketball court runs VR training to mimic New York's most iconic courts.

Each floor has an 'interactive' experience with a customise trainer studio on the first floor. Adidas followed with their own New York flagship in December, cementing the Big Apple as THE global retail battleground.

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7.

Amazon Books Seattle

2016 was the year that Amazon dived into ‘bricks & mortar’, marking a key turning point in retail history.

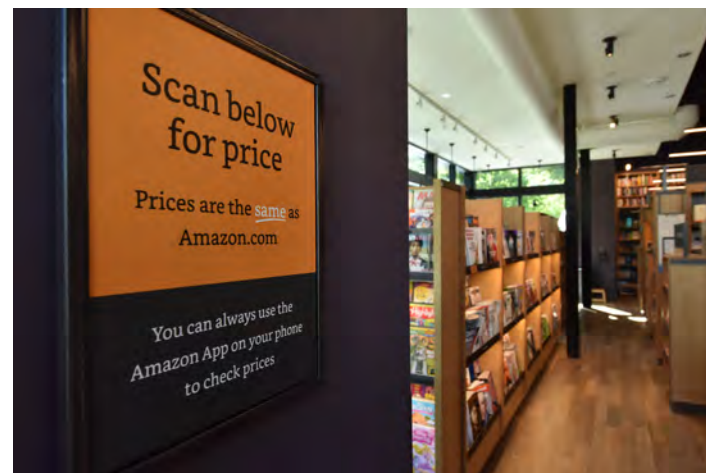
We headed over to Seattle last spring, partly to visit the amazing Starbucks Reserve Roastery, but also to check out Amazon Books; their first ever physical bookstore.

Located in University Place, the store is perfectly nice, although nothing special from a design perspective. Indeed it is a poignant irony that it so looks like all those bookstores that it has helped to drive out of business over the years.

However, Amazon Books takes an omnichannel approach that disrupts the traditional model; with dynamic web pricing, front facing selections drawn from Amazon.com and real customer reviews for every book. This is ‘Metail’ in action. It’s Amazon Go next!

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6.

SuperValu Blackrock Dublin

Our trend philosophy is simple; trends are global and they travel across every sector. No market or territory is immune.

Supermarkets have been trapped in a price war for so long that they have forgotten that the world has moved on.

Aldi's Project Fresh in Australia brought the 'Push for Posh' to the hard discounters, disrupting the equilibrium and changing customer expectations forever. The major players are going to have to invest heavily in the store experience if they want to survive.

SuperValu rose to the challenge with a stunning new store format, bursting with foodie values, stylish design, personal service and expert communication. Designed by Household, the result is one of the world's best supermarkets and a transformation of the brand.

[Read more here](#)



5.

