

BOSTON TEE-PARTY

By MARK FAITHFULL Photos courtesy of DALZIEL & POW

HELLO
BOSTON



It's been a while since tea was the drink of choice in Boston, but when Irish discount fashion retailer **Primark** set down its first U.S. store in the city, it was all about creating a flagship to announce its arrival from the other side of the pond.

← The "Hello Boston" graphic pays respect to the store's location.

↓ A bold set of central escalators draws shoppers to the second level.



Irish cheap-chic fashion retailer Primark has gone toe-to-toe with U.S. competitors before. Gap, T.J.Maxx (known as T.K. Maxx abroad) and Forever 21 ply their trade in the United Kingdom after all, as do overseas retailers including Zara, H&M, Topshop and UNIQLO, all of which are at various stages of trying to win the U.S. market. But this time around, the battle has commenced on American soil, and Primark has chosen the northeastern corridor as its start point.

At 77,000 sq. ft., the four-story building in Boston is the first of a proposed eight U.S. stores before the year ends, with Primark pinning its ambitions on what John Bason, CFO of Primark's owner Associated British Foods, describes as a superior customer experience and "buzzy" stores.

The company certainly comes with an impeccable pedigree. Originating in Ireland as Penneys, a fashion retailer renowned for its bargain prices and thrift-store-style merchandising, the retailer reinvented itself with bold, bright flagships in a

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-HELEN CUPIT, DALZIEL & POW

concept by London agency Dalziel & Pow, which was retained to design the Boston store. The agency's approach has made Primark a retail powerhouse in Ireland and the U.K. and, increasingly, select markets in Europe, acting as a mall anchor and a much-courted footfall driver.

Bason believes Primark will win over U.S. shoppers through a combination of "amazing prices," good shop locations, fashionability and store experience. In Boston, the flagship occupies the

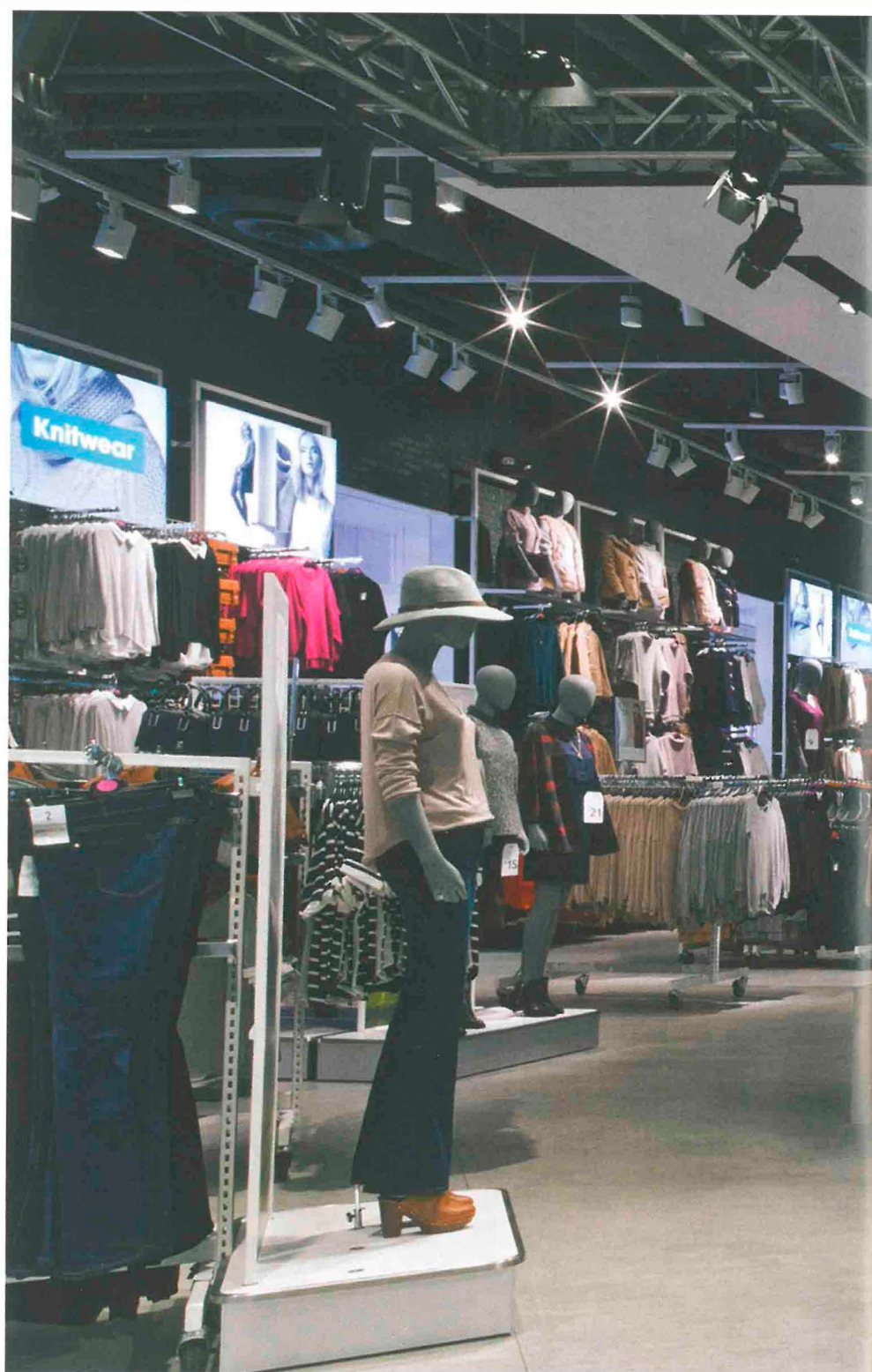
iconic Burnham Building, formerly home to department store Filene's Basement. Dating from 1912, the building's historic architecture has been sympathetically restored and enhanced by Dalziel & Pow's concept, incorporating historical references throughout and retaining original features, including windows, exposed brickwork and terracotta ceilings, across the retail space.

