



ALMA

**A L M A**

a walkthrough gender-neutral retail design



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# Abstract

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The stereotypes socially constructed around gender binarism constitute the restricted idea of bodies adjusted to the notions of feminine-woman and masculine-man. The constant reaffirmation of this hegemonic vision excludes the understanding of diversity beyond heteronormative coherence, and any possible form of expression outside the standards. These questions permeate the entire social sphere and its materiality, therefore, imply the practice of the designer.

The research explores the contemporary relationship between commercial spaces and consumers, from an overall perspective to a closer look at the particularities of beauty and skincare stores. From this analysis, the Interior and Spatial Design attributions are explored to rethink the concept of the sale space as an environment free of gender segregation intentions, and efficient as a major brand's representative.

Relying on the theoretical research, a flagship store is designed guided by the directives of gender-neutral design, and connected to virtual platforms through the contemporary empowerment tools of social media. Seeking to connect the brand's philosophy to the local culture, and foreseeing the spread of this concept around the world.

The thesis' outcomes represent a statement of the designers' potential to act against social paradigms by promoting inclusive initiatives along with the development of projects they are engaged to. The contemporary notion of retail spaces denotes a stronger influence on the consumer's mentality and therefore acts as a meaningful channel to spread gender-conscious ideals in society.

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# Introduction

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The interior designer communicates their ideas through spaces, at times providing immersive experiences, endowed with tangible and intangible values, capable of stimulating unique sensations and perceptions for observers. From this perspective, people are responsible for building spaces, but the latter, once integrated into society, are also responsible for “building” the first.

In the field of retail design, more specifically in the cosmetics segment, generally commercial spaces not only provide products but also sell the idea of beauty standards to be followed. If brands initially approach this strategy with the aim of stimulating consumption through the desire to achieving aesthetic perfection, the shopping experience ends up becoming a reference for unrealistic stereotypes of beauty and body image, which have a negative impact on society.

Among the distorted outcomes of beauty standards are the heteronormative conceptions about gender. Despite being currently discussed in contemporary society, studies on the subject in parallel to other spheres of knowledge, such as design, for example, are quite scarce, which makes the process of understanding this problem as a science difficult and, therefore, minimizes the perception of the urgency to discuss the topic.

Based on this premise, the thesis explores the persuasive character of commercial spaces as a social tool, through the creation of a gender-neutral cosmetics flagship store. The spaces and services offered by the store reflect the ideals of a fictitious model brand, Alma, which is against gender stereotypes.



# Objectives

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The main objective of this thesis is to explore the social role of retail design in the field of cosmetics for the promotion of inclusive ideals. The aim is to develop a flagship store design that represents the Alma brand philosophy, applying the guidelines of gender-neutral design when designing spaces consistent with the needs program of the two main functions - skincare and makeup store - and secondary services - wellbeing center and streaming area - in order to create an immersive brand experience that responds to contemporary gender issues.

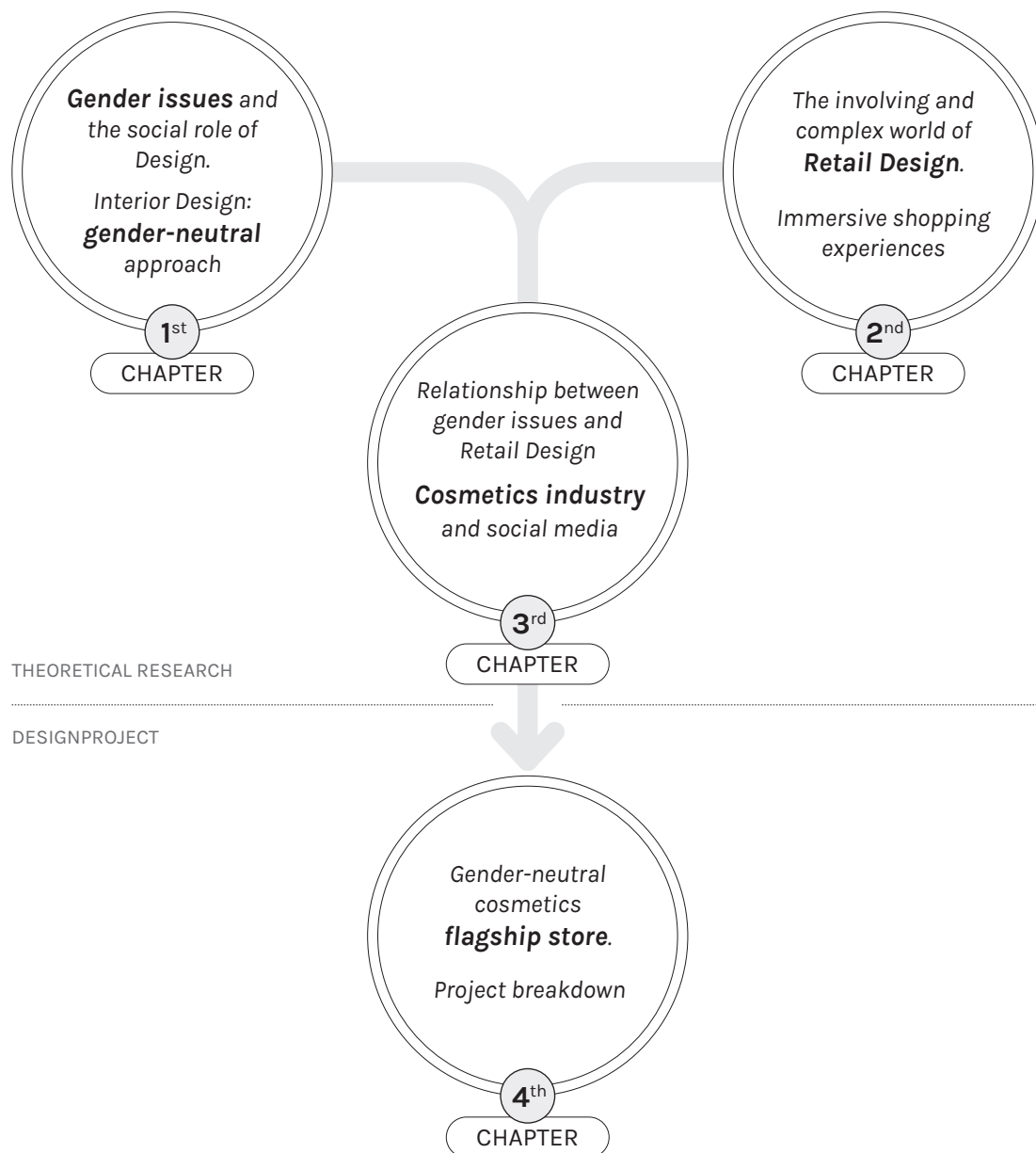




# Thesis Structure

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The present work is divided into four chapters to better articulate the various addressed subjects, and they are organized following the structure below:



United society

<https://elements.envato.com/pt-br/group-of-protectors-standing-together-holding-hand-XDLTHC4>







# Chapter 01

## Design and Gender issues

In this first part of the work, critical issues around gender and the repercussions of those on society will be explored. But how does this resonate in the Design practice? We will understand the role of the designer in this scenario and explore successful cases of gender-neutral retail as a way to elucidate the power of the interior designer to change social paradigms.

# 01.Theoretical frameworks to gender

## Understanding the terminology and its ramifications

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The debate on gender identities and expressions can be enhanced in the professional context of Design, just as it is present in the most diverse social-cultural spheres, as a defense of the interest of specific minority groups. However, before exploring the possible consequences of this relationship, it is important to understand the concepts of human rights, gender dichotomy, and its stigmas in real social everyday life. These terms are not exclusively related to the practice of Design, but they justify the conscious approach, free of stereotypes of binarism, proposed as this research's objective.

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### 1.1 Human Rights

#### UN statement

The United Nations[1] (2015), UN, declares that “human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status”. This means that everyone, without exception or discrimination, has the right to life and freedom; to be free from slavery and torture; and that they can also be free to express themselves, work, and have access to education. This right is protected by the International human rights law that “lays down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways to refrain from certain acts, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups”.

This declaration belongs to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948, and which takes into account different legal and cultural

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[1]. The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. (UN, 2015)





backgrounds from all regions of the world and is still in force today. The UN states that they are gradually expanding human rights law to encompass standards for women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities, and other vulnerable groups, understanding that they are constantly targets of injustice and harassment. Now, these groups cited possess rights that protect them from discrimination that had long been common in many societies.

The Universal Periodic Review is carried out every four years, a mechanism that involves the review of the human rights records of the 194 UN members. This measure is taken so that members can share the challenges faced related to the well-being of society, so that human rights can always be updated in each of the countries under their international obligations, and thus guarantee universality and equal treatment. for every country.

Among the human rights that the law, created by the UN, seeks to promote and protect, there is a specific one related to the individual in the social sphere, which is part of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force in 1976: “the right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being”.

Therefore, as a universal declaration, not belonging to any entity, but to all citizens of the world, human rights were designed to safeguard human life, and its existence in a dignified manner, and without any type of discrimination. And just as it is the duty of the states to guarantee all citizens these rights, it is the duty of the citizen to demand their length universally.

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## 1.2 Gender Stereotypes

### Social impact

Every society, throughout its history, builds a set of values that underpin its actions, and that goes beyond those universal sayings celebrated in letters of the nations, religions, or raised by revolutions. It is a set of tangible and intangible cultural characteristics, which influences different aspects of daily life and which defines patterns of belonging and suitability for members of a society. These social assumptions are also called stereotypes, and once sedimented, although they are not immutable, they have a slow process of change and a strong staying power.

Considering that stereotypes emerge from socially shared convictions, they seek to align values and behaviors in order to guarantee a certain homogeneity and “harmony” of the groups. However, despite the importance of maintaining a



minimum of social agreement, the relentless pursuit of standardization can mean the complete exclusion of diversity, and the premature judgment of the different as wrong. Such a segregated scenario is more evident in issues related to gender, as the doctor in psychology, Jesus (2012) states when identifying that since the first years of life, human beings learn to recognize the difference between the social roles of men and women and are taught to behave “appropriately” and befitting their biological sex.

The male and female dichotomy - gender - is culturally constructed. However, as social influences are not always visible, the differences between men and women are erroneously understood to be natural or totally biological, when in fact a good part of them are stereotypically based assumptions. In the book “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity”, the philosopher Butler (2013) discusses the fictitious idea of understanding anatomical sex as capable of ensuring or revealing truths about the identity and desires of each person. Butler (2013) explains that this social construction is established within what she calls “compulsory heterosexuality” or “heteronormative matrix”, which is applied as a system for classifying people and social life. It is also the key element for understanding oppression of gender and sexuality, since those who cross the established limits and do not follow this system of heteronormative coherence may not be understood and considered as abnormal.

In this context of forced antagonism between exclusive male and female characteristics, according to the Brazilian designer Ribeiro (2016), social expectations of adequacy are created as a method of classifying people as “normal” and “deviant”, based on the judgment of: forms of behavior; types of interests and activities; tastes and skills; body use and gestures; and affective and loving relationships. The existence of this norm, therefore, limits the freedom of individual or group expression, silences particular desires, and relegates manifestations of “alternative” gender and sexuality - not belonging to the heteronormative pattern - to marginality.

In the article “Homophobia, silence, and naturalization: towards a narrative of sexual diversity”, Lionço and Diniz (2008) points out that the naturalization of hegemonic gender patterns, and their negative consequences, opens space for perverse and arbitrary manifestations of oppression and discrimination, violent acts physical aggression, restriction of social rights and the imposition of social exclusion. These injurious practices make victims vulnerable to the greater precariousness of the social bond, subjecting them to the experience of extreme loneliness, since they may be excluded and oppressed even within the family circle, one of the most important care spaces.

It is important to discuss the essentialization of heteronormative standards to reaffirm the existence of gender diversity as a social value to be preserved, seeking

to guarantee the principles of a democratic society, such as equality, freedom of expression, autonomy, and respect for differences. According to Lionço and Diniz (2008), the recognition policy is a necessary strategy in the face of evident social inequality, in which the diversity of gender and sexuality are qualifiers of the social status of individuals.

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## 1.2.1 Targets of social segregation

### Minority groups

The procedures of segregation and exclusion of those who do not fit the sexual and gender identities attributed to each sex, involving most of the time verbal and physical violence, due to the understanding of heteronormative logic as supremacy, is called homophobia.

Generically, homophobia is understood as the exclusive refusal of homosexuality, both in the personal and social dimensions, therefore, a social pathology that is embodied in the individual. However, as explained by Toledo and Pinafi (2012), homophobia is built not only on “heterosexualization of desire”, but also on inequality between the sexes and the inability to accept gender diversity. Therefore, not only individuals who have sex with people of the same sex or show their desire for the same sex are victims of homophobia but all those who do not fit, in some way, the assumptions of heteronormativity forced by society – gender-nonconforming -, whether they are homosexuals or not, women or men. As Borrillo (2001) complements on the manifestation of homophobia on those who escape the heterosexual norm, and who resist the gender norms established by their biological sex:

“ [...] it thus becomes the guardian of sexual (hetero/homo) and gender (male/female) boundaries. That is why homosexuals are not the only victims of homophobic violence, but it also affects all those who do not adhere to the classic order of genders: transvestites, transsexuals, bisexuals, heterosexual women with strong personalities, delicate heterosexual men or those who show great sensitivity. (BORILLO, 2001, p. 16)

In this way, homophobic practices happen, as mentioned before, due to the heteronormative organization of society, which presupposes that everyone should be heterosexual or fit within the scope of masculinity in the case of individuals born

with biological male sex and femininity in the case of those born with the female biological sex. And homophobia characterizes people deviating from the standard, according to Toledo (2012), as “sick, abnormal, wanton, insane, sinner, stranger”, to mention some, when this judgment does not develop in physical violence. For this reason, many homosexual individuals constantly seek to “positively” represent their homosexual condition through the approximation of gender stereotypes instituted by heterosexual logic. From this perspective, Toledo (2012) explains that the homosexual identity of male gays and female lesbians is understood as more “acceptable” than those identities that violate sex/gender norms: effeminate gays, masculinized lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites, and transsexuals. This view is the basis for the understanding that even people who do not fit the current sexual norms, according to their desires and subjectivity, may still be within binary and hierarchical gender boundaries, due to non-deviant behavior. About this statement Miskolci (2007) comments that:

“ [...] at the individual level, heterosexism tends to be successful in creating homophobic subjectivity in such a way that even people who are interested in others of the same sex identify with the normative culture. Hence, it is not surprising to find that homoerotic expressions usually associate with internalized homophobia, maintaining desire as the core of subjectivities whose secret is mixed with the fear of contradiction with the social order. (MISKOLCI, 2007, p. 280)

In this regard, the French sociologist Daniel Welzer-Lang (2001) says that sexism produces many of the homophobic expressions. But as we can see, according to Toledo (2012), homophobia does not start exclusively from heterosexual people to reach homosexuals, but it can also be present in relationships where everyone involved is homosexual, since the rejection practices are not exclusive to the LGBTQIA+[2] environment but from the whole context of society based on binary patterns of behavior. In summary, understanding the role of every individual in society as a product and producer of values, Toledo (2012) classifies homophobia as a social construction that rests on all people, whether heterosexual or not, both in terms of expressing it - promote homophobic practices - as in the sense of being affected - victims of oppression due to the experience of homosexuality, or by dissent from gender norms.

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**| 2 .** LGBT is an initialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. The acronym, which is often used as a blanket term to refer to the queer community. The Q refers to queer or questioning [...] the I stands for intersex. The A also has multiple meanings, used to represent those who identify as asexual, those who are agender, and those who identify as allies of the LGBT community. To represent those who do not identify with one of the letters in the acronym, such as those who identify as pansexual, a plus sign is often used. (INDEPENDENT, 2020)



LGBTQ Pradae 1960's  
[https://www.buzzfeed.com/alanamohamed/before-pride-13-people-talk-about-being-lgbtq-in-the-1960s?utm\\_term=.dd0D3DBvo#.ci26Z6xRN](https://www.buzzfeed.com/alanamohamed/before-pride-13-people-talk-about-being-lgbtq-in-the-1960s?utm_term=.dd0D3DBvo#.ci26Z6xRN)

The need to refuse values that are not in line with social expectations is usually accompanied by a great deal of virulence. In recent years, according to Toledo (2016), news about hate crimes generated in the homophobic yearning to fight that person, or as the author describes, “that thing that insists on making itself visible” (TOLEDO, 2012, p. 148). So, nowadays it is possible to perceive more explicitly organized and militant homophobia, not because previously there was no such practice, but because today it is discussed more openly issues of freedom of expression, and along with these questions are revealed those that are against the fluidity of gender. Castañeda (2007) discusses the illogical need for a heteronormative defense based on segregative attitudes. He explains that homophobia not only seeks to reach the victim of the aggressor but seeks to reinforce heterosexual supremacy by reaffirming his superiority and naturalness. Therefore, homophobia has as its primary function to normalize heterosexuality and place it in a position of moral superiority, which only comes into existence after the reduction of the non-similar.

From the victim’s perspective, homophobia is interpreted in another way, which Castañeda (2007) defines as “internalized homophobia”. The author explains that most homosexuals in today’s society, even those who accept themselves as such, carry with them a permanent existential conflict, which leads them to live a certain affective and social isolation, in addition to a possible continuous effort in trying to prove their worth, since most of the time, they are understood as “deficient”. It may seem inconsistent for homosexuals to reject homosexuality, but due to the constant battle of internalized feelings, some individuals start to reject themselves as a way to satisfy the demands of the majority:

“ [...] it often happens, for example, that homosexuals are suspicious of their own desires or feelings: they may seem perverse, dirty, or even dangerous. [...] The fact that a person systematically rejects his own desires or feelings will, in time, end up affecting his relationships with others and with himself, [...] and even his physical health. (CASTAÑEDA, 2007, p. 148)

Objects of aggression, jokes, and continuous devaluations, individuals who do not conform to binary standards, become psychologically and physically vulnerable, in the face of an oppressive scenario in which they are victims. Castañeda (2007) explains that, unable to fight back to physical and emotional abuse, the victims often internalize a sense of anger, and eventually go beyond it in the form of violence to others or themselves, developing depression and self-destructive behaviors. According to Toledo (2012), attempted suicide by teenagers and young homosexuals is extremely high and are three times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth, with 30% of all suicides that occur in adolescence may be strongly related to the issues of sexual identity and gender. For Cooklin and

Barns (1994), in addition to suicide - an extreme measure of self-destruction - other risk behaviors, for example, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, appear as a possible implementation of life, or as an escape from rigid systems to real existence and cover up the violence that society suffers.



## 02. The design role in the social dynamics

### How Design permeates life in society

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In the book “Design for a Complex World”, Cardoso (2016) contextualizes the appearance of the designer in the period just after the first industrial revolution, when the series production of the products provided a very limited variety of styles. As a strategy to stand out in the competitive market, companies started to invest in the aesthetic and formal study of their products. In this scenario, the design professional emerges as responsible for developing this activity, in search of innovative ideas.

As a consequence of the more authentic approach to the production of material goods, the consumer society now has access to an increasing range of products and their variations, which, in turn, have progressively become more segmented, categorized, and targeted to niches increasingly specific audiences. From this, the production of design acquired characteristics much broader than just meeting the needs of the consumer market and began to carry symbolic and immaterial qualities, which are able to perform social functions by distinguishing and relating the user to certain groups and social stereotypes.

According to Silva et al. (2019), the close relationship between material culture and the context of life in society is a consequence of the constant interaction of the human being with the environment that surrounds them, where there are inserted a series of material goods endowed with symbolic charge – design outcomes – that go beyond their isolated object aspects and behave as issuers of messages with different interpretations. The latter are based on subjective aspects of the individual repertoire and cultural background of the interlocutor user and arise as a response from the sensory system, which is stimulated by the feeling of something already experienced and lived scenarios, by the transmission of familiarity and confidence, by the visual aesthetic aspect or by the reflection of the self-image you want to build. In other words, the artifacts produced by design are not neutral, they talk about the conceptions of the world, of the hierarchy of values, of social relations, of views about identities and differences.

If Design and its production are active participants in the dynamics of social interactions, and this, as previously seen, has its collective values and behaviors advocated by stereotypes, for Safar and Dias (2016) it is understandable that Design

makes frequent use of resources derived from segregative ideals already rooted in a society or group, such as heteronormativity, and therefore are responsible for its strengthening through the construction of material culture. The designer, as a programmer of this experience and a social being, is not immune to this behavioral influence, and must, therefore, be the holder of knowledge that allows him to reproduce intangible values in society through visual language in the artifacts produced and consumed by individuals, who do not strengthen the maintenance of values contrary to freedom of choice and expression. As the International Gender Design Network (2016) expresses:

“ *What is true for most of us, is also true for designers, both male and female: we cannot simply ‘shed our skin’ [...]. Not only do we have to be aware of this social genderization in design, we also have to comment on it in a critical, open and public way, and in so doing we have to strive for change towards accepting and supporting diversity, towards a gender-sensitive and gender-appropriate design in both theory and practice (IGDN, 2016)*

Therefore, addressing gender-related themes in design means questioning and rethinking situations in which design perpetuates stereotypes only as a marketing convenience, and exploring the designer as a powerful social instrument, capable of denaturalizing the materiality that surrounds us, and not only as a passive replicator of sexist assumptions. As Miller (2013) supports:

“ *The less we are aware of them, the more [the artifacts] can determine our expectations, setting the stage, and ensuring appropriate behavior, without being subject to questioning. They determine what happens as we are unaware of their ability to do so. (MILLER, 2013, p. 78-79)*

In this sense, the importance of social discussion linked to design is understood, seeking to better understand the contemporary scenario, through a closer look at its real needs, and to create alternative solutions to reach a more plural society, in which no portion of the population feels in a situation of non-belonging or adequacy.





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## 2.1 Construction of gender through design

### How design supports gender stereotypes

When discussing gender differences in the social sphere, their consequences are not limited to biological distinctions between men and women, as they reach questions about sexuality and all its varied range of possibilities. In design, according to Portinari (2016), one of the reasons that lead its practice to transpose these opposing characteristics in products, is the historical hierarchy established between men and women supported by patriarchy. If, on the one hand, the woman was seen socially as a being with a fragile, emotional, and dependent body, not ideal for intellectual activities and requiring physical strength, the man, on the other hand, maintained his position as being active, virile and capable to control emotions and act rationally. When transposing such stereotypical descriptions of the sexes to the visual aspect of the product, one usually finds characteristics described as ornate, delicate, and curvaceous attributed exclusively to products aimed at the female audience or avoided when there is a need to express grandeur, power, and respect. And in this case, like the complete opposite, the so-called “masculine” forms present firmness, grandeur, right angles, straight planes, and few ornamental details.

To exemplify the materialization of this dichotomy, I will initially use Product Design as the object of study of this first comparative approach, since the visual aspects related to consumer goods in this aspect of Design are more obvious, given its total marketing character, and for this reason, they can elucidate more easily gender technologies - devices that work in the construction and reinforcement of heteronormativity.

There are exclusive products on the market or designated to the public of specific gender, which differ only by their aesthetic appeal, with very similar or totally equal functions. Among the products for personal care, Portinari (2016) analyzes the brand of blades Gillette, in its Body and Venus versions, aimed at male and female audiences, respectively. She explains the choice by remembering that there are traditionally differences between blades for each audience. However, these differences are usually found in the intended use, which would imply that men use them for shaving, while women would use them on other parts of the body such as legs and armpits. This means that gender-related differences are translated into the product due to the social assumptions surrounding body care techniques. In addition to conventional razors, Gillette started to market a male line with the name Body, when understanding that men also shave other parts of the body besides the face. Despite a more attentive look at the wills of body care regardless of gender, the brand continues to offer product options, with the same function, differentiated by sex and supported by stereotyped visual signs.



