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Simplicity Sells

BY SUSANNA CHU
PHOTOS COURTESY MARTIN TESSLER

RETAIL STORES, KIOSKS & BOUTIQUES **SILVER**
SEETON SHINKEWSKI DESIGN GROUP LTD. – ROGERS WIRELESS

THE ASSIGNMENT: TAKE a 673-square-foot, cluttered cell-phone store with 20-foot high ceilings and, using 3-D branding, turn it into a sophisticated, high-impact flagship outlet. By the way, a giant four-foot by four-foot pillar sits in the middle of this retail space. It's a high-profile downtown corner location and the exterior is all glass.

"My first impression was of a glass cube," says Gerry Shinkewski, describing the re-branding of the Rogers Wireless outlet on Robson and Seymour streets. "We had to work within the proportions."

A principal at Seaton Shinkewski Design Group Ltd., Shinkewski set out to write the story of what the space could be. Gone were the cluttered, mismatched colours, signage and ads with their jarring, glaring print.

"We wanted the place to stay clean and pristine in the design detailing. By eliminating the visual garbage, we could concentrate on the item the store was selling — the cell phone."

Everything had to be simple and uncluttered — and solidly fixed to stay that way.

"Our primary goal was to make the space sculptural so the (sensory) appeal was immediate...Shapes were angular, clean, fixed — and every once in a while we had fun" says Shinkewski. "Every item that we chose, we chose it for its sculptural feel."

Rather than set the service counter demurely to one side, Shinkewski drove it at an angle into the heart of the store.

"Bang! It comes out strong and bold. Then everything else

plays off that strong element. From there, everything is simplicity itself. There are two telephone displays and that's it for parts."

The angular counter, with its equally sculptural, fixed seats, has the mass to balance the pillar dominating the space. Dressed in nothing but thick, corporate red Plexiglas, the backlit column piques the curiosity of passersby.

On the functional side of the space planning, Shinkewski brought a wall forward to create a storage system, which also hides a large, unsightly electrical panel and anchors the service desk.

The eye candy came in the ceiling detail, an Armstrong system of suspended white arcs.

"We just hid it with light so it looked like a light fixture, just to stop the eye from travelling up to the ceiling above. It's an eye-stopper."

Like the seating, the highly sculptural light fixtures are strong enough to stand on their own but still tie into the overall design direction. The lighting plays off display items to create shape and volume.

"The cell phone is the most important (part of the sales message)," says Shinkewski. "But how do you get the emotion happening so that you zoom in on one phone? Every purchase is an emotional

Client:	Rogers Wireless
Location:	Vancouver, B.C.
Interior Design Team:	Gerry Shinkewski, Arnold Kee
General Contractor:	Reotech
Square Footage:	673
Completion Date:	July 2006




buy. It is part of the image you're putting out."

Further reinforcing the brand, the seating and central pillar pick up on the red of the Rogers logo.

"But everything else is white-on-white-on-white as we could get it — to increase the impact from the street."

Indeed, everything from the display units to the computers had to be all white. The client did not even object to turning the Rogers logo into a white-on-white glowing watermark. This striking palette complements the project's luxury retail finishes. Shying away from traditional plastic laminates, Shinkewski opted for a heavy, half-inch thick, solid-core material similar to countertop finishes.

"It has a softness to it to create a textural feel." 

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