

Redefining the Purpose of Retail

A Collaborative Approach for Designing a Sustainable Retail Culture



Context: Millennials and GenZ's values are transforming the retail landscape, increasing the demand for sustainable and purpose-driven brands. Though current retail design practice leverages generational insights, a disconnect remains between the retail store's purpose and these conscious consumers who are driven by environmental and social responsibility. Rather than retailers designing for these generations (you), this studio engages Millennial and GenZ students alongside retail design practitioners to redefine the purpose of the retail store. Advancing both practice and academia, this project asks both students and practitioners to shift the retail conversation towards generosity and sustainability. Projects in the past have addressed issues such as the circular economy, shared economy, product lifecycles, service design, and slow fashion. Emblematic of the retail design practice, this studio brings interior, visual communication, and industrial design students together with internationally recognized professionals to explore the theoretical, conceptual, and professional practice of sustainable retail design.

* The studio is sponsored by VM+SD Magazine and the final design proposals will be juried by a panel of professionals to award to winning design the opportunity to present at the International Retail Design Conference (IRDC).

Process: The studio structure, guided by the professor's experience in retail brand strategy, mimics a multidisciplinary retail agency by creating teams of Interior, Industrial, and Visual Communication design students to develop Millennial / GenZ-centric solutions. The project will be developed through discussions with students, identifying your personal concerns with the retail industry and ethics driving your retail behaviors. Students will conduct brand experience case studies, assessing the customer journey, store's purpose, and alignment with their discussed ethics and desires. Collaborative teams will then design a physical experience that realized their vision for retail's future for a brand that embodies their beliefs. Weekly meetings with designers and research strategists from five influential retail agencies provided students with collaborative ideation, interactive workshops, and project feedback. Final design proposals will be presented in an open reception with representation from local agencies.