Gender-specific products. Same function, different targets

<https://www.rds.it/giochi/con-rds-e-gillette-venus-vinci-gli-eventi-rds-piu-cool-dellestate>

<https://twitter.com/GilletteIndia/status/623827575429685248/photo/1>

In the product intended for men, it is possible to notice the predominance of black color, which is often used in products for this target audience and it is not by chance that the impression of its color is sober and strong. In the female product, the colors follow a more illuminated pattern, with a lot of white and pastel tones, which are commonly associated with lightness. In addition to the product itself, packaging plays an important differentiating role, since visual language associates male objects with metals, and female objects with water, to further reinforce the contract between manly and delicate. (PORTINARI, 2016, p. 821)

As an alternative approach to the one chosen by Gillette, in order to contribute to a more receptive to gender diversity society, the Finnish designer Saana Hellsten,

through her master's dissertation, idealized a project that proposed to create a packaging concept that neutralized the gender of blades offered on the market. As a result of his research, Hellsten created the conceptual brand Basic, which seeks to unify the visual identity of its product line and offer consumers the possibility to choose the product for the function it will perform, and not for the gender for which it is designated. This initiative shows that choosing a design that is receptive to gender diversity does not mean considering everyone as equal or ignoring biological characteristics but exploring the various needs that really impact the performance of a particular product or service, understanding that differences exist and are important.



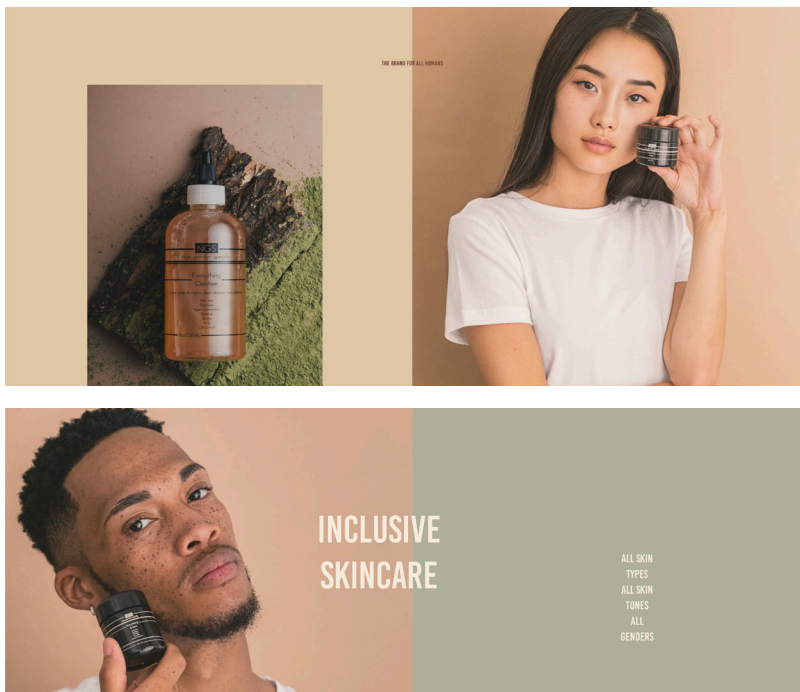
*Gender-neutral product. Razor designed by Saana Hellsten.*

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/21980783/BASIK>

The ability of design to question standards, and not to serve the maintenance of hegemonic order, is characterized by Ribeiro (2016) as a “destabilizing potential” since both the product and its user are inserted in symbolic disputes and serve as resources for the affirmation of new forms of representation, and for the reconstruction of the knowledge we share in society. In addition to Hellsten’s initiative, this potential has been explored in the marketing approach of other consumer goods, pointed out by journalist Simons (2018), in an article for the British newspaper *The Independent*, as a growing contemporary trend towards “non-binary direction”.

Simons (2018) highlights the adoption of the “gender-neutral” concept - not distinguishable by gender - by the beauty industry, among other market segments, since the first was for a long time, and it still is responsible for severe gender divisions, when offering products different for men and women only as a marketing approach, similarly as seen in the example of Gillette blades. She explains that the problem does not lie in the existence of different options, such as blue and

pink, or that men cannot be interested in the pink product, and women cannot choose the blue product, and vice versa, the restrictive binary categorization is the problem. In order to avoid this categorization, some companies position themselves in the market as actively unisex brands, such as the Non Gender Specific and Panacea, or simply do not encourage the maintenance of stereotypes through neutral packaging and the non-categorization of their products in “for men” and “for women, as is the case with Aesop, Allies of Skin and Asarai to name a few. From a scientific perspective, dermatologist Anjali Mahto, in an interview with Simons (2018), reaffirms the validity in the adoption of the gender-neutral concept, explaining that in the case of skincare products, even though men and women have biological differences that influence physical aspects of the skin, the only important considerations are the skin type of each individual and the particular issue you want to treat.



NGS. Gender-neutral skincare brand.  
<https://www.nongenderspecific.com>

At the Fresh Talk event, promoted by the National Museum of Women in the Arts, designer and writer Alice Rawsthorn discusses the urge for Design to react to the needs and desires of the contemporary world, and since it seeks to redefine gender norms, she proposes another path that aims at multiplicity, different from gender-neutral or unisex that opts for neutrality. According to Rawsthorn, it is possible to reflect on the possible gender identities when defining a polyphonic Design language, which explores several color palettes, textures, shapes, symbols and narratives, representing a mixed visual vocabulary, that can be interpreted according to the desire of each individual.

An example of the application of polyphonic language, this time from the perspective of Interior Design, according to Rawsthorn, can be seen in the project “Agender”,



by the British artist Faye Toogood, where fashion sectors were designed with gender fluidity for the stores. Selfridge departments in London and Manchester, in 2015. In the concept of the project, which seeks to provoke conversation about gender targeting in retail, designed by Toogood, products from all segments, fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, from over 40 brands, were stripped of any branding or displayed in garment bags and brown boxes, to democratize the merchandising and remove any indication of their target gender. In the moodboard created, the artist chooses a palette of pink tones combined with vulcanized rubber and latex, for the first floor. At the upper level, materials such as horsehair steel and concrete create a darker environment, although both spaces use the same metal rails and tube lighting. Toogood justifies to the choice of materials, in interview with Howarth (2015) to Dezeen, saying:

“ The materials used in the Agender houses [...] have a primal, raw feel. It's about trying to stop back the superficial layers of polish and branding, and by doing so reveal something innate.

As part of the campaign, the mannequins, which had not been removed from the window since the store opened in 1909, were replaced by gender-ambiguous garments draped over straps, stacked against poles, and hung from furniture pieces.



Faye Toogood's gender-neutral retail in London

<https://www.dezeen.com/2015/03/14/faye-toogood-agender-gender-neutral-retail-space-pop-up-selfridges-london/>



We could think that Design, following the function and needs of those to whom it is directed, would always be naturally democratic, plural, and free of assumptions. But if that were the case, this constant reiteration of deconstruction of binary patterns would not be necessary. Therefore, as seen in the examples presented above, it is necessary for Design to find new ways to allow individuals to express an increasing fluidity and multiplicity of nuances of gender identities, not only in easier fields of customization such as fashion and graphic art but in objects and spaces too. However, it is important to understand that refuting standards does not necessarily mean moving towards freedom of expression. Depending on the approach, it is possible to further emphasize the role of the stereotypical notion of gender, as in the example brought by Portinari (2016), described below.

In April 2016, during the Wave Festival in Rio, an award that celebrates new creations in the market, the Fischer Agency was awarded third place in the Design category, with the advertising campaign entitled “The Badass Shampoo Bottle”, which promoted a shampoo packaging for men inspired by beer bottles. The campaign associates men with activities that require physical strength, such as cutting firewood, and represents the action of buying shampoo as something traditionally feminine, and therefore a joke among men, when they need to perform such activity. In this case, the packaging inspired by beer, which is also part of the imaginary of the things that a man should like, appears as a “solution” to this “problem” and allows the consumer to feel more masculine when purchasing a product with the opposite theme the one considered feminine. According to Portinari (2016), the creation of this type of product demonstrates that Design is capable of not only maintaining stereotypes but can also contribute to the user to reaffirm what they want to associate with themselves.



The Badass Shampoo Bottle  
<https://designculture.com.br/badass-primeiro-shampoo-masculino-em-garrafa-de-cerveja>

Despite the misplaced social perspective represented by the Fischer Agency approach, in addition to the judgment of negative values, this case allows us to raise the reflection of the importance of having non-binary representativeness in the market, or in any other spectrum of society, which normalizes characteristics that go beyond limits of heteronormative patterns. Because in the same way that a heterosexual individual feels empowered when purchasing a product that represents them or feels comfortable in an environment that does not oppress them, a person who does not follow the same pattern must also feel represented as much in the products that they buy, as in the spaces they frequent.

The deconstruction of the current social paradigm oriented by binary regulations - the recurring status quo - is not a simple and immediate process. Fresh Talk hosts Susan Fisher Sterling and Lorie Mertes liken the challenge of gender freedom in Design to the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, the successful law that protects people with disabilities and forces every building to be accessible to wheelchair users. In order for the draft bill to materialize, Sterling and Mertes recall that architecture, interior design, signage, access, and accessibility standards had to be completely redesigned. And in this process, every little change is valid, because even through small-scale projects a language is formed, and from then on, the scenario perpetuates the first idea of what is “normal”.

The thesis relies on what was presented about the production of Design and gender technologies, to consider the gender-neutral concept or the polyphonic Design language as appropriate to represent the initiatives of breaking social assumptions related to gender, through the practice of Interior Design. There is the definition of neutrality, which is being considered as an epistemological contribution in this work, as the democratic approach, without any gender categorization, which allows the self-sense to emerge from the people themselves and not from the culture.

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## 2.2 Deconstruction through design

### General-neutral spaces

Concerning the production of Design, it was seen earlier that this plays an important role in social dynamics as a sign creator, which impacts the way society, and its groups are seen. More specifically about Interior and Spatial Design, although personal preferences and differences exist, and these are important, the spaces are arranged through elements, shaped not only according to the interests and possibilities of those who use them, but mainly due to the need to adapt to certain groups and standards - gender is one of them. This happens because space culturally represents the idea of identity, individual or of a group, and it's not only influenced but also influences individuals.

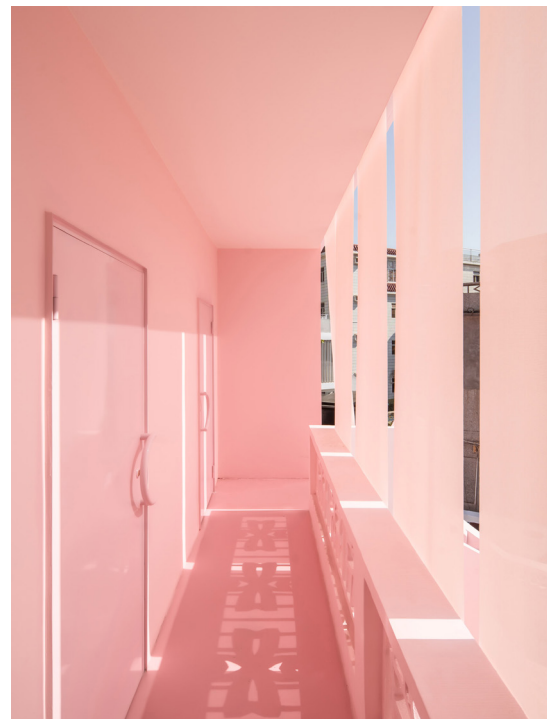
In the composition of a space, several elements, such as materiality, color, and shapes, to mention a few, indicate the gender for which they are intended. In an article published by the Curbed (2014) website, it is argued that the problem of gendered spaces is not the elements that compose it, but the use of the terms “male” and “female” to characterize them when they have nothing to do with the biological differences of sex. For Curbed (2014), the use of these words reinforces the old-fashioned false idea of an existent rule of what men and women should like:

“Decor bloggers, shelter editor, design writer: don't type the words “masculine” or “manly” or “feminine” or “ladylike” or “girly” when describing spaces. Don't use any other words that prescribe gender to furniture or interiors. The use of the words [...] harks back to one of the very first lessons children learn at school: what boys do and what girls do. This is one of those parts of culture that it's very good to train yourself out of or be trained out of, or never learn in the first place.

This approach is unquestionably valid and is a further step towards weakening stigmas that have an impact on society. However, as the article itself mentions, these stigmas are reproduced for so long that they are rooted and unfortunately are already part of the culture. And just dealing with the terminology change individually may not be enough to change a resistant paradigm. Proof of this is how easy it is to imagine “obvious” characteristics of a male or female space instantly, or the other way around, to see the image of a space and from its features to assume which gender group this is intended for. Gender stereotypes in space exist, deliberately or not.

In a project for the 2017 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism / Architecture in Shenzhen, the Chinese studio Wutopia Lab renovated two houses in Dameisha Village, an urban slum, aiming to explore social constructs around gender in Architecture. According to Block (2018), the “His House”, which represented the man, was painted blue, while the “Her House”, which represented the woman, was painted pink, colors that are usually used to represent the male and female in various spheres of graphic symbology. The interior of the houses - temporary installations - also represented the dichotomy. The man's house was dark and dramatic, while the woman's house illustrated sensitivity and delicacy. The project, by addressing the concept of gender stereotypes, and its representation being cliché - exactly what is expected from binarism - only reinforces the idea that some symbols, such as pink and blue, are already part of the heteronormative culture and will remain part as long as they are assimilated to gender or other stereotyped differences. Therefore,

it is understood that it is not enough that Design approaches cease only to be “named” in stereotyped ways, because they themselves already are preclusive. It is necessary that there is first a democratic and broad view about gender and its most varied nuances, and consequently the spaces that represent them.



*His house and Her house by Wutopia Lab*

<https://www.dezeen.com/2018/03/23/wutopia-lab-pink-blue-houses-masculine-feminine-shenzhen-china/>





His house and Her House by Wutopia Lab  
<https://www.archdaily.com/890513/his-house-and-her-house-wutopia-lab>

## 2.2.1 Case Studies

### Gender-neutral retail

Specifically, in commercial spaces, it is common to find signs that distinguish gender, whether through the products it offers, specific sections and departments, advertising, and design itself - colors, materials, furniture.



*The dichotomy between retail spaces targeted to men and women, but both from the same brand. On the left the men's store (Noir, le lis), and on the right the women's (Le lis blanc).*

<https://www.marcosproenca.com.br/noirle-lis/>

<https://www.fernandamarques.com.br/le-lis-blanc-shopping-cidade-jardim>

As a way of representing any possible interpretation of man and woman in space, some genderless retail innovations reject common masculine and feminine stereotypes and connect consumers through common interests rather than through gender-specific elements. While the concept of gender-neutral in fashion retail is nothing new, in addition to emerging brands, traditional brands such as Harrods are adapting this bold vision to their spaces. All examples presented below appeal to consumers' core values and replace gender-specific approaches with others that convey a gender sense of diversity and community. They were chosen because they represent different approaches and illustrate the multiplicity of options beyond the stereotyped monotony of gender-neutral Design.

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## > Say No Mo

The beauty salon and cocktail bar in **Kyiv**, Ukraine, was designed in **2020** by the interior design studio **Balbek Bureau** to avoid gender-stereotyped decor features that are often present in beauty-dedicated spaces. According to Levy (2020), the project is a renovation of two floors of an early 20th-century building, and its most striking characteristic is the blend of concrete surfaces and gold accents.

The look for inspiration for the concept happened in an inverse direction in this project. The Ukrainian studio analyzed a great number of beauty salons in its home country and worldwide, identifying the main repeating situational elements, such as colors, textures, graphics, and design. Instead of using the references as possible additions to space, the designers tried not to repeat them in their project, said the studio's founder, Salva Baibek, to Levy. Strongly aiming to avoid gender stereotypes, the salon's name is also related to that motto, and it's a reinterpretation of the phrase "say no more", that refuses any biased ideas. In the studio's own words:

“Say No Mo” to the traditional point of view on designing beauty salons, gender distinction, ordinary solution, and “yes” to the flight of imagination, creativity, and aesthetics.

Right at the entrance to the hall, framing the reception desk is a grand concrete archway that looks as if it was shattered. The purpose of this aesthetic was to serve as a metaphor for the “broken stereotypes in the beauty industry”. Concrete is applied to the floor and the different counters throughout the space. This reception area is also a small bar, accompanied by a simple yet cozy lounge, where guests can wait while having drinks. Further on, the atmosphere of the environment changes, with









### Attractive interior atmosphere

[https://www.dezeen.com/2020/07/20/say-no-mo-kyiv-salon-gender-neutral/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=bottom\\_block\\_1](https://www.dezeen.com/2020/07/20/say-no-mo-kyiv-salon-gender-neutral/?li_source=LI&li_medium=bottom_block_1)

the replacement of concrete with white tiles, which cover the floor and walls and create the pedicure area. In this area reminiscent of a calm and aseptic approach to a spa, cream armchairs and tables accompany the serene atmosphere, while a gold-painted sink at the center of the pedicure station stands out, and adds a refined touch, to complete the composition of light tones and contrast accents.

At the back of the ground floor is the bar area. All the walls around the bar were covered with golden metallic panels, which cover the roughness and imperfections of the building's original walls. The polished and smooth appearance of the panels contrasts with the rawness of the central counter made of concrete, and with the muteness of the pale-gray stool seats that surrounds it. Next to the cocktail bar is a room dedicated to manicure and nail art, which takes a less sober approach when being "painted" by blue lights that wash the entire space.

Following contemporary trends in content promotion on social networks, Levy (2020) says that on the landing of the main stairway is a "hammock-like swing chair where the visitor can snap photos for Instagram". Down the stairs, in the basement level, there are "minimally-finished" zones for hairdressing and make-up workshops. Despite the very limited choice of materials and colors, the design idealized by Balbek Bureau articulates all the elements so well that, at first, a space that could become very monotonous, is extremely attractive and inviting.

## > Harrods: Toy Kingdom

In August **2012**, the **Londoner** department store Harrods opened its first gender-neutral toy department, which was also the world's first, designed by the interior architecture studio **Shed**.

According to Chalcraft (2012), the products displayed were not grouped by what would appeal to either boys or girls, but by specific themes. The designers were commissioned to create a department that could offer to children a magical and fun experience, so they decided to create four different themes to awaken creativity: an enchanted forest, a circus-themed section, a candy shop, and a miniature toys world.

An interesting aspect of this project is that there was no color restriction aiming to “neutralize differences”. The fixed furniture of the environment painted in pistachio green mentions the more traditional character of Harrods but works only as a background for products in vibrant colors. After all, girls don't just like pink and boys also like colorful things. As a way of reinforcing the democratic character of the store, there are no labels, and signages indicating the gender of sections or products' categories.

In the case of approaching this project, in general, no attempt was made to achieve neutrality by excluding elements or products traditionally generated. The designers opted for an exciting mix of colors and shapes, which would allow children to feel free to have fun without old-fashioned standards.



*Fun and gender-neutral interior atmosphere.*

<https://www.dezeen.com/2012/08/01/shed-design-create-gender-neutral-toy-department-at-harrods/>

Harrods gender-neutral toy department  
<https://www.retail-week.com/department-stores/harrods-opens-doors-to-its-new-toy-kingdom/5038797.article?authentic=1>



His house and Her House by Wullop Lab  
<https://www.archdaily.com/869636/his-house-and-her-house-wullop-lab>



## > ETQ Amsterdam

The gender-neutral design approach chosen by the studio **Jos van Dijk**, to transform a canalside shop in **Amsterdam**, Netherlands, in **2016**, into a multi-brand store for footwear brand ETQ, was to avoid any possible gender interpretation from the interior elements, creating a very mute and sober background for the clothing pieces.



*Minimal gender-neutral interior atmosphere.*

<https://www.dezeen.com/2016/01/02/studio-jos-van-dijk-etq-amsterdam-shoe-store-minimal-interior-sneaker-lined-wall/>

According to Morby (2016), initially, the project was supposed to be a mono-brand store to ETQ, however, during the design process, the Dutch brand gained so much interest from other high-end fashion brands that they decided to switch the sneaker store to a space for different brands.

Besides the gender-neutral approach, the design concept focuses on minimalism and honesty in details and materials. The architect van Dijk tells Morby (2016), that the most challenging was achieving the purity of the space, getting rid of all unnecessary details. On the ground floor, some walls and ceiling are painted in white, also white concrete blocks are used as displays to accessories and magazines, and garments are hung from thin metal rails anchored into the rough concrete wall. The polished concrete floor extends to the basement level. There, the





sneakers are displayed in 200 rods in a grid-like pattern, that almost disappear on the wall. All the furniture, counters, seats and tables, are made of concrete, some of them weighing over 2,000 kilograms. For this reason, Morby (2016) explains that the building's floor had to be reinforced and strengthened. Fitting rooms and the staff area are housed within additional concrete volumes and are subtly merged with the floor.

At last, despite its neutral character, both in terms of gender and colors and materials, the elegant design and the good articulation of different textures and finishes of the same material - concrete - create a stripped-back space with a clean and exclusive appearance. The disposition of the products and their rigorous selection - low density - bring an exhibition-like atmosphere and authenticity to the store.

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## 2.2.2 The new generation notion of retail

Gender neutrality and other important issues, such as social inclusivity, and environmental sustainability, are recently getting more attention, since the “new generation”, better known as Gen Z<sup>[3]</sup>, according to McKinsey (2019), is the generation so far who is most concerned and engaged with such issues. Considering this trend, in an article for Vogue Business, Maguire (2020) explains that brands are investing in gender-neutral retail spaces to engage Gen Z consumers. Gender-neutral retail is not a new trend or simply a niche anymore.

On 9 October of 2020, the sports brand Adidas opened its gender-neutral concept store, in London's Soho District, uniquely aimed at the 18 to 24-years-old customers. The brand's vice president Chris Walsh tells Maguire (2020) that for Adidas it makes more sense to display items by sports or theme, rather than gender, allowing customers to explore the full range available and choose solely based on their taste. In Walsh's words:

“ People don't want to be defined by what someone tells them is right for them or isn't. It used to be that pastel colors were very gender-specific but we don't see that anymore. We just produce the best shoes and allow people to adopt them however they want to.

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**[3].** People born from 1995 to 2010 [...] a hypercognitive generation very comfortable with collecting and cross-referencing many sources of information and with integrating virtual and offline experiences.

# HE SHE ME

Agender  
/adʒendə/

Def: without a gender (nongendered, genderless, agender; neutrois);  
moving between genders or with a fluctuating gender identity  
(genderfluid); third gender or omni-gendered; includes those who  
do not place a name to their gender.

This new generation of consumers represents the beginning of a change in society's mentality, albeit slowly, towards freedom of expression and free interpretation of gender. In a 2020 survey, the website Vice (2020) unveiled that 41% of the of Gen Z interviewed reported identifying as not heterosexual, not cis-gender, and not rigidly masculine or feminine – gender-neutral spectrum. This mentality is translating in the way they behave within the commercial environment: 56% of Generation Z consumers already ignore gender labels while shopping, and “cross-buy” – consuming products outside of their gender. In this way, retailers must be aware of the young generation's mentality in not wanting to think about themselves or brands inside of boxes or binaries.

Despite the trend towards greater democratization of consumption habits, Maguire (2020) explains that, if on the one hand women already feel free to ignore gendered signs in retail spaces and enter the men's section, the vast majority of men are not yet feeling at ease in the same way. In order to facilitate and naturalize that journey to men and women, in cases where the shop owners don't have creative control over the products they offer, such as multi-brand stores, creating synergy between gendered products is an effective way to challenge the consumers' perception of what is a women's product and what is men's product, living it implied to free interpretation.

Understanding Gen Z as the target public that wants a space where they can express themselves more authentically, and designing sales spaces that fill this requirement, automatically creates a sense of inclusivity that goes beyond this specific age group and reaches out to all gender-nonconforming customers. Therefore, to adopt the commercial approach that conveys Gen Z consumers' expectations means being up-to-date to the contemporary perception of retail, while contributing to breaking gender stereotypes in retail.





