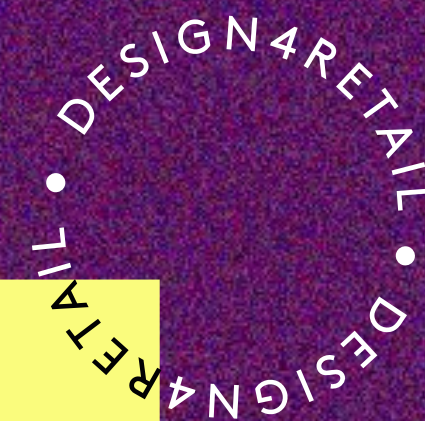


Ideas made possible.

Trend predictions.

2025



What has 2025 got in store?

Retail design is undergoing a rapid transformation, fuelled by technological advancements, evolving consumer behaviours, a renewed emphasis on authenticity and minimalism, and a growing commitment to sustainability. Modern retail spaces are becoming increasingly immersive and adaptable, seamlessly blending innovation, eco-consciousness, and creativity to elevate the customer journey. Through in-depth analysis and real-world examples, we'll explore the key trends shaping retail design in 2025.



Fig. 01, OSU, 2024
Fig. 02, Between the walls, 2024

"The constant pressure to consume has led to a phenomenon known as *‘consumer burnout’*, where people feel exhausted and overwhelmed by the relentless pursuit of material goods."
[Source: Psychology Today]





In 2025, shopping experiences are becoming *more immersive, interactive and socially conscious.*

[Source: LSN]

Our exploration.

As a creative retail agency, we constantly track and evaluate activity and ideas; observing how cultural touchpoints evolve. We in turn see the impact that has in shaping the world of retail for brands and customers alike. Our method for building this report brings recent observations of macro drivers together, and imagines how consumer behaviours and emerging trends could respond in a retail context. We will present seven potential core trends for 2025 based on our identification of shifting consumer attitudes and global drivers of change.

Social drivers



AI



Social Authenticity



Environmental issues

Design trends



Human Ingenuity
vs. AI



Was your childhood
a trend?



Dopamine
come down



Mushroom is the
new leather



Back down to earth



Re-use to Recycle



Is anything
authentic anymore?

Social Drivers.



A-yay or A-nay.

Retail is witnessing a surge in AI-powered solutions globally, where personalisation and increased efficiency are creating uniquely tailored experiences to individual consumer needs both in person and online.

While AI offers promising avenues for environmental good, such as identifying the drivers of climate change, its own footprint presents a stark paradox. The very technology designed to help the planet also demands a significant toll on its resources. Consider the construction of AI data centres: according to the UN Environment Programme, a staggering 800kg of raw materials are required to power a 2kg computer. This disparity highlights the intense resource consumption inherent in AI development. Furthermore, the construction and operation of these centres guzzle vast quantities of water, primarily for cooling the immense heat generated by their electrical components.

The environmental cost is not the only controversy surrounding AI. Its influence also extends to societal perceptions,

complicating the way people engage with digital content. The rise of deepfakes and fake news has tainted public perception of AI, raising concerns about the potential downsides of this emerging technology. In 2023, two AI-generated pieces featuring Balenciaga made the rounds online. YouTuber demonflyingfox, transformed the Harry Potter cast into Balenciaga models in just two days, looking like a nostalgic 80's/90's model campaign, many believed to have been unearthed from the archives. The second, was a photo of Pope Francies travelling through the Vatican in a white puffer jacket, dripping in gold chains.

In addition, Coca-Cola's AI-generated 2024 holiday ad sparked backlash over its perceived lack of authenticity, underscoring the tension between innovation and the human touch in creative work. AI's ability to rapidly generate convincing alternate realities highlights concerns about the reliability of online information and the erosion of trust in visual content.



The Power of Belonging.

The rise of private online communities, particularly on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, signifies a powerful shift in how individuals connect. These groups foster genuine engagement and cultivate loyalty among like-minded members, offering a sense of belonging often absent in broader, mainstream environments. This organic community building contributes to a fragmentation of cultural influence, as individuals gravitate toward niche groups that resonate with their specific interests. For brands, this evolving landscape necessitates a strategic pivot from mass-market approaches to focused engagement with these micro-communities.

By prioritising authentic interaction within these groups, brands can cultivate deeper, more meaningful relationships with consumers who are increasingly discerning and sceptical of traditional advertising and influencer-driven content. As our lives become increasingly digitized, so too does culture. Internet subcultures transcend geographical limitations, and platforms such as WhatsApp, Discord, TikTok, and Twitch facilitate genuine, reciprocal connections within these communities—

