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Something Old, something new.

Tait unveils innovative vision for the transformation of Old Street Station and the future of retail design.

Ever since news broke in 2012 that £50 million of Government money was heading towards a project to regenerate Old Street roundabout in East London, the world has been fascinated by the tech-savvy entrepreneurs and forward-thinking designers and developers who have been busy reshaping part of the Capital that has come to be known as 'Tech City'. And as this important hub of digital enterprise continues to grow, fresh ideas and creative solutions are continually being sought to cater for this pioneering and fast-changing sector. Nowhere is this better exemplified right now than at Old Street Tube Station, where something of a retail revolution is taking place.

Sitting at the very heart of 'Tech City' – and marking the confluence of the effortlessly cool creativity of Shoreditch and the financial powerhouse of the City – Old Street Tube Station is not only strategically important, but extremely busy with approximately 22 million people passing through its passageways each year. When Tait, part of CADS Group, was appointed the sole design consultant to redesign the station's retail space it was clear that it needed to draw upon its extensive retail design knowledge to ensure a scheme that reflected the energy, creativity and innovation of the location.

And what a result Tait has delivered! For the first time since it opened in 1901, Old Street Tube Station is being reinvented, its passageways transformed into London Underground's most innovative retail destination; a subterranean treasure house of unfamiliar retail, start-up businesses and experiential interaction, to tempt and entrance the weary 'Tech City' commuter.

"We were incredibly excited when TfL brought us in as the retail design consultant and creative lead on such an innovative enterprise," says Tait's Creative Director Robert Rosser. "We're creating a bite-size retail and entertainment hub which will evolve throughout the year. Prime retail space at Old Street Station is being made available for short-term rentals, providing brands, designers, artists and entrepreneurs with easy access to new audiences and potential clients. New spaces are being made available to lease, but all nine existing tenants have been given a fresh shopfront re-design by Tait, to revitalize their look and re-engage with the regular commuter, accentuating the great retail and services already on offer."

Associate Director in Graphics, Holly Simpson describes how the project brief was elaborated to address not only the retail but the overall asset: "Creating new spaces and re-invigorating the existing units was the key design element, but with eight exits and tired signage, it was a great opportunity to address the wayfinding at the same time – so, as well as the retail offer, we've re-designed the wayfinding system that takes you from ticket hall to street level. Each subway has been given an immersive colour wrap and numbering system to aid navigation, in a 'digital ribbon' design responsive to the tech-based locality."

As a retail design and delivery specialist, Tait's in-depth understanding of retail ensures concepts are always underscored with in-depth technical and commercial insight. The groundbreaking collaboration with TfL on re-inventing Old Street Station underscores its reputation as a significant creative force within the UK retail design sector and a company at the forefront of re-inventing the High Street.

“When willing to adapt, and through investment in design, there is a strong future for bricks and mortar retail,” says Tait’s Creative Director Robert Rosser. “Eight spaces in Old Street station will be available at the end of April for short-term rent through Appear Here, creating a new retail destination in London. The new spaces will be used for retail or experiential purposes; they will be curated around themes, concepts or seasons and will change every three months, giving daily commuters a diorama of fresh concepts and creating a marketplace between entrepreneurs and potential clients, where original ideas can be launched, tested and refined.”

Reflecting the exciting and eclectic nature of the development, the first retailers to occupy the ‘pop-up shops’ at Old Street Tube Station include Makers Academy, a 12-week computer programming bootcamp for people with little or no experience in computer programming, alongside Fully Charged, an innovative new electric bike company, and Mallow and Marsh, a handmade marshmallow company. Also popping up in Old Street Station is Bailey Nelson, a stylish eyewear brand whose co-founder Ben Moffitt was quick to see the full potential of the redesigned retail space: “We went into Old Street because we’re simply excited to be part of yet another development that reiterates why London is one of the most progressive places to live and do business on the planet.”

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