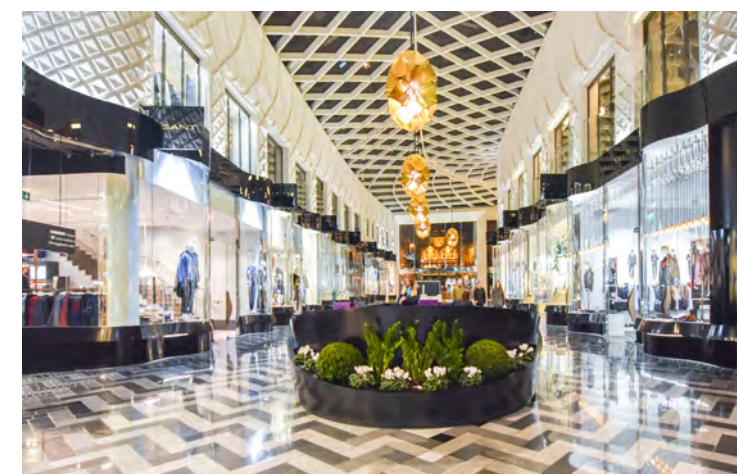
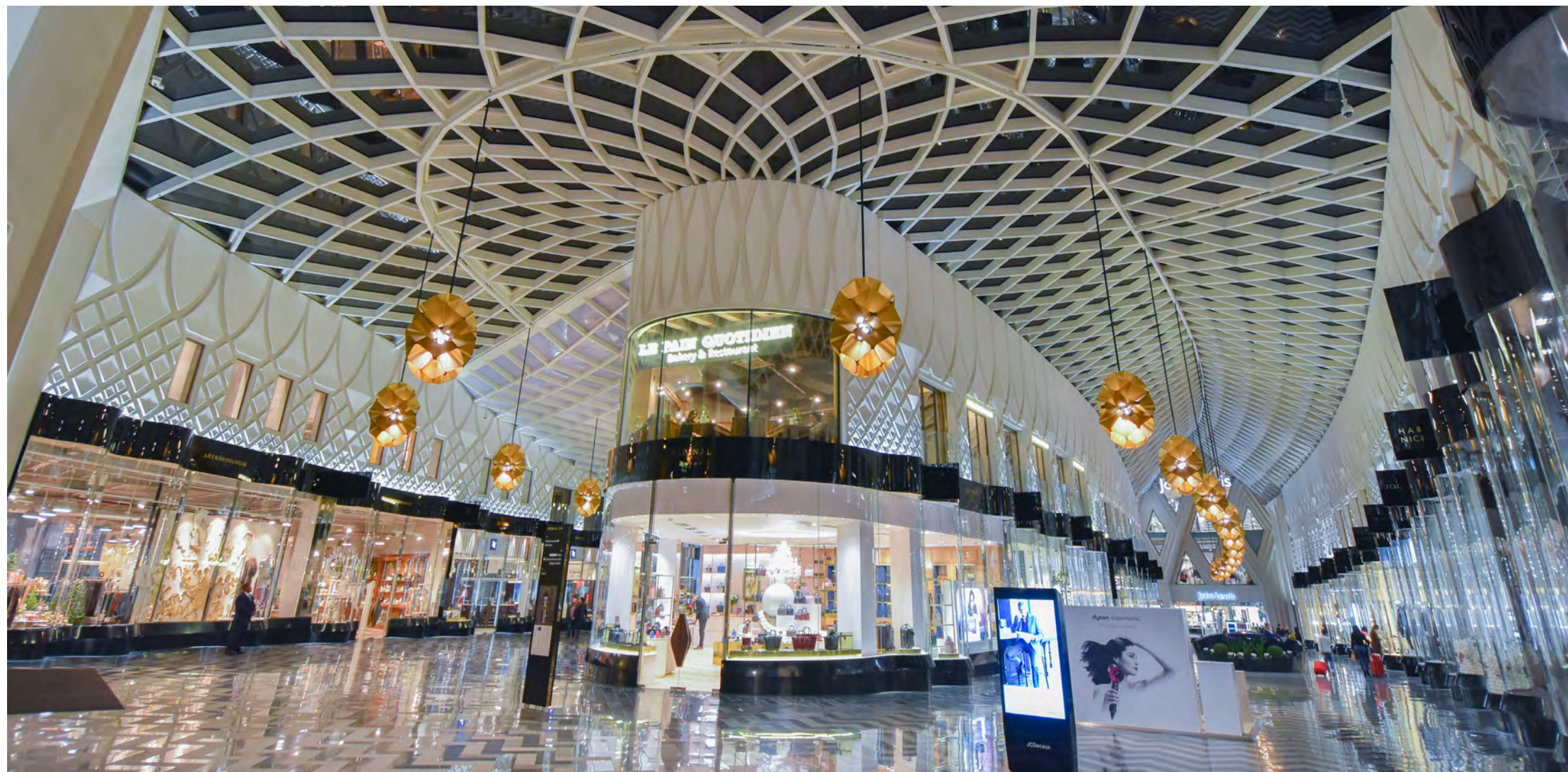
Victoria Gate Leeds

The Push for Posh continues at Victoria Gate; the UK's only major retail project of 2016. A fabulous annex to the Victoria Quarter, this Hammerson development reinvents the traditional arcade for the 21st Century with world class architecture and design.

Judging by the comments from first time visitors, the iconic space elicited plenty of surprise and delight, instantly establishing the centre as a jewel in Leeds' crown, and a powerful sign that great retail schemes can exist outside London.

The mix of new and cool brands is anchored by a huge new John Lewis - their best ever store - and a masterclass in how department stores can survive by being trusted experts.

This is a great example of how malls and city centres can thrive together.



4.

Barneys Chelsea New York

It's a tough time for department stores. BHS folded in the UK, whilst Sears, Macys and JC Penney have all announced massive store closures for 2017.

