

COLOR AND SPACE

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In Architecture and Interior Design



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SHIKIRI DIVIDING AND CREATING SPACE THROUGH COLORS

BY EMMANUELLE MOUREAUX

I will never forget my first hour in Tokyo. I was in the express train from the airport to the center of the city, watching the Japanese landscape go past my window. The greens of the rice fields and trees were shining through the rain. Suddenly, my eyes were attracted by a vivid "blue", standing out against the green background. Since such a color does not exist in nature, I thought at first it was a pool, but looking carefully, I discovered this beautiful blue was the color of a roof. This moment of several seconds was unforgettable. An hour later, I got off the express at Ikebukuro Station, a lively area in the center of Tokyo. Walking through the city, I was shocked by the cityscape brimming with colors. Bright colors overlapping and intermingling with each other, buildings with different volumes and layers of electric cables forming the cutout sky... To my eyes that grew up in a town made of stone, the colors appeared beautiful - like a painting. I was in Tokyo for two hours and decided to live here.

Tokyo made me become aware of color, and made me like color.

The emotion I feel when looking at the Tokyo cityscape comes not only from the fact that it is colorful. There is another very important factor: the sensation of "layers" I feel in the city. Tokyo is structured by a multitude of layers: small houses, buildings with different volumes, electric cables, signboards... All these layers overlap in the cityscape, giving a feeling of depth.

Colors, scattered in a multitude of layers, seem to float in the city.

When I started living in Tokyo, I realized that colors were only presented in non-architectural elements like vending machines or signboards, the buildings or the interiors themselves remaining monotonous. There would be no difference for almost of the recent architecture to be photographed in black and white or color. I was very surprised by this gap between the colorful cityscape and the monotonous architecture.

I decided to create spaces with colors, in order to give emotions to people, as I feel when I see the beautiful colors of Tokyo.

In architecture, color is often considered to be a minor element, decided at the end of the design process, like choosing the color of the walls, color of the flooring or of the curtains... The use of color is in general flat, two-dimensional. I think color must play an essential role in architecture: structuring the space itself. I mean a three-dimensional role.

Inspired by the layers of colors in Tokyo, I use colors as three-dimensional elements, like layers, in order to create spaces, not as a finishing touch applied to surfaces.

"Shikiri": Dividing space with colors

"Colors" and "layers" are expressed in a concept I develop in all my projects, the concept of "shikiri", a made-up word literally meaning "to divide space using colors" in English. Composed of two Japanese ideograms, "color" (shiki) and "divide" (kiri), this made-up word has the same pronunciation as the original word "shikiri" meaning partition in Japanese.

"Shikiri" is a colorful partition series, inspired by the Japanese traditional sliding paper screens or wood partitions. When I realized these functional and beautiful screens are fading away nowadays in Japan, I decided to create a new concept of partitions, which would match the present life and spaces, and bring out the essence of the traditional one: flexibility, layers, transparency, and depth.

I have been developing "Shikiri" partitions with different materials through many of my projects – acrylic sliding partitions for the Magic Forest Clinic, Kaleidoscope Exhibition, ARP Hills Hair and Beauty Salon, glass partitions for Be Fine Office, felt ceiling-hung partitions for the bodies fitness studios, shikiri furniture for Nozawa Apartment...

"Shikiri": Creating space with colors

"Shikiri" is a way of using colors not just as finishes applied on surfaces of the materials, but as three-dimensional elements, like layers, structuring and creating the space. Color becomes structure.

The colors, detached from two-dimensional walls or other surfaces, seem to float in the space and structure. In the Sugamo Shinkin Bank Niiza Branch, "squares of colors" floating in the space structure, giving it its form and depth. In the Tokiwadai Branch, "leaves of colors" play the same role. The layers of colors of Shimura Branch structure and compose the building.

I do not apply colors to spaces. By dividing space and creating flexibility using colors, giving depth by overlapping layers of colors, and structuring the space by scattering colors, I create spaces through colors. I use colors as three-dimensional elements, like layers, in order to create spaces, not as a finishing touch applied to surfaces. Color is not only beautiful. Color is structural, and color is powerful.