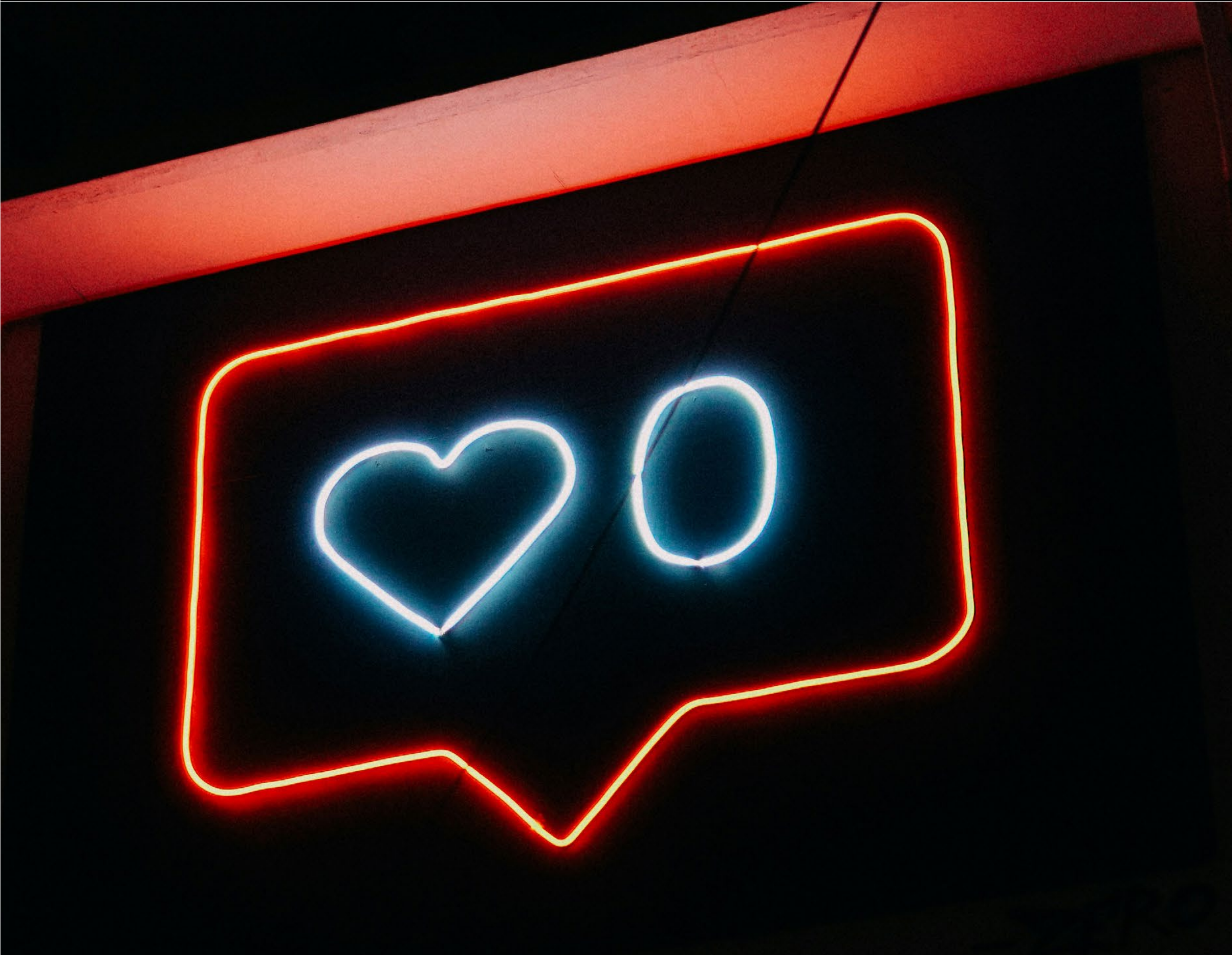
a level of engagement often unmatched by the traditional, one-way dynamic of influencer culture.

Taylor Swift's "Swifties" illustrate the rising importance of fandoms, often eclipsing traditional marketing budgets. Her success highlights the power of genuine connection over sheer reach. Swift actively nurtures her community, engaging with fans despite her massive 283M+ Instagram following. This reciprocal engagement fosters deep loyalty, generating organic promotion and brand advocacy, demonstrating the power of a dedicated fanbase.

In the future, brands that understand and leverage the power of these micro-communities will be the ones that build lasting connections and achieve sustainable growth.

84% say that the
community surrounding
a brand directly impacts
their feelings about it.

[Source: TINT 2023]



The Rise of Eco-Conscious Consumers.



The environmental crisis is intensifying, with 2024 marking the warmest year on record. The booming retail sector, projected to exceed \$30 trillion in sales, significantly contributes to this crisis, generating approximately 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions. While consumer demand for eco-friendly products is rising, businesses must take decisive action. The retail sector needs to drastically reduce its carbon footprint by 43% by 2030 to meet critical climate targets. This requires prioritizing sustainable innovation, including the use of eco-friendly design materials, to forge a future where economic growth and environmental responsibility are mutually reinforcing. This shift towards sustainability is also influencing design, with a focus on durable materials, mindful production, and minimalist aesthetics that prioritize quality and clarity over excess.

Whether through curated experiences, eco-friendly materials, or innovative technologies like generative art, design is evolving to balance functionality, simplicity, and a deeper sense of purpose.