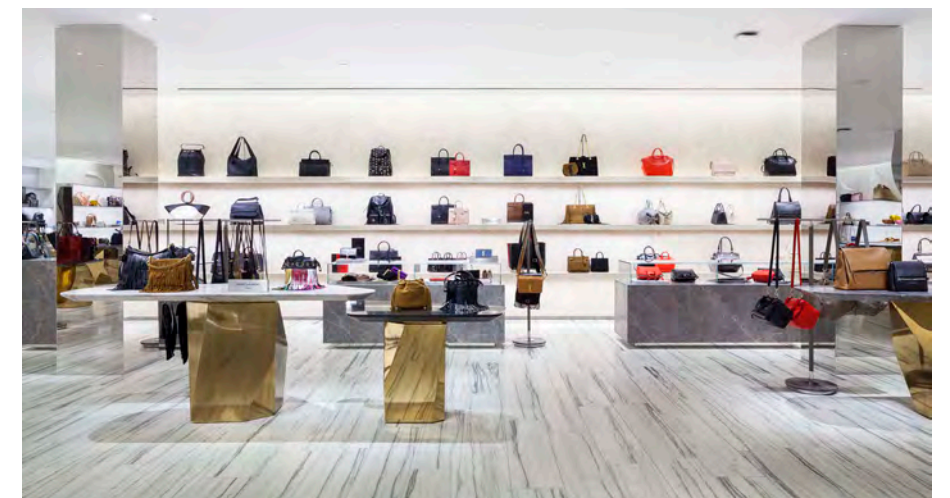
Whether you blame online sales or the department stores themselves for their complacent failure to innovate and inspire, some think the entire sector is doomed. We don't believe it is.

John Lewis thrives as a trusted expert, whilst Barneys is investing in luxury. Returning to its Chelsea roots last year, with this stunning store, Barneys exudes cool confidence and a clear understanding of who its customers are and what they want.

With Next's figures looking shaky, for us the prescription is clear; don't stop investing in the store experience. Otherwise we'll all just shop online.

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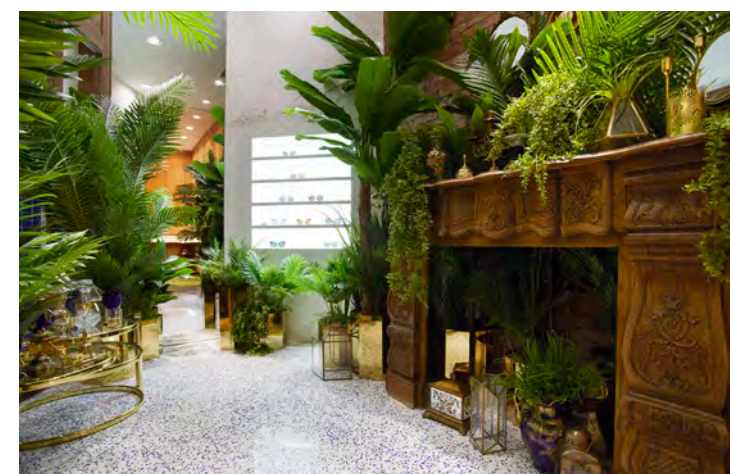
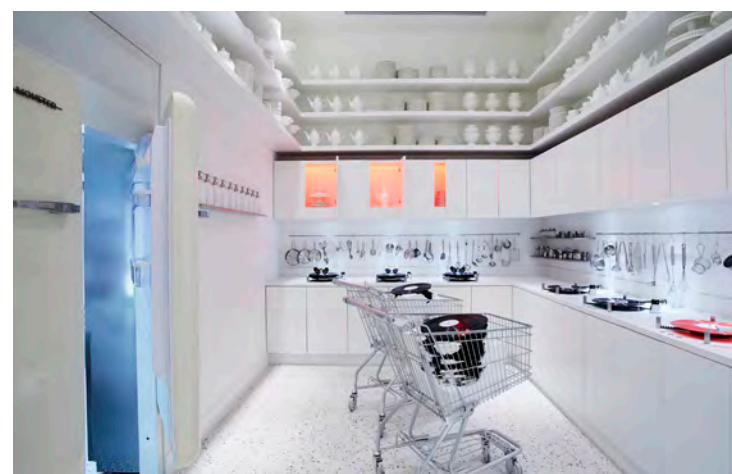
Gentle Monster Shanghai & Beijing

Seoul consistently rates in our top five cities and South Korea is a powerhouse of creativity and innovation. From pop music to fashion and technology, the 'K-Wave' is sweeping Asia and its ripples can be felt right around the world.

Founded in 2011 and inspired by US optical disrupter Warby Parker, Gentle Monster is an avant garde eyewear brand, headed by Hankook Kim. The company swept into retail in 2016.

Ultra cool and artistic, every retail store is completely different; from 'Platform' in Hong Kong; designed like a train carriage, to 'L' Artisan' here in Shanghai and 'Secret Apartment' in Beijing.

Each store is a three dimensional still life, with its own back themed story. A masterclass in how to avoid the 'cookie cutter' and keep retail exciting.



2.