Prada - Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan  
<https://www.prada.com/it/it/pradaSphere/places/galleria-1913.html>





# Chapter 02

## The Narrative of Retail Design

Retail design encompasses multiple elements and achieving a successful one requires the articulation of all the details in a holistic approach. This chapter will take us through the character of each part of a store, and how they work to convey a message, from the moment the client approaches the façade to the proper shopping experience inside. For the capability of expressing a concept in the most efficient way, the flagship typology will be unveiled.

## 03.The store's surroundings

### A place in the world

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The interaction between consumer and store/brand starts in the public space, before any shopping experience in the internal space. As tactics used to appeal to consumers, Retail Design communicates, at first, through the facade, signs, and external kinesthetic perceptions. Therefore, it is not enough to work only on the internal elements without taking into account the place where the store is located, the time, and the society to which it belongs. The consistency between what happens inside the store and the external space - the urban space, in this case - makes the narrative much richer and compelling and blur the boundaries between the two. Therefore, it is valuable to understand how the store interacts with the macro scale of its surroundings, then to explore more closely the individual's perception of the visual aspects of the building's facade in the composition of the urban landscape.

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### 3.1 The urban scale

The city is a living system



*Different urban commercial areas. Milan on the left and São Paulo on the right.*

<https://www.in-lombardia.it/it/turismo-in-lombardia/milano-turismo/milano-quadrilatero-della-moda>

<https://casaunique.com.br/rua-oscar-freire-lojas-restaurantes-cafes-praca-e-boas-compras-nos-jardins/>



The landscape cannot be described objectively, because it characterizes everything that is perceived by our senses and, therefore, it is changeable according to the interpretation of each person regarding their perceptions. Santos (1991) describes it as a set of elements from different moments in history. And according to Hardt (2000), the landscape can be interpreted as a relationship of the interdependence of natural and anthropic elements - built by the human being - that in a given time, space and social moment form a unique and inseparable set, which when in a state of balance, generate an aesthetic of unity.

In the academic dissertation entitled “Commercial environments and the influence of visual design”, the author Aguiar (2016), based on the concept of Santos (1991) and Hardt (2000), conceptualizes the urban landscape as a reflection of the relationship between man and nature. The urban landscape is the art of making the various buildings, streets and spaces that mix and make up a city coherent and visually organized.

According to Aguiar (2016), the way the landscape is projected, and articulated is socially constructed as the individual or collective experience develops in the environment. Urban landscapes, on a large and small scale, are also environments, individual or a grouping of several, and for this reason, they should not be judged only by what we see, but by what we appropriate as similar to our personal identity, and by what we feel. Under the same definition of space, the interpretation of the image of a landscape, which is the result of the relationship between the observer and his environment, depends on the individual characteristics of each person, but also on social and cultural factors.

The image of the city, for Lynch (1999) registers and highlights all human activities and, therefore, represents the main characteristics of the community it represents. And this image is strongly influenced by the architecture aimed at the commercial sector, which promotes, in a way, an official vision of capitalist society. Therefore, Aguiar (2016) characterizes the urban landscape as one of the elements of vital importance for the understanding of cities and their structure, consequently, of retail spaces.

The functionality of urban architecture is the main characteristic considered when studying the dynamics of a city. However, according to Minami and Guimarães Júnior (2001), in addition to the basic functions of housing, work, circulation, and leisure, the aesthetic function of architecture - building's façade - must be considered, to stimulate visually pleasing sensations to citizens, since it is through the landscape that cities connect with their inhabitants and visitors. As Silva (1997) describes:

“ [...] the good appearance of cities has important psychological effects on the population, balancing, due to the pleasant and suggestive view of harmonious sets and elements, the neurotic burden that everyday life puts on people who will live, live together and survive. (SILVA, 1997, p. 273)

The aesthetic aspect is as important for the services that use it, as a device to stand out in the landscape, as for the population that, according to Aguiar, has their quality of life and well-being influenced by it, since they are directly linked to the visual quality of the urban landscape. Similar to the tourist potential of cities, which grows in proportion to the beauty of its landscape, its conservation, and maintenance. Cullen (1984) says that the landscape must evoke positive emotions in those who live it so that they feel part of it because a monotonous, uncharacteristic, or amorphous landscape does not fulfill its mission. After all, a good image of the city reinforces the depth of relationships and intensifies human experience and action. For this reason, the visual organization of the urban landscape, especially the one built together with the buildings, must be able to be clearly read, so that the citizen can introduce their own meanings and relationships, turning the city into a set of notable and unmistakable spaces. To Aguiar (2016):

“ The clarity of the urban landscape, that is its legibility, is a major factor in understanding the city. The identification by all its agents of their own characteristics and their own organization according to a certain pattern indicates the ease of reading the city. An easy-to-read environment is, therefore, an environment with good readability, easy to identify. (AGUIAR, 2016, p. 32)

Although the legibility of the space is not the only attribute to be considered when exploring the aesthetic aspects of the buildings and facades that create a landscape, Aguiar (2016) describes it as a very important factor for the organization and fundamental for the urban scenario. The observer needs to easily read the environment in which they find themselves in search of references and orientations, which help them to build the perception about space. Regarding the clarity in the perception of the urban environment, through the reading of symbols and stimuli, according to Lynch (1999), a clear image also facilitates the speed in the displacements that a person needs to make, and provides comfort and well-being and the important feeling of safety:

“ Undoubtedly, a clear image allows us to get around faster and easier. However, an orderly environment can do more than that; it can serve as a vast system of references, an organizer of the activity of belief or knowledge. (LYNCH, 1999, p. 4)

Lynch (1999) explains that every individual reads a landscape always in search of references and guidelines, because it is through this reading that they mentally build the image of a given space in the broad urban scenario. Thus, from a practical point of view, to facilitate orientation within the urban landscape, the image of the city must have a sufficient number of points of reference that allow the individual to express his will and make his own choices, without having to make an effort too much to interpret any context or situation.

About the complex image of the city, which is constantly evolving and changing, Aguiar (2016) introduces “imaginability” as an indispensable quality in the perceptual/visual world. According to her, a pleasant landscape has several basic properties, such as meaning or expressiveness, sensory pleasure, rhythm, stimulus, choice, and imaginability, which is a physical quality related to the identity and structure attributes in the mental image. In other words, it is a characteristic that allows any observer to evoke a strong image, either by color or disposition, which facilitates the creation of mental images extremely useful to the environment. This characteristic becomes extremely relevant, since a highly imaginable city is inviting to look at, stimulates all the senses, is expressive, and gives the individual the power of choice. To build democratic urban scenarios, where there is a great diversity of experiences to be enjoyed, Lynch (1999) brings the physical clarity of the image as the main responsible for allowing the meaning to develop without interfering in our perception.

The contents of urban images in terms of their physical form are classified by Lynch (1999) into five main elements: roads, limits, neighborhoods, nodal points, and landmarks. Among them, for this study, the latter is the most relevant. They are the external reference points in a city, which end up serving as a starting point for the location, but which were not always built to fulfill this purpose, as a building with striking or eccentric characteristics that are easy to identify. Therefore, in an urban setting, a commercial establishment and its visual marketing strategies can often constitute a reference.



MASP - Distinctive landmark of São Paulo  
[https://www.archdaily.com/537063/ad-classics-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-masp-lina-bo-bardi/53e8adab-c07a80388e000d8-a4-classics-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-masp-lina-bo-bardi-photo?next\\_project=no](https://www.archdaily.com/537063/ad-classics-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-masp-lina-bo-bardi/53e8adab-c07a80388e000d8-a4-classics-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-masp-lina-bo-bardi-photo?next_project=no)



## 3.2 Visual communication

### Speaking through images

Communication means transmitting information, with persuasion, playfully, for prevention, education, or even in the sense of explaining or promoting a new product. According to Aguiar (2016), we can find the genesis of communication in the cave paintings made by primitive men. But it was from 1950 that visual communication gained more prominence, being disseminated through different communication channels so that messages reached the observer in an increasingly clear and continuous way. This shows that the human has always been connected with visual expression, which sought to graphically represent verbal language, and which served as a starting point for a communication system necessary for the development of human activities.



*Proeminent visual communication in the city. On the left London, and on the right Tokyo.*

*Source: author's personal archive*

According to Cury (2004) In the study of the commercial buildings' facades, the "external character" of visual communication, called external communication, which are forms of advertising seen outside consumers' houses, is explored. Commerce uses them for brand identification, sales promotion, visual merchandising, publicizing events, to name a few. And when it comes to visual communication, one should keep in mind the idea of the whole that it represents and not read separately each one of the elements that built it, which are: the content, text and/or image, the form, which is how the content is articulated, and the support, which is the physical materialization of what we intend to communicate. For Cury (2004), the support elements are extremely important, because they are the ones who help to "dress" product packages, transmit printed and electronic information and be a base for receiving stories. They gain strength as they spread throughout the city and create an almost chaotic mosaic of letters, images, and visual symbols, through small formats to giant elements that cover the entire length of a building.

The supports assist in the composition of the limits, indicate axes of the message's direction - frontal, horizontal, vertical - the nature of its shape - two-dimensional or three-dimensional - the material and its dimensions.

Under a broader view of the limits of its reach, Munari (2006) understands visual communication as any stimulus transmitted by anything that can be seen, from a tree to a billboard. What sets them apart is the intention of communication, which can be classified as casual or intentional. In this case, a tree that changes its foliage throughout the year, for example, does not intend to inform the transition of the seasons, but ends up warning any individual who wants to see it, even allowing a free interpretation of the message received, characterizing as casual visual communication. On the other hand, intentional visual communication is one that aims to convey a message, and in an ideal scenario, its meaning must be completely absorbed.

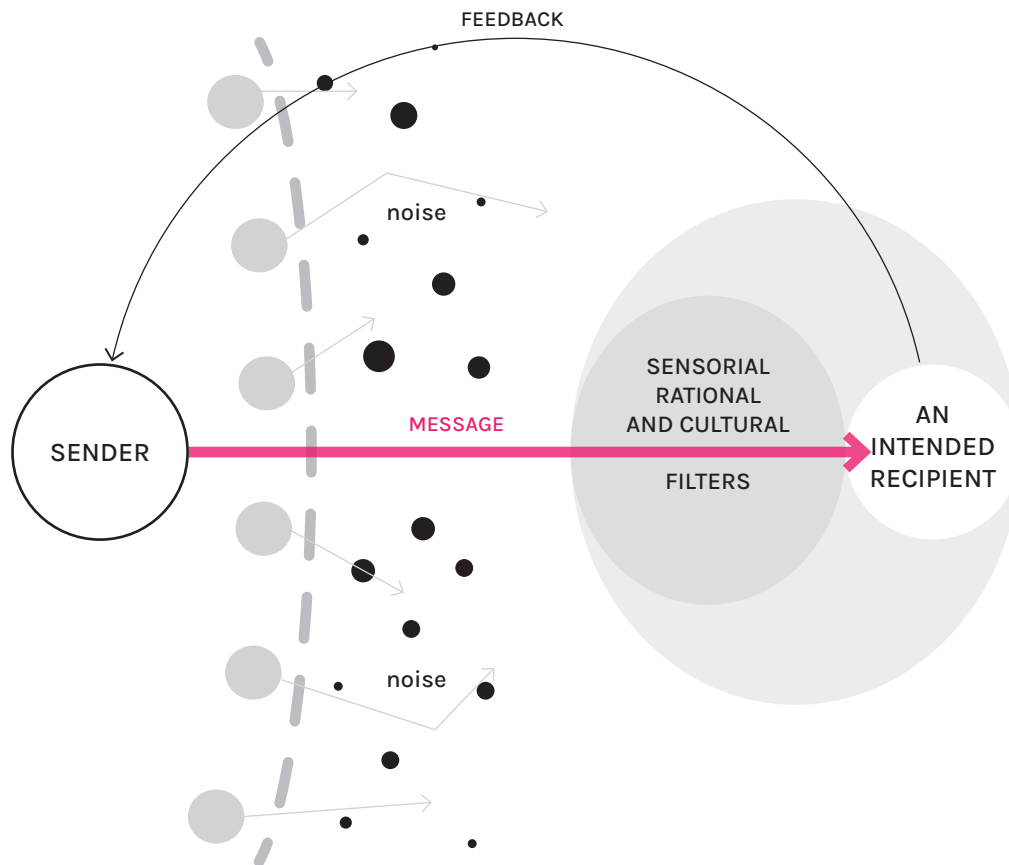
For the understanding of visual communication symbols to occur, according to Aguiar (2016), they are first perceived by the eyes and then sent to the brain where they will be analyzed and interpreted, and only then they acquire some meaning, since these symbols need to be deciphered first by the brain. Figuratively speaking, the perceived object impresses the retina, provokes emotions, and is constructive, in the sense of being equipped with symbols capable of communicating information.

Aguiar (2016) lists three main participating elements during the transmission of a sensorial message: the sender, the source of the message; the message, the subject that may contain facts, ideas, feelings, and thoughts; and the intended recipient, the target of the message. And the communication process, according to Panizza (2004), happens as follows:

“ The sender encodes the message you want to transmit by assigning a signal. The receiver receives the signal and decodes it according to the many meanings it has in its repertoire. When the receiver decodes the signal and obtains exactly the message that the sender wanted to transmit, the communication takes place. (PANIZZA, 2004, p.24)

Despite the ultimate aim of visual communication being the receiving of messages by the intended recipient, Munari (2006) affirms that this does not always happen. Because the environment in which the recipient is immersed is full of interference and noise that can alter or cancel certain messages. For example, a red light, in an environment predominantly illuminated by red lights, will be almost or totally canceled; or else a sign with a unique message, attached to other signs with the same message, will mix with them, and will no longer be exclusive and stand out. And even if the message is able to be transmitted without any interference during

the emission when arriving at the receiver, it will have to go through personal and unique filters of each individual, which can be classified as follows: sensory, focused on the individual's perceptual capacity; functional; based on the experiences of the individual; and cultural, based on the recipient's beliefs.



**LEGEND:**

1. Sender: who sends the message, the source
2. Intended recipient: the person who receives the message
3. Message: subject of communication; it may contain facts, ideas, feelings and thoughts
4. Channel: verbal or non verbal
5. Feedback: receiver's reaction or reply to the message and is directed towards the receiver

Communication process  
 Adapted from Professor Valeria M. Iannilli class (date unknown)

Once the visual message has been received, according to Munari (2006) it is possible to divide it into two categories: the information itself, conveyed by the message, and the visual support or channel, defined as the set of elements that make the message visible, as texture, shape, movement.

prominent neon-green façade - Louis Vuitton  
<https://www.designboom.com/design/virgil-abloh-new-york-louis-vuitton-pop-up-neon-green-07-11-2019/>





## 3.2.1 Visual communication in the urban landscape

### An ally to commercial activities

Visual communication started to be part of the city, according to Aguiar (2016), around 1930, the year when it started in the modern movement[4], it started to acquire more relevance from the 1950s and reached its peak in contemporary times, playing a strong impact on the image of the urban landscape in which it operates. According to Minami and Guimarães Júnior (2001), information and architecture - building's façade/envelope - must be conceived simultaneously, being the first part of the latter. The author mentions the Café de Unie project, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, even before the 1930s, which had with its architectural project the exact specification of the letters that should be stamped on the building's facade. Other examples cited, similar to the Dutch, are the projects of the expressionist architect Erich Mendelsohn, for the Schocken Warehouse in Stuttgart, 1926, and the Columbus House in Berlin, 1932, in which in the concept sketches it was already possible to identify the typographic sign.



*Columbus House on the top left, Schocken Warehouse on the bottom left, and Café de Unie on the right.*

**4 .** Modernism became the single most important new style or philosophy of architecture and design of the 20th century. It was associated with an analytical approach to the function of buildings, a strictly rational use of new materials, structural innovation and the elimination of ornament. The style became characterised by an emphasis on volume, asymmetrical compositions, and minimal ornamentation. (RIBA)

Affirming that visual communication was present in the urban scene since modernity, does not mean that there were no other visual communication formats prior to that date. However, according to Mendes (2006) modern advertising, as we know it today exposed as external media, is linked to a specific period of capitalism. With the development of this type of advertising, there was a significant increase in the presence of outside media in the urban scenario, through billboards, signs, frontlines, panels, and posters. The author classifies them according to their functions and characteristics, dividing them into five categories: identification, cooperation, dissemination, furniture, and urban furniture. Among them, the categories of identification, cooperation, and dissemination are closely related to the urban landscape.

The first has the function of informing the activities carried out in a specific space. The identification announcements are directly related to the building that houses the activity to be publicized. For this reason, the construction of the advertisement supports must take into account the visibility of the target audience, the physical characteristics of the place, the facade, and the type of product. This type of media is often used on storefronts; The second has the function of promoting products and services in the interior or exterior space of your sale space, being, therefore, a partnership between the product brand and the establishment when both are managed by two different companies. Physically, they have characteristics similar to the external identification media. And the last media type is exclusively geared towards advertising. Its main characteristics are the dimension and the message that stand out, as it needs to be apprehended quickly by the observer, and it is usually located in a strategic position.

According to Lynch (1999) external visual communication is one of the structuring elements of the urban landscape and supports the commercial building in the construction of its image as a landmark in the city. Curry (2004) argues that it allows the dissemination not only of ideas related to the primary commercial aspect of a brand, but it can also represent, for example, cultural and social ideals:

“ It is present as a legitimate spokesperson for the information of cultural, social, economic, technological, and consumer objects and values in our society. Interacts with other elements, uses them as supports, and can even become a reference point. (CURY, 2004, p.4)

Regarding the architecture of the buildings, in some cases, the facade serves only as a support for commercial disclosure disconnected from the activities of the building where the graphic element is installed. However, Minami and Guimarães Júnior (2001) recall that external communication is part of the building's design and, therefore, when possible, it should be thought of together with the architectural

project. External visual communication finds different opportunities to publicize companies and brands in the urban landscape and, thus, directly affects the consumers. Unlike other forms of communication, the visual is constantly reaching its receiver, without the need for the latter to perform any action besides observing, as described by Mendes (2006):

“ [...] a vehicle through which the target audience is compulsorily exposed. In other vehicles, such as television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the internet, on the contrary, the action of the receivers is assumed to make the communicative process material. Besides, the urban landscape is an extremely flexible means of communication, as it operates 24 hours a day, transmits messages instantly, and allows greater variability of formats and sizes for the ads. (MENDES, 2006, p. 33)

Despite the visual communication, articulated with the physical elements of a city, being extremely marketable, as mentioned above, and bringing aesthetic benefits to the composition of a dynamic and stimulating urban landscape, Aguiar (2016) explains that the human capacity for information processing it has a natural limit, which varies according to the individual and the perception channels involved, and therefore, in conditions where the stimuli exceed this processing capacity, the main information is lost and the stimuli become ineffective, because the observer will have to apply some effort to select, identify and store such a message among many others. Therefore, Minami and Guimarães Júnior (2001) add that the constituent elements of the composition of the urban landscape must be organized harmonically, so that they can provoke positive sensations in the receivers.

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### 3.3 The Store's Façade

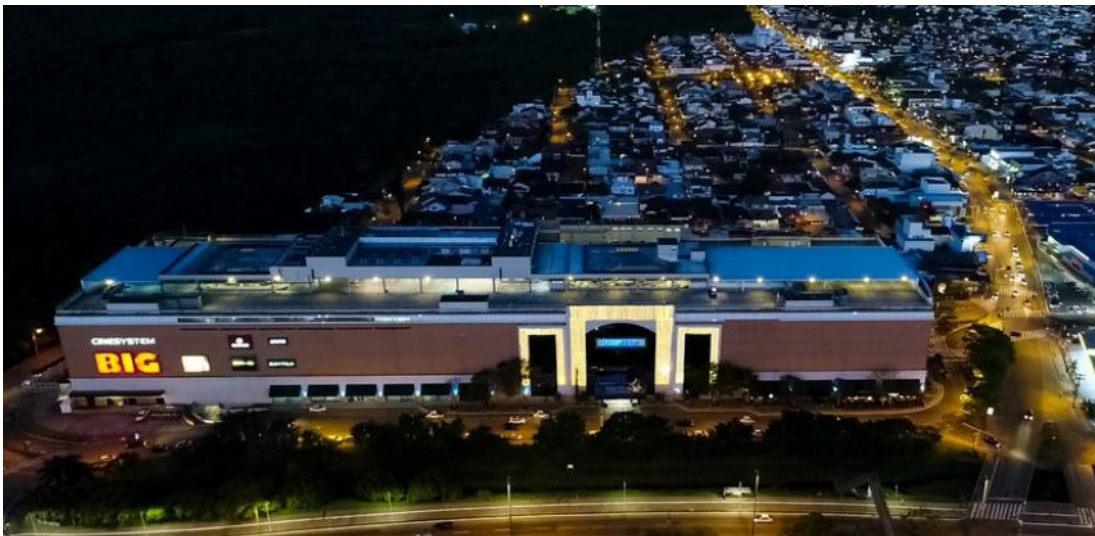
Buildings can speak

The design of the facade or the entire architecture of the building can often function as the first and strongest advertisement for the business, by attracting the attention of the person passing by on the street unpretentiously. The use of the building itself as an “open-air showcase”, in harmony with advertising elements, can be considered an effective way to insert itself into the urban landscape. How Morgan (2011) supports:

“ The design of a store [the envelope] can help support the brand image as well as underpin a successful retail strategy. Retailers rely on the design of the store to entice customer inside. While some retailers prefer more subtle store design, others like to shock and inspire, creating store that generate hype and discussion. (MORGAN, 2011, p. 33)

According to the architect Vargas (2001), the store communicates with the public in the urban space through three routes. The first refers to advertising carried out in the establishments themselves, mainly on the façade, the second concerns the use of the building’s own envelope as advertising, and the last is external media, not directly connected as a sales space - billboards and other general advertising vehicles.

Aguiar (2016) discusses the importance of taking into account the building’s aesthetics, in particular its front façade, when managing the image of a brand and its relationship with the public. For her, architecture mustn’t be understood only as a “box” that serves as a screen for visual communication, but as composition, style, harmony, and coherence with the immediate surroundings. And concerning commercial architecture, two more dominant variables must be added: the target audience and brand management.



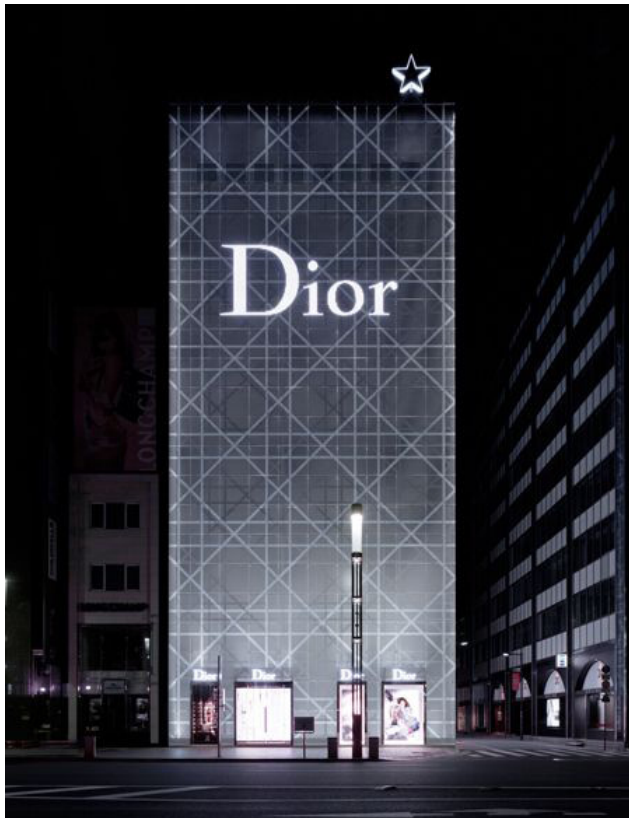
Box-like architecture

[https://acontecendoaqui.com.br/sites/default/files/styles/full\\_content/public/iguatemi\\_-\\_credito\\_commix\\_agencia\\_digital.jpg?itok=PZgqBANd](https://acontecendoaqui.com.br/sites/default/files/styles/full_content/public/iguatemi_-_credito_commix_agencia_digital.jpg?itok=PZgqBANd)

In order not to neglect the attractive capacity of the facade, the possibility of integrating it into the brand design can be an interesting factor and should be considered as part of the project. According to Aguiar (2016), the more aligned



with the visual identity of the brand and the more dynamic the store's facade, the richer the signs the design becomes and, consequently, the production of totally uncharacterized spaces without personality is avoided. Besides, through this approach, the brand image is reinforced, the project gains more attention from the public and, consequently, from the consumer.



