



# MARKITECTURE. FROM CONTENT TO FORM. FROM POINT TO PLANE.

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The European shopping center industry has entered a veritable transition. In the process, looming changes are clearly evident in every part of the industry and all links in the value chain. The 21st century consumer has come of age. He is no longer part of a homogenous group. He operates, refuses, consumes, and communicates through a wide variety of channels. He is part of several majorities, part of many minorities. He is mainstream, alternative, innovative, conservative, modern, young, and old. The consumer appears in a new light of "anything goes." Now we can safely abandon the rigid target group oriented thinking of the past.

The oft-cited point of sale is changing in a reflection of this. It is centralized, decentralized, real, virtual, urban, rural. It is simple, staged, opulent, functional, stationary, permanent and fleeting. Sounds confusing, but it doesn't have to be. Because the anchor, the common thread through all the difference is, in this case, the connotative occupying of sales floor. Filling the form with content.

Unfortunately, as I see it the shopping center industry has not yet sufficiently responded to this challenge. Only in the rarest cases does the marketing approach take center stage when planning new developments, expansions, or refurbishments. Marketing and brand strategies are much too seldom incorporated in the early stages of these processes. Markitecture, and in this case I am happy to endlessly repeat it, the interaction of marketing, architecture, and modern forms of communication, is essential for shopping centers. Consumers barely react any-

more to blunt come-ons like newspaper advertisements, sales brochures, and indistinguishable, staged center events. It is the message and not the means of communication that is critical.

Shopping centers and retail space have to become emotionally charged spaces. Developing brands, providing orientation and safety. Brands justify buying decisions. They bond and support, underscore the lifestyle. I am entirely convinced that this will become even stronger in the coming years – it will have to. The large centers, whether in major cities or on greenfield sites, have been built. Now the medium-sized and small cities are moving into the limelight. Here the centers are also presented through facts like tenant mix, accessibility, and parking. But in the end, other factors create the image.



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