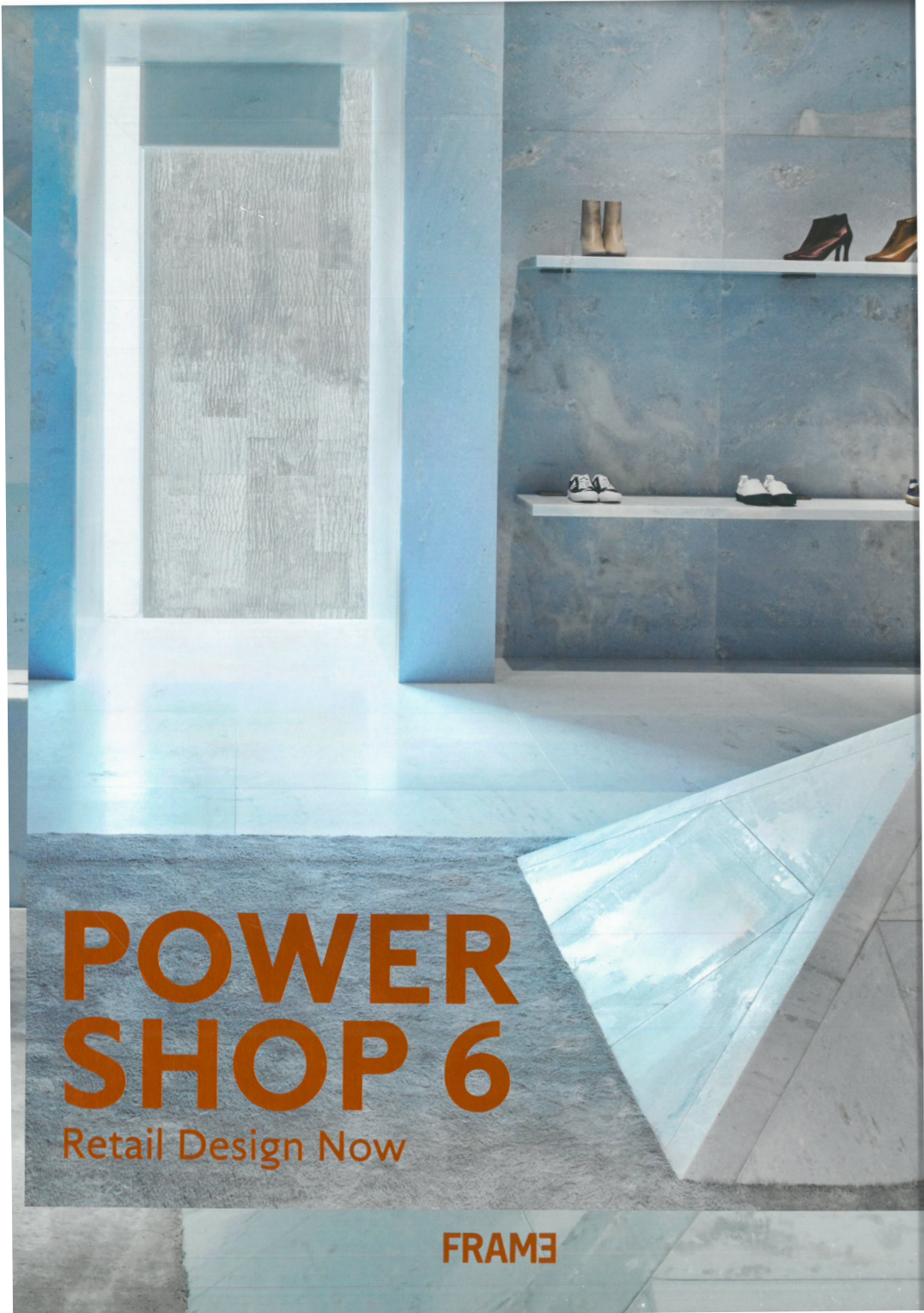


JOHANNES TORRE.



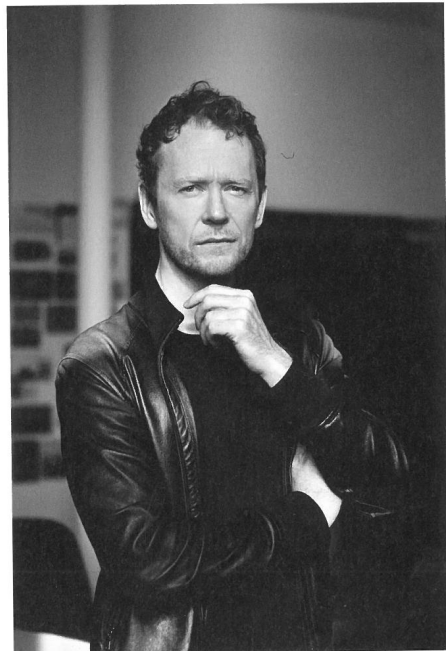
POWER SHOP 6

Retail Design Now

FRAME

Interview

JOHANNES TORPE



Danish designer JOHANNES TORPE highlights the importance of valuing authenticity over tendencies when it comes to creating efficient brand experiences and ensuring the overall success of a brand.

What are the key factors at play in your work in retail design? I think with modern technology the demand of creating an experience within retail is more and more important. We have to give customers a reason to go into a store instead of buying online, so our approach will always be to look at what is the best practice for the client we are helping: what their outreach is, where their markets are strongest and where they can differentiate themselves from their competitors.

What about the main challenges? We cannot help anyone unless they are willing to make the necessary changes. This can sometimes include going back to the root of the brand's DNA to make sure that the direction is right and that there is a deeper understanding of their past and present to enable us to gain a better perspective of their future.

This year your design for United Cycling (p.340) won the Frame Award for Multi-brand Store of the Year. The design was praised for letting the product remain the hero. How do you achieve a distinctive retail interior without obfuscating the product? It obviously depends on the product you sell. In the case of United Cycling, we made some hard-core choices by treating the product as the god of our cycling cathedral and leaving it up to the customer to decide how to interact with both the product and the space. I do believe that this approach has made the space absolutely wonderful to experience, and it has also given the products the ability to shine above all.

What do you think ensures the success of a store?

In the past I would say location, but United Cycling, in the small village of Lynge in Denmark, has proven that experience is more important. In that location, 60 per cent of the customers leave with a purchase and in its one year of operation the traffic continues to increase, with people coming a long way for the experience.

Establishing flagship store locations on every street corner of the world's metropolitan cities is no longer single-handedly the recipe for success. If they want to catch the attention of the new generation of consumers, luxury brands need to become a whole lot smarter in delivering their DNA in a much more experience-based direction. It is simply not enough to be a famous name...

What impact do you think factors like online shopping and 'the age of the influencer' have had in retail design? Influencers are for sure future advertising tools, but if you create your brand only to satisfy them, you will be compromising the integrity of your product for something that is based on tendencies and movements of big data. The moment a brand replaces authenticity with tendencies, it is on a short-sighted and dangerous road to self-destruction.

To design responsibly, we need to be more focused on creating real, tactile experiences that will let customers connect emotionally with the product by feeling, smelling, and almost 'tasting' what it can give them.

How do you envision the future of retail design?

You can never predict the future, but we can hope that the human connection will remain the focus and the experience will remain the goal.

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