

FutuREuse

Fashion for Reclamation



Salvo for

Interreg 
North-West Europe

FCRBE
European Regional Development Fund

REUSE IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In the European Union and around the world, construction materials have a massive impact on climate change, ecosystems collapsing and natural resource overconsumption. As a waste prevention strategy, reuse is a great solution to overproduction and natural resource depletion.

Despite its waste prevention potential, the salvage and reclamation trade is largely overlooked, especially in the context of formal construction projects. Better consideration for this approach in tools widely used by the construction industry would be interesting leverage to foster, support and further develop the reclamation sector.

THE FCRBE PROJECT

FCRBE stands for Facilitating the circulation of reclaimed building elements and aims to increase by 50%, the amount of reclaimed building elements being circulated on its territory, by 2032. The project involves 7 partners:

Rotor, lead partner (BE), **Bellastock** (FR), **Brussels Environment** (BE), **The university of Brighton** (UK), **Salvo** (UK), **Construction Confederation** (BE), **Belgian Building research Institute** (BE) and the **Scientific and Technical Center for Building** (FR)

For more information on FCRBE: <http://www.nweurope.eu/fcrbe>

FUTUREUSE: 7 SHORT INTRODUCTIONS TO THE WORLD OF REUSE

This is one of a series of seven booklets that have been produced to serve as a taste of what the FCRBE project aims to achieve. The subjects span the broad spectrum of reuse, covering considerations before, during and after with useful information to guide and inspire working with reclaimed materials. The booklets also highlight environmental benefits, clarify grey areas and frequently asked questions regarding best practices, whilst sparking curiosity for a future where use is reuse.

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Abstract

Reclamation and reuse, which were human nature before 1950, became less a necessity and more a choice, which fashion has increasingly guided toward newly manufactured materials. In the 1970s early pioneers of salvage set about making a market for reclaimed materials and reuse developed as a consumer choice. The word 'secondhand' was refashioned in favour of 'reclaimed' and desirability grew from designers to DIYers.

Beyond the trend for visibly reclaimed interiors, the underlying movement of environmental consciousness has the power to instil reuse as an ethos that does not go out of fashion. Materials are reclaimed throughout the world, but more could be done. A tiny proportion of both textiles and construction products are reclaimed so there is a strong opportunity for change in both fashion and its built environments. [1]

Through visual surveys and interviews with dealers, architects, and designers that have dressed retail environments with reclaimed materials, we aim to inform and inspire circular practises where the future of use is reuse.

Introduction

Reuse does not fit the current "psychology of abundance" [2] where 'new is best.' Fashion focuses on the future, the next new thing, often resembling the familiar with new iterations of trends from military style to minimalism. Trust in the tried and tested dates back to the Romans. *On Architecture* by Vitruvius, [3] a Roman architectural writer still valued today, recommended reusing materials from old buildings which had passed the test of time. Reclamation can be seen in Roman structures standing today, but longevity rarely drives the design of retail environments.

Although the carbon footprint of the construction and operation of a retail store has the largest impact, passive interior design also plays its part when a more holistic approach could reduce the frequency of refurbishments. Retail has some of the fastest turnovers of internal fit-outs, typically two to ten years. [4]

Using durable materials and finishes with reusability in mind would reduce the fashion industry's environmental impact. Just like many retail spaces, rapidly produced fashion is not built to last. Fashion is a barometer of our times so its environments must reset post-coronavirus pandemic. According to a McKinsey survey, 15 percent of consumers in Europe and the US expect to buy more ecologically and socially sustainable clothing, [5] and the shops they are sold in should surely support this ethos.

We are looking to reposition reuse, refashion if you will. Reclamation has always been celebrated for its connection with history, but is increasingly appealing for the environmental benefits of reuse and essential for the future.

Salvage dealers, histories and stories

This history contextualises the reclamation trade recognised today within a story stretching back to early civilisations that reused or reworked their old items and left little to waste. From the 1900s onwards building stores in Britain existed for high-end architectural antiques, but it was not until the 1970s that much stockholding took place. After the Second World War there was upheaval in cities across Europe and an urgent need to rebuild. The severe housing shortage led to cheap buildings which could be produced quickly and the regeneration saw slum clearance and mass demolition. Massive quantities of architectural items and irreplaceable timbers were landfilled or burnt. In the UK demolitions of the 60s and 70s around 24 million tonnes of unique timbers were lost. [6] This waste was halved by the 90s thanks to growth of the salvage trade.

For some that witnessed the waste it spurred a need to rescue materials and their pioneering businesses established the reclamation scene.

Reuse for the world you want Thornton Kay

Thornton Kay was one of the first first to publicise the environmental benefits of saving endangered architectural salvage. Aged 23, he co-founded the Comtek architecture and building co-operative and

organised an international green building and 'holistic living' fair. Reusing materials gathered from their building work, the projects and craftspeople inspired curious customers, which was when the reclamation yard naturally developed. Thornton established Walcot Reclamation with Rick Knapp in 1976, which became a destination for everything from fine architectural antiques to reclaimed building materials. Thought to be the first use of the term 'reclamation yard,' Thornton explains that the name had a double meaning:

“it was a place reclaiming old building materials, and it was set in a run-down area of Bath that we were trying to revive. From Georgian times, a 'yard' was a space behind a street frontage with workshops and artisans, like Walcot Yard. Up to then the only businesses using the name 'reclamation' were ones dealing in material recycling such as waste paper.”



