

■ **Shop America: Midcentury Storefront Design 1938-1950, edited by Jim Heimann. Taschen, 246pp, HB, £29.99.**

With its customary style and lavishness, Taschen is the perfect publisher for this compendium of designs for shopfronts in post-war America. The result is a gorgeous tome of illustrations for everything from toyshops to banks. Premised on the belief that bold and alluring shopfronts make sales, in the words of the Visual Front catalogue, "almost automatic," even modest establishments have ambitious facades combining expanses of glass and stand-out graphics. It is hard to imagine today's drycleaners and barbers tackling design with anything like the same aplomb. In his opening essay, Stephen Heller tells us that many of the retail designers were émigrés from Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe, such as Paul Laszlo, Morris Lapidus and Rudolph Schindler. More detail on which of the designs were built would have been useful, but ultimately this is an eye-candy book for anyone interested in forties style.