

Shopping & Style

Death of a salesroom



Golden years The entrance to the store still showcases the same rich opulence that was once a feature of the building from top to toe

Locked in a slow decline for the past few years, deluxe Daslu really is on its way out now. **Carol Teresa** investigates

Daslu, the mighty megaboutique on the Marginal Pinheiros, was once, in a not-too-distant past, synonymous with luxury in São Paulo. For years, it was a favourite one-stop shop for designer brands, with the likes of Gucci, Pucci and Prada on sale alongside national names such as Cris Barros and Osklen.

Founded in 1958 in chic Vila Nova Conceição, the store moved to its current location in 2005 – an ostentatious mock-classical collonaded building in Vila Olímpia. There, movie stars and glitterati would alight at the heliport while



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Ghostworld Empty showrooms proliferate throughout the store, where wealthy shoppers once browsed

the paparazzi (and other mortals) would arrive by car, leaving the odd pedestrian and curious tourist to pick their way in precariously between the 4x4s rolling in from the Marginal Pinheiros, São Paulo's ringroad, which runs parallel to the heavily polluted Rio Pinheiros past Daslu.

Despite the move to the new area, it was also in 2005 that Daslu's decline began, with the company running into financial and legal difficulties. The latter reached a head in 2009 when the owner, Eliana Tranchesí, was arrested – for the second time – and sentenced to 94 years in prison for the crimes of conspiracy, fraud and falsification of import documents. But despite

office block as floors close down one by one. WTorre, owner of the current Daslu site and the adjacent complex of buildings that will house São Paulo's newest luxury mall, JK Iguatemi, has stated that the transformation of the building into offices will be completed in the first half of 2012.

But while building construction goes on all around, Daslu's doors remain open just for now, so there's still one last chance for visitors to sneak a peek at the shell of a once glorious and vast temple to consumption. On the surface, it's business as usual. Salespeople and maids, smiling and dressed in impeccable uniforms, continue to offer seamless assistance in finding

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its troubles, Daslu still had the cachet to feature in the 'day in São Paulo' itinerary of *Wallpaper** magazine's 2007 São Paulo city guide, albeit with a note of sarcasm: 'The sheer in-your-faceness of the building design and its elitist appointment-to-shop security was deemed too much, even for the Paulistano wealthy.'

The store's decline might have been slow – almost agonising; but Daslu's days are now most definitely numbered. Reported to be in debt to São Paulo's state tax authority to the tune of R\$500 million, the department store is being slowly but surely transformed into an

that perfect something. And customers continue to buy, loyal to the luxury retailer to the end. There's a *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* air about the place that's enhanced by the baroque characters that can be spotted inside: women with the telltale signs of cosmetic surgery, which occasionally even include fresh bandages; spoilt young scions of who knows what kinds of families; and prim French-maid-uniformed workers.

Listen closely and you'll hear the shouts of engineers and the hum of drills, as yet another portion of the store is dismantled. And wander beyond the manicured confines of what's left of the retail space and you'll find escalators ground to a halt; vast white rooms with bare shelves collecting dust; and velvet hangers embossed with Chanel logos swinging dress-less on empty racks. A somewhat prophetic quote, 'Life is full of highs and lows', embossed in gold lettering on a wall, says it all.

It's not the final death knell for the brand, however. Last summer, Daslu opened the Summer House Daslu – a pop-up store on the chic Rua Oscar Freire. A large two-storey Villa Daslu concession also currently takes pride of place at one end of the open-air gallery of Shopping Cidade Jardim. Lastly, a Villa Daslu is set to open in the luxury mall-under-construction, JK Iguatemi, due to open in March/April 2012. A death, then, and a kind of a rebirth.



Castles in the sky Daslu's grand facade conceals a slowly dying store

Trendwatch *Espadrilles*

The soft-shoe shuffle is back in the shape of espadrilles and wedges that mix natural fibres with a splash of summer colour. Espadrilles appeared on the scene in Spain in the 19th century before becoming popular in the '70s. Yves Saint Laurent worked with the format some forty years ago; and this year, the shoe designer Christian Louboutin created a wedge with a heel adorned with jute, raffia and braided cord. Check out the style as spotted around town this month.

Bright colours with wraparound straps. **Ellus**, Avenida Roque Petroni Jr. 1089, Brooklin (5189 4603/ellus.com). **R\$249**



Sweet, romantic ... and high-rise. **Cervera**, Rua Princesa Isabel 208, Brooklin, 11 (3876 6300/cervera.com.br). **R\$179**



Red, with ankle straps. **Disantinni**, (4003 2157/disantinni.com.br). **R\$50**



Classic wedges. **Schutz**, Rua Oscar Freire 944, Jardins (4508 1499/schutz.com.br). **R\$410**