Comtek 1974 covered architecture, recycling and alternative technology



Thornton Kay, 1974. Credit: Glyn Davies



Walcot Yard.
Credit: Glyn Davies

Thornton who was also a partner in a joinery business which made a kitchen for shoe designer Manolo Blahnik, and a conservation award building company, that created a reclaimed recording studio for eighties band Tears for Fears.



Thornton's signed Tears for Fears album cover

Rick Knapp, Thornton Kay and team on tea break.
Credit: Glyn Davies



"In the early days of Walcot Rec an article in The Telegraph brought several sackfuls of mail. People wanted to know what we were doing. People hadn't heard of it and it was mainly women that wrote. They liked the story, durability and craftsmanship." More salvage businesses sprouted up and reclamation started to become trendy. By the end of the eighties Walcot was supplying large amounts of salvage and flooring to fashion retail as well as hospitality.

In tune with Tears for Fears lyrics, someone could have said to him "welcome to your life; there's no turning back." At the age of nine, he was horrified by the demolition of an old music hall, the Chiswick Empire. His father, grandfather and grandmother - all touring theatrical master carpenters - had worked there. Thornton describes playing with bricks on bomb sites in

London as a child and seeing sections of buildings with wallpaper and fireplaces still stuck to the walls: "they even had little ornaments on the mantle pieces, it was like a cameo of life."

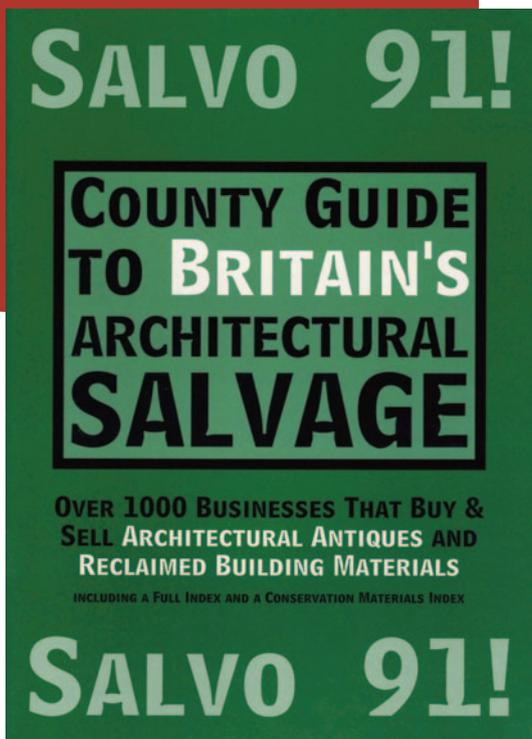


East End of London during the Blitz. WWII.
Credit: Sue Wallace at English Wikipedia

It is hard to imagine someone as passionate about bricks, but more of us might join his fight to save them with the knowledge that in the UK, we manufacture over 2 billion bricks a year and destroy about the same number in demolition. Every 12 bricks embody the energy of a gallon of petrol and while there was a big push for recycling, there was little push for reuse. The word upcycling conjures up visions of painted furniture, but it was originally coined by Thornton with German salvage dealer Reiner Pilz, whilst despairing about the waste in European demolition under the name of recycling in the early 90s. "I called it downcycling" he says, "they smash bricks, they smash everything. What we need is upcycling where old products are given more value, not less."



Salvo Code member, London Reclaimed Brick Merchants Buckinghamshire yard



Salvo 91!

Motivated to grow the network and increase reuse, Thornton published *Salvo 1991*, a directory of dealers to make it easier to find places to buy architectural salvage. He shortly left Walcot to set-up Salvo, a marketplace with the mission to promote the reuse of materials from demolition and reduce the amount of salvageable material that ends up in landfill.

Salvo has tried to represent the interests of the reclamation trade and petitioned the government on the environmental benefits that the industry offers in reducing building waste. "I began writing to the Prime Minister every year, first Margaret Thatcher, asking the same question: Is reclaiming bricks for reuse a good idea?" Without the data to answer Thornton's question, the UK government commissioned the Salvo BigREc Survey, supervised by the BRE (Building Research Establishment). The results helped guide policy.

Meanwhile, in the fashion sector some of the green motivation for reclamation became confused when companies refused to allow reuse of reclaimed interiors to be salvaged a second time, due to perceived branding protection. Thornton recalls an eco-friendly retailer which used reclaimed wood, but refused to allow that wood to be salvaged during a subsequent refit because a competitor could, it was felt, use the wood to copy



Salvo Code member, LASSCO Three Pigeons showroom

their brand. This scenario was echoed when Burberry hit the headlines for destroying unwanted stock in order to prevent it being stolen or sold cheaply. In fairness to Burberry, which released a statement to confirm that it would end this practise, [7] they were not alone. Incorrect disposal of stock and store fittings takes place across the fashion industry, despite the environmental consequences.

Global fashion brands tend to focus on consistency, and a homogenised interior does not aid the use of salvage, with global sourcing being cited as a common barrier to using reclaimed materials. However, authenticity and uniqueness in commercial spaces will be even more important to entice people back as real world retail reels from the effect of Covid-19. As our conversation draws to a close, Thornton advises "embrace the unexpected and use it as a design opportunity."

The A word

Adrian Amos

"It's all about the A word - authenticity" says Adrian Amos, who established LASSCO in London in 1979 to bridge the gap between demolition and architectural design. Over the years LASSCO has supplied fashion retail, and its showrooms act as backdrops for fashion shoots with storied spaces for hire.

