

# Brilliant or Bonkers?

A Q & A about retailing with HGTV stars Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan

## BY BRIDGET FABI Q&A



After taking the CGTA Gift Show by storm this past August, the saucy Scottish interior design-duo of Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan sat down with *Retail News* to chat about everything from retail purchasing to merchandising and display. The pair is best known for their television shows on BBC and HGTV, *How Not to Decorate* and *Colin & Justin's Home Heist* respectively, and their no-holds-bar approach to design advice. Here, the talkative twosome gives us the lowdown on retail do's and don'ts.

### Do you find there are distinctive differences between retail in Canada and the UK?

**JUSTIN:** "We always say there are only two kinds of taste: good taste, which is ours, and bad taste, which is everybody else's. Seriously though, styles are fairly generic on both sides of the Atlantic. I find that the retail sector in Canada has better offerings. Canada is extremely design literate and has more of an edge. It's easier to find different options close at hand on the same street whereas in Britain you really have to travel from high street to high street."

**COLIN:** "Bad design comes from bad shopping and both Canadians and Britons are guilty of this. Bad taste is everywhere, it doesn't discriminate or know geography and that encompasses both homeowners and retailers."

### What are the biggest blunders you feel retailers make?

**JUSTIN:** "Poor merchandising is the biggest crime in retail. Department stores are the perfect example of good merchandising and retail posting. So many independent shops don't merchandise well, shoving items into various spots, making it look like a car boot sale. A clear view of the products, well put-together displays and signage is absolutely crucial! Specific zones for categories make it easier to shop. Roomy displays where customers can admire the design and shape of an item

rather than having every last bit of stock crammed onto a shelf is imperative to a great retail experience. Less is more."

**COLIN:** "Seasonal adjustments are important as well. For example when the temperature goes up, your store environment should look cool and floaty – and the air conditioner should be on. During cold, damp weather; customers should feel warm and cozy. And of course lighting is usually terrible in most stores. You can put so much effort into dressing the windows and displays and it can be spoiled by harsh lighting and shadows."

**JUSTIN:** "We all want to feel good, and great shopping always makes me happy. So the backdrop and overall appearance of the store is very important. We all work hard for our money, so why would we want to spend it in a shop with worn carpet or peeling paint? Create an inviting, stylish environment and burn gorgeous high-quality scented candles. A lovely ambience makes all the difference. A bad shopping experience will send them off to spend their money elsewhere."

### What advice can you offer retailers when buying for their businesses?

**JUSTIN:** "Think twice, buy once. Make sensible decisions rather than grabbing everything you see. Perceived value gets people to spend. Items don't have to be pricey and over the top, as long as they appear to be well-made and stylish, it will be easier to make a sale."

**COLIN:** "It's great to be aware of fashion, but it's better to be an individual and make purchases tailored to celebrating personal style and encouraging the customer to be themselves rather than always worrying about following the latest trends. Classic selections you love always outlast the trendy stuff." ■

Learn more about the designers and find out when *Colin & Justin's Home Heist* airs in your area by visiting [www.hgtv.ca](http://www.hgtv.ca).