

Which Way Is Up

New York Times (1923-Current file); Feb 13, 1981; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times
pg. 26

Which Way Is Up

The British, as usual, have a word for it — upmarket — and the goods sold in upmarkets, naturally, are upgoods. Americans have adopted the word and applied it to the latest thing in retailing, the Upscale Shopping Plaza. Up, in this usage, means pricey and trendy, which are also good, if somewhat dated. British words.

The British still call them shopping centres; in American, that would be spelled centers and smack of discount chains. Hence: plaza, suggesting more class than mass. Upscale plazas contain boutiques, not stores. And boutiques contain designer clothes, not dresses, and pasta machines, not hardware. In an upmarket, whatever isn't gourmet is imported or crafted.

And where are these upmarkets? Everywhere. Increasingly, they occupy recycled historic buildings like railroad stations, financial exchanges and old land-

mark markets that have teetered on the edge of destruction. Boston's hugely successful Faneuil Hall Marketplace set the style. In London's Covent Garden there are cafes in place of barrows and candle shops instead of cabbages. Manchester's noble Royal Exchange has been updated with acres of carpet, piped-in music, graphics and upgoods. Philadelphia's turn-of-the-century Bourse will be this country's latest upmarket. All have upprices.

A landmark saved is better than a landmark lost, but even the most robust architectural survivors are succumbing to a slick sameness in their shops and merchandise. Like airports and highways, they are becoming indistinguishable around the world. When you've seen one upmarket you've seen them all. And overexposure to upgoods can only leave you feeling down.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.