An abstract architectural drawing featuring a complex network of black and white lines that create a sense of depth and movement. A prominent, thick orange line winds through the composition, starting from the bottom left and curving towards the top right. In the upper right corner, there is a small red rectangular object. The overall style is graphic and modern.

# Out of the Box!

Brand Experiences  
between  
Pop-Up and Flagship

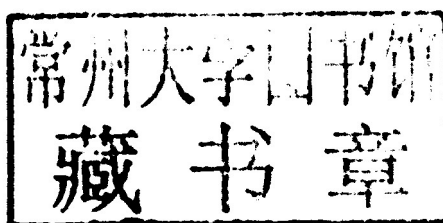
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# SURFACE TENSION

Page 6



# *All That Matters*

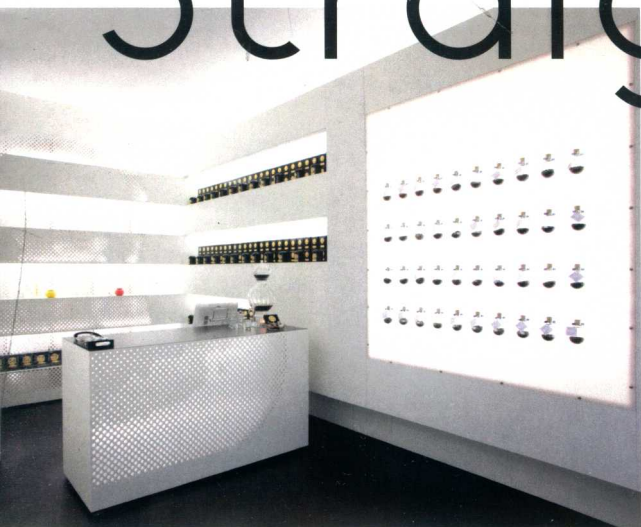
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# Straightforward

Page 132



# GOING PUBLIC

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# Glamor & Drama

Page 218



J 534 / w37

# Out of the Box!

Brand Experiences between Pop-Up and Flagship



# SURFACE TENSION

Page 6



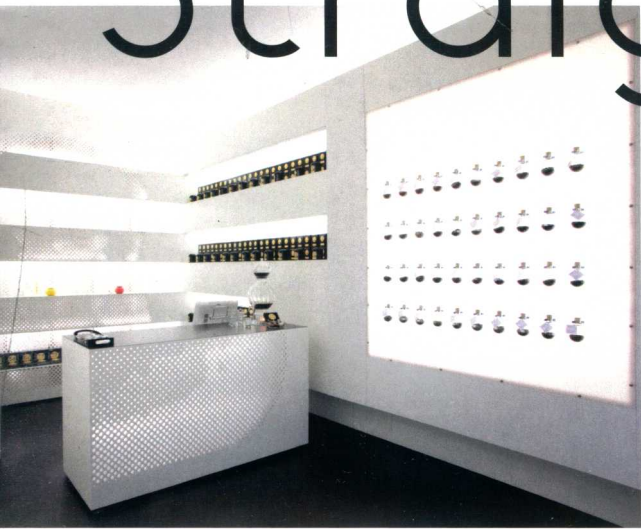
# *All That Matters*

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# This is not a store; it's a story.

Once upon a time, there was a retail landscape. It was a flatland of logos and print ads, a two-dimensional terrain that one day began to morph into a three-dimensional brandscape and this is where the new commerce began.

With the ascendancy of shopping apps, checking in and group buying, crowd sourcing and augmented reality, online shopping (e-commerce) and shopping from mobile devices (m-commerce), consumers can now research products, find the deepest discounts, get fashion advice from friends who are far from the fitting room, and have a say in how a manufacturer's next sofa will look or if it will even be produced. We can accomplish all of this at our keyboards, moreover, whether we're in our three-piece suits or our birthday suits. On the one hand, then, it has become increasingly difficult to peel us out of our pajamas and get us into the store. On the other hand, the internet cannot provide us with the kind of experience that moves us.