In a Sunday Times Magazine interview about the emerging salvage scene in the 80s, Adrian said "In our business we never have to worry about this year's colour or style. One is dealing in historical truth." [8]

LASSCO's origin is rooted in seven generations of cabinet makers and timber trading. From finding a market for architectural joinery that was readily destroyed or destined for landfill in the name of changing trends, Adrian found himself, "pulling mahogany doors out of a skip at one end of the street, and selling them at the other" and he began supplying trendy King's Road

boutiques, such as Granny Takes a Trip. King's Road, Chelsea, was built for King Charles II for grand romps from St James's Palace to Fulham, but was later the haunt of movers in music like Mick Jagger and shakers of fashion where the mini skirt took off.

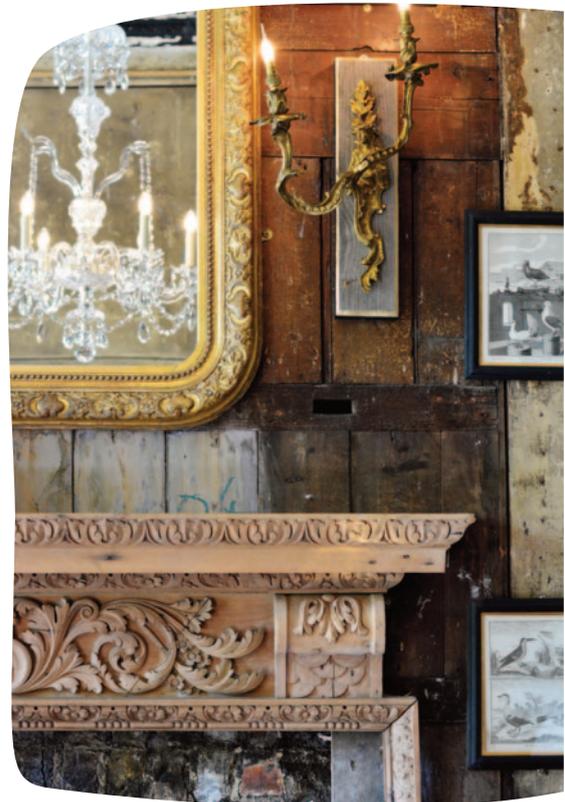
"It's hard to know who's leading who, is it the look or the availability of decorative materials" says Adrian, but LASSCO guides trends with its showrooms and dining spaces designers visit for ideas, and salvages from iconic fashion interiors in Savile Row and Jermyn Street. Adrian recalled how fashionable places blended, borrowed and reclaimed from one shop fit to supply another - hat shops to hairdressers and hospitality.

This is the age of sharing, and both fashion and construction sectors are seeking circular models. From fashion for rent to treating buildings as material banks, the truth is that whether loaned or owned, the shirt on our backs, the bricks in our buildings and of course the planet are all borrowed. Adrian recognised this in the 80s:

“People complain about the colour a fireplace comes in or something, and I have to explain that really their passage on this earth is of no importance, that if they buy the fireplace they will merely be custodians of something that will still live when they have passed on and anyway, that's the colour it is.” [8]



Adrian Amos
Credit: Tim Kent



LASSCO
Brunswick House

Out with the new, in with the old

Andy Thornton

His eponymous company Andy Thornton Ltd, suppliers of furnishings and architectural pieces to the hospitality and retail sectors could be credited to a backpacking trip that Andy took in 1972 with his girlfriend, now his wife, Kate.

The couple started in the US, where they began working for John Wilson, owner of the Golden Movement Emporium, an architectural antiques store in LA. It sounds like a California dream in the golden state, but the name prosaically came after John bought a thousand 1940s toilets. He moved into the auction business instead, supplying pubs, restaurants and retail with the salvage, flying Andy and Kate to organise big sales in between backpacking.

In 1974 they returned to England and started buying demolition salvage in once grand textile towns to export to the US, whilst still organising the auctions. Andy explains “there was no market for it at the time in this country because people just weren’t interested. The biggest difficulty was getting to it before the demolition men had burnt it or smashed it up.”

Coinciding with the 1980 recession in America, the last auction did not do well but fortunately the appetite for salvage was picking up in the UK.

“By then I had a team of 20 joiners who were both dismantling interiors and then converting them into more saleable items, so we had to find a new market, and damn quick. We took a last minute stand at an interior design exhibition in London and we found that there was an interest in this country as the breweries were wanting to change over from all the formica of the sixties.”

They built the business conceiving hospitality and retail functionality using salvage to create exciting interiors. “The recognised path would be what does the market want, but often the market doesn’t know what it wants until it sees it. In many ways people who are designing it and introducing it are partly creating the market.”

Like hemlines, signs of the times can be seen from the choice of materials. Reclaimed floors were afoot in fashion shops from the 80s, and the choice of timber reflected the taste of the time, such as maple strip flooring when fashion favoured minimalism. Reclaimed materials can create many aesthetics, even though it is sometimes pigeonholed. Andy recalls a TV interview:

“They wanted the story that people that bought salvage were living in a time warp and that they were out of fashion and I wouldn’t give them the story they wanted...We worked with old fashioned products but we weren’t an old fashioned company.”