A study conducted in 2023,
found 72% of respondents
reported that they were actively
*buying more environmentally
friendly products* than they did
five years ago, while 81% said
they expected to buy even more
over the next five years.

[Source: Business News Daily]



Design trends.

Human Ingenuity vs. AI. the Battle for Creative Control.

AI is not just everywhere—it's transforming everything, and the creative world is caught in the crossfire. While tech giants champion AI's potential for efficiency and hyper-personalisation, envisioning "smart" retail spaces and tailored shopping experiences, creatives grapple with the unsettling realities of copyright infringement and potential job displacement. The Coca-Cola AI ad debacle and Black Mirror's chilling portrayal of AI's darker side serve as stark reminders of the ethical tightrope we walk. Even seemingly harmless applications of AI, such as creating creative gradients and dynamic forms, raise questions about originality and ownership.

But here's the crucial point: AI is not the enemy of creativity—it's a powerful tool. While it can automate routine tasks and even ignite inspiration, it's human ingenuity that remains the vital ingredient in crafting meaningful experiences and understanding the nuances of human emotion. AI can generate a gradient, but it takes human artistry to infuse it with meaning. It can produce a dynamic form, but it's human understanding of form and function that dictates its purpose.

Retail and design now stand at a critical juncture. Brands flirting with AI-generated content risk sacrificing authenticity for novelty, while others are harnessing technologies like augmented reality to push creative boundaries in response to AI's advancements. The rise of AI-driven hyper-personalisation is revolutionising retail, from interactive displays to bespoke shopping journeys. Yet, as automation accelerates, the warnings about widespread job displacement cannot be ignored.

The ultimate challenge, therefore, is not about resisting AI, but mastering it. It's about strategically leveraging its power to augment human creativity and boost efficiency without sacrificing the essential human connection that fuels genuine brand loyalty. AI will reshape retail—the question is not if, but how. Will it amplify the human experience, or will it erode the very essence of what makes us human? The answer lies in our ability to strike a delicate balance between technological advancement and the irreplaceable power of human creativity and empathy.



Fig. 01

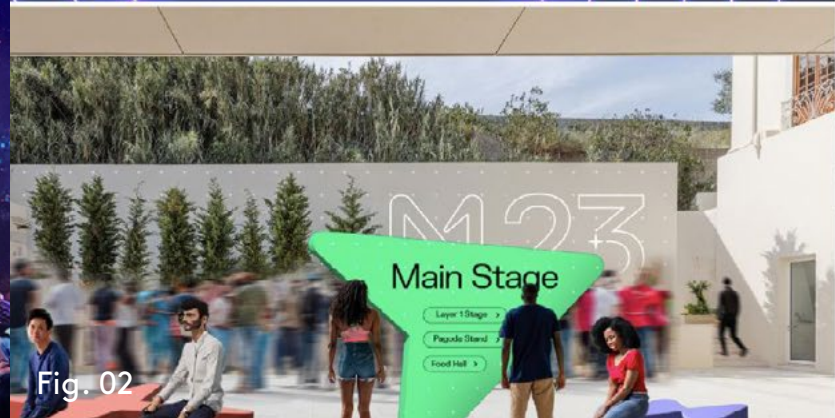


Fig. 02



Fig. 03



Fig. 04

Human Ingenuity vs. AI. the Battle for Creative Control.

Trend Toolkit



Gradients

Smooth colour transitions are integral to the AI trend, enhancing visual appeal in AI-generated art and enabling machine learning algorithms to function.



Physical Illusions

Blurring the lines between reality and digital creation, creating physical environments in unexpected or surreal ways that mimic, lighting, and perspectives seen in AI generated visuals.



Integrated Tech

Seamlessly blending new technologies, such as machine learning and interactive robots, into the retail space, enhancing functionality while maintaining aesthetic simplicity.



Dynamic Forms

Utilising AI mathematical tools allows for shapes and forms to be developed creating illusory movement and depth, enhancing the captivating nature of physical illusions and blurring the lines between static and dynamic.

Is your childhood a trend?

As we become increasingly disconnected from the physical world, there are signs of a shift away from online overload towards simpler, more streamlined lifestyles. The constant barrage of stimuli, endless content, and fleeting micro-trends are fuelling a desire to return to simpler times, or at least what Gen Z and Gen A perceive as "better" days. Despite not having lived through those times themselves, this is their first encounter with retro aesthetics and "New-stalgia," offering a lo-fi alternative to the overwhelming presence of social media and technology.

Nostalgia has long been embedded in our collective creative consciousness, with anemoia being widely explored by Gen Z writers. Freya India, in her Substack article "A Time We Never Knew," reflects on a childhood overshadowed by iPhones and the loss of deeper connections. She advocates for a return to simpler, more mindful pursuits.

One example of this shift is the re-release of the Nokia 'Dumbphone' 3210 signalling a move away from online overload towards simpler living.

This nostalgic "harvesting" of past references isn't confined to one particular era, as nostalgia holds different meanings for everyone. The key lies in striking a balance between novelty and familiarity to capture attention—Familiarity, though comforting, can also diminish excitement.