Walking into a shop today, we know the product specs by heart, but we don't know how its upholstery feels, how the shape conforms to our form, or if it will remind us of building forts with our grandmother's couch cushions in days long past.

A tectonic shift in technology and values is forcing brands to retrofit their approach to retail, event, and exhibition design. More than a conventional showroom, today's increasingly apathetic customers need do-tiques, "fitting rooms" in which to try on both product and brand, places where the experience is as limited edition as the merchandise, and where brand, buyer, and goods are bound together in a catalytic chain—whether a financial transaction takes place immediately or later on.

Welcome to experience design. We solved the problem of displaying clothes on racks long ago, but learning how to seduce sensory-deprived and information-overloaded shoppers with a compelling



spatial story is, well, a different story. Selling is about branding is about experience is about emotion. And emotion sells. The finest retail interiors, exhibition concepts, flagship stores and themed stores, temporary pop-up shops, gallery/boutique hybrids, and event spaces, mobile or sedentary, are becoming

a form of media. Which objects, stores, and brands we choose will depend on which "channels" move us most. The shopper is a complex creature, with a fraught relationship to things, self, and style, with diverse interests, secret disappointments, and guarded aspirations.

**Brands are learning that they must tap the visceral, intuitive, and imaginative core of the customer**

and engage in a dialog with their "guests," who will spend time (or elect not to) in the universe created by the company. With galloping advances in technology, every shopping trip is poised to become a resented physical commute if the destination is workaday. Experience and the degrees of emotion that it engenders will turn a passerby into a customer, a customer into a repeat customer and a repeat customer into a Tweeting, Facebooking, checked-in advocate of the brand.

To make his week-long pop-up shop in Manhattan, fashion designer Richard Chai—who believes that the attention span of today's consumer lasts about two seconds—collaborated with Brooklyn studio Snarkitecture to transform the inside of a disused shipping container. The designers carved into blocks of EPS foam with custom-built wire cutters until a glacial brandscape filled the box, a monolithic white field, excavated, striated, with no truly vertical walls and no really right angles. Chai wanted to tap the senses, from the look of the interior to its sound and smell, to provide, as he phrased it, "an experience of exploration, an emotional experience."





As the demand for evocative, interactive, curated, and unrepeatable branding space continues to grow, temporary commercial interiors have anticipated experience design and brandscaping, and so deserve particular attention.

The pop-up shop began as a frills-free environment intended to relieve the high costs of brick-and-mortar retail—from long-term leases to interior design and architecture fees. It used to be that the only way to distinguish a pop-up shop from a back-room sample sale was the price on the hangtags, but in order to increase traffic and give pop-ups the aura of limited-edition destinations, the form grew increasingly baroque.

When British sports retailer Reebok, a pop paladin of the 1980s, opened a quickie sneaker store amidst the visual din of Manhattan's wholesale lighting district, local creative agency Formavision

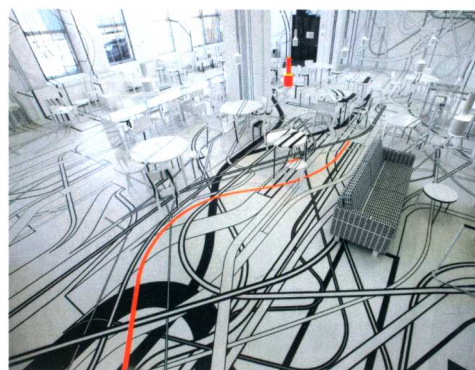


frescoed every surface, including seating and displays, with nacreous honeycombs, chevrons, stripes, and polygons of every description.

Borrowing from WWI dazzle warship camouflage and a 20th-century arts movement called vorticism, the storefront

looked as two-dimensional and colorful as a comic book or a Technicolor version of Norwegian band a-ha's rotoscoped 1985 Take "On Me" music video. (Arguably a pop culture watershed that became the impetus behind the retail success of the leather motorcycle jacket following the video's MTV release.)

