

# Canali, New Bond Street, London



*Upscale Italian menswear label Canali has opened a flagship store which is heavy on Milanese slick but light on attention-grabbing design features*



## Essentials

**Address** 126-127 New Bond Street, London

**Opened** May 7

**Size** 2,700 sq ft

**Number of selling floors** Two

**Canali stores opened this year**

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Mumbai and London

**Canali expansion plans** 200 stores

by 2011. At present there are 161

**Headquarters**

Canali is based in Sovico, northern Italy

to more conservative single-breasted suits in sober greys and blacks.

Canali is about a complete look, so having bought the suit, formal shirts, plain or striped, are on hand, as well as silk ties and shiny leather briefcases and footwear to finish things off.

There is a casual aspect to the offer, which is as formal as it is possible for casual to be, without heading down the suit road. In practice this means high-gloss brown leather jackets, zip-through tops and striped polo shirts. There is also a wide range of suede and leather Gucci-esque loafers in colours running from a discreet dark brown to a very shouty red or burnt orange.

**Score 7/10**

## Visual merchandising

At this end of the market you'd expect things to be well put together and not to find the merchandise grouped commodity style. On the ground floor, this is certainly the case. Just inside the entrance, a side-hanging rail teams jackets with plain polo shirts. This is followed, cheek by jowl, by a rail of dark pinstriped jackets and trousers co-ordinated with formal striped shirts below a shelf of carefully folded shirts.

While there is a loose in-store divide between the merchandise types that you might typically find in a menswear emporium, things are not as rigid as might normally be expected. Presumably, Canali shoppers are not expected to drop in merely for a pair of trousers or a suit, but to consider the range as a whole and to spend accordingly.

There is also a particularly top-end feel to how selected accessories are displayed in internally illuminated glass-fronted niches behind the cash desk. It's about making a black briefcase and a pair of shiny shoes seem precious – something that is essential if you are to persuade the shopper to part with large amounts of cash.

And in visual merchandising terms, the layout is concerned with giving shoppers and stock room to breathe. While there is no sense of overcrowding, the store does not fall foul of the common designer practice of displaying a few garments on nearly empty rails and then hoping this will create an impression of exclusivity with correspondingly ambitious pricing. The only problem is that in total it does come across as Euro-bland and predictable, even if it does look good.

**Score 6/10**

## Service

The door is opened for you by a black-suited security type and, once inside, absolutely nothing is out of place. It is to the credit of the discreet staff that they were on hand to help the single customer who was inspecting the range on the day of visiting. But there was no sense that he was being crowded. It was almost like a very select form of self-service, with staff at the ready.

**Score 7/10**

## Store appeal

Stand at the entrance and the thing that is likely to strike you most is the double, close to triple, height atrium, that houses the cash desk and the two initial rails along the perimeter. This space sets the tone for the rest of the store with marble floors and highly polished wood used to create the walls on both sides.

Canali has worked with architect **Fernando Correa** from Studio Grassi to create the store's interior and the marble and dark wood used throughout. It is also worth noting the parquet floors, luxurious rugs and textured leather panelling, used to define particular areas, as well as the smoked glass fixtures and steel-framed illuminated shelves.

Large sheets of anti-reflective glass have been used in the windows, meaning a higher level of natural daylight in the interior. And for the top-flight shopper, there is a private shopping room on the lower floor with leather sofas and a bar. Notwithstanding the high level of finish, however, this is a store interior that runs dangerously close to being, well, a little on the dull side.

**Score 6/10**

## Would I buy?

If the shopper is in the market for a slice of highly finished Italian designer menswear, then providing the pockets are deep, a purchase may follow. The trouble is, there really are rather a lot of shops that feel like this one and, given that at this end of the price spectrum selling is about persuasion, it could prove a little difficult to maintain interest.

**Score 6/10**

## VERDICT

Canali has unveiled a London flagship that is perfectly on brand for the aspiring Eurocrat, but which does seem almost a little too perfect for its own good. A degree of quirkiness might have gone some way to ameliorating this.

32  
50

## OUR EXPERT



**John Ryan**  
Group stores editor

With a background in fashion buying, including a 10-year stint at C&A in the UK and Germany, John Ryan writes about visual merchandising, store design and the business of launching new shops. As a journalist, he has covered the sector for more than a decade

If you didn't know its provenance, a quick glance at a Canali suit would probably be enough to tell you that it was Italian. There is a certain type of slick, metropolitan, almost too polished type of tailoring that probably looks best on a man emerging from a grand palazzo in Italy's commercial capital where it is more or less the norm.

For those walking the grand, old-money thoroughfare that is Bond Street, it is now possible to join this particular clan following the opening, two weeks ago, of Canali's largest store to date. The Canali store is not the first that the brand has opened this year, with Hong Kong, Shanghai and a second store in Mumbai already under its belt and with Perth and Singapore in the pipeline.

Previously, this two-floor store was a branch of Jigsaw, but today it would be hard to tell as the 2,700 sq ft space has had a total makeover, with the upper floors set to be restored and turned into a showroom for the wholesale range.

Canali celebrated its 75th anniversary last year and has opened 56 boutiques

in 31 countries since 2002, bringing its worldwide total to 160 outlets by the end of last year. The brand plans to hit the 200 store mark by 2011, meaning that if Italian smooth is your thing, then there should be no shortage of Canali merchandise to satisfy the craving.

## Key looks and merchandise mix

A quick progress round this store will be enough to scare off the faint of wallet. The spokeswoman on hand for the brief tour notes that prices for a suit start at about £700 and then "head on up". This is therefore an upscale proposition where price may not be immaterial, but where it may well be secondary to style and cut.

And suits are at the heart of the Canali store, displayed in groups across both floors. In fairness, if you wanted something other than a suit, then there are jackets: lots of them, with a strong double-breasted offering.

Beyond this, it's a case of formal or less formal, which translates as dark or light suitings available in myriad shades ranging from sand with white pinstripes

**Room to breathe: smoked-glass fixtures, illuminated shelves and lots of wood and marble give a feel that's top-end if a little Euro-bland**