Fig. 01

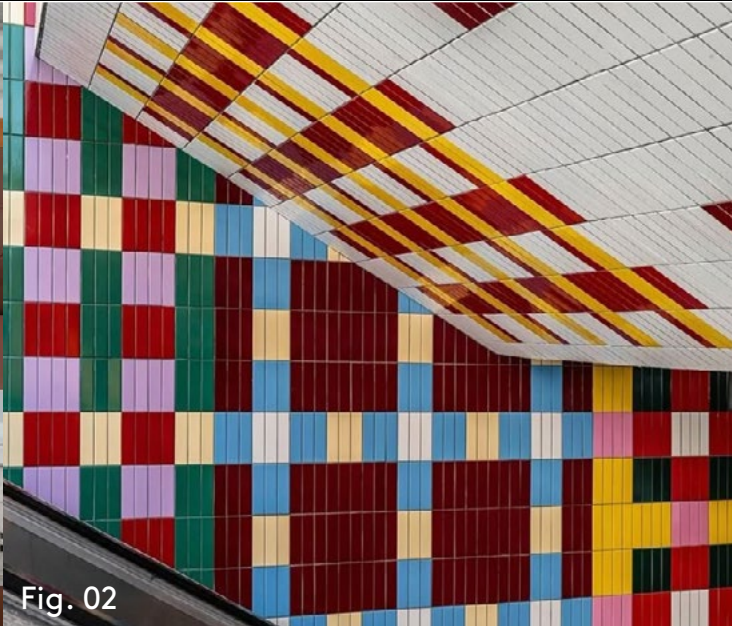


Fig. 02



Fig. 03



Fig. 05



Fig. 06



Fig. 07

Is your childhood a trend?

Trend Toolkit



Reductionist Interfaces

Evoked simpler times, offering a comforting antidote to modern tech's complexity by focusing on familiar, essential functions.



Pixelated Aesthetics

With their retro gaming and early digital aesthetic, pixelation is a key element to New-stalgia, evoking fond memories of simpler, less polished technological times.



Product Revival

Reintroducing classic designs or features, fuels the New-stalgia trend by offering consumers familiar and comforting products that evoke positive memories of the past.



70's Colour Schemes

With their warm, earthy tones and pops of vibrant colour, evoking a sense of retro cool and a connection to the design aesthetics of that era.

Dopamine come down.

In recent years, design has been swept up in a sea of visual homogeneity. Algorithms feed us more of the styles we already like, so it all looks eerily familiar. Peter Field, Adam Morgan and System 1 Group’s "Extraordinary Cost of Dull" report found that boring advertising is less effective and memorable, and that’s damaging for brands.

The trend is also driven by the desire to be more eco-conscious, with customers gravitating towards prioritising quality over quantity. Minimalism promotes the idea of fewer, better things. Leading to sustainable choices that emphasise long-lasting, high-quality products and reduce waste.

Retailers are adopting minimalist designs to create spaces that allow for a more focused, less cluttered shopping experience, which appeals to consumers seeking simplicity and ease.

In graphics minimalism will strip away the clutter to put the nitty gritty front and

centre, marrying striking typography with a refined visual narrative. This offers a structured, stylish approach to delivering impactful messaging.

The maximalism movement reacted against this, and now as cycles continue consumers are looking again for some visual quiet, this time maintaining more individualism within the minimal. As noted, new minimalism is not about the total absence of things or removing all imperfections and details, but about using the absence of selected things to add meaning and value to what we chose to retain.

"83% of people actively seek out experiences that bring joy and happiness."
[Source: Future 100 report]



Fig. 01, Cybex, 2024
Fig. 02, United sodas of America, 2024
Fig. 03, DixonBaxi, 2024
Fig. 04, Toptoe X Klein Blue, 2024

Fig. 05, DixonBaxi, 2024
Fig. 06, United sodas of America 2024
Fig. 07, Peachy smile, 2024
Fig. 08, waterfrom design, 2024

Fig. 09, Sofia Hupalovska & Nataliya Stukonog, 2024

Dopamine come down.

Trend Toolkit



Simple Shapes

Clean lines and geometric forms to create a sense of order, clarity, and visual calm.



Bold Messaging

Allowing the message to stand out through simplicity and directness.



Panel Illumination

Soft, even lighting that enhances clean lines and highlights the simplicity of the space.



Singular Colour Usage

One dominant hue to create a unified, serene atmosphere, eliminating distractions and allowing the space to feel calm and cohesive.

Mushroom is the new leather.