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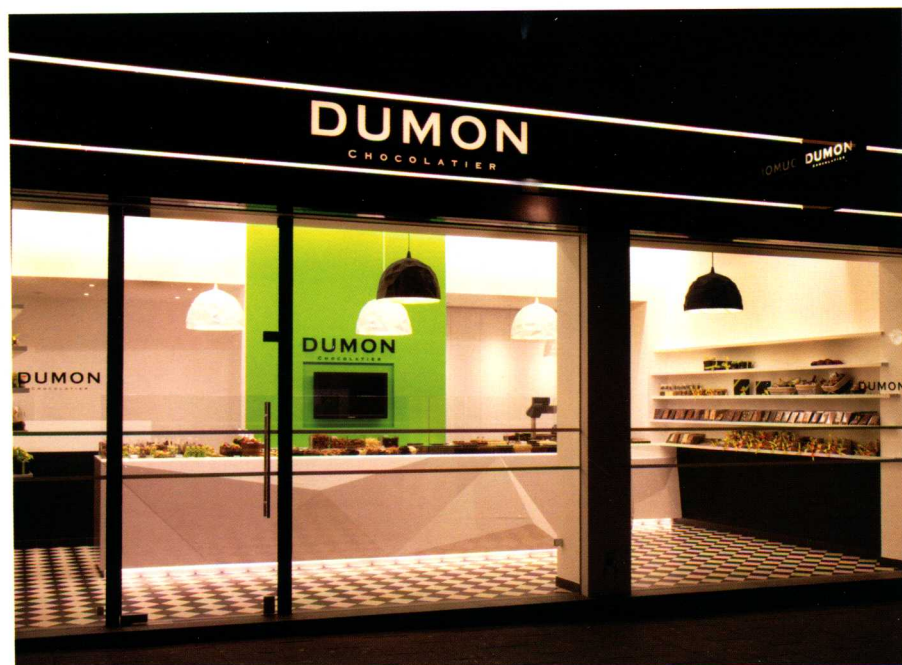
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DUMON KORTRIJK

WITBLAD

Location: Kortrijk, Belgium

Area: 50 sqm

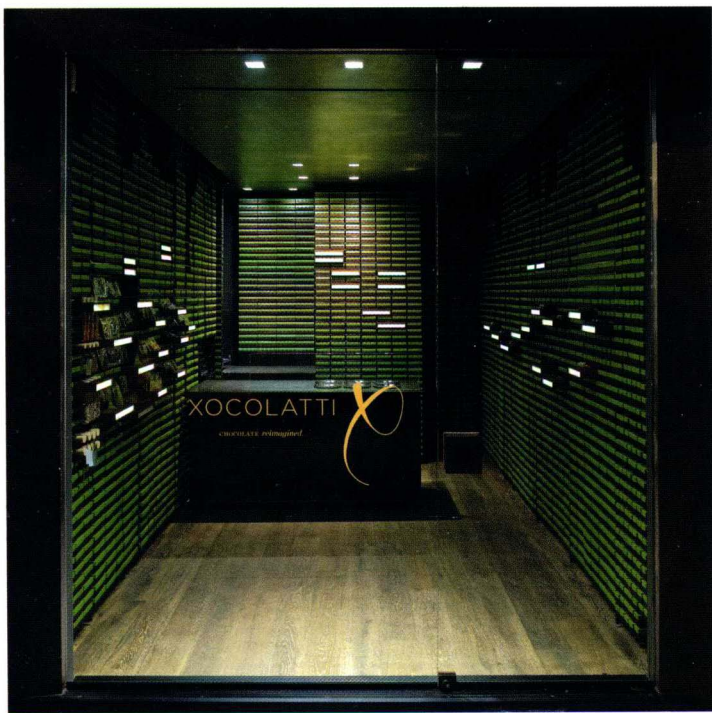
Photographer: Witblad

Dumon Chocolatier sells handmade chocolates and the company wanted an interior for its new shop that reflected the craftsmanship and passion that the owners have for their products. Dumon already had two shops in the Belgian cities of Bruges and Torhout. This third shop in Kortrijk is situated in the main shopping street and have to fit well in the design environment and image of the city of Kortrijk.

The shop concept by Witblad is based around treating chocolates as jewelry, as the Dumon handmade delicacies are as pleasing to the eye as gemstones. The entire length of the main counter is molded into angular shapes, with facets referring to diamonds. The large gloss-painted triangles differ in shape and size and reflect the light in a multitude of ways. Working their way from one side of the shop to the other, customers can view the confectionery behind a glass partition. Complementing the molded counter are the Rock lamps from Diesel with Foscarini which hang overhead. The entire color scheme of the shop – white, black and green – ties in nicely with the confectionery within; white and dark chocolate with, perhaps, a hint of fresh mint. The interior has been designed as a shop window in order to be inviting to customers and entice passers-by into the store. Two originally separate shops have been combined into one space with a totally open-facade which means, from the street, the entire product range can be viewed.