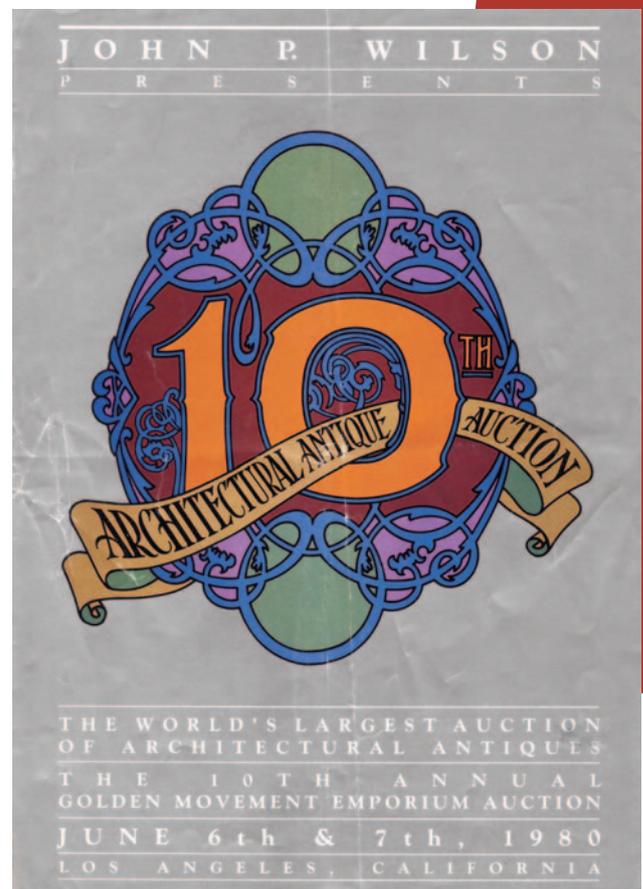
Andy Thornton, 1975



Salvaging a Chemist shop from Scotland, 1977

Most of their work was for the hospitality sector, but retail jobs for the luxury department store Harrods and a pine hat shop from Vienna that was rescued to fit-out another shop stand out for Andy. Like others in the salvage vanguard of the 70s, the couple were driven by their detest for waste and appreciation for rare reclaimed objects. Andy and Kate bought a farm and were living in a caravan during the renovation. "The first thing we bought was a big cast iron fountain that we put on the lawn. The neighbours couldn't understand it. There we were living in a caravan – we've moved but I still have that fountain made in 1895 in Glasgow."

10th Annual Auction of The Golden Movement Emporium guide



The 'Reclaimed Look'

Reclamation in design is an ethos rather than an aesthetic. However, a taste for industrial and what has recently been characterised as the 'reclaimed look' became popular around the time of the Great Recession. The look is defined by exposed brickwork, stripped-down walls and flooring, and mismatched vintage furniture that celebrates individualism, yet works together to create authentic spaces and a relaxed atmosphere. A recognisable recession style, which salvage pioneer, Andy Thornton recalled Time magazine characterised as "early tool shed design." Interior trends are reactive and this look offered businesses a way to convey value for money to their customers rather than wasting funds on fancy interiors.

The pendulum of fashion swings back and forth, something different, something new. Dealers Louise and Sam Coster behind Mongers Architectural Salvage point out that "reclamation was never out of fashion, from Romans to Voysey, the architects of our built environment have reused whatever was available. It is solely the individual items that have gone in and out of fashion."

When reclamation becomes associated with a new fashionable aesthetic, it trickles down [9] into the mass-market and when demand outstrips supply it drives faked reclaimed materials.

Some in the fashion retail sector, which from the late 1970s had been reusers of salvage, started to 'get the look' from fake reclaimed, which was a budget way to fabricate green-looking credentials but with the high environmental cost, not simply of the new, but the additional cost of making the new look reclaimed. Similarly, if a fashion label opts for cotton from remote pesticide-ridden forced-labour countries, then local people, their children, and the planet pay. Beyond cheating customers with pretend eco-friendliness, without a strong and varied reuse market there is a danger that high value materials may follow lower value routes or be landfilled.

Truly Reclaimed

The fashion retail environment must be functional yet also tell a story. The choice of truly reclaimed materials with provenance already have a story to communicate brand narratives, from heritage to sustainability.

Rebekah Matheny of Ohio State University coupled sensory perception of materials in retail with research aiming to encourage sustainable design. On reclaimed wood Rebekah writes:

“the use of reclaimed wood products not only communicates a connection locally and speaks to sustainability, but it also creates an emotional response that sets the customer at ease. Reclaimed wood is not artificial, it's genuine, honest and real, and that connects to customers on a human level. Whether conscious or subconscious, the interior material product humanises the brand and creates a connection between customer, brand, and the natural environment.” [10]

The convenience of online shopping has changed physical retail into more of a leisure activity rather than a necessity to buy. Fashion retail has to up its game to give customers a reason to snap and share the shopping experience, and crucially to create sensory spaces where people want to be. Early salvager and London based designer, Ivan Speight describes the "humanity" of reclaimed materials in the interiors that he creates. "One of the most important things for me in any interior is



Tree House by 6a architects with reclaimed jarrah cladding from Salvo Code member, Ashwells Reclaimed Timber.

Credit: Johan Dehlin

people's wish to stroke it and I think the tactile quality of reclaimed materials is very seductive for a lot of people." Ivan could guarantee that his designs for commercial interiors would increase turnover: "Each client got its own identity via me, visually, so as a point of reference I was able to help them with their sales by presenting their physical presence in a manner that seduced the public."