Artist Tobias Rehberger did a high-profile series of cafés in this vein. The temporary boutiques and brand sanctuaries of architect and former fashion designer Rafael de Cárdenas also share this audacious graphical approach, with robust contrasts of color and developments of form. For de Cárdenas, if these types of spaces are any good, they tell us two things: what is happening now and what will be happening soon, coveted information that the host brand must know and, through



its spaces, broadcast. The projects on the following pages represent only a scant number of retailers and designers, but they exemplify the way in which codified rituals of product display are being superseded by bolder experiments (visually, materially, locationally, scenographically) to stimulate, as de Cárdenas calls it,

**"never-been-seen-beforeness".**

People just can't get enough of the new. And we don't just want to watch it, passively, on a screen; we want to step into it, climb it, row over it, slide down it, wear it, inhale it, get a little lost inside.

For the sake of expediency, the projects are divided according to their creative approach: graphic, material, straight, public/outdoor, and scenographic. As is shown in the first chapter, **Surface Tension**, spaces can be flattened or given dimension, become quiet or loquacious through the use (or avoidance) of color, pattern, typography,



illustration, texture, or all of the above. They are caffeine or codeine, a graffiti-ed street and a gallery, articulations of progressive brands that want to be associated with art, culture, and innovation. In the following chapter, **All That Matters**, it is the material that says something about the label and, occasionally, delivers a message. **Straightforward** spaces give customers the relief of an unembellished, what-you-see-is-what-you-get experience and are commissioned by companies that value authenticity, candor, and a no-nonsense ethos while still putting a premium on good looks. The

installations in **Going Public** locate the brandscape in a landscape, bringing the shop into the countryside or the countryside into the shop. Highbrow or low, high-tech or low-tech, material-driven projects are constructed from, for example, women's hosiery, industrial rolls of aluminium sheet, blue polyurethane foam, or rip-ties. Finally, **Glamor & Drama** presents brand stages in the form of novelty boutiques and scenographic interiors that appeal to our emotions in an effort to transcend the transaction. In the very best cases, customers buy into the business with more than just their money and consume, not just things, but culture, not just artifice but a sense of self. The purchase (if one is even made right away) becomes a souvenir of the customer's affinity with, not just loyalty to, the brand. So, as shopping pervades every arena of our public—once noncommercial—lives and wriggles into the machinery with which we fabricate our own identities, the most deeply experiential spaces could just become the poetics of the 21st century.







# SURFACE TENSION

Graphics can both define and exquisitely confuse space. The mechanism behind graphical interiors is sometimes simple: Hundreds of stickers in the shape of black chevrons suggested abstracted flocks of blackbirds on the wing, making **ZMIK**'s boutique at the Basel art fair feel dynamic. Letters, in various point sizes and typefaces, gave texture to the **E-Types**' font shop in Copenhagen. Repetition, exaggeration, or layering can lend surfaces dimension, personality, mood, or depth. Taken to an extreme, this means that graphical interiors may feel deliciously disorienting: bigger or smaller inside than they appeared from without, or a profusion of contrasting color, geometry, or form. **Denis Košutić** slathered one of his Italian Amicis stores with such a variety of floral wallcoverings that the space could trigger a bout of hayfever.

At the pinnacle of the graphic aesthetic are several interiors, including the **Reebok Flash** pop-up shop in New York and a series of cafés by artist **Tobias Rehberger** that sprang from the trompe-l'oeil dazzle painting that once camouflaged World War I British Royal

Navy battle ships. In a departure from his older dazzle projects, Rehberger didn't add any color to the bold line drawings with which he filigreed tables, chairs, and even window panes in the **Logomo Café** in Turku, Finland, but the illustration felt just as engrossing. In Flash, **Formavision** tattooed every surface with flashy geometries, garment racks appeared two-dimensional from certain angles, and furnishings—graphical devices just as much as the graphics—tapered to a needle point.

Somewhere between the bare and the baroque, however, there is a middle ground. **Tomás Alonso**'s trio of **Camper** shoe shops, for instance, feature a minimalist graphic look: Careful compositions of ceramic tiles make it appear as if some of them protrude from the wall when they are actually flush.

At their best, graphical interiors wake us up. They can connect viewers to something (the brand) far bigger than they are, or make a space feel intimate and the company that commissioned it, sheltering.







