

STORES

In the pink at Missguided

The etailer has opened its first foray into bricks and mortar at London's Westfield Stratford City shopping centre. **John Ryan** discovers how the young fashion brand has created a real-life avatar of its playful online presence

Picture this. You're female, 16 years old and you're shopping for clothes.

While this may be a bit of a leap for the average *Retail Week* reader, if this path is followed the choices are legion, whether it's New Look, Topshop, River Island or Primark.

But these days there is rather more to the high street than the high street.

You'll also take a peek at the online merchants Boohoo.com, Asos and Missguided.

Boohoo has already made forays into bricks-and-mortar and has opened temporary stores in New York, this Christmas and last.

The pop-up serves a dual purpose: it gives the brand the lay of the land in a new market and also provides a clue about how it might work as a physical retailer.

But it was temporary and, for the most part, the experience of buying fashion remains different online from looking at clothing in a shop.

Brash beginnings

For the last couple of weeks, however, those in search of their online favourites have had the new Missguided store in the Westfield shopping centre in Stratford.

It's on the first floor of the mall, en route to John Lewis – although it is hard to see those beating a path to the department store being likely to enter Missguided.

That said, anybody passing the Dalziel & Pow-designed store will be hard pushed not to notice it. It is a vision of Barbie pink.

The store, like all of the others on this level, has a very high frontage owing to a ground floor and full-height mezzanine level being incorporated within the space.

The observer is likely to gawp at the walls, which have mannequins and risqué quips running up them, displayed on light boxes.



Missguided, Westfield Stratford

Opened November 23, 2016

Design Dalziel & Pow

Number of floors

2: ground and mezzanine

Ambience Barbie bling

Highlight Pink sports ute



RUNWAY

RetailWeek
FASHION
FOCUS



STORES

RUNWAY

RetailWeek
FASHION
FOCUS

► A pink sports ute with monster wheels occupies centre stage, in case the gaze fails to be focused on the whole panorama.

The bling vehicle has mannequins all over and around it, and the image is of an updated 'girl power' display that might have been put together for a music promo video in the mid-90s.

Pink banknotes suspended in a shower from the ceiling are frozen as they make their way down to the eye-catching car.

As for the walls, motifs read "make the naughty list this year" and "dresses worth shaving your legs for". More long-haired mannequins are positioned on faux marble plinths beneath these legends.

Physical expression

By any standards this is visual overload and for a website that specialises in the sassy and knowing, this is a direct physical avatar of what Missguided customers will be familiar with.

As with many stores that feature a prominent mezzanine, the temptation at this stage would be to head upstairs via the escalator.

But it is worth exploring the space beneath as this is the area where most of the clothing is located – upstairs is predominantly about accessories.

Two things will stand out – a mid-shop circular feature that serves as a denim shop-in-shop, and the cash desk.

The latter consists of a long counter backed by a screen that runs the length of it on the wall behind, serving as one of the few in-store hints at the retailer's digital heritage.

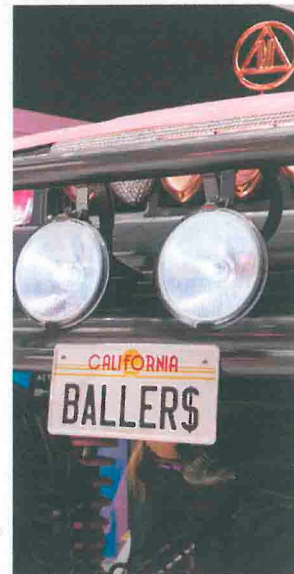
The rest of the floor is divided up into semi-discrete spaces, all of which feature perimeter displays with more mannequins, with the occasional one sat astride an ostrich-sized pink flamingo.

Everything is overstated, with bling a given. There are spots throughout, with high and low lights adding drama to the whole.

Upstairs, the atmosphere is similar, but the circular feature is devoted to a footwear department with circular mirrors above it.

The space features a see-through curtain composed of glitter gold threads, giving it a sense of enclosure, or perhaps the inner sanctum of a club.

The floor also includes a trio of mannequins with unicorn heads (accompanied by the legend "99% Unicorn"), a mannequin duo sitting on a chromed Chopper-style motorcycle, and a lone figure sparingly clad in stripes perched on top of a stack of doughnuts.



The store is racy, but still accessible for teens – this is about fun, not sleaze.

Digital life

An interesting point about this store, other than it being highly successful at capturing a teen mood, is how little about it is digital.

From the "Get naked" sign outside the fitting rooms to a projection onto the floor on the mezzanine that reads "let's step it up a level", visual merchandising carries the day in this interior.

The occasional hashtag on the screens show that mobile phones will be at the ready when this space is shopped. But the star of the show is the store.

It may not be to everybody's taste, but it is probably right that it shouldn't be. Missguided's store targets a relatively narrow demographic and does so with unerring precision.

And in a store where £40 is better end, pocket-money prices are de rigeur.

Missguided may be the name, but firmly on the tracks is the intent.