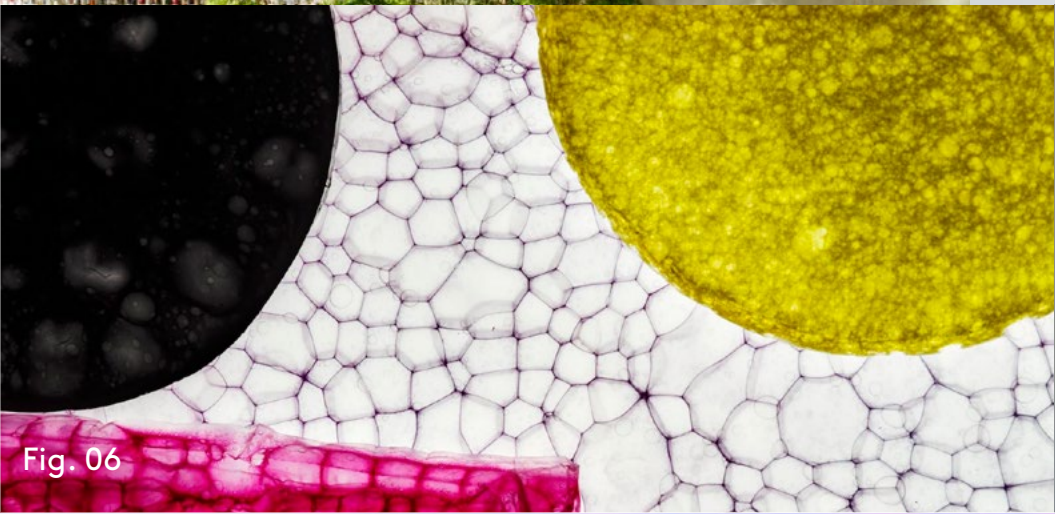
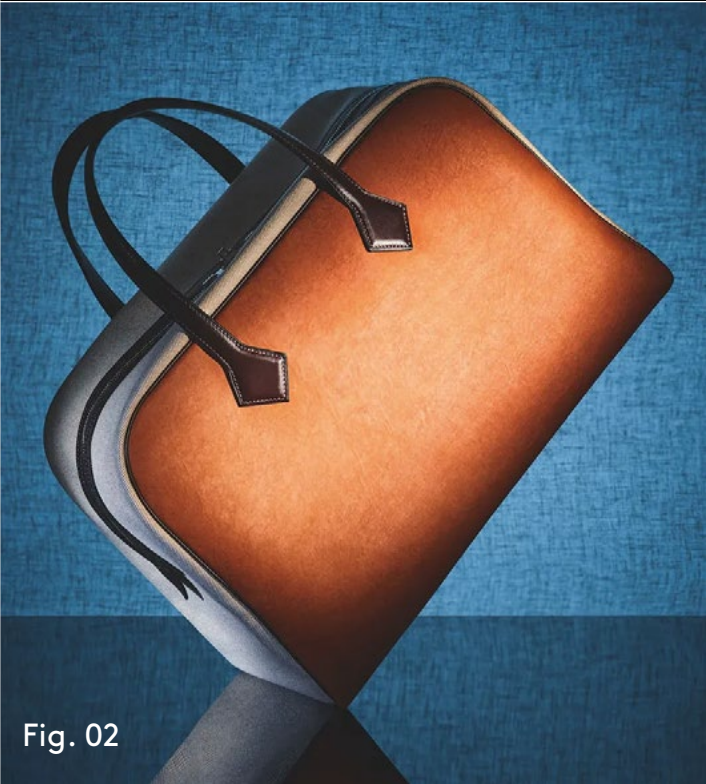
Fuelled by increasing environmental concerns and a desire for fresh, nature-inspired solutions, bio-fabricated materials are gaining popularity with consumers and brands looking to prioritise sustainability. Seen as eco-friendly alternatives to traditional materials, they reduce reliance on petrochemicals and non-renewable resources, further reinforcing the sustainability mindset that is increasingly embraced by Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

As breakthroughs continue in the development of new bio-fabricated materials, these biologically grown options will increasingly shape the fashion industry—from packaging to product development and the built environment. Materials currently in circulation include mycelium, bacterial cellulose, algae and seaweed, while experimental designers are also exploring innovative alternatives like fish skins and everyday fruits and vegetables.

In retail design, these sustainable materials will play a crucial role in creating eco-conscious store environments,

enhancing both the aesthetic appeal and environmental impact of physical spaces. Bio-based materials like mycelium leather, algae-derived textiles, 3D-printed timber and bioplastics are beginning to be used in retail design renders, offering sustainable alternatives that not only reduce environmental impact but also elevate the aesthetic and functional qualities of store environments.

"There will be no sector of the economy in the future in which biotechnologically produced materials will not play a role. It is simply a question of *how quickly they will become established.*"
[Source: Nidion, Karaianna Fogelberg]



Mycoworks.

Location: Hotel Populus, Denver
Designer: Design Miami.Paris, 2024

MycoWorks, a pioneering biotechnology company, is revolutionizing interior design with its innovative Reishi™ material—a biomaterial made from mycelium, the root structure of mushrooms, that resembles suede.

Hotel Populus in Denver, known for its nature-inspired design and commitment to sustainable hospitality, has embraced Reishi™ in a bold way, incorporating nearly 500 sheets to create The Reishi Tapestry, a stunning sculpture suspended above its restaurant, blending artistry with eco-conscious design.

Luxury furniture designer Ligne Roset has also adopted Reishi™ across its collections, demonstrating the material's potential in high-end design. These collaborations highlight the growing interest in Reishi™ within the interior design and architectural industries, offering a sustainable, eco-friendly alternative to traditional materials and empowering designers to create visually striking, eco-conscious spaces.