*Consistent correlation between facade design and product's iconic pattern*

<https://fabriciomora.tumblr.com>

[https://www.dior.com/it\\_it/products/couture-M0538ILOL\\_M41G-borsa-lady-dior-my-abcdior-pelle-di-vitello-cannage-ultra-opaca-grigia](https://www.dior.com/it_it/products/couture-M0538ILOL_M41G-borsa-lady-dior-my-abcdior-pelle-di-vitello-cannage-ultra-opaca-grigia)

The British author Crewe (2008) exemplifies a successful relationship between the commercial segment, in this case, the fashion segment, and the architecture that houses the sale space, making mention of the American architect Peter Marino's project for the Chanel store in Osaka, Japan, describing it as "a clear example of how retail stores can quite literally project their message onto the city". The structure is a combination of ceramics, metal, and glass, and its surface is illuminated by several backlights that project images and texts on the streets of Osaka. The images, as in a kaleidoscope, dance over the building and the cityscape, as a strong and fluid connection between architecture and the fashion brand.



Chanel store in Osaka by Peter Marino

<https://www.petermarinoarchitect.com/work/projects/chanel-osaka>

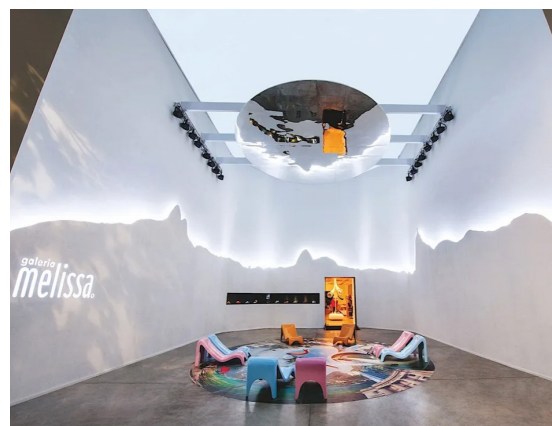
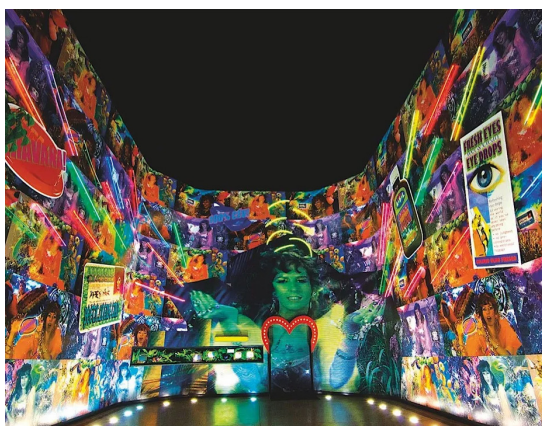
Unlike the store's internal space, which generally has a restricted visitation time, the store's facade can be observed, and interact with the public, regardless of its opening hours. Therefore, when studying the elements that make up the exterior, two distinct moments of commerce must be taken into account, while open and closed. According to Aguiar (2016), thinking in this way helps to break the "sameness" of the bars and gates that are used to close stores when they are not open to the public.

As a way of smoothing the transition spaces between the interior and exterior of the store, there are situations in which retail design reinvents the urban space, exploring the persuasive character of the facades and stretching its limits in search of a closer connection with the city. According to Aguiar (2016), these spaces can be defined as semi-public, which are exactly the transition between the public space and the store itself. The space generated between them is neither completely public nor completely private, and they serve as a more restricted socialization environment directed to the public that identifies with the brand identity.

A Brazilian example of a store that creates this semi-public space, known internationally, is the Galeria Melissa, in São Paulo. The store design was designed by the architect and designer Multi Randolph and it is located at Rua Oscar Freire, one of the most important shopping streets in the city. What makes it stand out in the urban landscape is an open area with more than 100 m<sup>2</sup> that precedes the entrance to the store, designed to host outdoor events. According to the Melissa

brand website, this space appears as a breath of color, shape, volumetry, and avant-garde movement to the “grayest city in the southern hemisphere”, and behaves dynamically, always reinventing itself to provide an aesthetic breath in a megametropolis of more than 20 million inhabitants. The recessed facade was designed so that the space gained could function as a large three-dimensional showcase to be periodically renovated. Since 2005 Galeria Melissa has hosted more than 30 different installations, created in collaboration with several artists, which reflected the brand’s launches, collection changes, or new partnerships. In Randolph’s words, in the Melissa’s website, the store:

“ [...] was designed to change constantly. I seek to create immersive and dynamic experiences, in which dimensions and meanings are confused. Art, research, and innovation must be part of our daily lives and are not restricted to museums, galleries, and laboratories.



Facade of the Melissa flagship store in São Paulo

<https://www.vogue.it/galleries/gait38830?image=5be322bd582be000119eb9e6>

Another interesting aspect to be analyzed regarding Galeria Melissa has to do with what was previously mentioned about the relevance of designing a store that is “active” 24 hours a day, interacting with the public, even outside opening hours. During the night, the entrance courtyard is always well lit and allows unrestricted access to the public walking in the region. This initiative is extremely interesting for the city, because regardless of the configuration of this large external showcase, it can behave as a stage for narratives and space for informative, cultural and aesthetic discoveries, in addition to establishing a dialogue between the brand’s product and the public in unexpected ways. Contrary to what one might think, interactive facades are economically welcome even where there is no intense circulation, as their existence is already an excellent form of brand communication, consumer attraction, and positioning in the urban landscape. As Sackrider (2009) reinforces:

“ If the eyes are the windows of the soul, the showcases reveal the soul of the store. They communicate day and night, in a lasting exhibition that lives until the last customer leaves and continues into the night. Thus, the showcase is certainly the fundamental exterior element of the point of sale. Capital for brand identification, the showcase is a reflection of itself and its products, to reinforce the style of the brand and focus on its positioning with the consumer. (SACKRIDER, 2009, p. 10)

Therefore, exploring the use of the facade and its showcase during all times of the day, regardless of its opening hours, means reinforcing the brand’s positioning before the consumer, in addition to contributing to the aesthetics and dynamics of the city.

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### 3.3.1 Empirical evidence

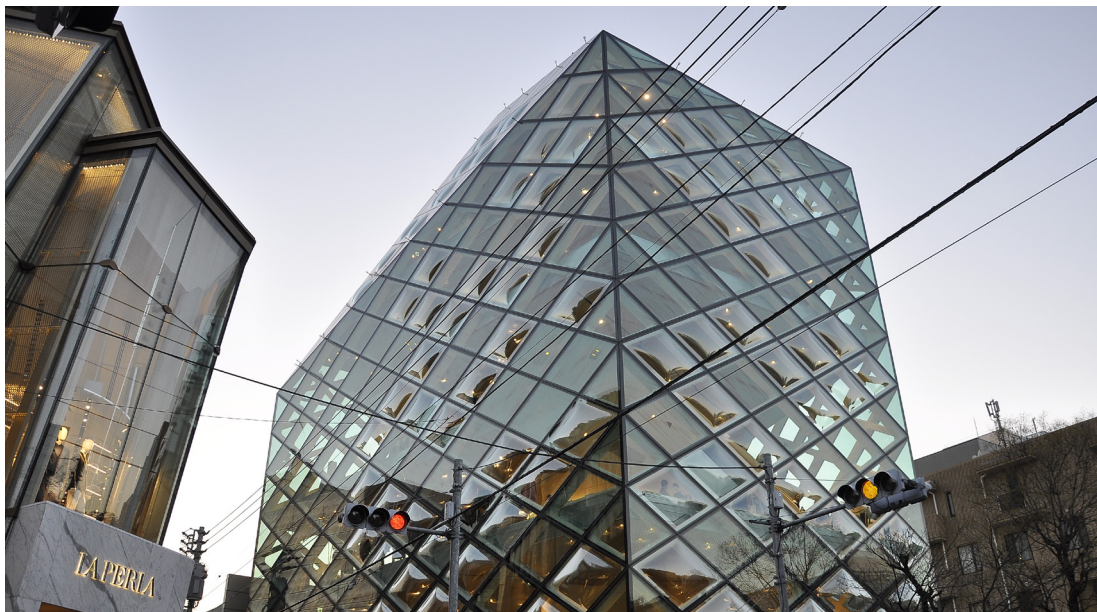
#### An experienced case study

In the following paragraphs an empirical experience will be presented as evidence of how powerful can be the design in conveying a message through spatial elements; in this specific case the brand through the facade.

In January 2017 I had the opportunity to visit Tokyo, the capital of Japan. In one of my wanderings without right direction, in order to explore the organic experiences of the city, an activity also known as “drift” by Urbanism studies, I arrived in a neighborhood called Aoyama. It is known for being one of the richest neighborhoods in Tokyo, due to its great commercial importance, bringing together international



fashion houses, coffee shops, and 5-star restaurants. And like almost the entire city, this region is also loaded with diverse information, which overlaps and create an extremely invigorating “organized mess”, that only Japan can offer. In the midst of so many constructions, a prismatic building, all glazed, similar to a lightbox, caught my attention. Seen from a distance, it was not possible to locate the sign that indicated the name of the brand, but I instinctively associated the geometric pattern, composed of diamonds, that creates the building’s external shell, after the Prada brand, which is an inverted triangle, and the striking black lines that surround the entire volume added to the view of the clothes inside the store, to the iconic and traditional line of fashion products made in black nylon by the Italian brand. Curious, I approached the building and found the mark stamped on the glass, confirming the analysis done so automatically by my subconscious.



Prada store in Tokyo by Herzog & de Meuron

Source: author's personal archive

In addition to this empirical analysis, in a study on the relationship between retail design and contemporary art, Van Cleempoel (2008) mentions the same Prada store to exemplify a contemporary practice in associating art and interior design in an extremely integrated way, not just as a mere decoration superficial, to realize the design as a holistic project. In this case, fashion and architecture are related in such a synchronized and close way that the limits between the product and the space that exposes it becomes blurred, and the result of this symbiosis becomes extremely convincing in the eyes of the public.

In detail, in the Ching (2004) article for *Studio International*, the building, built in 2003, designed by the Swiss architect duo Herzog & de Meuron, was positioned at one of the corners of the site to free up space for the creation of an intimate







back square, which serves as a “breathe” between extremely dense blocks, and as a meeting point for passers-by. The 6-story tall building, with a prismatic shape on 5 sides and a pointed top, according to Ching (2004) description, stands out as a shining crystal, coming from another planet. Its facade is covered with a diamond-shape mesh, filled with hundreds of glass panels in four different types: the usual flat and transparent glass; the etched glass for modesty in the changing rooms; bulging convex glass that seems to project the interior of the shop out onto the street; and concave glass that seemingly draws the passer-by on the street into the shop itself. In complete synchrony, the modular elements create, in the author’s words, “a compact architectural universe that gives an unexpected and multidimensional shopping experience”. The products displayed are framed by panoramic views of Tokyo and end up creating a “surrealist collage” of the overlapping elements of the brand and the urban space.



Consistent correlation between facade design and brand's logo

Source: author's personal archive

[https://www.prada.com/it/it/women/accessories/products.porta\\_cuffie\\_in\\_pelle\\_saffiano.1NR009\\_053\\_F0002.html](https://www.prada.com/it/it/women/accessories/products.porta_cuffie_in_pelle_saffiano.1NR009_053_F0002.html)opaca-grigia

The interior, which dialogues strongly with the exterior, can be accessed through one of the glass diamonds that make up the facade, which is on the same level as the sidewalk, extending the square into the store, which further smoothes the transition from the exterior inland, and vice versa. The internal space was organized to take advantage of the building’s verticality; thus, all floors are somehow connected by vertical visual elements that create the illusion of totally continuous space. According to Ching (2004), as support for the connection with the urban landscape, structural hexagonal steel tubes, shelter changing rooms, and additional exhibition spaces inside, and work almost like telescopes that frame different views of the city.

Taking into account the importance of the building’s presence also at night, as previously raised by Aguiar (2016), the building shines from the inside out, due to light fixtures that radiate like the lights in a fashion event, designed in the urban fabric as heterogeneous as the from Tokyo. Ching (2004) ends his description by

emphasizing the capacity of this project to combine the spheres of architecture and design, with that of fashion design. Besides, according to the author, the project redefines the traditional distinction between the glass curtain wall, structure, and facade, in the process of eliminating unusually the traditional differentiation between architecture, shop windows, and displays, making the shopping experience much more comfortable and memorable.

This example shows that the good articulation between design and architecture can positively reinforce the image of a brand, by softening the limits of what is contained - product - and what contains - space. But above all, analyzing the experience lived in 2017 from the perspective of the study of Retail Design, it is possible to conclude that the use of the correct elements, in coherence with material and immaterial aspects of the brand, allows the observer and prospects to interpret in different ways, quick, and instinctive the message that the design wants to transmit through the stimuli, even if that observer does not have prior knowledge about the existence of a certain store. Therefore, the retail space, in addition to fulfilling its basic function of exhibiting products, becomes a powerful tool to promote the image of a brand.



## 04. Exploring contemporary retail spaces

### A multidisciplinary practice

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Along with the emergence of retail trade, there was also the need for merchants to attract consumers to the interior of the stores, either through flashing signs indicating the name of the establishment or through the display of products in shop windows or in displays placed on the streets, such as the way of proving that they were open for business and that their production was worthy of pride. From a very early age, according to Morgan (2011), regardless of which commercial segment they belonged to, stores exposed what was best to offer as a form of visual marketing. Butchers filled their display cases with fresh meat to attract customers and inform them of the stock available on a given day; florists, in addition to decorating their windows with showy flowers, arranged them on the sidewalk creating a path to the interior of the store, inviting the customer to come in, attracted by the colors and aromas; and barbers allowed a free view of the interior of the establishment so that those who passed on the street could witness their skills

Similar to this old empirical strategy, the main purpose of retail design is to provide a sale space that enhances the brand and highlights the best qualities of the products offered in a store, which must first attract the customer and then stimulate their permanence and interest. To Morgan (2011), this objective is achieved by combining ambiance, functionality, and an inviting design. However, the approach must be specific to each type of segment and, consequently, to the type of product offered. In addition, the practice of retail design is directly linked to consumer market policies, which are constantly changing and evolving, and are designed by increasing market competitiveness, growing new services offer, applying new technologies, and/or changing consumer behavior. Consequently, sales spaces are also influenced by this dynamic and come to represent different values and roles as they need to adapt to the new demands of the consumer society.

In the book “Places & Themes of Interiors”, Iannilli (2008) describes the contemporary sale space as the result of a multidisciplinary practice that involves not only design and its aspects but also other areas of knowledge such as marketing, computing, management, psychology, and sociology. And this interaction between heterogeneous areas is responsible for a more complex, diffuse, and fluid project, where the consumer plays a decisive role in the design choices, since now it is desired spaces, microenvironments, that dialogue more closely with them and allow information -store experiences.





This new composition changed “from a space of supplying to a physical place of well-being, experience, and entertainment”, where there is the engagement of the senses and emotional involvement, linked to the client’s participation through their cultures and identities. Therefore, the approach to interior design should no longer be just based on rationality and functionality, but also consider qualitative and subjective aspects of the perception of space from the client’s perspective, who is endowed with emotions and feelings.

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## 4.1 The store as an experience

Beyond what is seen

Every space has its function. Even when empty, they are at the disposal of hosting new activities or simply representing a pause, a transition between other spaces. They can be opened, closed, covered or not. Throughout history, architects and designers have developed solutions, together with the improvement of techniques, which provide conditions for the constant search for an ideal, demonstrating that the good dynamics of spaces can stimulate other senses of the user, in addition to fulfilling the basic functions to exist or harbor. To study the ambience conceived through Architecture and Design is to seek to understand the needs and aspects extrinsic to man and how they influence the creation of the feeling of well-being and belonging to any space, whether public or private.

To start discussing these issues, I present the definition of ambience, or the synonym environment, which will be considered as an intrinsic basis when addressing themes related to Interior and Spatial Design and Retail Design, throughout the development of this thesis. It is often understood as an inanimate space, composed only of the material environment in which one lives.

Refuting this view, I rely on the thinking of Bestetti (2014) about the capacity of the environment, in a space built or not, to emit stimuli that can please or dislike, when “dialoguing” with the limits of the human body - physical conditions - and with the cultural background of each individual - mental conditions.

In the article “Ambience: built environment and behavior”, the professor conceptualizes ambience as the humanization achieved through the balance of the physical and moral elements that make up a space, the last being the scenario where social, political, and economic relations take place particular group of

society, including different cultures and values. The physical elements mentioned can be classified as shape, function, color, texture, ventilation, temperature, lighting, sound, and symbolism, and each of them makes up the dimensioned and functional space and determines the level of well-being of its occupants. Morals, on the other hand, are subjective and are acquired culturally, establishing meanings, positive and negative, in relation to the stimuli of the environment, since the human being is a social being that interacts with the physical and social environment that surrounds him. Therefore, these elements must be part of an interrelated system aimed at welcoming and comforting the user:

“ Comfort is the condition of well-being related to the needs of the individual and their insertion in the immediate environment. It involves not only the choice of thermal, acoustic, visual, or chemical criteria but also the addition of emotion and pleasure, giving it a holistic character, since the built environment is an existential screen, being a shelter for the body and the soul. (BESTETTI, 2014, p. 02)

The immaterial human apprehension about the environment is explained as a translation of environmental stimuli reflected in patterns of behavior and is constructed through individual mental filters of each person, such as experiences already lived, personality, imposed cultural values, which are responsible for interpreting reality. It can be classified as selective, since it absorbs only the portion of the received stimuli that can be decoded. But, according to Bestetti (2014), it is also affective, as it depends on whether the accumulated experience is positive or negative, being able to transition between one and the other over time with the improvement of the repertoire. Therefore, the greater the number of positive memories related to individual experiences, the more pleasant the future space experiences will be, also from the perspective of negative baggage.

Still on the human being's ability to read the symbols that surround them, architect Okamoto (2002) classifies our senses in three main categories: perceptual, spatial, and proxemic. The first sense relates to the five human senses, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and vision, and easily captures changes in the environment, guaranteeing the interpretation that may cause well-being or not. The second recognizes the people and equipment that make up the physical environment. And the last sense is defined as being related to the physical distance between people spontaneously established in social life, based on the spatial conditions favorable to the encounter and the exchange of experience.

Despite the level of comfort and well-being of an environment being subjective and relative to the interpretation of others, according to Bestetti (2014), the designer should always look for shapes, dimensions, and volumes, which can be more or



less pleasant, but are always as appropriate as possible for users, whether in a long-term space or just a short passage, always paying attention to the stimuli it seeks to provoke since human consciousness is always active:

“ [...]The way in which we report the world is linked to the endless horizon of perception, long before scientific data. The conscience, therefore, doesn't observe carelessly, on the contrary, it is constantly active, depending on the contact with the world. (IANNILLI, 2008, p. 117)

Considering space as an environment full of meanings that stimulate the body's senses and establish immaterial connections, from the perspective of Retail Design, the designer should be concerned with creating sale spaces that provide immersive experiences that connect the shopper at emotional levels to create values for them and generate brand awareness. This connection is important so that the store design can translate the brand identity from the products, services, and spaces into the customer experience. Parallel to Okamoto's definition of perceptual symbol reading, Iannilli (2008) presents the multi-sensory approach as a way of creating a holistic cognitive experience. This approach involves exploring human senses in an orchestrated and simultaneous way, combined with entertainment, and design, so that the customer can apprehend the space as a continuous and interrelated sensory sphere and, therefore, live a totally energizing shopping experience. and stimulating. In this sphere, each of the environments carries the brand philosophy, so that they project their image and encourage customer purchase behaviors.

In a recent research by Blasquez and Boardman (2019), the store experience is presented as a solution to fragmentation of the current retail scenario, in which, according to them, traditional physical stores have lost their appeal and decreased in terms of sales, and therefore they need to invest in the creation of superior experiences for the consumer. To understand the experience, it is necessary to take into account the ambience, as described above, added to its ability to influence the consumer's purchase decision. Because, according to the research, the way the customer interprets the sale spaces depends on how the design project manipulates the countless factors, or symbols of the environment, which can lead to the success or failure of the business. The environment, as seen, directly affects the individual's relationship with space and, consequently, influences the increase or decrease in the customer's willingness to buy the products available in the store, and in the way they will relate the brand to the level satisfaction of their experience.

The concept of the influence of the sale space environment on customer perception and behavior was introduced by the American professor Kotler (1973,1974), calling it the store atmosphere. As one of the pioneers studying the psychological stimuli created through retail design, the author states that, in some cases, the image that

the atmosphere of the environment creates in the buyer’s mind is so effective that it becomes a more persuasive factor in the dynamics purchase than the product itself, becoming, in this case, the main product. In other words, in this scenario, consumers are more focused on the emotional side of the purchase, on the hedonic value, than on the store’s utilitarian perspective.

In the article “Store Atmosphere as Retail Strategy Element”, the authors Chamie et al. (2012) presents research that analyzes the view of some scholars regarding the influence of the retail ambience on the consumer and concludes that they all follow a unique line of reasoning and that they do not contradict themselves in their definitions but differ when defining the hierarchy of the main factors, in the degree of detail and in the nomenclature used for the classifications. This comparison can be seen in the table below:

Authors	Stimuli	Composition
Kotler (1973-1974)	The main sensory channels in the atmosphere are: sight, sound, smell and touch.	(i) vision: color, lighting, size, shape, (ii) hearing: volume and tone determination, (iii) smell: freshness and essence and (iv) touch: softness, softness, temperature.
Bellize; Crowley; Hasty (1983)	Retailers traditionally use colors to project an image or to create the desired atmosphere.	The color can be used both to attract and to increase the comfort power so that the customer stays longer in the store.
Buckley (1987)	The combination of stimuli allows to create a store atmosphere that can be motivating and pleasurable.	The atmosphere of the store is created by a combination of music, colors, accumulation of people and other stimuli such as: floor, ceiling, lighting, changing tables, walls, pillars, consumer services, etc.
Bitner (1992)	Servicescape: the impact of physical factors on the behavior of customers and employees.	(i) environmental conditions: temperature, air quality, noise, music, etc., (ii) space: store layout, equipment, furniture, etc. and (iii) signage, symbols and artifacts and decoration style.
Turley e Milliman (2000)	The broad categories that create the store atmosphere are: external variables, general interior factors, layout and design factors, sales area and product displays and human variables.	(i) external variables: architecture, style and surrounding stores, (ii) general factors of the interior: floor, lighting, color scheme, music, width of corridors, ceiling, (iii) Layout and design factors: design and allocation space, grouping, flow, etc., (iv) sales area and product displays: signage, wall decoration, price signage, etc. and (v) human variables: characteristics of employees, uniforms, accumulation of people and areas of privacy.
Ballantine, Jack e Parsons (2010)	There is a need to evaluate the atmosphere from a broader and holistic perspective, as the stimuli are not experienced independently. There is a great interrelation between them.	(i) attractiveness stimuli: lighting, auditory stimuli, space, colors, layout, product and display layout and other characteristics of the store design and (ii) ease stimuli: comfort, accumulation of people, lighting and product layout ( as facilitators) and staff.