During a 2016 TEDx talk *Creating Meaningful Memories Through Sensory Experiences* [11] Rebekah Matheny outlined the importance of designing with purpose to create engaging spaces which speak to the customer. She went on to argue the importance of designing with materials that connect customers with the place and the purpose, for this not only makes shopping a more memorable experience, it can also encourage the practise of slow fashion. [12] Arguably the more connected we feel in a retail space, the more we are in tune with ourselves and free to make conscious decisions and remember why we are there, and if we want or need to buy. Real world retail is not simply about products, it is about experiencing a brand.

From fashion to function and round again

English dealer, designer and maker, Saxon Durrant of Metroretro, describes the motivation of his fashion clients "as 'retail theatre' - giving the customer a layered, immersive environment in which to shop." Saxon makes functional pieces that maintain the look and character of the original salvaged items, with clients ranging from department stores Selfridges and Liberty to world-renowned brands like Ralph Lauren and Levi's.



Playful display of early 20th Century workshop drawers by Metroretro

Dedicated to giving a future purpose to quality pieces Sam and Louise Coster of Mongers Architectural Salvage have supplied wash basins loaned for luxury advertising campaigns, to permanent fixtures in the cosmetic display at Liberty. "But look behind the scenes and many shops, restaurants and pubs up and down the country have public loos supplied by us!" add the Costers, and you cannot get more functional than that. A smart way to communicate with your customers if you take the old adage that you can tell a lot about a place from the toilets.



Sanitary ware in the showrooms of Salvo Code member, Mongers Architectural Salvage

The vogue for signs of age opens opportunity for reclaimed pieces to meet a purely decorative purpose. This fashion also influences restoration as Sam and Louise describe: "rich patinated metals, heavily mossy stone, faded paint on doors has always been there but perhaps not as much as now. We have adapted to fashion and find ourselves changing a lot of our restoration techniques to preserve old paint and patina rather than polish and shine."

The whole point of experiencing something in real life and not through your screen is to enjoy all senses. Rebekah Matheny questioned if our sensory memory is at stake when we focus so much on pictures rather than really being immersed in a moment. [11] The move towards visibly-aged tactile materials could heighten the essence of a space. One may be able to replicate the look, but truly authentic materials feel different.

Visual Surveys

Reuse and retail storytelling

Increasing scrutiny of the fashion industry's carbon footprint has encouraged brands beyond those that market themselves as sustainable to declare carbon neutrality. It is now an essential part of corporate social responsibility, which in fashion terms can make it hard to separate the green from the washing. Brands can declare carbon neutrality by funding carbon savings, sometimes somewhere on the other side of the world in order to balance out the carbon emissions they have caused. By designing fashion environments with reclaimed materials, brands could save a lot of embodied energy and make strides towards carbon neutrality from their own store doorsteps.

Our visual surveys explore fashion destinations in London that incorporated reuse into their design philosophy. There is arguably a hierarchy within the examples of 'reuse' from antique reclaimed materials that have high historical and environmental value to innovative materials made from recycled waste and surplus, which is not technically reuse, but rather making use of excess supply. However, all of the examples serve to show that this is a design ethos, not a single look and no matter the style there is opportunity to reuse and create retail environments with longevity.



*Exit here. Door from
Salvo Code member,
The Architectural Forum*

Reclaimed Luxury *Gabriela Hearst, first international flagship, London*

Gabriela Hearst declared the first carbon neutral fashion show for her Spring 2020 collection and the London building chosen for the brand's international flagship speaks of her ethos. Designed in the late 19th Century by Robert William Edis, the Queen Anne revival building features warm yellow brickwork and red fireclay mouldings. Edis believed that interiors should promote physical health and wellbeing. The new interior exhibits natural materials avoiding the use of harmful chemicals.

A collaboration between Gabriela Hearst and architect Lord Norman Foster, the store features reclaimed materials which showcase her commitment to environmentally responsible design.

“The main two directions I gave Foster + Partners was that first and foremost it has to be the most sustainable store ever made and it also has to be an evolution not a revolution from the New York store.”

Gabriela Hearst [13]

Upon entering customers are greeted with a herringbone parquet floor salvaged from the Copthorne Barracks in Shropshire. Adopting materials reclaimed within the country the brand opened its new store doors is a good way to introduce and integrate with respect to the local environment.

“Gabriela wanted us to create a store that took a sustainable approach, allied to her brand. The London store is underpinned by a similar sustainable ethos and care for the environment in its materiality and operation”

Russell Hales, Senior Partner, Foster + Partners

Like the brand's tailoring, the store is luxurious, timeless and comfortable. “The interior spaces are designed to flow seamlessly, creating a relaxed experience for customers” adds Russell. A warmth is created with bespoke furniture crafted from a London plane tree felled by a storm in Lincoln. The design incorporates vegetable tanned leather and similar tones to the New York store, but is decorated with locally sourced antiques such as the porcelain soldiers, which hark back to the military flooring. It is clear that this is not about stock holding, but a new place for customers to discover and experience the brand.



Gabriela Hearst interior featuring salvaged oak parquet flooring.

