

# LEARNING FROM CHINA



## A New Era of Retail Design

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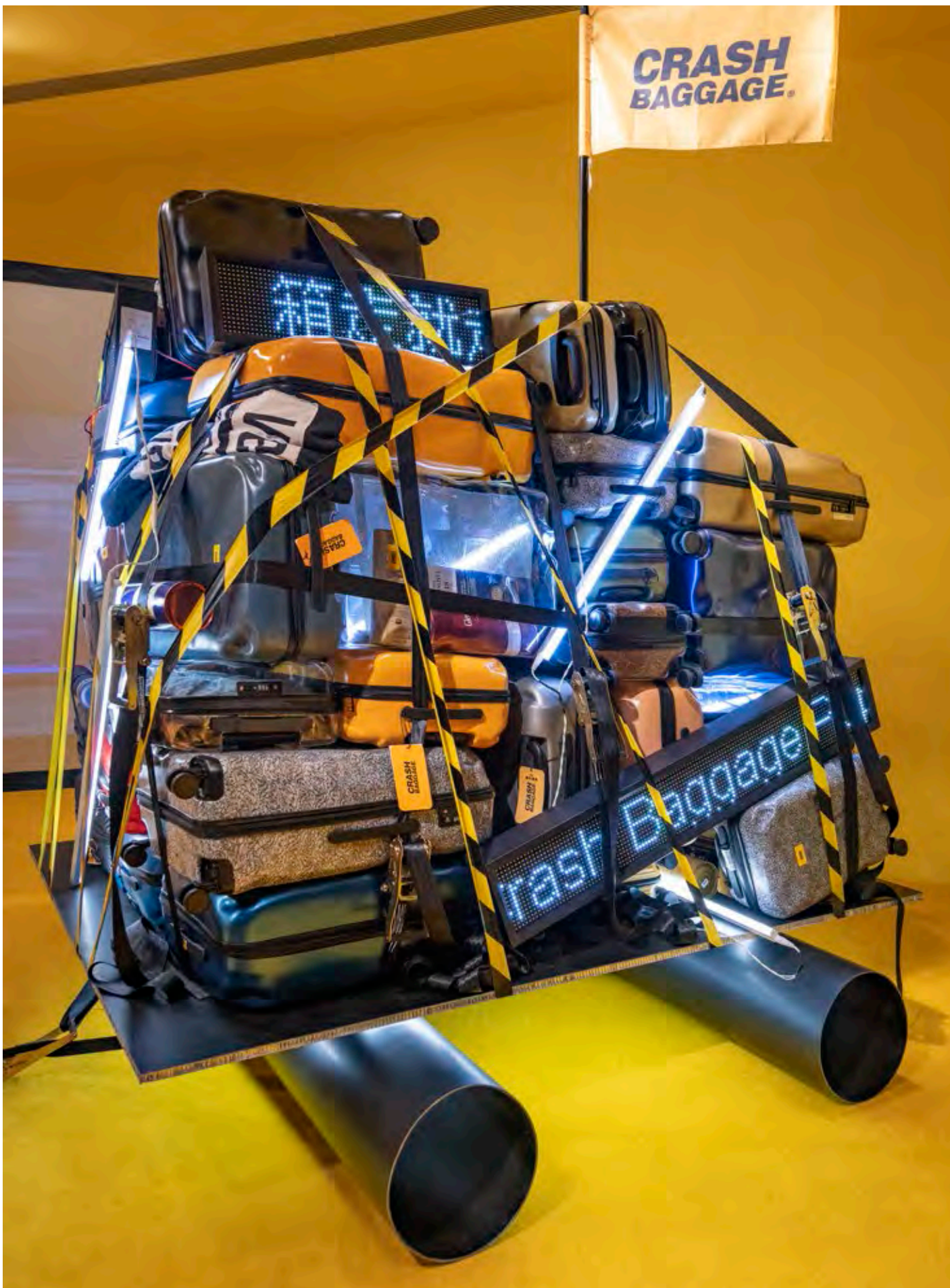




## CRASH BAGGAGE

ALBERTO CAIOLA channels one single, bold narrative to connect a brand to its own tribe





**SHANGHAI** – Italian luggage brand Crash Baggage specialises in deliberately dented, seemingly damaged suitcases which encourage customers to be carefree in their travels. In line with its adventurous spirit, Italian designer Alberto Caiola created an immersive spatial experience for the brand’s Shanghai launch. The installation took visitors on a journey to fantastical frontiers, far from earthly concerns about lost luggage, travel logistics – and even gravity.