*Classification of the communication tools*

*Adapted from Chamie et al. (2012)*

Each of the elements is capable of contributing, individually or together, to the perception of one or more sensations. For a more cohesive understanding, Blasquez and Boardman (2019) divide the classification of elements and stimuli into 5 main categories based on the behavioral response that individuals present from the stimuli caused by the situational elements of each space. The categories are:

1. External elements (e.g. store facade, entrance, display windows, building architecture);
2. General interior (e.g. use of lighting, scents, sounds, color, textures, materials);
3. Layout and design;
4. Point of purchase and decoration (e.g. product displays, point-of-purchase displays);
5. Human variables (e.g. the influence of the shoppers - crowding, privacy - the influence of retail employees - personal attitude and uniforms).

As seen, some authors defend the view of studying the stimuli of an atmosphere in an integrated and holistic way. However, others study isolated aspects of the store's atmosphere, such as colors and music. And there are still those who work more intensely with all the senses of the store, betting on the creation of concept stores or flagship stores. In an ethnographic study conducted by Borghini (2009), it was observed that an environment that focuses on the shopping experience and raises it to an unexpected level by the customer, can attract an audience that travels the area even without a first purchase intention, in addition to increasing the desire the customer to go through all areas of the store or stay longer than planned and result in higher purchase volumes. Kotler (1973,1974) describes that the first step towards creating a sensory environment and understanding your target audience, because the project's complexity increases as their audience becomes too generic. Thus, he states that the designer, and the other professionals involved in representing the brand as a space, must identify the main variables that are available in the store environment to instigate the desired awareness and reaction, and these variables must be previously planned accordingly with what has value for the target consumer.

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## 4.1.2 Influence on customer behavior

### The space as commercial strategy

Due to the high competitiveness in the global market, to not fall behind, enterprises must develop strategies centered on the client, that is, to have the ability to respond and adapt to the needs of their audience. Consumer relations become increasingly competitive and the one whose strategies come closer and reach the pulse of consumer desire more deeply wins.

Understanding, from the perspective of the space user, the meaning of offering an immersive and stimulating environment at the time of purchase, enables the enrichment, creation, and improvement of design strategies according to the identified values. The commercial competitive advantage and the possibility to provide the customer with pleasurable sensations are directly related to discovering new ways of understanding what the expectations of this target audience are and, therefore, creating a space that successfully represents the brand.

The consumers, in general, are always looking for new purchase alternatives that provide satisfaction and pleasant experiences, remain less and less faithful to a single brand, due to the wide range of options, value the cost-benefit ratio in their purchasing decisions, and are interested in customized solutions. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the relationship between the customers' voice and internal strategies, since generic quality, without foundation, is not a source of competitive differentiation, different from the quality aligned with the customers' expectation, which is seen by the latter as something of value.

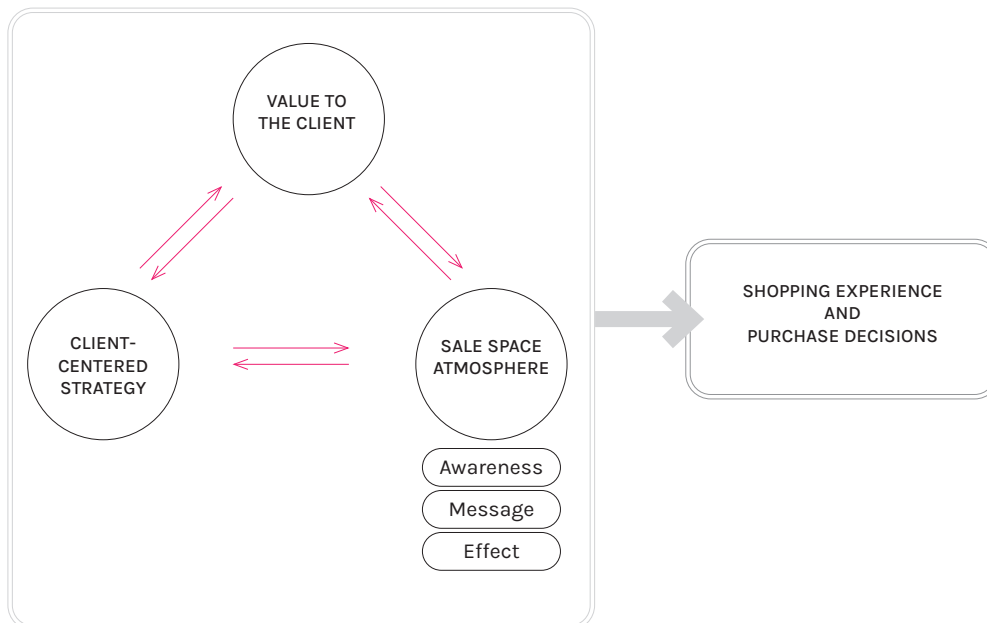
In the 1980s, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) presented the Mehrabian-Russel environmental psychology model based on the paradigm between stimulus, apprehension by human senses and response, which measures the level of emotions generated by the shopping environment and its influence on customers' approach and avoidance behaviors, taking into account consumer attitudes and intentions. Ten years later, the model unfolded through new research on current buying behavior, carried out by Donovan et. al (1994), and they demonstrated that the pleasure obtained induced by store environments is a great reason for spending extra time and extra money in the store. In line with these results, Scarpi (2006) found that the atmosphere is responsible for providing a hedonic shopping experience, which has a direct effect on the cost of the products, the enthusiasm and satisfaction of the buyers, which consequently influences the amount of money that customers spend at the store, and the number of items they buy. Regarding specific stimuli, Morrison et al. (2011), through their research found that the state of excitement produced by auditory and olfactory stimuli in sale spaces increases the level of pleasure for customers, making them feel comfortable making choices and buying.

According to Blasquez and Boardman (2019), consumer behavior can be divided into impulse purchase and non-impulse purchase. The former is characterized by being a sudden and immediate purchase, without a previous intention, but different from the unplanned buying. The latter includes both planned and unplanned purchases. Therefore, the atmosphere of the sale space can influence the customer who is determined to buy a specific product, in purchasing additional products. Blasquez and Boardman (2019) add that there is a possibility that customers who visit the store just because they are interested in the environment, will come to spend equally or even more than the buyers who already had the objective of purchasing a product,



as a result of the immersive characteristic of a well-articulated atmosphere. And even when the visit to the store does not generate any purchase, it's atmosphere can create a good impression about the brand image and, consequently, enhance customer loyalty, and ensure that they return in the future, generating long-term income.

Understanding that the sale space fits into a more comprehensive classification of “environment”, as seen, its interpretation and values attributed to it by the customer are subjective, personal and, therefore, cannot be determined completely objectively by the retailer or the designer. Chamie et al. (2012) synthesize the coexistence relationship between the strategy centered on the client, the value and interpretation of the client, and the atmosphere of the store experience through a conceptual model, presented in the following image:



*The client as the center of the sale spaces' atmosphere*

*Adapted from Chamie et al (2012)*

This model also proposes that the retail space atmosphere can influence purchasing behavior through three main methods: attention, message, and effect. Being the first and the second responsible for influencing the consumer's general decision about the choice of the store, while the latter deals with how the atmosphere influences the purchase behavior inside the store.

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## 4.2 Situational elements

### Spatial composition

As seen before, the retail spaces can provide a wide range of sensations through immersive shopping experiences. They can be defined as architectural interior spaces where the user interacts with the situational elements within it and receives different stimuli. But what are these elements, and how they perform in the retail environment? For a clear understanding, firstly it is important to define the interpretation of the visual aspects of the space, and then to study the interaction between customer, space, and product. To do so, it is highlighted the environment's functional aspects, which will guide the visitor's experience, and the aesthetic aspects, that will characterize the narrative inside the store. All these elements together, if well-articulated, will contribute to conveying the brand's unique message.

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### 4.2.1 Visual connections

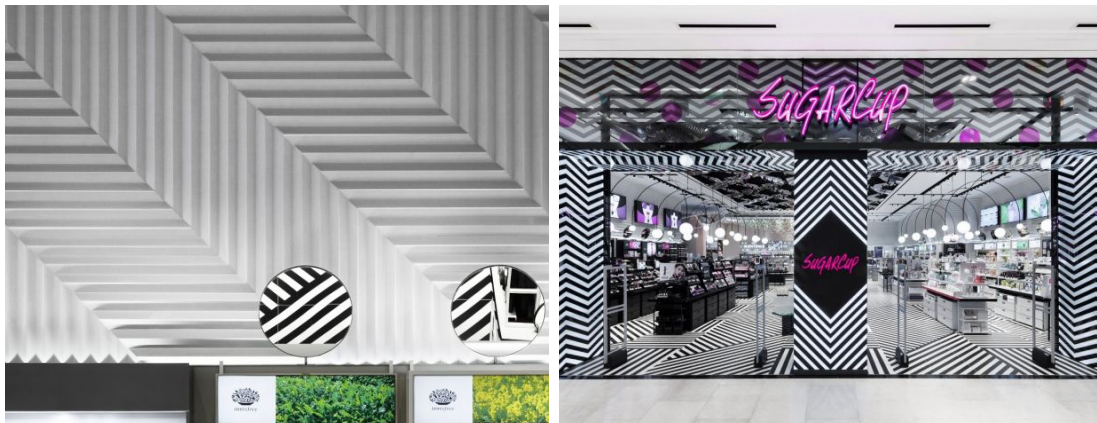
#### How the eyes read the spaces

As in a large space such as the urban scene, visual communication is an essential element for the interaction between the interior architectural space and the observer, in this case, the client. The latter, before making purchase decisions, will go through the moment of observing the space, as the first contact. According to Zeni (2015), within the study of Interior Design, space is no longer just signifier and becomes the signification, when there is visual interaction with the user, viewer, or client. Thus, in the context of Retail Design, the signifier is the space for the sale of products, and the signification is the atmosphere created through design and the future relationship between the customer and the product on display.

In an internal environment, according to Zeni (2015), there are several aspects and visible elements that are sometimes subtly treated in an environment, which are: the line, the shape, the direction, the texture, the color, and the luminosity. Since all these elements must be articulated in balance, which can be understood as the harmonic relationship between the objects introduced and distributed in an internal space, that is, the mutual relationship between figure and background since an element gains other meanings when immersed in a specific context. For Ching (2013):

“ Space is not a concrete matter like stone or wood. It is a diffuse and formless mist. The universal space has no definition. Once an element is placed in its field, however, a visual relationship is established. As other elements are introduced in the field, several relationships are established between space and elements, as well as between the elements themselves. Space, then, is formed by our perception and such relationships. (CHING, 2013, p. 2)

About the line, Zeni (2015) characterizes it as essential elements in the formation of any visual construction. For Aguiar (2016), it is a succession of points that can convey the feeling of a space larger or less than it really is, welcoming or dynamic. Linear shapes can follow different directions, horizontal, vertical, sinuous, and diagonal, and are found in different positions in space, defining relationships and building patterns among the other elements of the project. According to Aguiar (2016), vertical lines convey a feeling of strength, haughtiness, and luxury; horizontal lines convey calm, stability and tranquility; the winding ones are graceful and suggest fluidity; and the diagonal lines have rhythm, strength, dynamism, and action.



Diagonal lines patten at Sugarcup store by Betwein Space Design

<https://retaildesignblog.net/2017/02/15/sugarcup-store-by-betwin-space-design-hanam-si-korea/>

According to Zeni (2015), lines can become textures - lines that, through their arrangement, create smooth or rough patterns. For Ching (2013), there are two basic types of texture: the tactile texture, which is physical and can be felt through the sense of touch; and the visual texture, which is perceived through the sense of sight. While all tactile texture is also visual texture, the latter can be illusory, or real, physical.



*Different presentation of the same material. Rough concrete and smooth concrete.*

<https://www.ebaumsworld.com/pictures/a-nonchalant-compilation-of-36-remarkable-randoms/85814661/?image=85815130>/<https://www.core77.com>

Allied to the application of texture is the performance of the lighting design of a space, which influences the perception of textures and other elements arranged in the scene. Lighting in a store, according to Zeni (2015), in addition to playing its trivial role of highlighting a focal point, lighting corridors or just to wash the space, it can acquire different and specific meanings according to the way it is used and can transmit different customer sensations, such as using warm light to represent a cozy space and refer to a tropical atmosphere, or cold light to transmit modernity.



*Cold and warm lights in retail.*

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/24381539/Dior-Homme-store-interiors> | <https://adoro.farmrio.com.br/mundo-farm/farm-em-vila-velha/>



Light, despite being individually complex and presenting numerous possible configurations, according to Gurgel (2010), must be defined together with the selection of colors in a project, since they are part of a single composition. A given color may have its perception altered according to the quantity, type, and quality of the incident light and reflected by the colored surface. In addition, through the harmony between light and color, it is possible to deceive the observer's gaze, simulate changes in spaces, and even deceive the senses.

The color, according to the definition used by Aguiar (2016), interferes in the hierarchy of information of an establishment, can induce feelings and behaviors, and influences the general understanding that the customer has about the establishment. Therefore, when choosing the color palette of retail space, one must take into account the brand management, the concept of architecture and design, and the sensory associations relevant to each color. As stated by Farina et al. (2011):

“ About the advertising and sales promotion areas, several factors combine to determine the exact color that will be the carrier of the most convenient expression, for each specific type of message, for a product to be consumed, or service to be used. In reality, the specificity of what will be announced has an intimate connection with the color used, either to convey the feeling of reality or to cause an impact or highlight a differential. (FARINA et. al, 2011, p. 116)

One of the attributions of colors is the power to create spatial concealments, which can be explored, such as sensations of amplitude or reduction of space. According to Crepaldi (2006), the degree of proximity or distance also depends on the relationship with lighting and color saturation, but he explains that warm colors, such as orange, yellow and red, cause sensations of proximity, heat, density, opacity, dryness, besides being stimulating; cold colors, like blue and green, stimulate the sensations of distance, moist, airy, light and calm.

Understanding that colors are strong stimulators of sensations, it is necessary to avoid compositions where there is no chromatic harmony, as they usually result in disorder and can cause visual confusion in the observer. To prevent situations like this from happening, Aguiar (2016) proposes to explore the use of the chromatic circle, including black and white, as a basis for achieving color harmony in space, through 5 basic composition techniques:



Example of monochromatic and analog color composition. Glossier store.

<https://www.dezeen.com/2018/11/13/glossier-flagship-store-soho-new-york-gachot-studios-pro/>

- Monochromatic: only one color is used as a visual resource, and it is one of the simplest ways to achieve unity in a space, which can generate a highly positive impact when well-explored;

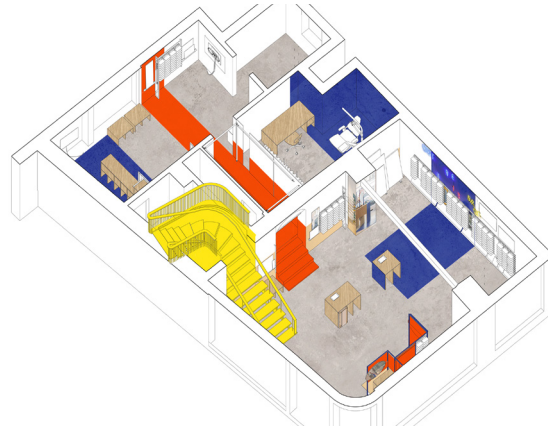
- Analog: two or more colors are used that follow the color circle in the composition. “Neighboring” colors have a high degree of affinity and create serene and comfortable designs for the eyes. So, it is a great option when the figure, in the figure-background relationship, has many details, colors, or patterns;



Example of complementary color composition. Papyrus flagship store.

[https://www.archdaily.com/954539/papyrus-flagship-store-wgnb?ad\\_medium=gallery](https://www.archdaily.com/954539/papyrus-flagship-store-wgnb?ad_medium=gallery)

- Complementary: diametrically opposite colors in the chromatic circle, for example, orange and blue, create a vibrant high contrast, and a great solution to highlight elements without discarding harmony;



Example of triadic color composition. Ace and Tate's store.

<https://www.dezeen.com/2017/08/18/ace-tate-copenhagen-eyewear-store-interior-features-blocks-primary-colour/>

- Triadic: when the composition uses three colors equidistant in the chromatic circle. It is widely adopted by commercial campaigns, as it offers a strong visual contrast while retaining the balance and richness of color;



Example of achromatic composition. Aesop store in Tokyo.

<http://schemata.jp/aesop-lucua-1100/>

- Achromatic: neutral colors are used, which are located closer to the center of the chromatic circle. Because they do not have a large amount of saturation, the original hue of the color is barely identified. This chromatic composition generally conveys lightness, elegance, and impersonality.

Regardless of the chromatic composition chosen for the interior of a store, Aguiar (2016) recalls that it is also important to consider the psychological stimuli that the colors individually provoke to the observer. Understanding the essence of each color, sensory reflexes in the consumer become more predictable. The colors act on the senses, with greater or lesser intensity, and interfere in the consumers' decisions, and their well-being, since it can stimulate emotions and desires. However, although it is possible to predict possible reactions from each stimulus, the interpretation is individual and is related to the experiences and socio-cultural issues of each individual.

In this way, it is possible to understand that the atmosphere of a space depends on several aspects, mainly the composition created by the texture, colors, and lights, which become signs and transmit feelings about the "story" that a brand wants to tell through a space, which will be absorbed or felt by the spectator-customer. Therefore, according to Zeni (2015), from the harmonic alignment between all the elements mentioned, a complete visual relationship is obtained, since, even if your intentions are not explicit, what can be seen will certainly cause some reaction in the viewer.

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## 4.2.2 Functional aspects

To ensure usability

In a sale space, so that the visual relationship between customer and product can easily happen, it is also necessary to take into account its functional aspects. Gurgel (2010) defines design as the art of combining shapes, lines, lights, and colors to create a space or an object that satisfies three fundamental points: function; the objective and subjective needs of users; and the consistent and harmonious use of materials.

For Parente (2000), the atmosphere of a store is created from the union of external and internal promotion resources, layout solutions, and the way products are displayed, including the quality of service and the behavior of store employees. If the external quality of the store - building, facade, and shop window - influences the first contact and understanding that a customer has of the store, the internal environment must keep the customer stimulated in the purchase process.

Regarding the internal quality of sale spaces, Morgan (2011) explains that customers determine their favorite stores, mainly from the analysis of the space, whether it is pleasant or not, the ease of finding products and the signs, if they are clear and explanatory. Thus, to guarantee the smooth flow of space, including the ease of



location of products, concerning functionality in a store, the layout is an important aspect to be considered, since it will indicate the way users should explore the space, and under what aspects the products on display will be submitted so that the act of purchase is performed with comfort and dynamism.

Logically designing the sale space means being able to encourage the customer to circulate throughout the interior of the store and experience the totality of its space. According to Zeni (2015), it is possible to mention the grouping of products, the width of the aisles, and the location of the cash register as some of the items to be considered in the layout. The latter, according to the author, can be arranged under two forms of circulation, free and forced.

Free circulation, under the classification of Zeni (2015), refers to the lack of definition of a continuous driving of the customer to a specific predefined destination, however, it still allows the identification of sectors. Forced circulation, on the other hand, occurs when certain focal points, such as gondolas, installations, or even works of art, form certain visual lines within the space and, consequently, a path to be followed. However, the term “forced” does not mean the restriction to a single path, only that the customer reaches his desired destination based on his orientation by the exhibitors and other elements arranged in the environment. This type of circulation requires greater attention with signage, in addition to the use of auxiliary differentiating elements, such as different materials, colors, floor and ceiling designs, and lighting. According to Zeni (2015), all the elements that are used to delimit passages, such as gondolas and displays, must have a height that does not prevent the total view of the interior of the store, since it is important that the customer can have a broad view to interact more dynamically with all the products on display, in addition to assisting salespeople in controlling space.

Regarding accessibility, Zeni (2015) mentions the need for people in wheelchairs or with baby carts to be able to move around the store without difficulty. The ideal space available for each aisle would be one that allows a two-way corridor, where customers can move without accidentally bumping into exposed products. In addition to facilitating circulation through all sectors of the store, it is necessary that the way to the checkout counters, usually located at the back of the store, also be facilitated, so that the customer can complete the purchase. It is worth remembering that other auxiliary areas, such as administrative areas, inventory, staff room, must have independent and discreet access, so as not to interfere with the store’s service.

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## 4.2.3 Aesthetic aspects

### A sight for sore eyes

After defining the functional aspects of a store, it is necessary to analyze the aesthetic aspects of the latter, not only as mere decoration but also as responsible for creating the sensory atmosphere. According to Nero (2009), the relationship between Interior Design and aesthetic aspects:

“ [...] it doesn't offer itself as a marketing panacea, it doesn't just come to help sell, but it gives meaning to what you want to say, it lends style, light, projections, color, humanism, and greatness. It remembers spaces in many styles, provides evocations, draws symbolic movements, attributes historicity. (NERO, 2009, p. 100)

When studying the aesthetic elements that will compose the sale space, it is common for the latter to be seen by Interior Design as a scene, or a scenario, and customers as spectators of this scene. For this reason, the design practice that ends up taking action in these cases is scenography, which will be responsible for creating a story based on the good dialogue between all the internal elements of the store. According to Zeni (2015), to achieve a convincing scenographic representation, therefore satisfactory, it is necessary to combine historicity - narrative - with the product, so that the client feels involved in the atmosphere and feels closer to the brand, making possible connections between its history individual and the product.

Although decorating a space and creating a scenario are two completely different concepts, according to Zeni (2015), there was a period in the history of scenography that the scenographer performed functions very close to that of a decorator. For example, in the Renaissance, the activity of scenographers was limited to adorning theaters and painting panels with images in perspective. However, scenography is currently known as the art of organizing the stage and the theatrical space, which should be useful, effective, and functional, in addition to serving as a staging instrument. Similarly, in the sale space, the scenography is no longer merely an illustrative element and becomes a visual device that interacts with the public, that is, it does not represent just an image as it becomes the space where the performance will take place.

To illustrate the application of scenography and aesthetic elements in retail design, Zeni (2015) proposes a comparison between two examples of successful projects, however, one of them is not the result of the scenographic approach while the other

sees the sale space as a living history be counted. The former, exemplified by the Brazilian brand Siberian, is the result of a good design solution, therefore providing comfort to the customer, and both the disposition of elements when the choice of materials is made intelligently and harmoniously, which does not characterize the environment as unpleasant, but there is no historicity. The latter, exemplified by the brand Gentle Monster, encourages the customer to live the space intensely, from the moment it uses exclusive elements that convey the history of the brand, or the idea that it sustains, and proposes the sensation to be immersed in a totally inviting and stimulating atmosphere. For example, common exhibition elements that gain particular aesthetic characteristics, and help to support the space narrative. This type of space also allows varied interpretations based on an infinity of sensations caused by the built scenario.



*On the left is the Siberian store, and on the right the Gentle Monster.*

<https://portoimagem.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/porto-alegre-ganha-a-segunda-loja-da-siberian/> | <https://www.gentlemonster.com/store/>

As in a spectacle the scenography is responsible for telling all the stories' details and even identifying the characters' features. Therefore, when we translate these aesthetic aspects to the relationship between Retail Design and scenography, the client becomes the spectator participating in the show and, therefore, must be immersed in sensations and not just visit a merely decorated space.

## 05.The brand in retail spaces

### Translating brand into experience

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Understanding a building and its space is the starting point and subject of investigation for most interior design. In retail, however, to reach concepts that are aligned with what the commercial space will offer, according to Mesher (2010), the brand is the starting point and the building or site often comes later, as a consequence. For this reason, it is important to study the best ways to translate a two dimensions brand into the tridimensionality of interior space. In other terms, the retail space should be built based on the concept of the brand it represents and the products sold within it. The interior of a store represents the aspirations of the brand ideals and striking characteristics aiming to strengthen the relationship between the space and the narrative/message, which means that everything about the brand must be consistent – colors, materials, style, graphics, and product range. This consistency is responsible to make the communication between space and customer stronger and to re-affirm the brand's worth.

