

MATERIAL ISSUE

The fashion industry thrives on a culture of imitation - if not perhaps the sincerest, then at least the most profitable form of flattery. It is a relatively short but well trodden path from couture catwalk to chainstore, where faintly familiar ideas resurface *en masse* for less exclusive consumption than was imagined or intended by their original creators.

So it is with the equally transitory world of shop interiors. At first sight David Quigley's recent makeover for the Issue chain of middle market womenswear shops would appear to owe a considerable debt to the House of Coates. But below the surface there are some intriguing currents of thought.

Issue has half a dozen outlets sprinkled around the country, mainly in the nightmare alleys of megamalls such as Meadowhall and Lakeside,

PETER COOK



Thurrock (shown here). The brief was fairly loose, but could be best interpreted as bringing a whiff of High Street Kensington to darkest Essex. In such a situation, less is very definitely more.

At Thurrock the shop's frontage is conceived as a blank, uncluttered screen, like a TV set, that simply frames the colour and activity within. An undulating plane of yellow crinkly tin ripples seductively across the ceiling, from which

is suspended a serpentine track of tiny glinting spots. Exposed flex trails out from each spot and coils barbed-wire fashion round the track.

The interminable fashion shop cliché of the sanded timber floor is given a rough and unexpected twist by the use of dark maple boarding salvaged from mills and factories. The timber has been cleaned with acid and then waxed, to give a dense, nutty floor texture that is more

muesli than cornflakes.

Similarly the wall finish is not merely politely stippled paint, but skim coat plaster stained to achieve a bare-hewn, permanent quality that stands out in the surrounding sea of shiny shopping mall ephemera.

All the interior fittings were designed by the architects, including the heavy, flamed metal gondolas which look like old Singer sewing machine bases and the organic, copper and parchment lamps. CS