Fig. Populus & Design Miami.Paris, 2024

Mushroom is the new leather.

Trend Toolkit



Brand x Bio-fabricated Materials

Fostering innovation and expanding the applications of sustainable, biologically-derived materials through shared expertise and resources.



Experimental Finishes

Utilizing biofabricated materials and processes, are central to the biofabricated trend, showcasing the innovative potential and aesthetic possibilities of sustainable, biologically-derived materials.



3D Printed Natural Resources

Using a 3d printer to process the bio materials can allow for further development in their use and application.



Degradable Packaging

Packaging that can be composted is a direct way of a retailer showcasing their eco credentials and sustainable commitment to their customers.

Back down to earth.

The global shift toward mental health and well-being has led many people to seek a deeper connection with nature. Natural, earthy environments are calming and restorative, offering an antidote to the technological overload of modern life.

This trend is called, ‘New naturalism’. It is a natural evolution of the popular biophilic trend, which saw an influx of living walls being installed. It takes a more abstract approach to satisfying the human desire for contact with nature, by drawing elements and influences from the natural world and adapting them for use in built and graphic environments.

The trend will see not only the original natural materials such as rocks, wood and clay bought into indoor environments and photography, but textures, colours and materials replicating those found in nature re-imagined for use in products, packaging and interiors.



Fig. 01



Fig. 02



Fig. 03



Fig. 04



Fig. 05



Fig. 06



Fig. 07



Fig. 08



Fig. 09



Fig. 10

"Designers are re-evaluating what earth-friendly colours and designs they can pack onto (packaging) materials without packing on more carbon emission"
[Source: Looka, 2025]



"In 2025, expect a visual language that whispers of environmental stewardship: natural textures, earthy palettes. But brands will not only look sustainable but ensure they're rooted in ecological mindfulness. *Packaging may move to be as minimal as a haiku, made of materials that leave barely a footprint, and designs will exude a sense of calm, as though the planet itself had taken a deep, contented breath.*"

[Source: Simon Manchipp, founding partner at SomeOne.]

Back down to earth.

Trend Toolkit



Raw Elements

Highlight the inherent beauty of materials like stone, wood, and metal, celebrating their unrefined textures and organic forms to create a more authentic, nature-inspired aesthetic.



Textural and Tonal Natural Replication

Mimicking the subtle variations and depth found in nature, using materials that echo the look and feel of natural elements.



Earthy Tones

Evoking a warm, grounding atmosphere by using muted shades of brown, green, terracotta, and ochre, which reflect colours found in the natural world and foster a sense of harmony and connection to nature.



Texture as a backdrop

Adds depth and tactile richness to spaces and images, using materials like stone, linen, or raw wood to create an immersive, nature-inspired environment that feels authentic and inviting.

Reduce to Re-use.

As we become more aware of the impact of consumerism and the waste economy, focus is drawn to the need for circularity of materials in manufacture. Images showing the piling up of recyclable waste awaiting stripping and sorting, shows the need for a simpler reductionist design philosophy.

The need for ease of recycling/re-use will see a drive towards mono-materiality in design, a philosophy that focuses on using only one type of material in a product or environment. The intent being that complexities associated with separating different materials at the end of a product's life-cycle is eliminated. It also reduces the environmental impact of a products disposal.

A wide range of brands are already embracing these principles as consumers become more eco-conscious and demanding of traceability when it comes to sustainability. Aesop's Taxonomy of Design website embraces this desire for transparency, offering an archive of their store designs.

It shares insights into the materiality of their often mono-material stores, which are crafted from identifiable local materials and sources. This approach celebrates the respect given to the local community, environment, culture, and history.

"The motivation is to create products where the component parts can be *dissembled and separated more easily for repair or recyclability.*"
[Source: dezeen]