Mesher (2010) uses the term “brandscaping” to describe the turning of a brand into a spatial experience. The author advises thinking about the prospective space as a blank canvas, where walls, floor, and ceiling will be characterized by the brand's identity, with color, pattern, logo, sound, and scent that fit perfectly. Although there are different mechanisms and ways to explore the branding in sale spaces, some of them are capable to reach the global level by promoting new innovative concepts to consolidate the brand in the market. And those are becoming an increasingly common strategy, as the retail market becomes more and more saturated, and consumers more exigent. Among the appealing mechanisms are the flagship stores, which in Blasquez & Boardman (2019) words, are the keyway for the brand to enter into a market, especially the international ones, because they attract a lot of media attention when functioning “more as brand image representatives than sales channels”.





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## 5.1 Flagship stores

The ultimate brand representatives

From the 1970s onwards, during the American deindustrialization[5] phase, drastic changes in the economic scenario led to the restructuring of production processes and labor relations, which contributed to the emergence of experience stores in the United States. But they only became popular 20 years later, with the development of research related to changes in consumer behavior.

“ Post-war prosperity and increasing consumption have contributed to the expansion of business and leisure in many ways. The landscape has changed through the development of shopping malls, retail and hotel chains, cultural quarters, and virtual environments. Routinely used by the media to describe a variety of prestigious and usually large-scale projects, flagship has found a place in our vocabulary well beyond their nautical origins. (KENT, 2009, p. 19)

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in brands investing in the creation of flagship stores, as a way to strengthen and control their image, and how it is interpreted by consumers, to strengthen the brand identity and provide experiences one-time purchase to your customers. This is because, according to Blasquez & Boardman (2019), the brand image must reflect the unique and exclusive character of its products and services and, consequently, be able to positively influence the general idea that customers have of the whole set that this brand represents. The flagship store represents both strategic and operational roles having a mixed function between commercial and communication.

In this sense, the main objective of the designers responsible for the flagship store projects is to take the concept of branding[6] to an extreme level. According to Meshner (2010), the job of the flagship store is to promote the brand in prominent areas around the world, offering the widest and most in-depth product assortment in high-quality environments. And, even though, being an extension of what is found

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**| 5 .** Deindustrialization refers to the contraction and decline of the weight of manufacturing industry within an economy. (SCIENCE DIRECT, 2009)

**| 6 .** Branding is na approach used to Market products and services under a particular name. The concept of branding is intrinsically linked with advertising, marketing and playing on the subconscious aspirations of the consumer. [...] is a global culture fueled by consumerism and the need for people to categorize their lifestyle [...] through buying into particular products. (MESHER, 2010)

in a retailer's chain store, their higher specification and exquisite features act as a brand statement. The flagship has the power to influence the "brand choice" made by a consumer since it offers memorable experiences - more an attraction than a place to shop - the consumer might visit the flagship store and not purchase any goods, but by visiting it they will remember the brand in the future when the need to buy any products of the segment arises. In other words, this retail typology works as a marketing tool and aims to "subconsciously stimulate the consumer into choosing a particular brand" (MESHER, 2010)

In research around the flagship stores, Kozinets et al. (2010) list three main characteristics, that can be used to distinguish them among the other retail typologies. First, they represent one single brand of product. Second, that brand's manufacturer is also the owner of the store. The last one, they are operated mostly to build or reinforce the image of the brand rather than focus on selling products at a profit. The authors highlight that the consumer's perception of social "reality" is strongly conditioned by the brands in their environment, which means that where and how the store is placed plays an important role in how the brand wants to be seen. Brands are symbols extensively used in the contemporary consumer cultural universe, and for that reason, individual brands are increasingly investing in environments built especially for them, that moves beyond the conventional retail and takes over the residence in flagship brand stores. To Kozinets et al. (2010), the devotion of unique and exclusive space to brands is an important retail phenomenon.

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## 5.1.1 Case studies

### Flagship stores

To exemplify the Flagship typology, two stores of different brands were selected, but with the same commercial segment. Although both examples represent traditional Asian beauty and skincare brands, their design approaches are completely different. While Sulwhasoo opted for a concept connected to Korean traditionalism, Shiseido aimed at the opposite side and built its concept around what is most technological in the Japanese market. This antagonism is important and was chosen on purpose to illustrate projects that chose to represent brands, with very similar ideals and stories, in different ways, but which are equally successful.

## > Sulwhasoo

Sulwhasoo is a brand of skincare and beauty products founded in 1996 in South Korea, which combines ancient Asian wisdom and modern science to find the harmony of body and mind, from the inside out. Its flagship store, designed by Chinese studio Neri & Hu, which opened in 2016 in Seoul, South Korea, is a signature space that gathers and conveys the essence of Asian beauty and its deepest sense. For Neri (2016), one of the architects responsible for the store's design, it is important that Sulwhasoo as a brand is able to create its own identity and show the world the idea of its holistic products through this particular building. Thus, from the understanding and experience of spatial architecture, hopefully, customers will come to understand the brand's products in a deeper and more meaningful way - materialization of the product in space, and vice versa. And most importantly, that consumers can ultimately leave the space with the embedded within their system experience. The architects' intention to create a space that appeals to all the senses, can then be summarized in three words: identity, journey, and memory.



External elevation of the Sulwhasoo flagship store .

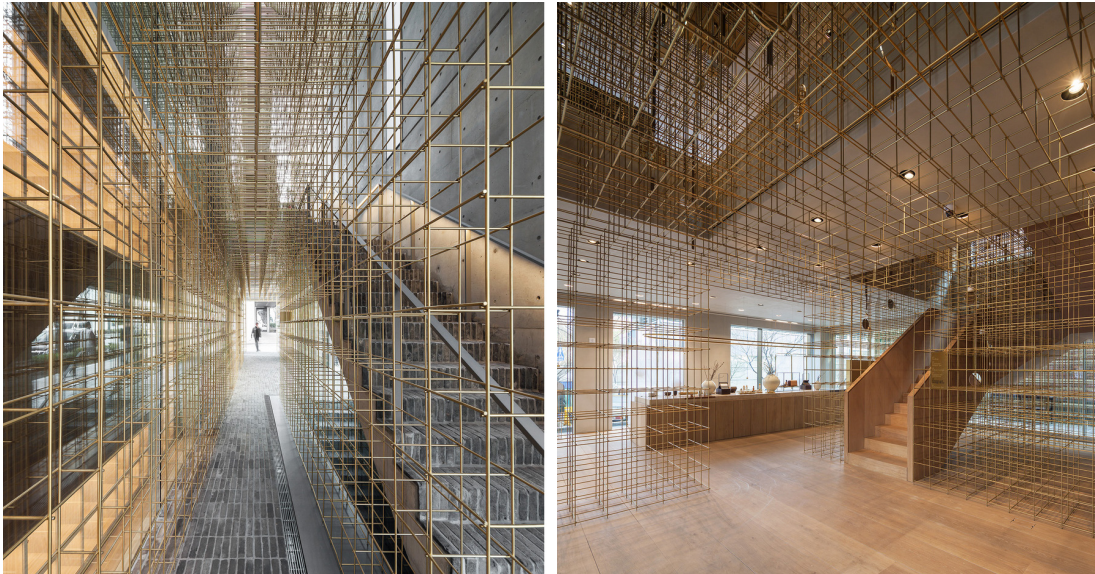
<https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/794191/loja-principal-da-amore-sulwhasoo-neri-and-hu-design-and-research-office>

The concept of the project is the metaphor of a lantern, a container of light. The meaning of this object, both mythological and literal, has great relevance for Asian culture, as it illuminates the path, indicating the beginning and end of a journey. Neri & Hu's intention is for the project to become a beacon, a destination. The gray facade of the building incorporates wide openings that allow the warm tones of the interior to stand out. The yellowish color comes from the interaction of light with the wooden floor and the brass lattice. This metallic structure is the key element of the project, as it ties the whole interior space together, and guides customers through









*Internal structure of the Sulwhasoo flagship store .*

<https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/794191/loja-principal-da-amore-sulwhasoo-neri-and-hu-design-and-research-office>

all their experience in the store. The high density of the lattice creates a sense of infinity, which is accentuated by circular mirrors integrated into the gaps between the rods. Hanging within it are also custom bespoke light fixtures that turn the “lantern” structure into the main element to frame and highlight the products on display. But in addition to the dense sculptural characteristic, the structure creates a series of voids and openings that delimit spaces and different programs. The brass rods delicately rest upon “a solid ground of wide timber floorboards, giving the interior a warm and natural feel, and that occasionally rises up to form wooden counters inserted solid stone blocks”, in which the brand’s products are displayed as precious objects (ARCHDAILY, 2016).

Each store floor has a specific function, with the main boutique, gift-wrapping, reception desk, and multifunctional auditorium on the first floor, and lounges on the second floor. On the third floor, there are located spas, a powder room, a courtyard, and a staff room. In the basement, there is another spa, but more luxurious based on Korean medicinal herbs. And navigating among all five, you can see changes in the atmosphere and the materials used. In the basement spa, dark brick walls, Earthy gray stone treatment rooms, and warm crafted wood floors lend these areas a sense of intimacy, shelter, and relaxation. The material palette becomes gradually lighter and more open as visitors move up the building, creating an interactive environment, culminating in the terrace where the brass lattice creates lounges and frames views of the surrounding landscape (GRIFFITHS, 2016). Neri (2016) describes the journey as a constant contradiction between two counterparts: enclosed to open, dark to light, delicate to massive. According to ArchDaily (2016), the holistic approach to the lantern concept, which is present in the space-making, lighting, display, and signage gives visitors the “endless intrigue and urges to explore the spaces and products” with excitement and delight.

## > Shiseido

Shiseido is a Japanese cosmetics company founded in 1872, which understands beauty as all diversity that exists in humanity, and not as an image. In addition to its strong connection with the senses, emotions, and nature, the brand relies heavily on research and scientific development. In Ginza, an important upscale shopping district in Tokyo, Japan, Shiseido opened its “Global Flagship Store” this year, the brand’s largest and most important store, where innovation, hospitality, beauty, and wellness collides. It receives the title of “global” because it not only represents the brand but offers exclusive products from all countries where it is present.

Despite being an extremely traditional brand, connected with the culture of its country of origin, and with human relations, the concept of the flagship store follows the opposite direction and explores the intense use of technology. If at first, this approach seems to be contradictory, the experience that the store intends to provide to the customer, called #ALIVEwithBeauty, justifies the use of state-of-the-art technologies and convinces through extremely delicate strategies. The technology combines with makeup and skincare activities to make them exclusive and personalized for each client, so they can discover the beauty within. During the journey inside the store, customers wear a bracelet that records all purchases, allowing them to explore the space without having to carry a shopping basket, and only at the time of payment they receive the products. In addition, Shiseido created Leah, an Intelligent Beauty Partner that accompanies virtually the customer in every space of the store.



Same store, similar approach, different feel. Simplicity x hi-tech and warm x cold light

<https://www.shiseido.co.jp/ginza/en/floorguide/>



The store is part of a commercial building and is divided into three floors, each with different characteristics and functions. On the ground floor, all makeup and skincare products are displayed around a central island. The brand's website calls this floor "Play with Beauty" because in this area customers can discover and test all products while playing with their five senses. For this, Shiseido offers different technological stations that strengthen the interactive character of the shopping experience:

- Make me up: a navigator that displays detailed product information when the client holds a product in front of it. And it also simulates how the product will look on the client's face, through facial recognition;
- Digiskin tester: a digital tester that allows the client to easily check and compare details of different skincare products. It also allows the client to find optimal skincare products just by answering a simple survey;
- Ultimate to go: a vending machine to quickly purchase products following simple steps;
- Ultimune fountain: a brand exclusive refill service inspired by the Mottainai spirit of Japan – consciousness about waste;
- Power bar: an automatic tester with which the client can dispense products just by holding their hands underneath, allowing them to experience the texture and aroma on their hands;
- Foundation bar: a digital tester that can accurately diagnose the right foundation color for each client. They can easily find the perfect tone just by taking a picture and try the product immediately.



*Technology highly explored for immersive user experience.*

<https://www.shiseido.co.jp/ginza/en/floorguide/>







The second floor, entitled “Create Your Own Beauty”, is dedicated to consulting professionals in the field of makeup and skincare, who recommend products and techniques to customers, through short private beauty and wellness classes. In addition to consultancies, spaces dedicated to gift wrapping, offer packaging customization services to make them even more exclusive. In the basement of the store, Shiseido dedicates a space not for shopping but for relaxing experiences to unwind and relax the body and let the natural beauty shine through. The space is called “Awaken Your Beauty”, and it offers a unique program that stimulates the five senses with scent, sound, and light, and the exclusive meditation pod “Somadome” that resets and recharge the mind and body.

An interesting aspect of the store’s design is the location of the elements, on the first and second floors, they are very similar in shape and position, but the materiality and atmosphere are transformed, and they are adapted according to the main function offered on each floor. The first floor, where the interaction takes place mainly through machines, the material is extremely artificial and aseptic, such as metals and glossy surfaces, and the lighting is strong and cold. On the second floor, where there is a direct interaction between staff and client, wood and fabric prevail in the space, giving a more intimate and cozy feeling, and lighting is less intense and warmer. It is noticed that the store’s design is not very intriguing, and extremely functional and minimal, but it fits very well with Shiseido’s proposal to allow customers to explore the wide range of products that the brand offers. The store, more than surprising by the eyes, has the intention to conquer by the technological interactive experience.



On the left the gift wrapping are and on the right the meditation space.

<https://www.shiseido.co.jp/ginza/en/floorguide/>



Aesop Emporium, Melbourne  
<https://www.dezeen.com/2019/09/27/aesop-pitt-street-sydney-shop-interiors/>







# Chapter 03

## Retail Design and The Beauty Industry

After discussing social aspects around gender and understanding the dynamics of retail spaces, this chapter will explore how both these studies come together and the relevance of making this connection happen. Among all the retail segments, the cosmetic one touches on relevant gender issues; therefore, it's discussed both its role in society and its characteristics when translated into a sale space.

## 06.The trigger

### Beauty binary standards

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Acts of discrimination are the ones that marginalize and downgrade individuals and are based on prejudiced ideas, preventing them from exercising their rights as human beings and, therefore, deprives them of freedom of expression, and to participate actively in society in a comfortably. In a statement on sexual rights, Sharpe (2008), president of IPPF[7], states that the expression of a sexual identity different from heterosexual expectations is still the target of discrimination, stigma, and violence. Thus, people who do not fit within the heteronormative rule are in a position of vulnerability and are often victims of moral and physical aggression. I take the liberty to include, in the group mentioned by Sharpe, individuals who, in a way, also do not fit the heteronormative standards, despite being heterosexual in terms of their sexuality. It is understood that in discussions about social struggles, people who are openly homosexual and heterosexual people do not participate in the same group, since the first is considered part of a minority group and the second is not. However, as was seen previously on the definition of homophobia, not being homosexual does not necessarily mean being protected from homophobic aggressions. Thus, for the development of this work, it is considered appropriate to place people who do not meet the gender expectations of heteronormative society, regardless of their sexuality, in the same position.

Taking as a starting point the understanding of the aggressor's motivation to practice hatred, in a scenario where the aggressor and the victim, who do not know each other, establish the first contact, among all the characteristics of people "outside the binary standard", the physical appearance, behavior, gesticulations, that is, all that superficial that can be apprehended quickly, and that can be identified as "deviant" from normativity will be the trigger, and perhaps the main one reason to "justify" the practices of violence and discrimination mentioned by Sharpe. Therefore, in these cases, physical appearance, or "the cover" from the English idiom "don't judge a book by its cover", seems to play a significant role and therefore becomes the object of interest in this research.

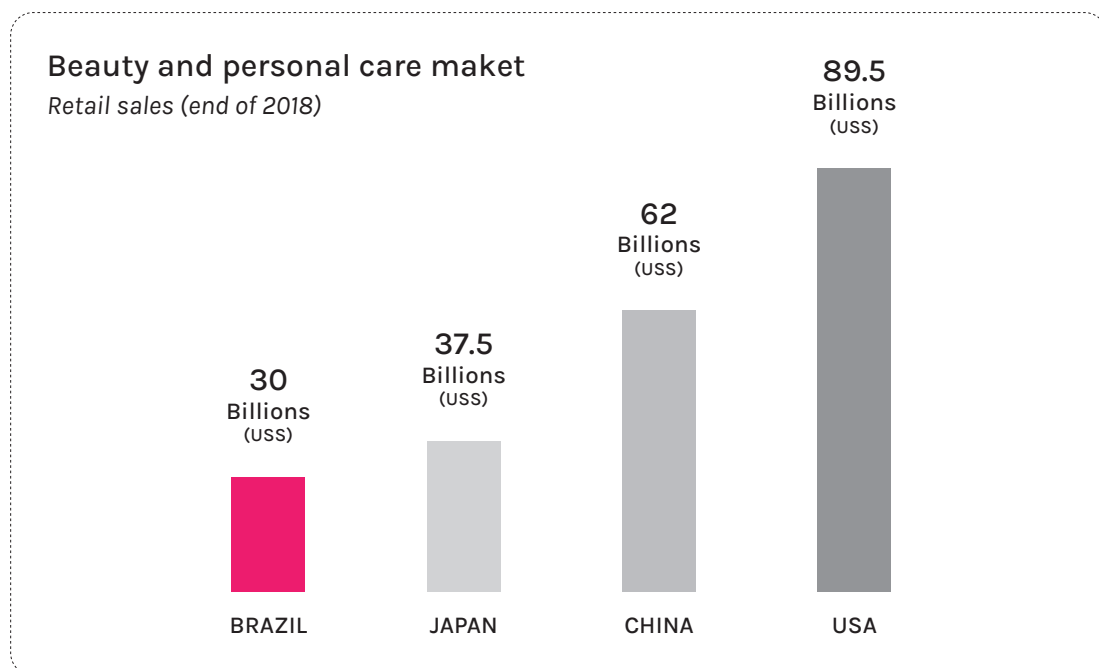
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**[ 7 ]** . IPPF is a global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. [...] a worldwide movement of national organizations working with and for communities and individuals.





About the appearance and the stereotypes that are created around it, the beauty industry is largely responsible for its maintenance and for reinforcing the plastered contemporary idea of the aesthetic standards of the body. According to Knopp (2008), when we refer to the cult of the body in contemporary society, it is understood as a composite of aesthetic dispositions more complex than just good shape and physical appearance, it also refers to the way of dressing, the way of walking, gestures, and body posture to mention a few. Allied to the beauty industry, the media creates the intermediation between the latter and society, reproducing social values related to the body, and stimulating the consumption of services and products to make the viewer more beautiful and attractive. The media, according to Knopp (2008), is extremely powerful in the construction of the collective imagination of culture, and for this reason produces an idea that reaffirms the inseparable relationship between beauty, health, power, and success, which is represented as essential to obtaining happiness. Therefore, with the spread of the concept of beauty, combined with success and status, created by the discourse conveyed by the media, supply, and demand for products and services, that reinforce and help individuals achieve this ideal, have been expanding in recent years. Following this exponential growth, Weber (2020), brings a survey conducted by Euromonitor International on Forbes, data showing that in just 5 years, between 2013 and 2018, in Brazil, the fourth-largest beauty market and personal care in the world, after the United States, China, and Japan, the value of retail sales in reais increased by 24.5%, accumulating a total of US \$ 30 billion in 2018.



Adapted from Werber (2020)



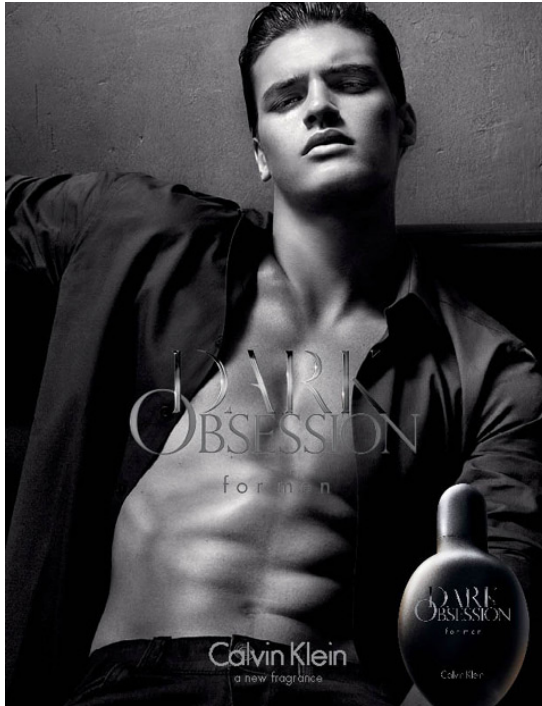
The origin of the phenomenon of the worshipping of the contemporary body is related by Knopp (2008) to the advertising boom of the 1920s, stimulated by Hollywood film productions, which impacted the cosmetics and fashion industries and highlighted the valorization of the skinny silhouette and makeup. According to Castro (2003), since then, people's need and responsibility to redesign their own body has been strengthened, as a way of defining or redefining their own identity, and the way society will see them. In the post-World War II period, there was a significant change in the behavior and habits of society in relation to hygiene, health, and beauty. This change, according to Castro (2008), happened due to the diffusion of mass media with the appearance of TV, which fostered the democratization of fashion, the creation of a new hedonistic culture, and the raising of standards of life, culture, and welfare. Thus, as the reach of the media expands and they become more intensely part of the dynamics of society, the greater the expectations of individuals to achieve ideals - the idealized concept of standards - increasingly unreal, consequently more severe are the external judgments about the appearance of others, and less is the capacity for self-acceptance of the individual who seeks to match the idealized standard, sometimes inconsistent with his own individuality. As Knopp (2008) says about the negative aspect of the ideal aesthetic image created by the media:

“ Prolonged exposure to these images can have negative effects on individuals and society as a whole. Men and women compare their physical attractiveness with those of the models in the ads and these comparisons often lead to low self-esteem and negative self-perception since the media has the power to create and dictate standards of beauty, fashion, and behavior. (KNOPP, 2008, p. 05)



Lingerie campaign for women.

[http://pulpiculture.blogspot.com/2015/11/victorias-secret-advertising-campaigns\\_20.html](http://pulpiculture.blogspot.com/2015/11/victorias-secret-advertising-campaigns_20.html)



Perfume campaign for men.

<https://www.thefashionisto.com/matthew-terry-fronts-calvin-kleins-dark-obsession-fragrance-campaign/>

Material and immaterial goods in society are used as bridges for social relations and define cultural categories and social values, then are responsible for building bonds between like-minded. McCracken (2003) explains that society judges and it is equally judged by the body and its various expressions, because, similar to any good, the individual uses the body, consciously or unconsciously, as an object of social interaction, communication, and meaning. In this way, the physical

appearance and performance of the body act as distinctive characteristics, signs of status, and social condition, from which judgments are made According to Souza (2004), “the body acts as symbolic materiality of meaning, as “a surface on which the social nature is embedded”.

In the coexistence relations of the postmodern society, for Knopp (2008), the individual assumes different identities, which are dynamic, are built by the society itself, and represent and classify the individual according to specific social situations. According to McCracken (2003), the social construction of the human being’s identity depends on the consumption of goods and services, which behave not only as a means for social relations but as categorizing signs of individuals in the social sphere. Therefore, consumption and what is consumed are part of a social sphere that, according to Knopp (2008), regulates and guides the daily practices in contemporary society, and allows every individual, based on the analysis of the events in this sphere, start to judge values and automatically classify behaviors according to niches pre-established by social assumptions. In other words, understanding the body as a communicational vehicle of signs, its language, gestures, and forms, all culturally codified, become instruments of social distinction and indicators of personal status. The worship of the body, therefore, can be interpreted as a sphere of consumption that guarantees people acceptance and the feeling of belonging to a specific social group, or on the contrary, excludes them from standard social groups and assigns them to marginalized social groups - not included within acceptable stereotypes, imposed by society and reinforced by the media.