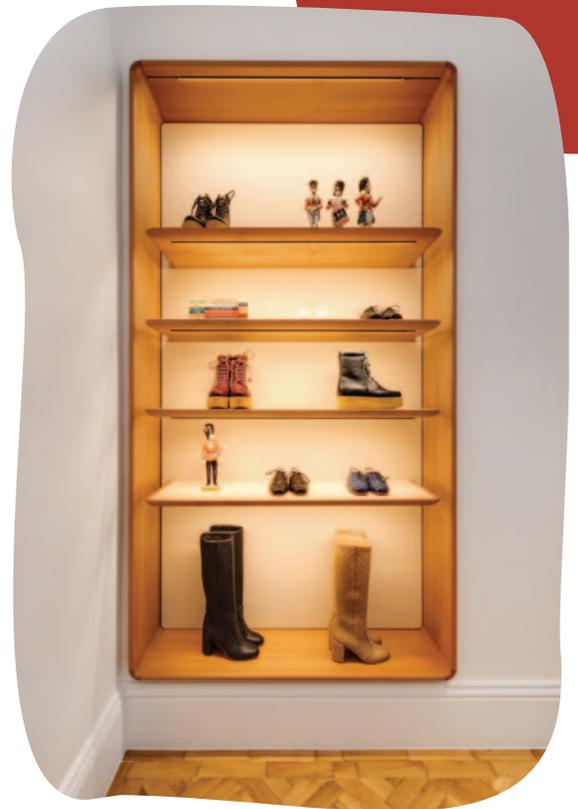
Credit: Cunningham Captures



Fixtures and furniture from the London plane timber designed by the practise in collaboration with British based company Benchmark. Credit: Cunningham Captures



Exterior of the 19th Century Queen Anne revival building. Credit: Cunningham Captures



Locally sourced antiques dress the store. Credit: Cunningham Captures

Sustainable Sanctuary Stella McCartney, global flagship on London's Old Bond Street

Stella McCartney is committed to cruelty-free design, and over the years the fashion house has really focused on improving its environmental impact. In the UK all Stella McCartney offices, studios and stores are powered by wind energy.



"Sustainability is a massive part of what we do as a brand and therefore also a massive part of this store."

Stella McCartney [14]

Designed by Stella and her team, the interior incorporates recognisably reclaimed materials such as the display plinths made of bricole salvaged from waters in Venice. These sit alongside less obvious examples of reuse like the building's lift which is lined with pink faux fur reclaimed from a previous collection. Just like the brand's collections focus on innovation in discovering new ecological processes, the store showcases experimental materials like the papier-mâché wall panels made from office waste paper.

Who says shopping is bad for you

An indoor rockery featuring boulders sourced from the McCartney farm in Scotland is the first feature customers see as they walk through the original



Wall panels made from waste.

Credit: Hufton + Crow

Stella McCartney interior featuring reclaimed display plinths.

Credit: Hufton + Crow



Bringing the boulders in.

Credit: Hufton + Crow

Edwardian entryway. The design promotes wellbeing with replanted moss and thyme from the Wayward's plant recycling scheme and the store's clean air, which is purified to remove 95% of the air pollutants. The multi-sensory experience continues with sound, which is personal. Fitting rooms feature recordings from the designer's meditation teacher, and a reclaimed wood reggae style speaker installation plays records from Stella's own collection.

“What I wanted to do was to bring people off the streets from the hustle and bustle of the city, and try and wrap my arms around them, hug them. I really want to have the experience of everything that we are at Stella McCartney, of bringing people in and having a relationship with the consumer, with a human. To have a moment of pause and reflection is the point of the experience.”
Stella McCartney [15]

Reclaimed and Reimagined *Coal Drops Yard, Kings Cross London*

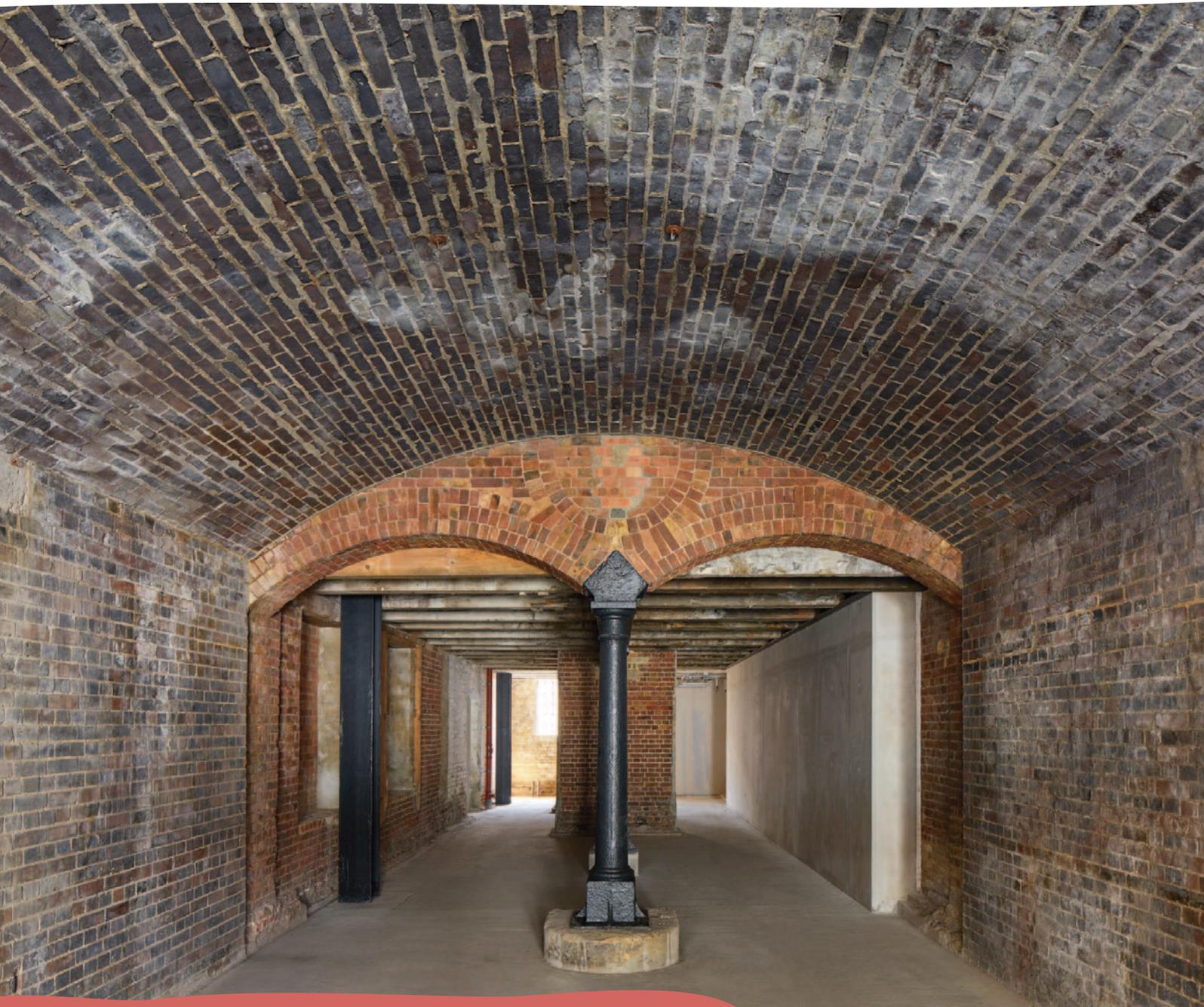
The retail neighbourhood takes its name from its history as freight rail yards of the industrial revolution, where London would receive coal from the north of England. Since construction in 1850, it has adapted for different purposes from coal to club kids when it became a rave destination before it fell into disuse in the late 90s. Even then, the site's authentic industrial character attracted fashion house Alexander McQueen to stage a show there; substituting a traditional runway for the old cobbled yard.