Through a playful temporary space and single bold narrative, Caiola committed the ‘outlaw’ baggage brand to engage its actual clientele instead of trying to appeal to just anyone walking in off the street. Of course, the unconventional space was so playful, it may just have done that, too.

Occupying 110 m<sup>2</sup> in the department store, the interior invited the brand’s target demographic – young, footloose and trendy – to leave convention at the door. A bright, monolithically yellow space was anchored by a solitary model pedalling a stationary exercise bike while towing a lunar buggy piled with Crash Baggage’s signature suitcases and wrapped in hazard tape. In this other-worldly destination, even movement became nonsensical, with the traveller’s progress measured not by distance, but by a moving LED backdrop. Extreme and surreal, the installation effectively broadcast Crash Baggage’s reputation for manufacturing durable products in highly resistant materials, capable of withstanding the harshest, or even most far-fetched, conditions.

Dirk Weiblen



**Previous Spread** An immersive installation highlights the value of exploring more and worrying less.

**Left** To emphasise adventure, the all-yellow space is anchored by a sculptural installation.

**Right** At the brand’s Shanghai debut, a DJ played next to oversize disco balls in the shop’s storage room to illustrate the products’ capaciousness, durability and free spirit.

**Next Spread** The design focuses on the brand’s actual customers, in order to cultivate a deeper, more emotional engagement.



**Through the installation's bold narrative, Caiola committed the brand to engage its actual clientele and in doing so, sparked the curiosity of a larger audience**







**Left** Thick arches across the open-plan space evoke classical Italian porticos and are suggestive of socialising and cultural exchange.

