

## RETAIL

Colette closes its doors in Paris while numerous concept stores crop up in less likely cities. What's next for the **FASHION-LIFESTYLE RETAIL FORMULA?**







## DOVER STREET MARKET SINGAPORE

The brainchild of Comme des Garçons' Rei Kawakubo, Dover Street Market – which embodies a retail experience that's built around the concept of 'beautiful chaos' – reached Singapore last year.

**WHEN NEWS OF COLETTE'S** closing circulated last year, surely more than a few retailers began second-guessing the concept-store formula. One of the first of its kind, Colette in Paris offered a curated selection – the *crème de la crème* of fashion brands alongside up-and-comers – and hosted cultural events for 20 years before shutting up shop in December.

Seven years after Colette was born, Dover Street Market opened its doors in London, turning the concept into a warren of art installations and famously unbranded brand stores. When Comme des Garçons' Rei Kawakubo launched another DSM in Tokyo in 2006, she claimed that New York City (which eventually opened in 2013) would most likely be her last stop. Ultimately aiming for a maximum of four or five DSM stores, Kawakubo reached the lower end of her quota last year with the opening of DSM Singapore.

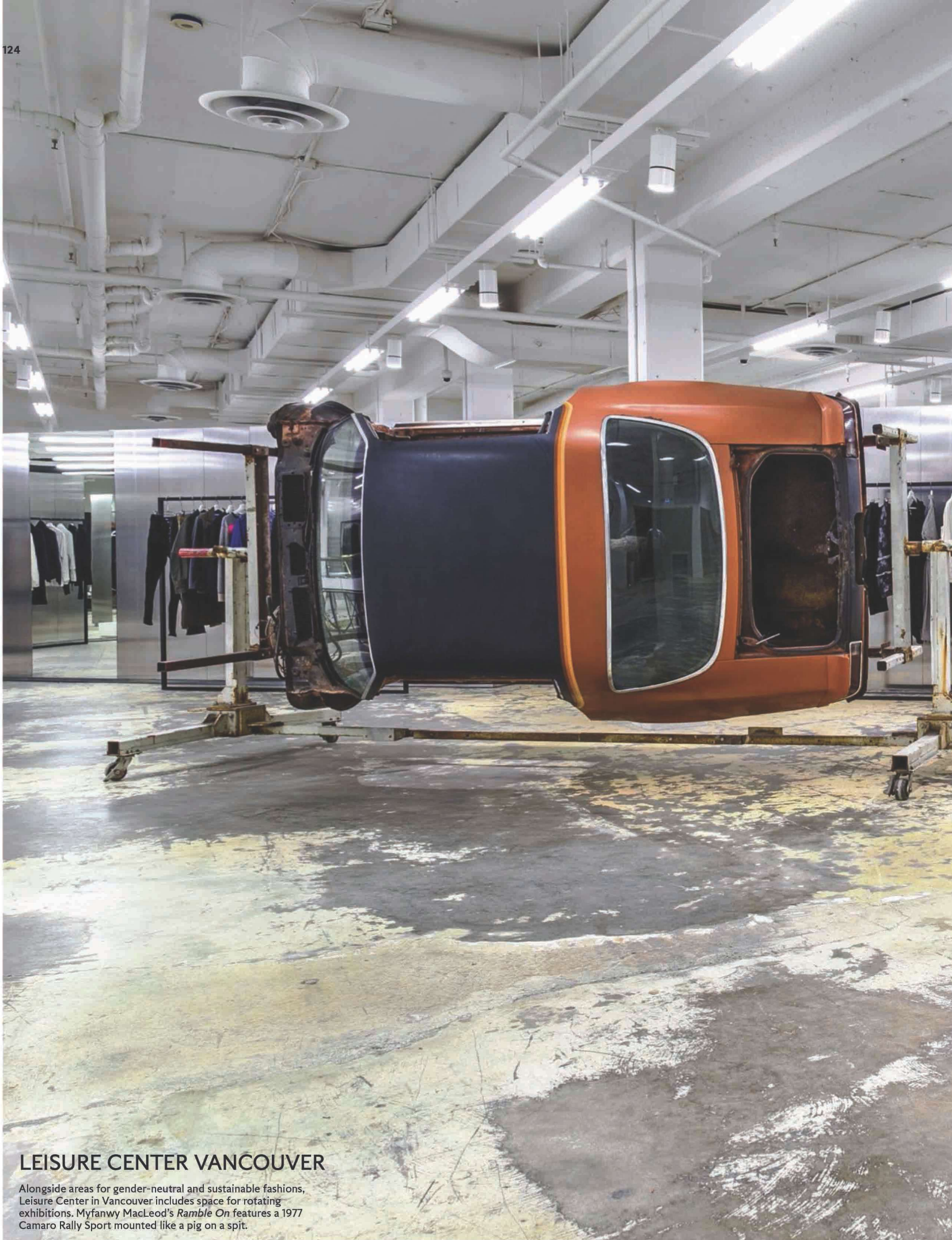
Colette and DSM were forerunners in their field; the latter can be traced as far back as the 1960s, when Kawakubo encountered Kensington Market during a London visit. Paris, London, Tokyo: all are known for setting stylistic trends, but similar high-end multi-brand concept stores that fuse fashion, art and lifestyle are now cropping up everywhere, from Moscow to Vancouver. The recipe? Pick an impressive – preferably run-down – space, introduce art and culture, and strictly curate the selection.