XOCOLATTI

DE-SPEC

Location: New York, USA

Area: 14 sqm

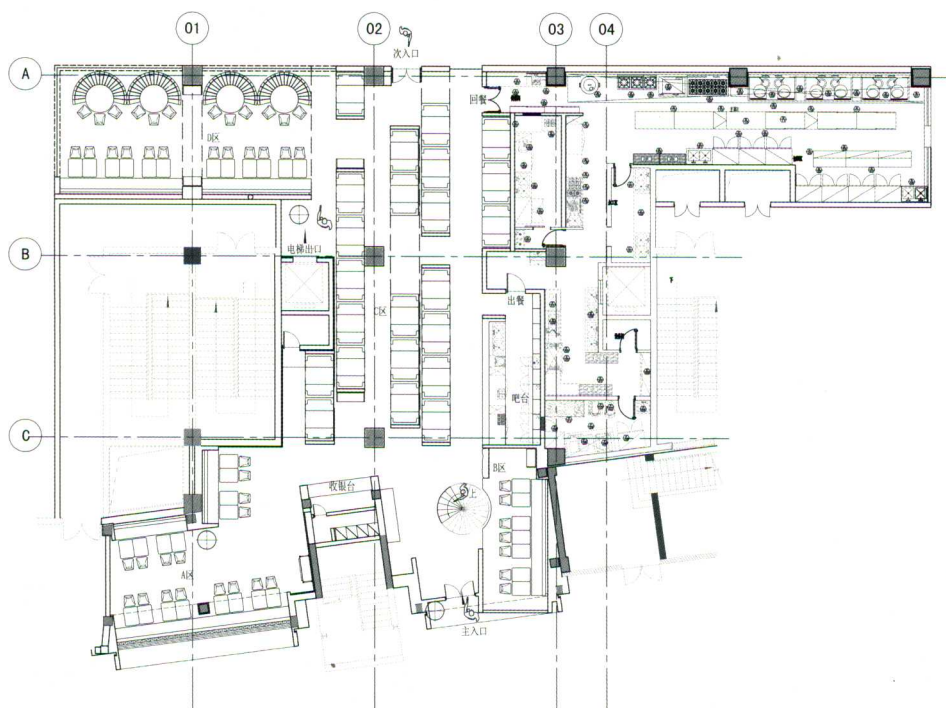
Photographer: Frank Oudeman

De-Spec's concept for the 14 sqm space lies in eliminating the traditional barriers of a storefront and window display. They created an interactive vitrine-like space that seamlessly integrates with the streetscape.

The walls are lined with custom-designed, floor-to-ceiling bronze shelving systems that are based on the multiple variations of the different sizes of the green and brown chocolate boxes. The wall acts as both storage and a display of multiple graphic patterns, bold and iconic. Customers, daily, choose their favorite chocolate boxes and take it out of the wall resulting in multiple patterns at the end of each day making every day unique. This interaction between customer and display provides an animating narrative to the presentation of the store throughout the day with an insightful discovery for the owners as the largest gaps in the wall indicate the favorite flavors of the day. For the materials of the project, De-Spec chose bronze as it has the richer brown color evoking more artisanal and luxury chocolates.

De-Spec invited Exit Creative to collaborate on the brand identity and together, the two firms created the glowing light boxes featuring each product. This layer of information over the neutrality of the grid enables the customer a more clear reading of their options and flavors. De-Spec acted as both designer and builder and was able to put together a very strong team of craftsman to produce and install the new display system and its components using CNC, laser cutting and casting of various metal works throughout the project.





P.S. RESTAURANT

GOLUCCI INTERNATIONAL DESIGN

Location: Beijing, China
Area: 850 sqm
Photographer: Sun Xiangyu

The P.S. Restaurant (Postscript) is one of the hippest restaurants now in Beijing. The customers are mostly younger, and the owner is in his 20s.

The concept for the design was to use continuous, geometric surfaces to create an interesting dining experience for young people. On the first floor, white hallways with mercury looking hanging lights break up the continuous green rectangular strips that dress up the walls and the ceiling. The designer decided to move the green color into glass panels which separate the booths, also making its way to the facade glazing, creating a minty glow ambiance within the space. After ascending a spiral staircase, the second floor has a fresh loungey vibe as the seating changes from booths to individual pod chairs, perfect for socializing and sipping cocktails!

The designer understands the social phenomenon very well and he delivered the idea of "gathering" in this project. It was understood that the target clients would be young working adults, so the design had to be vivid enough to attract young people's taste. Lighting and linear shapes were crucial elements to the restaurant design.