**Above** Postmodern geometric stand-alone displays function as landmarks in the surreal landscape.

## HARBOOK

In a digital era, ALBERTO CAIOLA designs an ode to the printed page

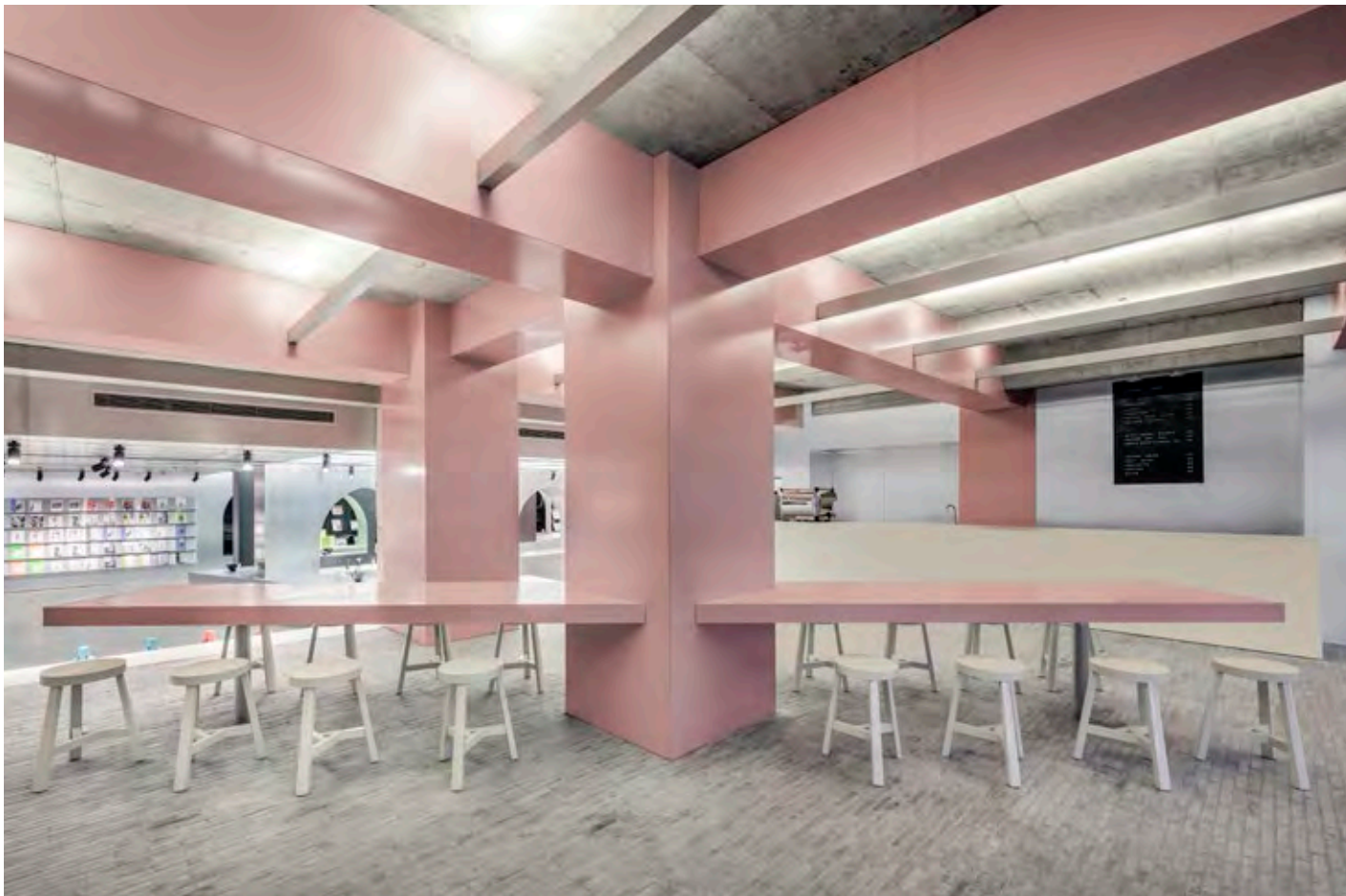


**HANGZHOU** – In a Chinese city that has been home to writers, philosophers and poets of legend, Harbook wears its heritage with a progressive spirit, mixing lifestyle elements into its retail space to draw in a new generation of city-dwellers. The 600-m<sup>2</sup> bookstore, café, and contemporary Scandinavian furniture showroom, is a model that blends tradition with aspiration.

Like a landscape in a Surrealist painting, the space abstracts an urban environment – arches, columns, an indoor sky – as a provocation to the imagination. Extending across an otherwise open-plan space, a series of thick arches evokes the classical Italian portico, an element long associated across eras and cultures with socialising, cultural exchange, shopping and

dining. To emphasise this cityscape, stand-alone geometric displays embellish the space like abstract sculptures and the luminous ceiling is gridded with Barrisol.

The colour scheme – dusty pink, timeworn industrial concrete, silver and black – and an unconventional mixture of materials co-exist with more classical elements. A custom staircase ascends to a raised café area floored with locally sourced grey brick, a nod to the local context in an otherwise culturally neutral environment. Overhead, a LED light installation serves as both a dramatic centrepiece and a metaphor for the enlightenment contained in books – as opposed to the more literal and ubiquitous illumination of digital screens.



Dirk Weiblen



**Left** The design mixes materials and colours unconventionally, using a colour scheme that ranges from dusty pink, purple and green to silver and black.

**Right** The shop, which will sell both books and furniture, hosts readers and furniture display on tiered platforms.

**Next Spread** The interior resembles an abstracted Surrealist landscape and is meant to accommodate a mixture of retail types.

**A LED light installation serves as a dramatic centrepiece and a metaphor for the enlightenment contained in books**



