

# SOUNDING OUT SPECIALIST FINISHES

BY ROB FLETCHER

AS RETAILERS CONTINUE TO SEEK OUT NEW WAYS OF HELPING CONSUMERS FEEL AT EASE WHEN SHOPPING, ROB FLETCHER TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT THE LATEST ACOUSTIC TECHNOLOGY IN FINISHING AND SURFACES TO SEE HOW THIS CAN IMPROVE THE RETAIL EXPERIENCE.

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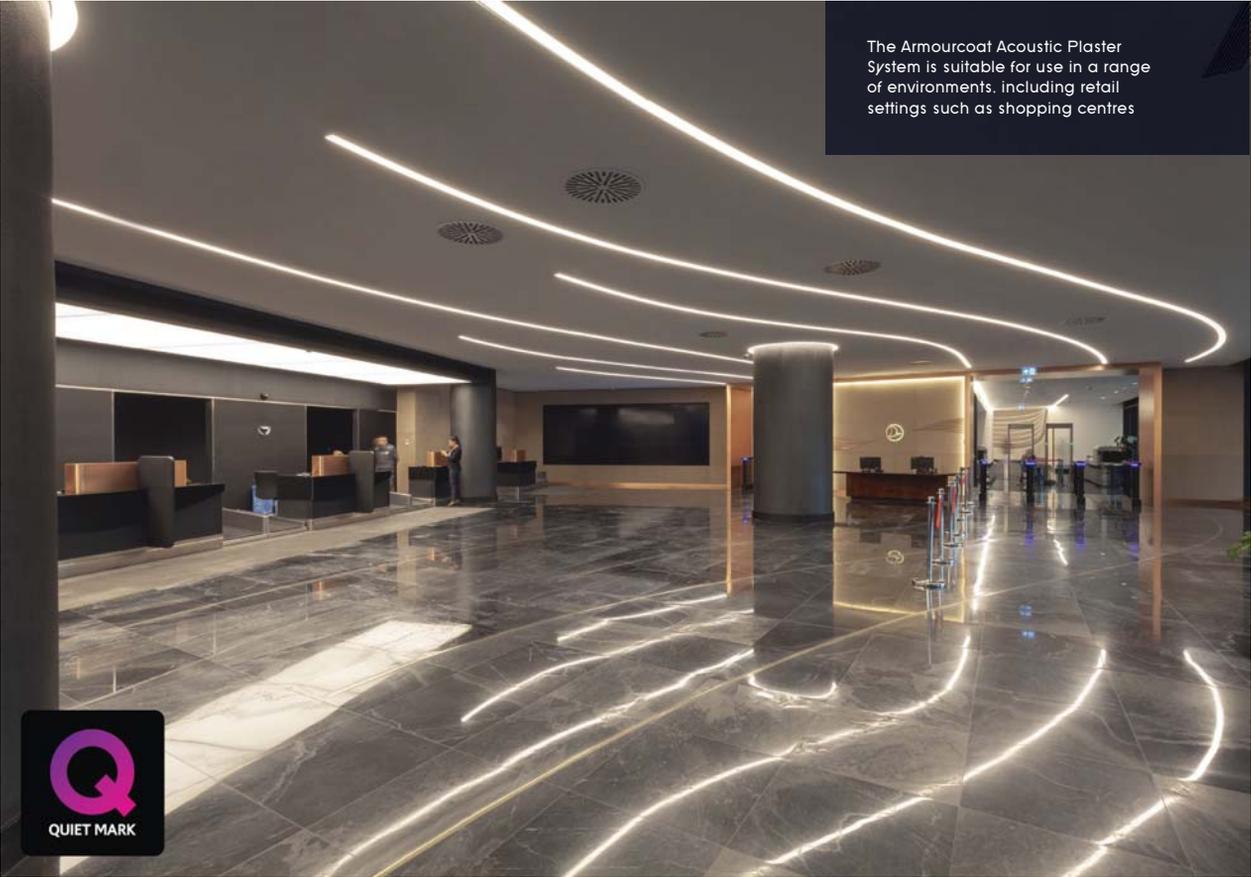
Retailers will be all too familiar with the challenge posed by outside noise. While for some this can be the constant flow of people in shopping centres, others may have to contend with vehicle traffic and even the elements on high streets and busy roads.

After you have explored the usual routes such as double-glazed windows and even wall insulation, where do you go from there? Recent advancements within the surfaces and finishing sector could offer new options to retailers of all kinds.

But what sort of technologies does this include? Retail Focus has reached out to Quiet Mark, the commercial trading arm of the UK's Noise Abatement Society charity, to find out more about the latest products on offer to the market and the core benefits these offer to retailers.



Quiet Mark launched the Acoustics Academy just before the UK entered into a Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020



The Armourcoat Acoustic Plaster System is suitable for use in a range of environments, including retail settings such as shopping centres



## DEMYSTIFYING THE SCIENCE

In February 2020, Quiet Mark developed and launched the Acoustics Academy, a new online platform to further equip home-owners, self-builders, architects, designers, house-builders, specifiers, consultants, developers and trade-buyers with third-party, verified acoustics solutions for building applications.

