

RETAILERS AND DESIGNERS USE INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES TO EXPAND THEIR SPACES



MASSIMO IMPARATO

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University Dubai's School of
Architecture and Interior Design

The role of materials in defining outdoor spaces is changing. Once architecture dominated how an urban area or shopping district might look, but that has changed as brand design seeks to express itself outside the tangibility of a restaurant, cafe or shop.

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If we look to the most recent evolution of spaces, in City Walk for instance or in Dubai Marina, I think there are very good examples of how the retail spaces literally unfold to the outdoors and start to influence the way in which the outdoor space is organised,” explained Massimo Imparato, assistant professor at the Canadian University Dubai's School of Architecture and Interior Design.

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Imparato, who participated as a speaker at the Middle East Stone show which took place last May in Dubai, describes the relationship between the interior and exterior spaces as ‘mutual’.



But, he mentions, the influence of the interior is growing sharply as brands seek to express themselves visually in the outdoors in ways which go beyond signage. Imperato further expressed his observation of designers introducing users to the brands by building an atmosphere and extending that beyond the confines of a simple retail space.

“Retailers are literally expanding outdoors, and materials are very important to this,” he explained. “This is why I think stone is a crucial material because it can [have an] influence in terms of textures, colours and shapes, to create a visual and tactile experience of the outdoors.”

“The building itself, instead of being the dominant element, becomes a canvas on which materials are displayed, and materials of course are part of the message that retail brands can use to express themselves in the outdoors.”

The variety of materials being used to create these effects sees natural stone being combined with metals such as copper, aluminium or steel in a way that all of them are celebrated. Designs are also taking elements once deemed to be structural detail that had to be hidden and exposing it as a feature. It is a trend which has its origins in large public spaces, such as hospitals or airports.

“There is always the need, especially when we have very long or big places, to keep plenty of interest for the eye,” said Imperato. “Now this approach has been developing more to create this sense of belonging and helping a brand to express itself in the outdoor space.”



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