The standards of beauty and aesthetics reproduced by the media automatically gain binary connotations, since they operate in the social sphere and represent the heteronormative expectations of society. In this way, while creating unachievable ideals of beauty for both women and men, they restrict which standards are exclusive to the latter and which other standards are exclusive to the former. In November 2015, Izquierdo (2015) tells, in an article for the Brazilian magazine *Veja*, the story of M.A.C's Canadian makeup artist in Brazil, Jake Falchi who experienced an act of discrimination based on her physical appearance, in October of the same year. The makeup artist when attending her appointment at an aesthetic clinic in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, was not assisted by the local team on the grounds that the clinic's services are not aimed to men, and when being mistaken as a male person, she was asked to leave the establishment. When trying to explain that she was a woman, the clinic's employees replied saying that they also did not assist homosexual people, assuming that the Canadian was homosexual based on the judgment of her body. Jake says that she returned home completely devastated by the aggression she suffered, and reports that the way she dresses is often the target of prejudice, as her personal style does not fit the social standards of femininity, and therefore not accepted as adequate to her biological sex.



Makeup artist, Jake Falchi.

<https://vejasp.abril.com.br/blog/beleza-de-blog/maquiadora-relata-episodio-de-discriminacao-em-clinica-de-depilacao/>

The diffusion of patterns and stereotypes of beauty and aesthetics, both male and female, opens the door for cases like Falchi's to be increasingly common in contemporary society. In this way, the ideal, created by society and reinforced by the beauty industry, not only judges the characteristics of an individual as sufficient and insufficient but also as belonging or deviant. For example, a woman who is "overweight" by social body standards will automatically be labeled "non-standard", and this condition is likely to be viewed negatively - insufficiently - both by those who judge her and by herself who will feel diminished by the judgments.



And a man who behaves or performs activities considered feminine or exclusive to women will be seen by society as an individual who does not follow a set of male standards, and therefore wrong.

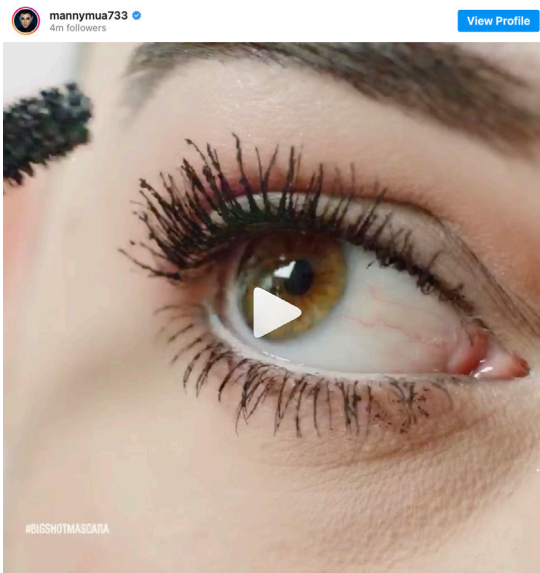
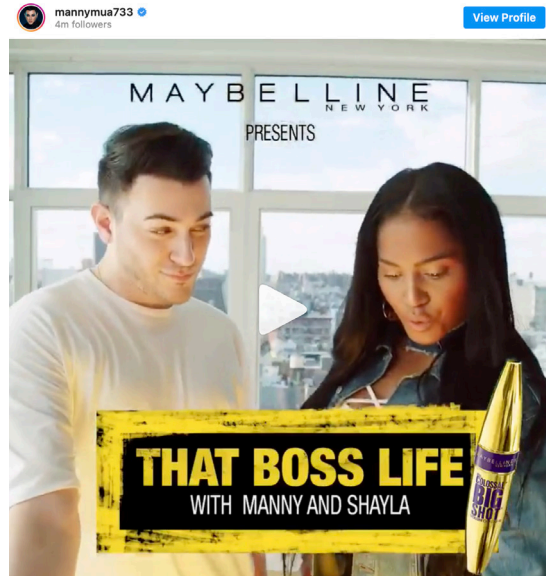
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## 6.1 Social media and the beauty industry

### A persuasive partnership

Nowadays, the above-mentioned diffusion of social assumptions takes place substantially through digital platforms and digital social media. According to Santos and Santos (2014), we live in a period called “technical-scientific-informational”, characterized by the intensive use of computers and cell phones, which allow the creation of new technical networks and social relationships, and consequently allowing circulation of ideas, messages, people and goods, at an extremely fast and efficient pace. For this reason, the cybernetic environment has become the perfect space for businesses that want to spread their brand and products quickly and effectively. However, in the case of the beauty industry, its performance through media and social networks, in addition to working as a marketing tool due to the promotion of a brand, even if indirectly, strengthens the dissemination of beauty standards, reaching an audience much greater than through conventional media such as television and print media. In addition, if before the public was only a receiver of information, now they can make use of the spaces provided by digital platforms to share their own opinions and reproduce information, rather it's real or distorted. In this way, anyone is able to reproduce negative values that are already rooted in the culture of a society and give them even more strength through the internet.

In 2017, according to information from the Hypesness (2017) website, the American make-up artist and YouTuber, Manny Gutierrez, 29, was chosen to be the first male model to star in a Maybelline make-up advertising campaign. The make-up artist, who has millions of followers on the digital platforms YouTube and Instagram, and produces content mainly related to beauty, was extremely applauded for this achievement since he broke a standard not only for the brand, he was representing but for the entire beauty market that is very stereotyped. Unfortunately, the avant-garde and empowered attitude of Maybelline and Gutierrez had been the target of homophobic attacks on the internet. On Twitter, another digital platform that mediates the interaction between users around the world, the blogger Matt Walsh posted the following sentence next to a photo from YouTuber: “Dads, this is why you need to be there to raise your sons”. Walsh's prejudiced comment was answered by Gutierrez's own father, but even so, it represents the thinking of a large part of society, who considers a man, regardless of his sexuality, who wears makeup as wrong, or under the aggressor's view, as lack of parental supervision and education.



Manny Gutierrez, face of the Maybelline campaign.

<https://www.elle.com/beauty/news/a41853/maybelline-manny-gutierrez-first-male-ambassador/>

More recently, in July this year, the Brazilian cosmetics company Natura invited 14 famous men to star in its Father's Day campaign. Among them was the name of transgender actor Thammy Miranda. The inclusive vision of the Brazilian company in representing the diversity of people and parents in its campaign, generated a great negative repercussion on

the internet and became one of the most commented subjects on Twitter at the time, represented by the hashtag # NaturaNo. Some internet users created this movement on the internet to boycott the choice of the cosmetics company to have chosen a trans man to be part of the campaign, assuming that because he was not the biological father of his son, Miranda could not represent the category of "Brazilian father". Responding to the transphobic initiative, in an interview with the digital magazine Ecoa, Andrea Alvares, Natura's vice president, remains firm in the campaign's approach, and explains that the intention was never to shock or create a debate around issues involving gender, but to represent everything that the brand considers "possible fatherhood", choosing "men who are living fatherhood in a present way, with all its nuances". Although the issue of gender is not the main focus of advertising, the vice president recognizes the importance of the debate and of working on diversity "not just as a speech", but as an ongoing intention that represents various social and racial groups, in search of a balance.

## Dia dos Pais: Thammy Miranda recebe ataques e Natura se posiciona

Na noite desta segunda-feira, #NaturaNão está entre os assuntos mais comentados no Twitter e empresa se posiciona após campanha

Por **Marina Filipe**  
Publicado em: 27/07/2020 às 11h32  
Alterado em: 27/07/2020 às 19h01  
© Tempo de leitura: 2 min



Thammy Miranda e filho: campanha de Dia dos Pais para Natura gera polémica (Facebook/Reprodução)

*Thammy Miranda in the Natura campaign.*

<https://exame.com/marketing/natura-faz-campanha-de-dia-dos-pais-com-thammy-miranda-e-gera-polemica/>

Internet access continues to grow globally. In November 2019, according to the United Nations website, more than half of the world's population, or 4.1 billion people, use the internet, with its use in developed countries reaching almost 87% of individuals. This means, for the dissemination campaigns through media and social networks, that the propagation of information and

the reach to new prospects increase and become easier. Unfortunately, as was seen in the cases involving advertising campaigns articulated by the beauty industry mentioned above, at the same time that the transmission of information becomes broader, the greater is the openness to judgment of all types, including prejudiced and negative ones. However, despite haters[8] and their harsh comments, the use of the internet has allowed the insights on beauty, aesthetics and, consequently, on the use of cosmetics and personal care products, to gain a different perspective and construction from those spread in the 1920s. In this way, it allows standards and stereotypes, even in a slow process, to be deconstructed, and the range of expressions through possible aesthetics to increase and become more democratic.

## 6.1.1 The influencer era

The hype of the moment

Contemporarily, content sharing and virtual socialization platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram, have reached a new dimension, named by Boyd (2017) “the peak of digital influencer age”, due to the success of the recent professional category named digital influencer or content creator, which is someone with a social media following who encourages fans and followers to take action. Therefore, companies are increasingly betting on marketing in partnership with digital influencers, who are bridges between the brand and the customer, as an alternative to traditional

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**| 8 . Hater**” is a label used to refer to people who use negative and critical comments and behavior to bring another person down by making them look or feel bad. These hurtful and negative comments can be delivered in person, online, or in texts and apps. (STOP BULLYING)

marketing. As Morgan (2019) states about the beauty industry and social media relationship:

“ *The rise of both beauty tutorials on YouTube, where influencers with millions of followers showcase complex makeup looks and an Instagram-led “selfie culture”, have helped beauty sales boom in recent years. (MORGAN, 2019)*

An example of this relationship between influencer and brand is a make-up line, which was born from the partnership between influencer Ingrid Nilsen and the make-up brand bareMinerals. According to Boyd (2017), Nilsen, who is the creator of the YouTube channel Miss Glamorazzi, already addressed topics related to bareMinerals in the production of content for her channel even before working with the brand, so the partnership between the two happened naturally transmitting more credibility and truth to the large audience that follows the YouTuber. BareMineral’s Chief Marketing Officer, Claudia Poccia tells, in an interview with Boyd, that digital influencers have emerged as “the authorities in the beauty and fashion industries”, in the current process of evolution and transformation of the beauty world, and the following industries, having noticed such phenomenon, they started to hire these professionals as spokespeople for the brands, since they already “live and breathe” their brand ideals. Poccia adds that the brand’s commitment to partnering with digital influencers instead of renowned celebrities is the possibility of bringing the brand and its products closer to the lives and real needs of consumers, in addition to being able to represent diversity among people through the image of different content creators, rather than a single beauty icon.

In a post published in July 2019, on the “We Are Social” website, the GlobalWebIndex’s strategic insights analyst, Valentine (2019) states that social media has played, and continues to play, a crucial role in shaping the long-standing beauty industry, bringing new opportunities and challenges; and that companies that do not develop strategies to include themselves in this new flow risk to be left behind. In 2019, GlobalWebIndex surveyed internet users aged 16-64 who had recently purchased beauty products or make-up/cosmetic, and 45% of them responded that before purchasing any product in the segments, they look for online reviews, either through recommendations and comments from other consumers on social media, posts from expert bloggers, or celebrity endorsements. This research proves the growing importance of exploring digital platforms and partnering with their personalities, as means of dissemination to the beauty industry, as stated by Valentine (2019):



The use of influencers/celebrities as a marketing medium shows no sign of slowing down. The beauty industry has adopted this tactic more fervently than any other. Influencer marketing on social media has become one of the most effective ways to build brand awareness and helps to bring beauty products to life.



Various digital influencers as promoters of a brand.

Source: Youtube

Regarding this current behavior and trends in the global beauty and skincare market, many companies are already investing in strong digital engagement and devising strategies to stand out in the new social media environment. Following this trend, Weber (2020) presents the Brazilian skincare brand Salve, founded by technology entrepreneur Daniel Wjuniski and advertising and digital influencer Julia Petit, in June 2019, who developed his first formulation based on reviews and contributions consumers/followers, as a co-creation. The company, which today has more than 300 thousand followers on Instagram, continues to invest in direct communication with its consumers, which serves as a thermometer for the creation of new products and the engagement of the brand. Another example of a beauty brand that invests heavily in the digital approach is Glossier, which according to Olivia Valentine, has its success based fundamentally on its relationship with the internet and with its fanbase of almost 3 million people on Instagram. The American brand, founded in 2010, has maintained a close connection with its consumers/followers since the beginning, and constantly shares content produced by them on their social networks. Such is the relevance for the brand of how it is seen through digital platforms, that Glossier started to idealize packaging and labels that help products look aesthetically good when consumers photograph them and share those pictures on their social network.



Nikkie de Jager - Successful digital influencer and supporter of the transgender visibility  
<https://www.beautybay.com/p/beauty-bay/nikkie-tutorials-x-beauty-bay-pres-sed->



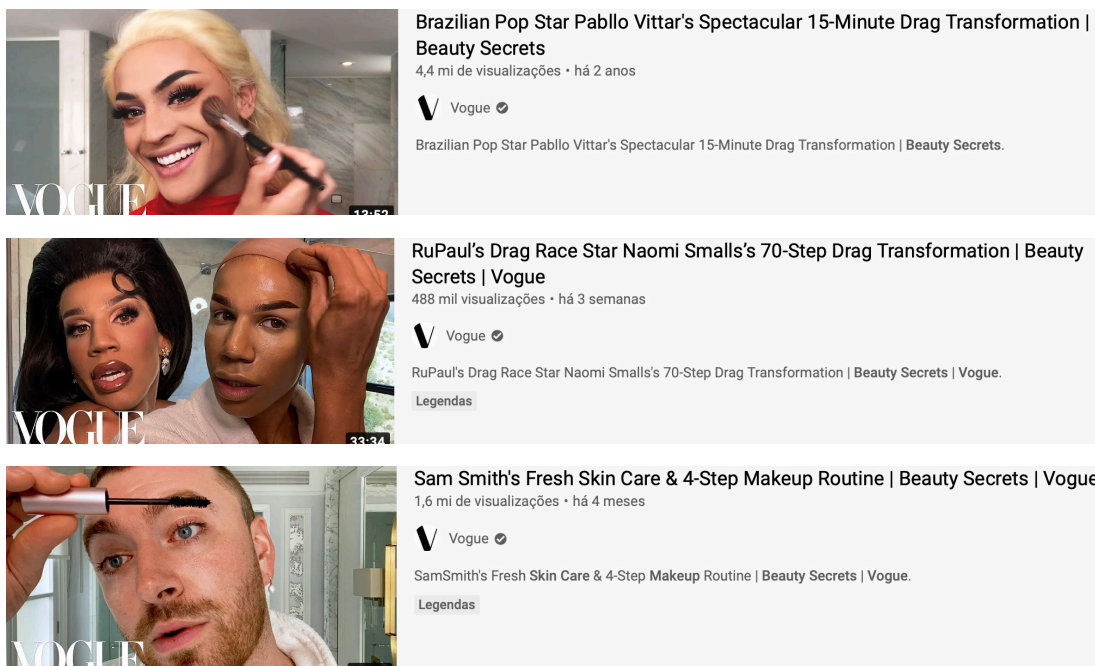




## 6.1.2 The silver lining

Using their power to do good

As the essentiality of the internet reaches more universal levels, social media becomes the epicenter of discussions around social and cultural issues and proves to be increasingly necessary to drive changes in society. They offer people one of the biggest platforms to talk about issues that interest them and thus pressure brands to join the discussions. Among social topics, such as sustainability and the environment, social media can also serve as instruments to bring awareness to issues of diversity and inclusivity, including race, body positivity, sexuality, and gender. According to Valentine (2019), the beauty industry has traditionally brought the stigma “male versus female” in terms of how products are created and promoted, but she believes that in the last decade a big step has been taken away from this restricted thinking.



*Various different and influential people talking about makeup and skincare on Vogue.*

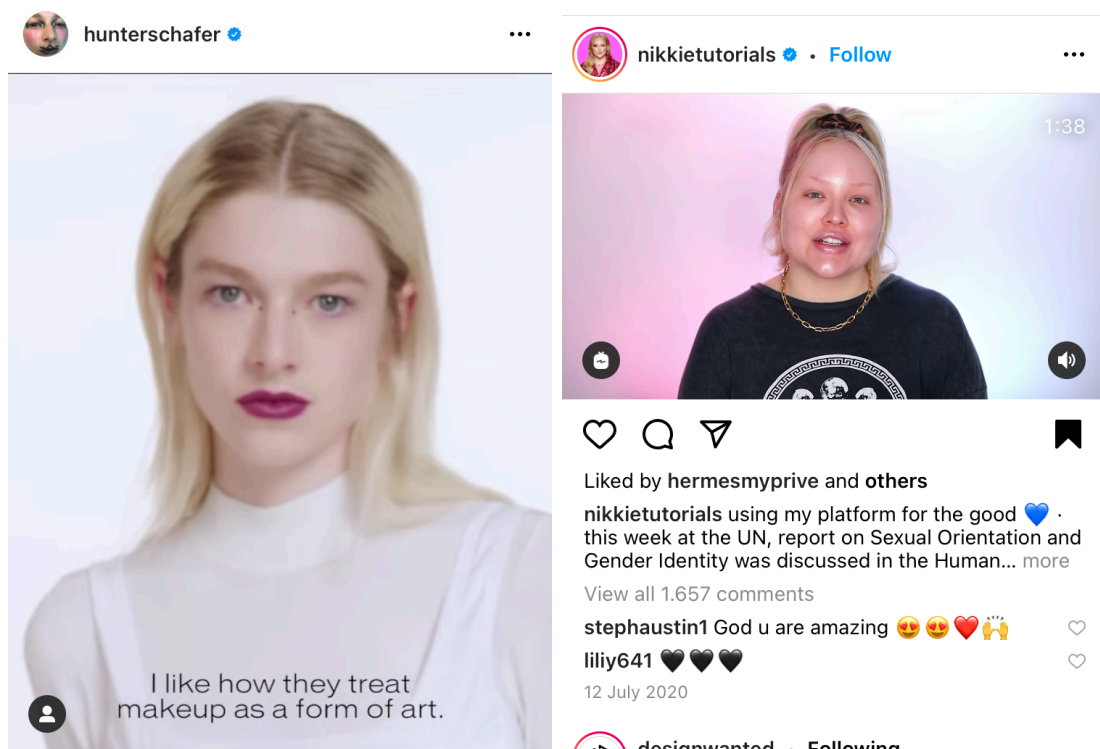
Source: Youtube

The renowned American fashion magazine, Vogue, published since 1892 by Conde Nast Publications in 22 countries, has long occupied its space on the internet through its website and virtual editions of the magazine, but it has also become a phenomenon on social networks followed by millions of people. On her YouTube channel, with almost 9 million subscribers, Vogue created a series of videos called “Beauty Secrets”, in which celebrities are invited to show off their beauty and skincare tricks. Although the guests are always famous people and media personalities, and



by themselves, they already represent idealized images for society, the American magazine channel opens space for people of different niches, races, genders, and sexualities, to talk about a theme that is it is still seen as exclusively feminine and aesthetically stereotyped. And in addition to the intention of entertainment and promotion of the Vogue brand, this action becomes important because it allows the beauty industry to be represented not only by a single standard of person, but by a more varied range, and it is even more relevant because it is promoted by an international brand that is influential and has its ideals respected in the environment in which it operates.

Militant initiatives like Vogue's, although at first, they seem to create a tension in the recognition and maintenance between equality and difference, they open more democratic and plural paths, in which diversity is normalized. The representativeness of social minorities, in the public space, according to Andrade (2020), is important because it is not only a matter of seeking that the interests of minority groups are represented and guaranteed, but it is above all part of the formation of the individual who makes up this group. For example, a woman who reaches the highest position in the government of a country, allows subjectivity to be created in the female identity that other women can also get there. In the same way, it happens in the sphere of beauty and aesthetics, when individuals who are not normally representatives of this environment, start to occupy it and demonstrate their ability and right to do so, subjectivity is also created in the groups represented that there is no negativity in practice such actions.





Artists and digital influencers using social media to spread positivity.

Source: Instagram

Social media has had a profound impact on the beauty industry, especially in the way it interacts with its consumers. They allow brands to explore more creative ways of approaching their narratives and entertaining their customers throughout the process of purchasing products and services. Despite the creation and strengthening of stereotypes are still part of the reality of the content broadcast on digital platforms, the latter has allowed that, through the production of content, people with the most diverse characteristics can, at the same time, promote their image and mediate actions between clients and companies, to address topics relevant to the development of society. In general, at different scales of influence, the alliance between the beauty industry and social media, can now give voice to empowering initiatives that break with society's paradigms and turn diversity and militant acts into a meaningful trend.

# 07. Beauty and skincare stores

## Singularities of each segment

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Historically, the beauty industry has been responsible for supporting stereotypes, including gender, in society. However, as seen previously, in this context the beauty and skincare product markets have made it possible for inclusive attitudes to become increasingly relevant in actions against breaking social stigmas, through the alliance with digital tools, which makes both mentioned cosmetic markets especially relevant in contemporary society, and consequently relevant to the study in this research.

If on the one hand in the virtual environment the notion of beauty and aesthetics has already started to take its first steps towards freedom of expression, contradictorily, the spaces that provide the products that support such initiatives are still mostly gender-oriented or have some gender-specific references.

Therefore, in order to change this exclusive scenario, the final project of the thesis aims to unite the activities performed by digital influencers through social media, with the sales spaces designed on gender-neutral aesthetics, and under this union, drive the dispersion growth of ideals in favor of freedom of expression. However, first, it is necessary to know the main particularities of the design of beauty and skincare stores and understand how they restrict the gender of the target audience.

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### 7.1 Field research

#### Experiencing spaces and sensations

In the sale spaces, in addition to a well-executed layout project, other elements and aspects contribute to its success, especially the individual emotional manifestations of each visitor when immersed in the shopping experience. Faced with a scenario where many of the effects of the store's atmosphere are expressed subjectively, it was decided to conduct a field research of qualitative documentary methodology and direct observation, in which the evaluation criteria are based on technical details of the project but mainly in the perception of the subjective stimuli



of each commercial atmosphere. This field research foresees the description of the phenomena in an unrestricted way, as it is not about the analysis of the design projects as technical drawings, but as already materialized spaces that are stage for the most diverse types of interaction.

The need to carry out the visits arose from the lack of research in the literature related to retail design with a focus on the beauty and skincare segments, which described in detail their specificities. Therefore, the objective was to analyze the dynamics of spaces and understand how they relate to the segment-specific situational elements of the store, and what they are. Another motivation was to have a clear understanding of how brands transform their identity and philosophy into a physical space capable of transmitting them to the visitor/customer, and whether this communication happens clearly or not. For this, it was also necessary to analyze the website of each brand, where it was possible to find the story and philosophy of each of them, in addition to their profiles on the social network Instagram, to try to understand how each brand promotes itself visually as if it relates virtually to the public and what social banners they raise concerning the environment in which they operate. But this analysis was carried out after the visits so that they did not influence the “first impression” of the space.

The research scenario was the cosmetics retail in Milan, Italy, in six stores, three for skincare, and three for makeup. They were chosen because, apparently, they approach themes in some different way and that could generate more interesting comparisons. Based on the results obtained from the visits, and the analysis of their digital platforms, considerations were made regarding the store of each of the brands, pointing out positive and negative aspects of tangible spatial elements, such as furniture, layout, and lighting, and of intangible elements, such as sensations and emotions. Although the focus of this research was not exclusively the perception of gender signs in sale spaces, this topic was present in the process of understanding space and was pointed out in the result as a form of analysis and not as a judgment of values, to understand what the main sources of the gender approach in the commercial environment are, to be avoided in the design project, which will be proposed as the final result of this thesis.