In keeping with Primark's hallmark style of acknowledging its host location, the customer

journey begins with a "Hello Boston" mural in the lobby, illustrating Primark worldwide locations as part the brand's international fashion story, and is one of several original art features in the store.

"The store embraces the city, boasting a design concept reflective of local character and personality, while retaining the identity of the Primark brand," says Helen Cupit, marketing manager, Dalziel & Pow.

Other local references include decorative fret-cut





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SWEATER	\$16
SHORT	\$7
SAFETY	\$9

SWEATER	\$21
JEANS	\$20
SHOES	\$24

VEST	\$29
TOPS	\$21
JEWELRY	\$3



↙ Primark has gone big on mannequins, 530 of them in all, to provide customers with outfit inspiration.

↑ A shop-in-shop area curates the latest products and looks for time-poor, trend-conscious customers.



panels, applied to cashwraps across all levels and designed to express the departments they are within. The "Kids" panel features a colorful reinterpretation of the Boston skyline.

"Each Primark flagship takes on a unique identity, a global brand acting locally," says Andrew Piepenstock, associate design director, Dalziel & Pow. "The flagship store in Boston communicates

the world of Primark to the U.S. market, where the brand has limited recognition, ensuring clear expression of fashion, value and locality throughout the customer journey."

Primark has exploited the full height of walls on the first floor to merchandise and display its wares and, upon arrival, customers are greeted by a collection of mannequins raised high into the space. Showcasing seasonal outfits and great value, as if bringing the pages of a fashion editorial into 3-D, this high-impact visual merchandising display brings Primark's brand promise—"Amazing fashion, Amazing prices"—to the forefront.

Another key feature is the 1,000-sq.-ft. trend room, a shop-in-shop curating the latest products and looks for time-poor, trend-conscious customers. Primark also has used 530 mannequins to provide customers with outfit inspiration; plus 73 cash registers and 84 fitting rooms, all helping to minimize waiting times. Shoppers can relax in a number of seating areas across the floors and charging stations are available for a range of mobile devices.

The space boasts plenty of digital signage. Behind the mannequins there is a high-definition digital LED ribbon that both interacts with the visual merchandising and leads the customer's attention up the escalator to the store's upper levels. A large

screen toward the rear of the store runs a constant-but-changing loop of video on the latest fashion stories and trends. This establishes that there is something new and exciting for customers to discover on every level, while highlighting hot product lines. Free Wi-Fi is available, and in-store digital screens tell the global story of the brand through illustrations and shout-outs from Primark's user-generated online site, "Primania."

"With social media and where Primark has been in the U.K., on Oxford Street, the awareness of Primark is high in Europe," Bason says. "When we open a store, there's lots of excitement. It has become a destination store. In the U.S., consumer awareness is much less. That's the thing that's got to build."

The missing piece is a link to online shopping. Like elsewhere in the world, Primark doesn't offer a transactional website, relying instead on high-traffic physical locations. The King of Prussia shopping center near Philadelphia, where Primark just opened its second U.S. store before the holidays, is in the top five malls in the country in terms of visitors. But, aside from the Boston flagship, Primark will be sharing space with Sears stores. This isn't without complications, but if the deal is successful, it could mean exposure across Sears' almost 800 stores across the United States. **dar**

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PROJECT FILE

Primark
Boston

RETAILER

Primark

DESIGN FIRM

Dalziel & Pow

ARCHITECT

TTG, Gensler (execution of contract documents)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

JT Magen Construction Co.

CONSULTANTS/ENGINEERS

FISKAA Engineering

STORE FIXTURES

Cardinal (center floor equipment), Vira (perimeter fixtures and fitting rooms), Fleetwood (seating), WAM Industries (fret panels)

MANNEQUINS/FORMS

SFD

LIGHTING

LAPD lighting consultants, Weidenback Brown (lighting suppliers)

FLOORING

Amtico, Forbo

SIGNAGE/GRAPHICS

Widd, Vision On, Seaport, Ruggles Sign Co.

MILLWORK

Cardinal, Vira

PAINT

Benjamin Moore

SOUND SYSTEMS

Wave

TECHNOLOGY

Technomedia (digital screens), MOODmedia (monitors and projections)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FIRM

LOLA Creative Solutions LLC

Information in the project file is provided by the retailer and/or design firm.

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—JOHN BASON, PRIMARK