Part restoration, part transformation, Heatherwick Studio's design for the new retail and restaurant quarter opened in 2018. Appointed by property developer Argent in 2014, Heatherwick Studio's Project Leader, Tamsin Green describes that across the broader development "there was a site-wide approach to the strategy for reclamation and storage. Much of what was salvaged has been reused, often on the site from which it was reclaimed."

Same-site reuse decreases the chance of materials being left to waste, and respects the part that those materials played in-situ. The reuse of carbon-containing materials is more eco-friendly than the energy cost of making new ones, which sets Coal Drops Yard apart from the usual shopping complex.

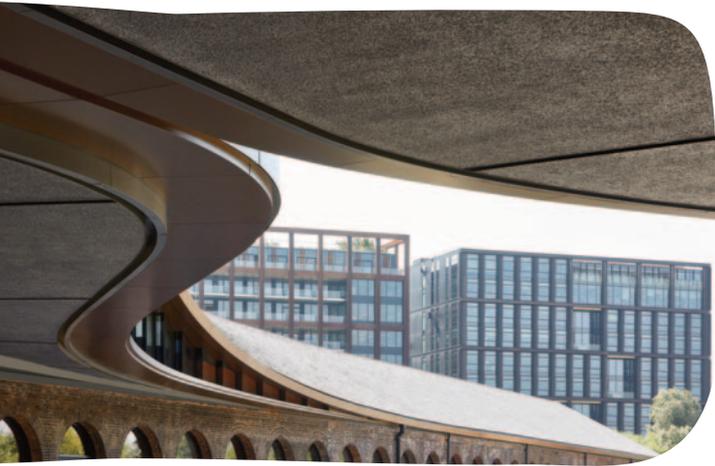
Brick arches at Coal Drops Yard.

Credit: Hufton + Crow



“We were struck by the amazing Victorian qualities of the warehouses as well as the cobbled yard, so we knew instinctively that it was imperative to preserve the historic character... By adopting a light touch, where necessary, new additions drew on the palette of aged ironwork, soot-stained brick, slate, timber boards and the cobbled yard of stone setts.”
Tamsin Green, Heatherwick Studio Project Leader

The brick arches were restored with 300,000 imperial bricks, 250,000 of them reclaimed from the site. Much of the original timber and cast-iron structure of the depot buildings was also retained and restored. The space evokes connectedness with a design that links the viaducts in what has been likened to a kiss. Tamsin explains, “The high street has been in crisis for a long time and our client, Argent understood that to survive, any new-built retail space needs to offer something more interesting and special to try and be more sustainable for the future.”



Coal Drops Yard.
Credit: Hufton + Crow

The Kiss.

Credit: Hufton + Crow



Refashioning surplus with purpose

Boutique by Shelter, flagship store in Coal Drops Yard, Kings Cross London

Coal Drops Yard breaks the mould with a blend of established and emerging brands. Central to this fusion was a charity shop, lynch pin to the high street no matter the decade, but particularly astute given the current boom of the secondhand fashion market. Unlike the rest of the high street, revenue in the charity retail sector has been increasing year on year, [16] perhaps due to economic uncertainty, but there is also a sea change in attitude towards secondhand clothing. Customers are more clued into the true cost of fashion, and the environmental benefits reuse.

Boutique by Shelter offers customers a purposeful selection of donated clothing; vintage, designer and high street fashion. Sales from the boutique support the Shelter services, which help millions of people coping with poor housing conditions and homelessness. The interior was created by HemingwayDesign with surplus materials from the Coal Drops Yard development, repurposing elements like paving slabs for shoe displays. The building's brick and plasterwork are exposed to heighten the industrial feel and the history of the site.