# Kid's Republic

2005 / Beijing, China

## SKSK ARCHITECTS: KEIICHIRO SAKO

Client: Poplar Publishing Co., Ltd.

See also pages 26 and 122

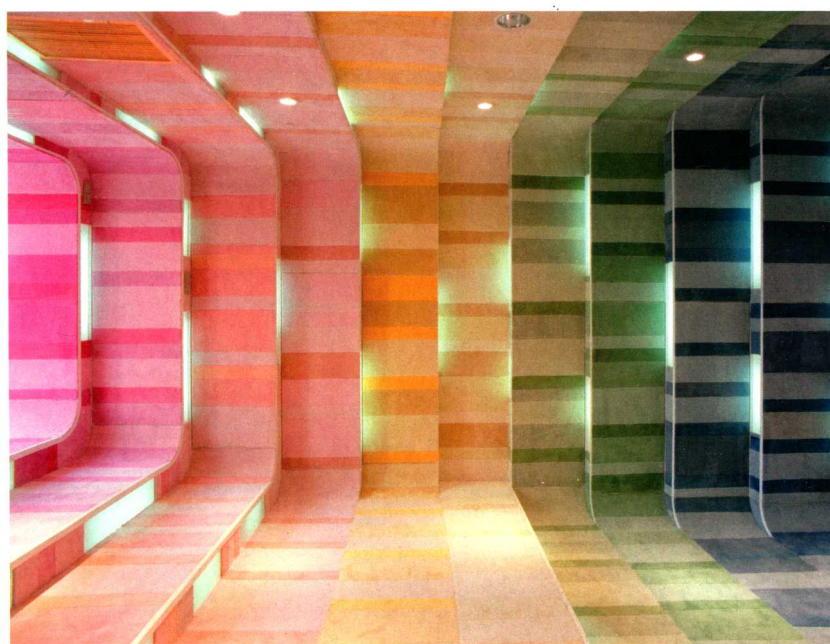
The 165-square-meter Beijing location of Poplar Publishing's kids' bookstore is marked by a Candyland-like ribbon of carpet that cheerfully paves the interiors with "flagstones," so to speak, in seven colors. Zones in the ground floor event room—for storytelling, shows, and performances—are connected by 12 colored rings with various perimeters. Open spaces between sections of ribbon unfurling over the floor, walls, and ceiling are used for illumination or display. In one area, pale ribbons are staggered and layered to wrap an intimate interior and to create benches and a stage for a tiny auditorium. The ribbon itself as it climbs and descends serves as shelving, tabletops, gates, check-out counters, and seating. Apertures in the bookshelves become windows, passages, or cozy reading nooks so that children can sit or lie anywhere they like to read and play. The 100-meter ribbon meanders through the event space and up the stairs to the bookstore on the second floor, at one point turning into the steps themselves. If, traditionally, interior design restricts itself to narrow definitions of floor, wall, ceiling, and furniture, SKSK's design eschews these sensible and orderly definitions, suggesting instead that no distinction should exist between reading and playing.















## Unknown Union 2011 / Cape Town, South Africa

### ARCHITECTURE AT LARGE: RAFAEL DE CÁRDENAS

Client: Unknown Union - Jason Storey,  
Sean Shuter

See also pages 44, 46, 48, and 52

The interior of Cape Town men's boutique, Unknown Union is another Pop Art-Op Art combo by New York-based Rafael de Cárdenas of Architecture at Large. In an 18th-century building,

two floors of retail space glow diffusely with ziggurats of multi-colored shelving, display cubes painted in vibrant ombrés of teal, green, lemon yellow, and pink, and an exploded chandelier of fluorescent tubes. Boxed in terracotta tile flooring (common in Cape Town) and white walls, the scheme was inspired by the simple forms and saturated colors used by Mexican architect Luis Barragán. A former Calvin Klein fashion designer, de Cárdenas tends to think of form separately from material. In this store—apty since it sells clothing—he selected materials and surface treatments after settling on the forms, in much the same way that fabrics are matched to already determined styles in the design of garments.