Vancouverites' fondness for the outdoors explains their relaxed approach to fashion and design. There's truth behind the 'activewear, everywhere' jibes. Seeking to expose the city to a more exclusive international flavour and to appeal to the increasing number of expats now calling the west coast of Canada home, Mason Wu opened Leisure Center late last year. Recognizing the changing definition of luxury – 'it's a luxury to take

a moment for ourselves, to read a book, for example' – Wu called upon Casper Mueller Kneer Architects to transform a 1930s warehouse with Art-Deco detailing into a retail destination that surrounds fashion with a curated selection of titles from Donlon Books of London, a plant-based tonic bar from New York's The Alchemist's Kitchen, and space for rotating exhibitions: *Ramble On* by local artist Myfanwy MacLeod was first in line. So far, not so different from its predecessors. Things get a bit more forward-thinking, though, with the introduction of a gender-neutral section, as well as space for designers who push sustainable methods and fabrics (Story MFG, for instance, uses vegetable dyes). Wu also sees Leisure Center's flexible downstairs space befitting community yoga classes, new product launches and private-shopping experiences.

KM20, which was founded by Olga Karput in 2009, recently traded its modest »





## LEISURE CENTER VANCOUVER

Alongside areas for gender-neutral and sustainable fashions, Leisure Center in Vancouver includes space for rotating exhibitions. Myfanwy MacLeod's *Ramble On* features a 1977 Camaro Rally Sport mounted like a pig on a spjt.









Pavel Krutkov

## KM20 MOSCOW

digs for a 2,500-m<sup>2</sup> space in Moscow. Going for an 'Art Biennale meets Alice in Wonderland' vibe, the interior focuses on the 'preciousness of the offline experience'. Along with fashions from such usual suspects as Comme des Garçons, KM20 also features (yep, you guessed it) relatively unknown brands, plus a beauty corner, a restaurant serving biodynamic wines, and a collection of what the managers consider the most interesting books and magazines from (coincidentally?) another London bookseller, Idea.

Besides the creation of worthwhile offline experiences, what makes this wave of concept stores something that so many are keen to embrace? 'Consumers today are less interested in purchase and ownership for the sake of it,' says consumer futurist William Higham. 'They're happy with access-ship, except for "unique" items. As a result, they view shopping more as a leisure activity [Wu seemingly hit the nail on the head when naming his store] than as a way to buy. They have e-commerce for the latter.' Higham says that shoppers are looking for something special from their stores: theatre, interaction, curation, serendipity. 'Dover Street Market picked up on this trend early and offered customers something extra.'

As the trend gains ground, it's resulting in precisely the situation it was distancing itself from: finding the same store with the same brands regardless of where you are in the world. Surely part of DSM's appeal was the surprise factor, which obviously wanes as similar concepts are increasingly adopted in every corner of the globe. Higham agrees: 'DSM itself needs to evolve further or it will seem passé. Agent Provocateur and The Body Shop have had similar problems: their core concepts have been co-opted and they haven't really taken things further.'

Higham believes that next-generation retailers will need to up the ante in terms of theatre and interaction. 'The internet of things, augmented reality and virtual reality will improve retailers' ability to make it happen. They'll also need to create new versions of curation and serendipity: celebrity curation, random versus AI-led serendipity. And mixed use within department stores and shopping malls will add more leisure, food, housing and offices to the equation.' — TI

doverstreetmarket.com  
km20.ru  
leisure-center.com