Fig. 01



Fig. 04



Fig. 03



Fig. 02

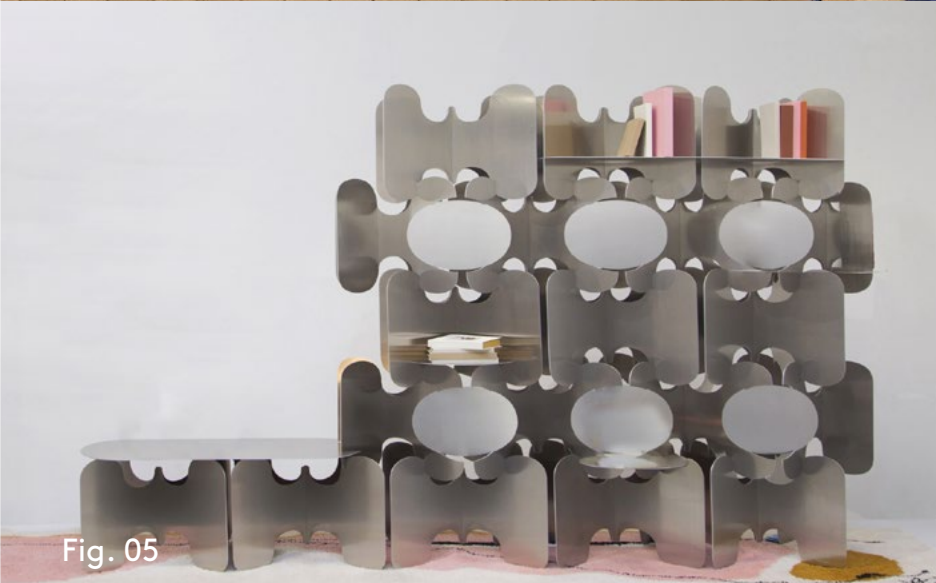


Fig. 05

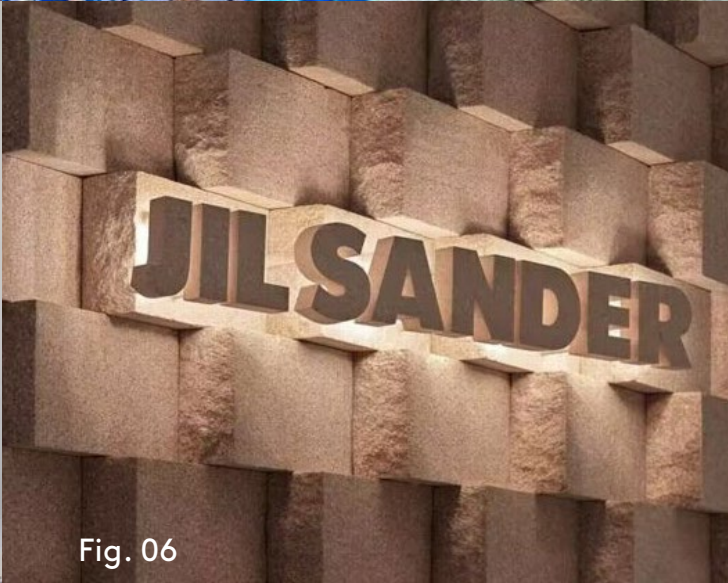


Fig. 06



Fig. 07

Reduce to Re-use.

Trend Toolkit



Material Drenching

Extensively using a single material throughout a space, celebrating the material's inherent qualities and creating a cohesive, immersive environment.



Fully Recyclable Packaging

Packaging, made from a single material, simplifies recycling and promotes a circular economy for packaging.



Internal Interventions

Embracing a spaces raw shell and using singular materials to create the environment and furniture within it.



Inventive Materials

Pushing the boundaries of a single material's potential, demonstrating its versatility and driving innovation.

Is anything authentic anymore?

The rapid integration of technology, the overload of social media, and increasing urbanization have sparked a growing trend toward craftsmanship, heritage, and cultural identity. As AI continues to evolve, we are seeing more products created by computers and fewer made by human hands or sourced directly from the earth. This shift raises the question: how do we preserve true creativity and heritage from authentic and reliable sources?

Luigi Carnovale, founder of Design LSC, highlights two key drivers of this trend. "The first is personalization," he explains. "Consumers are seeking unique, handmade items with personal meaning, moving away from mass-produced products. The second is sustainability. The focus on eco-friendly and ethical consumption aligns perfectly with the craft's slow, intentional production."

A major transformation in how products are made and consumed will soon become a fundamental concept. More retailers are offering repair services and breathing new life into pre-owned items. Brands

like Stussy are already embracing these principles, collaborating with the Ain Leuh Women's Cooperative to recycle unsold t-shirts into handwoven Moroccan rugs.

Hyper-local design is also on the rise, with the location and legacy of a project increasingly influencing design trends. This includes everything from subtle cultural references and detailing to reusing objects, materials, and waste sourced within the immediate surroundings of a project. Aesop's new Barcelona store, designed by Spanic Studio Mesura, exemplifies this approach, sourcing Montjuïc stone remnants from demolished 19th-century buildings to craft the store's interior.



Fig. 01

Fig. 03

Fig. 02

Fig. 04

Fig. 05

Fig. 06

Fig. 07

Fig. 08

Circulation Repair Workshop.

Location: Shibuya, Japan
Architects: DDAA 2024

Circulation Repairs customizes and resells high-end footwear and holds workshops to enable their customers to learn to repair their own shoes. Given this usage, DDAA wanted the store design to follow suit, using the businesses sustainable values: re-purposing and repairing the existing shell, rather than creating something new. The store is divided up into two spaces with a retail environment to the front and repair workshop to the rear.

The repair workshop was designed as a self-contained unit within the existing space, equipped with dust, temperature, and humidity control to protect the shoes being restored. The rest of the space, formerly a basement garage, was preserved in its original condition. To create unique wall displays, old shoe racks with casters from the client's collection were re-purposed and mounted on the walls.



Is anything authentic anymore?