Kit Kat Chocolatory London

Have we reached peak personalisation? Probably not quite yet. But brands are going to have to work harder this year to add value than just printing your name on a label.

Kit Kat used crafted personalisation as the cornerstone of its pop up strategy, and it proved so popular that it has now opened its first permanent store in Melbourne.

Kit Kat Chocolatory first launched as a special edition boutique in Tokyo in 2014. It was followed by Kit Kat Studio; a made to order personalised pop up in Sydney in 2015. The Chocolatory was resurrected in London last October.

You could choose your chocolate and toppings and personalise your packaging before your Kit Kat was hand made in front of you. All for £7 a pop!

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1.

IKEA Dining Club Pop Up London

Last year, the pop up went mainstream. No longer a niche fad, pop ups have become a genuine retail channel and the top of the pyramid of a proper omnichannel strategy.

IKEA continue to demonstrate their commitment to innovative thinking with a truly multichannel approach: Last year they launched a new Click & Collect city concept, alongside our very favourite pop up - The Dining Club.

A two week pop up in London's Shoreditch, IKEA inhabited an old office building, installing a Cafe (serving meatballs!), a Virtual Kitchen, Demo Kitchen and event theatre.

But the highlight was the DIY restaurant where you could cook dinner for up to 20 friends under the guidance of a professional chef. Simply awesome!

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WTF Bonus!

Thought Brexit was Bad? London

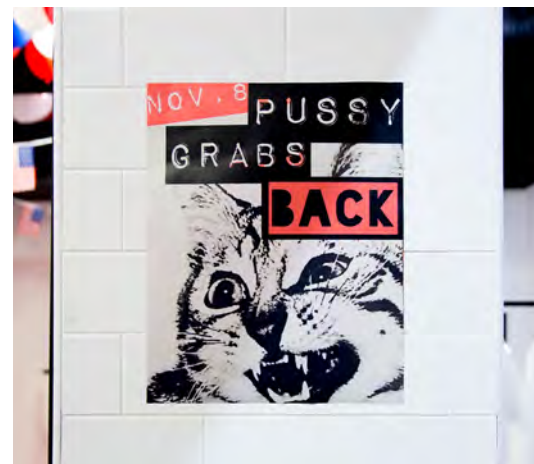
This surreal store, celebrating the US presidential election, reflected the all-round craziness of 2016.

A two day pop up in London's Old Street Station, you could buy a variety of comedy products, and watch live coverage of the election, with food, booze and Donald 'Trumpnuts'. Guests were even encouraged to take a 'Trump Dump'!

Of course, the biggest losers of 2016 have been the pollsters, who have spectacularly failed to predict any of the major political upsets. The reason is simple to explain; people lie.

The lesson applies to politics and retail; don't ask customers what they want, because they will give you the wrong answer! The truth is that we are all bored of the status quo and we don't trust the old order. We want surprise and delight, and the brands that can deliver will be the ones that thrive.

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Our news

What we've been up to

The interesting thing about our work at echochamber is that the projects we undertake and the clients we help, reflect what's happening in the wider industry. We feel like a bellwether!

2016 was the year of the pop up, with FMCG clients using them as a powerful tool to drive brand awareness, and online retailers testing new paths to market. We have run creative workshops to develop some great pop up concepts that will launch in 2017.

Retail safaris continue to be even more popular; a great way of getting the team out of the office and inspired with new possibilities. We ran safaris in London, Paris, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Amsterdam, for clients from around the world. It was great fun!

Networking Safaris

This year we are going to try something different; London retail safaris for small groups who would like an intensive day of trend hunting and retail inspiration alongside other like minded retail professionals. The day will begin in Covent Garden with a trend presentation, before heading out on foot to explore the best new retail that London has to offer. An opportunity to connect and explore, each safari is limited to 10 people. Contact us for dates and for ticket information. We will be running them every month throughout the year.

Best of West End
February 9th, London

East meets West
March 15th, London

Where we'll be next

We will be heading back out to Seattle as soon as the new Amazon Go opens its doors to real customers, as we want to be there to document retail history in the making.

We will continue on a road trip down the west coast to Portland and Los Angeles, before running a couple of early spring safaris in New York.

Matthew will be talking at Euroshop in Düsseldorf in March, with other keynotes scheduled in Dublin and Prague.

Asia will be another focus, with safaris booked for Tokyo, Seoul and Singapore. Otherwise we will continue exploring the shopping streets of London, our favourite home city.



Need to know more?

- Keynote speaking
- Retail safaris
- Trend workshops
- Best in class reports
- Competitor reviews
- Agency recommendation
- Retail Inspiration

Say hello

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