Poppy Szkiler, who co-founded Quiet Mark with her mother Gloria Connell OBE in 2011, set out the core benefits of this platform to retailers: "By creating the first definitive industry-champion online guide for the very best approved solutions to unwanted noise across the building sector, Quiet Mark aims to boost best practice for acoustic design solutions to transform buildings and design of outside living spaces.

"With science-made-simple commentary, important installation insights, vital specification know-how bespoke to each building sector product range, plus Quiet Mark approves products in both consumer and commercial technology sectors.

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In order to verify products, Quiet Mark performs due diligence assessments of declared technical test data and tests products in its purpose built lab in London. The organisation also conducts field visits, and compares like-for-like products, collecting data from a consumer/trade champion perspective to offer the best guidance to customers, certifying the solutions that meet its criteria with its logo.

But what are the core benefits of these products to retailers? Szkiler said: "Sound and acoustic design of retail spaces now has a new important timely role to play, a space designed with sensitivity to acoustic balances with sonic intelligence can transform retail experience to provide great comfort, wellbeing and welcome."



Kardean Designflooring's Korlok range includes a number of products, including the Baltic Washed Oak option seen here

## COMFORTABLE AND WELCOMING

Looking at some of the developers Quiet Mark works with, Szkliler said one of the partnerships of interest to the retail sector is with Armourcoat, a manufacturer and specialist contractor of decorative surface finishes.

Armourcoat began working with Quiet Mark in 2019, with its Armourcoat Acoustic Plaster System being the first solution of its kind to be recognised by the organisation.

Designed to optimise the acoustics of interior spaces, the Armourcoat Acoustic Plaster System offers a clean flat and smooth mineral surface that can be applied over large expanses to both flat and curved surfaces, offering sound absorption.

The system comprises of a special mineral wool composite panel that is bonded onto the substrate and finished with a seamless layer of the Armourcoat Acoustic plaster, allowing for sound to be absorbed and attenuated. As a further benefit to users, the system is available in a wide range of colours and a number of custom features.

"Armourcoat Acoustic is suitable for use in both commercial and residential interior projects including major transport hubs, restaurants, bars and nightclubs, cinemas and theatres, shopping centres and retail units, leisure facilities such as swimming pools and gymnasiums, open plan office environments, corridors and walkways, toilet and washroom lobbies, music rooms, open plan entrance halls and living spaces," Armourcoat said.

Szkliler from Quiet Mark picked up on this flexibility and outlined how the use of Armourcoat Acoustic can help specifically in retail environments. She said: "You can have a stunning design but it might feel awful and very uncomfortable to live or work in daily when sound waves are bouncing around off hard surfaces.

"With sensitivity for the long-term benefits of using an acoustic plaster, rooms can look just as impressive with the warmth and comfort of an absorbent material structure which transforms a living space profoundly."

## FOCUS ON WELLBEING

Another business to have received the Quiet Mark stamp of approval is Kardean Designflooring, a manufacturer of luxury vinyl flooring. Available in a choice of gluedown, loose lay and rigid core formats, Kardean flooring products have a hard wearing surface that is quiet underfoot.

Kardean secured Quiet Mark accreditation for its Korlok range, which features a rigid core construction and pre-attached acoustic foam backing. The acoustic qualities of the product provide effective sound reduction with no need for a separate underlay, reducing ambient noise by 2dB.

Fleur Carson, commercial sales director at Kardean, said: "With today's focus on wellbeing, specifiers are increasingly looking for materials that can enhance a natural design and protect the indoor environment by improving air quality and reducing noise levels.

"Our Korlok range offers all the benefits of Kardean flooring, including an authentic look and texture of natural materials, a hard wearing finish and a waterproof, hygienic surface.

"In addition, Korlok's pre-attached acoustic layer creates a quiet and peaceful environment. The rigid core structure reduces the need for extensive preparation of the subfloor while its simple click-locking mechanism means that a beautiful new floor can be installed in no time at all."

Kardean Designflooring was one of the first luxury vinyl tile manufacturers to introduce the rigid core format in the UK, a product that Carson explained offers specifiers a realistic look of natural materials, as well as the flexibility to cope with uneven subfloors and also acoustic benefits.

"In commercial settings such as retail, reducing downtime for renovation is key," Carson said. "This is why so many designers are choosing Korlok because its sophisticated locking mechanism offers a high quality flooring option that is quick and easy to install.

"We are so confident that our Korlok range will stand up to the demands of a busy retail setting that we offer a 15 year commercial guarantee."

Szkliler from Quiet Mark also spoke about the benefits of Kardean's solutions: "Like all brands that have achieved Quiet Mark certified status for their products, Kardean passed Quiet Mark's technical acoustic performance assessments in its specialist luxury vinyl tile flooring products category. This means they provide an excellent solution to help reduce noise reverberation in home and commercial specific design applications.

Though retail settings may have been quieter than usual in 2020, when shops are able to reopen later in the year, there will inevitably be a rush of consumers keen to return to physical shopping, as opposed to browsing the web at home.

Ahead of this rush, putting in place new measures to help customers feel at ease inside retail environments could help make their experience more enjoyable and relaxed than ever before in our "new normal" world.