Shelter's historic posters reinforce the underlying purpose of the boutique and the importance of a purchase. The store design was long listed in the 2019 Dezeen Awards and sales have outperformed expectations.

“It's a great place to spend time and be seen in. And this halo effect is rippling through the whole network as the shop is a real conversation starter where we can explain about our work.”
Richard Hudson, Shelter Senior Marketing Manager [17]



Boutique by Shelter interior.
Credit: French+Tye



The writings on wall that a purchase has purpose.
Credit: French+Tye



Refashioned surplus materials.
Credit: French+Tye

No stranger to the virtues of thrift, the design studio's founder, Wayne Hemingway started selling second hand clothing in Camden Market over 40 years ago before launching the label Red or Dead, with his wife Geraldine. They designed Red or Dead stores with salvage.

“We wanted to show that shopping consciously can extend from buying pre-loved to repurposing the unloved and unused to reduce waste in the construction of the shop itself – to prove that waste need not be wasted.”
HemingwayDesign [17]

Solidarité Féminine

Bella Freud, Chiltern Street, London

With the acceleration of ecommerce, high fashion retail is moving further towards a gallery-esque experience, so it is not surprising that Bella Freud chose a former gallery to stage her first shop. Bella collaborated with architect Maria Speake of Retrouvius.

““ *“I wanted to create an intimate shopping experience with an apartment like feeling, a bit like stepping into a friend’s place for a cup of tea and leaving with her favourite jumper.”*
Bella Freud [18]



Portrait of Bella Freud and Maria Speake in the Chiltern Street shop. Credit: Tim Fallon

Architectural salvage and design business, Retrouvius was founded by Adam Hills and Maria Speake after they met at Glasgow School of Art, studying for a degree in architecture at the Mackintosh School. Arriving in Glasgow with a ‘strangers eye’ allowed them to appreciate the city and its providence. An early salvage haul from Townhead library, which had been vandalised and left to mould, illustrated the shiploads of tropical hardwoods that flowed into the city, rescuing features like lecterns made from single sheets of teak.

The shocking quality and range of materials being left to waste inspired the creation of Retrouvius.

““ *“Witnessing demolition and the hypocrisy and madness of studying architecture (that teaches construction) and the assumed linear process that ends with blatant demolition. We witnessed extraordinary waste of both materials and disregard for craftsmanship in those early Glasgow demolitions.”*
Maria Speake

Like with salvage discoveries, serendipity helped Bella Freud find Retrouvius. Their first project was to refurbish her Victorian home. By coincidence Bella’s existing fire surround was made of the same rare stone that Adam had just saved from Frederick Gibberd’s Heathrow Terminal II building. “We reused this stone, alongside salvaged tropical hardwoods, glazed doors and maple panelling. All of these materials resonated with Bella and have since found their way into all of the projects we have worked on with her. They have become part of her visual world.”

You might call the shop a home from home, borrowing from residential motifs. Retrouvius designs for the materials, creating space around them rather than seeking or adapting materials to suit. The right salvage naturally integrates into Bella’s built environment and connects customers to eras that influence her.

From the reclaimed stone floors to fluted terrazzo column drums from a department store in Liverpool, Retrouvius is passionate about maintaining the reusability of materials. Maria says, “The stigma that reuse is complicated is not the case — it is a confused and misconceived notion. Reuse should be simple and does not need to be disguised through complicated processes or acts of transformation. Screwing or bolting panelling is most cost effective, rather than complicated concealed junctions or joints using glue.”

Retrouvius has built a reputation for the real deal, reclaiming brilliant examples of desired material, but also creating demand with their eye for quality salvage. The result is honest spaces like this one, which convey Bella's world.

“We hope that all human environments including the fashion world will incorporate reclaimed materials and see the value of texture and time, emotional power and the shift in mindset that they bring.”
 Maria Speake

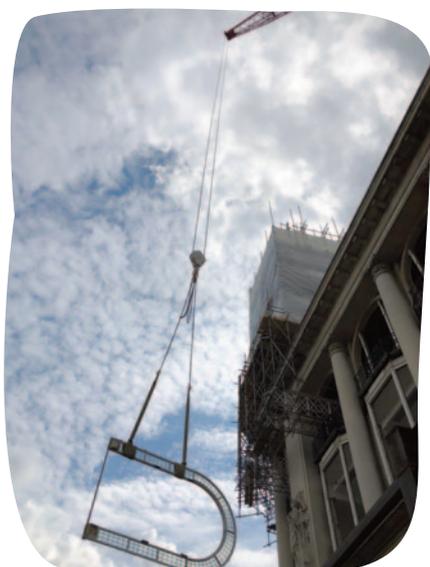


Bella Freud interior.
 Credit: Tim Fallon



Fluted terrazzo column drums salvaged from Lewis's department store. Credit: Tim Fallon

Reuse in action by Salvo Code member Retrouvius.
 Credit: Retrouvius



Salvage.
 Credit: Retrouvius



Conclusion

Our visual surveys and insights from dealers, architects and designers show that despite the pleasing aesthetics, it is the deeper ethos that completes the sensory perception of reclaimed materials in fashion environments.

Environmental consciousness has translated quickly for the growing clean beauty movement thanks to the immediacy of ingredients applied to our skin, and we cannot help but hope that it will permeate more into our second skin, the materials that we dress ourselves and our interiors with.



Detail of an antique fireplace surround, from Salvo Code member, Nicholas Gifford-Mead

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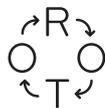
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