Trend Toolkit



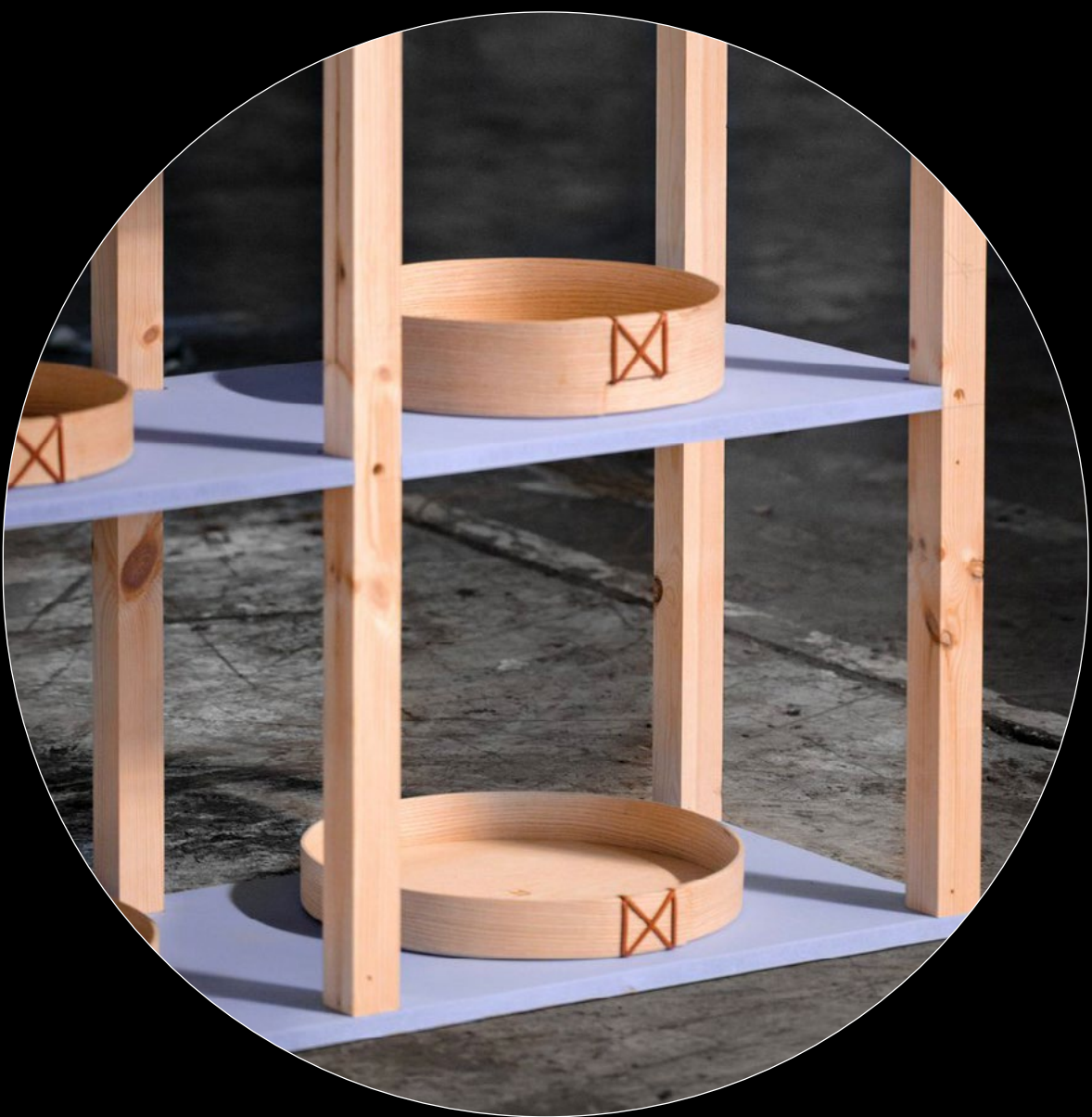
Location Specific Design

Honors local heritage and craftsmanship, creating unique, story-driven pieces that resonate with a community's identity.



Inherited Architecture

Retaining existing structures, breathing new life into the past while honoring its historical significance.



Referenced Details

Drawing inspiration from historical designs or techniques, adding layers of meaning and connection to contemporary creations.



Cultural Typefaces

Often rooted in tradition and heritage, used to connect contemporary design with historical and cultural narratives.

Sustainable, Authentic, and Tech-Driven: The New Era of Retail.

The future of retail is a dynamic interplay of technological advancement, a renewed focus on sustainability, and a yearning for authentic experiences. From AI-powered personalization to bio-fabricated materials and nature-infused spaces, retailers are exploring innovative ways to engage consumers. This evolution reflects a shift in consumer priorities, with a growing emphasis on purposeful consumption, environmental consciousness, and a desire for genuine connection with brands. Ultimately, the retailers that successfully navigate these converging trends will be the ones that thrive in the years to come.

Social drivers



AI



Social Authenticity



Environmental issues

Design trends



Human Ingenuity
vs. AI



Was your childhood
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Dopamine come
down



Mushroom is the
new leather



Back down to earth



Re-use to Recycle



Is anything
authentic anymore?



Let's *talk.*

hello@design4retail.co.uk