I concluded this field research with a general analysis of each of the segments, skincare and beauty, and the comparison between the main aspects that differentiate them.

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## 7.1.1 Skincare stores

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### > Aesop

#### >> Brand story and philosophy

The brand is known worldwide for its skill with its products and the environment where they are sold. The perfect union between the skincare industry and the world of design and architecture puts Aesop always in the spotlight when topics about these segments are addressed.

It was established in 1987 in Melbourne, Australia, by the hairdresser Dennis Paphitis. Initially, the brand offered only 4 products, nowadays its catalog reaches more than 100 products, ranging from body care products to aromatizing environments, with rich formulations, and special attention to the ingredients used, which are meticulously chosen, as the brand itself describes:

“ We offer skin, hair and body care formulations created with meticulous attention to detail, and efficacy and sensory pleasure in mind. Our objective has always been to formulate [...] products of the finest quality; we investigate widely to source plant-based and laboratory-made ingredients and use only those with a proven record of safety.

The attention to detail extends beyond the formulation of cosmetics and combines the brand's passion for design and architecture. So great is the importance it places on this multidisciplinary, that on its website there is a session in which it describes its history and trajectory allied to the topic, and there it explains that when considering new locations, it intends to blend and intertwine into the fabric of the street and add something of merit rather than impose a discordant presence, always trying to work with the pre-existing elements of the place, in order to respect the past, present, and future. When talking about itself and its trajectory in the market, on its website, the brand is very succinct and direct and relies heavily on inspirational quotes that value the individual.

## >> The visit



*Aesop facade and entrance door.*

*Source: author's personal archive*

In Milan, there are three branches of the brand, and the one chosen for the visit was located on the corner of Via Meravigli and Via San Giovanni sul Muro, next to the iconic Castello Sforzesco, and is entitled Aesop Corso Magenta. The store was located on the ground floor of a residential building and goes almost unnoticed in the middle of a very busy area of the city. Although external visual marketing is not extremely perceptive and quite simple, as it is just two neon signs hanging in front of the store windows, I do not consider it as a negative feature, since, combined with other details of the facade, copper metallic frame, and orange canopies, create a simple and delicate composition that, while dialoguing with the aesthetics of the existing building, brings an air of refinement and attractive exclusivity. Through large glass windows, it is already possible to see the greenish-blue that stands out inside and contrasts with the sand and orange tones of the facade, but when entering this simplistic color perception it gains a much more poetic meaning.

Inside the store, the same shade of green is replicated on the wall and ceiling tiles, on the displays and shelves positioned against the wall, on the counter, and on the window curtains. However, the monotony that could be created due to the intense exploration of monochromatic elements, is broken with the different finishes of the materials. The walls and ceilings take on two different nuances of color depending on the light source that illuminates them: illuminated by the natural light of a cloudy day, the tiles reflect a more bluish and cool color, when illuminated by the bespoke brushed brass pendants, the tiles in cool colors become warmer and reflect an almost yellowish green tone, which refers to the proximity. The products are





*Sitting area and feature sink.*

Source: author's personal archive

displayed on shelves and displays arranged only on the walls, and because it is a small space, there are no displays placed on the floor that can prevent comfortable movement inside the store. The displays were made in an aesthetic that alludes to vintage hospital furniture, with metallic frames that create a rhythmic pattern of rectangles. And in contrast to this more elaborate approach, yellow shelves have unpretentious products, and although they do not belong to the same general aesthetic of the environment, they reinforce the silent chromatic approach.

The atmosphere of the environment conveys the idea of an old pharmacy/ experiment laboratory. The feature sink, which is embedded next to the displays on the wall, follows the same geometry as the other openings but is all lined in steel, which reinforces the idea of something aseptic, very characteristic of laboratories and hospital environment. The service counter at the back of the store also follows the same aesthetic line, with a steel surface and blue metallic body. At the same time that the store proposes a “scientific” aesthetic, the adornments, the chosen furniture, including the light fixtures and ambient music, bring warmth, and this combination results in a more intimate space, like a personal laboratory.



*Bespoke tiling and lighting.*

Source: author's personal archive

A very interesting aspect of the interior is that there are no graphic elements, such as advertisements and indicators for sectors or product categories, that can distract attention from the displayed products, which despite having a neutral appeal arouse interest. However, this more “less informative” approach restricts a characteristic that plays an important role in a skincare store, which is the individual experience of the visitor/customer. This is because the packages are all very similar, if not the same, and as there is no indication of categories of use, such as “for the hair” or “for the body”, or even the price of the products, the customer is dependent on the help from the seller and does not feel completely at ease to explore, even if the environment is inviting and the layout of the products attractive.

Identity is represented through space in a very effective and intense way, without the need to invest in extravagant and unusual elements. The meticulous details, from the personalized furniture and the choice of colors to the signature herbal aroma of the brand, when combined, create a unique and immersive atmosphere. And the experience becomes even more comfortable, because both the design and the staff's own behavior, which focuses exclusively on products and their functions, do not instigate any gender distinction or feeling of non-belonging.



*Shelving and cashier desk.*

*Source: author's personal archive*

## >> Considerations

The brief description of the brand's proposals and philosophy highlights the importance that it attaches to the details and the essentiality of its products. And in doing so, in the case of a skincare company, it unpretentiously conveys the idea of being strongly connected to the senses in a peaceful / spa-like approach. Given these aspects, I see the design and atmosphere created by Dimorestudio, not just in line with Aesop's philosophy, as they represent it in an even more attractive and surprising way, in the right measure, without exaggerating. It is clear, when exploring the brand's digital platforms, that it does not invest in advertising campaigns to promote products or its own image, and this is a characteristic that can also be perceived through the sale space. As mentioned, the graphic elements, such as logo and signs, are quite simple, and if at first, this approach may seem wrong, in the case of commerce, when experiencing the space and the shopping experience, it is understood that the lack of this marketing appeal allows the customer to be captivated much more by the immersive atmosphere than by a brand expectation.

Despite having already heard about Aesop, researching the brand after the visit was a synesthetic experience. While reading about the details of his philosophy and browsing the poetic and "cult" posts on his Instagram profile, he could almost smell the aroma of herbs in the air and the calm ambient music of the store. The memory of silent colors, the details of the furniture, and the general refinement of the space, all connect with what the brand offers in its (indirect) ideological discourse present on digital platforms. Therefore, the physical store does not exist only as an alternative to buying online, or just as an exhibitor of products. The experience in the physical space highlights the qualities of the products, adds positive characteristics to the brand image, and makes the consumer want to repeat the experience, by stimulating sensations. The absence of signs that refer to gender does not instill a lack of representativeness and allows anyone to feel comfortable in the environment.



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## > Caudalie

### >> Brand story and philosophy

Caudalie's story began in 1993 when Mathilde and Bertraud Thomas, founders of the brand, partnered with Pharmacy University of Bordeaux laboratory director Joseph Vercauten after discovering the world's most powerful antioxidant contained in grape seeds. The name of the brand arose from the desire to represent the couple's roots linked to French wineries, and "Caudalie" is a term used by wine connoisseurs as a unit of measurement of the time that the taste of the wine remains on the palate after its tasting.

Throughout the evolution path, the brand has invested in the development of technologies with natural bases that have become established products. Nurturing an appreciation for the natural essentiality of the ingredients used in the production of cosmetics, in 2006, Caudalie created the Cosm-ethics, which establishes strict rules to obtain the most natural formulas possible, and yet guarantee effectiveness and luxury.

Engaged in environmental causes, in 2012 the brand became a member of the "1% for the Planet" network, and therefore earns 1% of its worldwide turnover to organizations working to protect the environment. That same year, Caudalie's first boutique spa was opened in New York, which tells the history of the brand and its origins, through an "urban twist" of its Vinothérapie roots translated into a store dedicated to women. And today there are more than 50 units spread all over the world.

### >> The visit

In Milan, there is only one boutique of the brand and it is located in Via Fiori Chiari, in the Brera district. The street is closed to pedestrian traffic and other small boutiques that help to create an almost scenic setting, where pedestrians are invited to stroll and admire the luxury that the stores present there can offer. Part of the composition of this promenade, the Caudalie store stands out for the green elements present in the windows and the canopy, which receives the logo of the brand printed in white. From the outside, through the window, which displays few products, it is possible to see the interior of the store completely, which appears to be quite intimate and comfortable, but when entering the perception of the space becomes a little different.



Window display and interior.

<https://www.treatwell.it/salone/caudalie-boutique-spa-milan/>

As it is a small space when entering the store, the different light sources, such as illuminated panels, pendants, spotlights, and illuminated shelves, coming from different positions, seem to dispute the eye's attention, and at first, it is not possible to interpret the space with a unique composition, but separate parts and focal points.

The products are displayed on wooden shelves that seem to belong to a botany file and are divided by lines, rather than by function of use, so the customer needs to know the products beforehand or be assisted by a salesperson, which will explain what each product line is about and its specific functions. In fact, personalized personal service, to the detriment of free exploration, seems to be an important characteristic for the functioning of the dynamics due to the spatial composition of the store. In the center of the space, there is a counter, aesthetics similar to that of an oak barrel for wine storage, with a Carrara marble top, which exposes some products and is also the basis for a feature sink. But, despite the presence of the latter subjecting the customer's interaction with the products, any possible interaction is exclusively conducted by the employee, while she provides a small "lesson" about a certain product and allows the customer to try the product on her skin, in a brief treatment session. The elements that make up the space behind this central counter follow a completely different aesthetic from the rest of the store, which resembles a completely white and illuminated drug handling laboratory. At the till point, which dries the same design as the shelves that imitate files, some miniatures of products are displayed, and at the bottom of it a luminous panel in a window format prints the image of a grape plantation.

The understanding the aesthetic composition of the interior of the store is not immediate, but it becomes clearer as one also learns about the products and their formulations. Most of the brand's products carry some ingredients from grapes and their seeds, as explained by the seller, so it is understood that many elements refer to wineries and this world of natural and botanical production. However, the combination of these elements that refer to grape plantations, with

the aesthetics of pharmaceutical environments, does not happen fluidly and makes its interpretation difficult as an integrated scenario. The visual marketing present in the store, as well as the classification of products, makes no distinction of gender, and the personalized service creates a pleasant experience. However, this experience is not immersive, because although the set of elements that make up the space is not unpleasant, they do not necessarily convey the same message or are not part of a composition that tells a story, acting in isolation. In addition, much of the materiality chosen mimics original materials and techniques, which conveys an idea more caricature than in fact true and immersive.



*Interior atmosphere and spa area.*

<https://www.breradesigndistrict.it/location/boutique-caudalie/>

## >> Considerations

Caudalie's story is quite interesting because it is born from the solid roots of a family business and gains credibility and space in the world of cosmetics through intense scientific research to achieve established formulas. From this union between the fluidity of the nature of the wine plantations and the pharmaceutical precision, an appreciation for the refined culture of the Spa arises. Inside the store visited it is possible to see all these references, but somehow, they do not seem to belong to the same space: elements that alone make sense, but that cannot be read as a composition.

Wineries are part of the tradition of the brand because, in addition to being related to the history of the founding family, almost all formulations take ingredients and assets present in the DNA of the grape, so it is comprehensive and expected that elements of this French rural atmosphere are present in the design intent of the store and, in fact, are, for example, the wooden beams, the exposed masonry arches, the white walls with irregular texture, and the counter that alludes to a wine barrel. All of these elements were very well executed, but the way they are arranged in space without much connection turns them into purely scenography elements without much capacity to stimulate sensations. Although the brand identifies itself as destined exclusively for the female audience, the atmosphere of the sale space is only quite delicate but does not refer to any gender. In general, the store experience conveys important aspects of the brand philosophy, it definitely solves all the needs that the services offered may have, but it is not immersive.



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## > Lush

### >> Brand story and philosophy

The famous hand-made cosmetics brand was founded in 1995 in Poole, England's major port city, and began to spread to other corners of the world two years later. The construction of LUSH actually started in the 1970s, with the union of Mark Constantine and Liz Weir, who were both passionate about science and the world of beauty. The pair went on to develop hand-making herbal hair products, and the popularity led them to produce for another famous cosmetics company The Body Shop. In this process of flourishing business, Helen Ambrosen and Rowena Bird joined the team, and in the 1980s, after 15 years of partnership with The Body Shop, Constantine & Weir sold their formulas to the brand and founded Cosmetic to Go (CTG). The proposal for this new brand invested in products with vibrant colors and never-before-seen items. Many of the products created for CTG, such as bath bombs, solid shampoo bars, and solid massage bars, remain in the current LUSH catalog and are some of the iconic products.

From that moment of independence, the brand was able to invest in "close to their hearts" issues. Contrary to animal testing in laboratories, they developed the buying policy that ensured that no supplier tested on animals, which became the pioneer in the market and is still in force today. Besides, the brand went on to fund the important work of those looking for cruelty-free solutions to cosmetics animal-testing free.

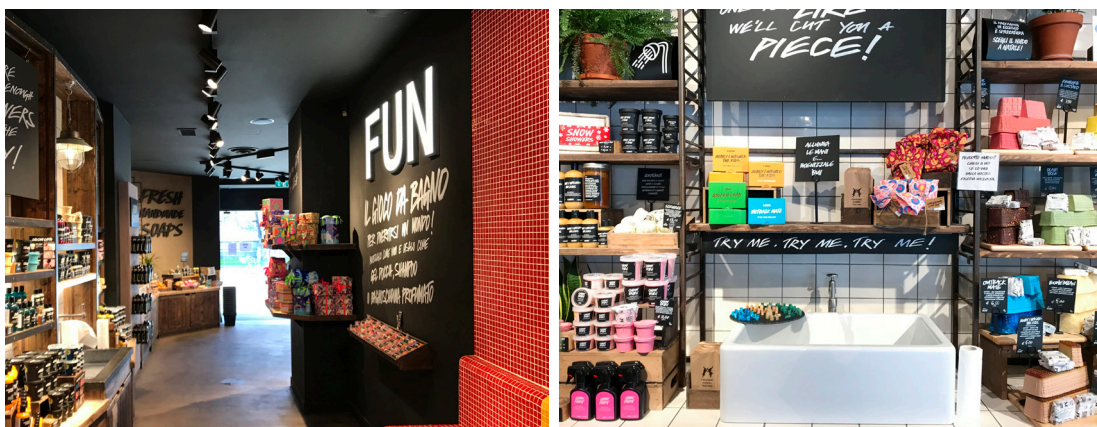
Allied to the fight against animal testing, when visiting a delicatessen in London, they aroused an interest in the use of fresh ingredients in the production of cosmetics, with an emphasis on reducing preservatives in the formulation. And it was with this idea that the founding group of CTG disbanded the current brand at the time and gave birth to LUSH Fresh Handmade Cosmetics. The first LUSH store was inaugurated with a simple design, using blackboards as a way to advertise products, and discarding the idea of using frivolous packaging. According to the brand, most of the capital was invested in the purchase of quality fresh ingredients. And that was supposed to be just an initial market approach, it ended up becoming the signature of the brand.

The brand describes itself as a campaigning company and prides itself on going against the standards of the cosmetics market and choosing raw materials and labor policies. LUSH states that it continues to fight animal testing and is working on conservative-free cosmetics. Regarding creativity and innovation, the brand claims that they remain true to their identity, regardless of industry trends, and that they continue to invest in innovations.

## >> The visit

The branch chosen for the visit, among the 7 stores spread across Milan, was located in Piazza del Duomo, just behind the city's cathedral. Before any analysis regarding the store's design, it is necessary to mention that even without seeing any visual reference to the store, it is possible, many meters away, to feel the strong and unmistakable aroma of the brand, and therefore to know immediately that there is a Lush store in the vicinity. The façade is little ornamented, and the side window that displays products is barely visible, since there is a restaurant right next to the store, and the former creates a physical visual barrier that prevents this window from being easily reached or seen from afar. The characteristic white luminous sign on a black background is easily recognized by those who already know the brand, because it is reproduced in the same way in all branches of the store, regardless of its location, but this visual approach can only be moderately attractive for new consumers who do not know the brand in advance.

If it is possible to recognize the “Lush” aroma from a distance, inside the store it intensifies. In addition to the aroma, modern incendiary pop songs take over the environment and create a young and carefree atmosphere, which matches the attitude of the employees, men, and women, who also behave in a stripped-down, very cheerful way, and at the same time, they show themselves willing to help, allow the customer to explore the space and the products. And this “exploration” freedom, in my view, is a very important quality for the “free” concept that the store tries to transmit, as the customer is entitled to feel, touch and even test the products, which are very colorful and vibrant, when not in the standard black Lush packaging. The experimental character of the visit is reinforced by the presence of several feature sinks scattered throughout the store, which allow several customers to test the products without having to wait since the movement of customers is large.



Interior atmosphere and feature sink.

Source: author's personal archive



Products display and skincare area.

Source: author's personal archive

The product displays and all the elements that make up the store's design are positioned against the wall and pillars, leaving the passage free for customers to move. However, the store space is divided into two main rooms connected by a long "corridor" and, although the plant allows free traffic and without a determined flow, the space is intuitively read as a beginning, middle, and end, and therefore the most visited spaces are the main hall - the "beginning" - and the corridor - the "middle" - the last hall being used only for the payment of purchases, although it was not designed to fulfill this function only. In this space at the back, an area was created especially dedicated to product experimentation, even more, specific than the feature sinks scattered around the store. However, its location at the back little encourages the customers' unpretentious and organic interaction with the products or the staff with the customers, and due to this little movement of people, the space seems to be "disabled", arousing little interest.

The atmosphere of the store is indeed immersive. All the details seem to dialogue with each other and together they create a scenario that recalls an old warehouse, which was redesigned when it was taken by joyful and fun energy. All displays and shelves on the walls, as explained by a store saleswoman during the visit, are made from recycled wood and follow the aesthetics of objects that can be found in warehouses, such as wooden boxes for loading fruit, and shelves metal profiles used in stocks. Some products are even displayed and sold in slices cut by the seller, who wears an apron - typical clothing for warehouse workers -, which further reinforces the playful character that refers to another type of trade, more connected to that of natural food products. As for the lighting, it is very controlled and quite dramatic. Warm light spotlights focus on shelves and other possible elements, but there is no general lighting of the environment, which allows the latter to remain more comfortable and intimate.





Fragrances area in the end of the venue and feature sink.

Source: author's personal archive

The store explores information a lot through writing rather than images. The products are not intended for audiences of specific gender, so their disposition in the store is determined by the category of use or by the production/aroma line, and are identified through handwritten signs and posters, but are spread around the store without a very rigid division. The packages, when present, are very similar to each other, but there is no difficulty in identifying their purposes of use, as they are properly identified. There is no advertising to publicize the products, but there are some posters demonstrating people using them, and these people represented are diverse and do not follow an aesthetic or gender pattern. Throughout the store, you can find other posters supporting the cause against testing cosmetics on animals, and the products displayed without plastic packaging suggest a more conscious and “organic” environmental appeal of the products.



Instructions guide with men and women.

Source: author's personal archive



## >> Considerations

There is no doubt that the connection with handmade products and the appreciation of the delicatessen atmosphere, present in the brand's trajectory, served as inspiration for the creation of the store's interior design concept. The feeling of being shopping at a food store is true and makes the customer want to "taste" the products as if they were actual snacks.

Lush, in its brand philosophy, raises three main banners: fight against animal testing, negative view of unnecessary use of packaging, and the use of natural products. The first is, in fact, strongly represented in space through posters, prints in selling goods, packaging labels, to mention a few. The second ideology is also proven, since many of the products are displayed without any type of packaging, and despite being an environmentally conscious measure, it even becomes a brand differential. The third, on the other hand, sees it as a not so obvious approach chosen by the brand; in general, when trying to highlight the "natural" aspect, elements that stimulate calm and are free from any "filter" are explored, and the extremely vibrant space of the store, with different crazy colors and agitated music, maybe masks this "natural" quality of Lush products; but I do not consider this approach negative since the store environment is successful in transmitting well-being in such a unique way.

Analyzing the brand's social networks, their posts represent different people and personalities, since they often reproduce the content created by their customers. Also, it stands against movements in favor of minority groups and freedom of expression. These actions demonstrate the brand's client-centered approach, which seeks the well-being of anyone, regardless of how it is. This empowered characteristic is not present through any physical element in the store - a literal approach -, but an atmosphere free of gender stereotypes and exclusive segregations, allows the shopping experience to be light and stimulating.

The aesthetic approach, which mixes elements of delicatessen with influences of contemporary young pop culture, is almost caricatured, but the good execution of the project and attention to details transforms what could become a replica of something that already exists, in a unique concept, which it is now recognized as a subscription to Lush franchises.

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## 7.1.2 Beauty stores

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### > MAC

#### >> Brand story and philosophy

MAC (Make-up Art Cosmetics) is a beauty brand already consolidated in the market that is always innovating to accompany the contemporary scene, and always positioning itself socially as a spokesperson for marginalized social groups. It describes itself as a brand for:

“ *All Ages, All Races, All Genders... A professional makeup brand setting trends backstage at fashion weeks around the world. Today, MAC means so many things to its millions of fans in every corner of the planet [...]* ”

The brand was founded in 1984 in Toronto, Canada, by photographer Frank Toskan and salon owner Frank Angelo. The pair, frustrated by the lack of makeup that performed well in photo shoots, decided to create their own. They started producing makeup in their kitchen and sold directly in the salon to photographer friends, makeup artists, and models. But their homemade products gained fame among stylists and fashion editors, and in 1984 the duo opened the MAC brand at a counter in a department store in Toronto.

The great advantage of the brand was that it invested in the makeup business, as “the ultimate color authority”, while the great companies of the time had their focus on the skincare segment. In addition to having revolutionized the market by hiring professional makeup artists to work as attendants at the counters. Over the years he has developed a unique image of products that combine street style with glamorous style and panache. And so, it became known for being an outrageous brand, that breaks with the standards, and that honors individuality and self-expression above all. The stores and the department store counters are taken by this unexpected mix and carry “a brilliant sense of drag and theater”.

In 1994, seeing that HIV and AIDS were spreading around the world, MAC created the VIVA GLAM project, which donates 100% of the profits collected from the sale of products of this line to partner institutions that treat patients with HIV and AIDS. MAC constantly works in partnership with beloved names from pop culture, art,

and fashion, such as Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Lorde, Proenza Schouler, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, and Brooke Shields. This approach makes the brand idea to reach existing fans and increases the relevance of the brand. She also cultivates permanent ties with the fashion industry, behind the scenes of fashion shows and photoshoots, and guarantees her status as “the world’s leading beauty trendsetter”.

## >> The visit



Store's facade and beauty bar.

Source: Google Maps

In Milan, there are 6 branches of the brand, and the one chosen for the visit was the one located on Via Torino. Like all stores on the street, MAC is also located on the ground floor of a building. Its facade is quite simple and is restricted to the dimensions of the door. The sign comes down to a black rectangle and luminous letters with the brand's logo, but although simple, it is easily recognizable since it is part of the brand's visual identity and is repeated in other branches around the world. The sign respects the geometry of the opening on the façade, but a small detail sets it apart from the adjacent stores and appears to have a more “well done” finish: The black sign - two-dimensional strip above the entrance door - gains a more three-dimensional aspect, like a box between the inside and the outside, since the same material/element used in the sign extends to the inside of the store, and is quite noticeable, because the glass door that divides the two spaces, has a frame only on the sides and on the side lower, allowing the upper part to be visually free, and this “continuity” can be perceived.

The interior of the store is quite small, and this is not an exclusive feature of this branch, but tends to be a standard of all, or most, of MAC stores. The rectangular plan is divided into two aisles, by a central piece of furniture, which displays various products on its surface, and has several drawers that serve as a stock of each of the products that are displayed on the bench. On the sides of these corridors, vertical displays positioned next to each other create a rhythm of “accelerated movement” in space, and this character is reinforced by columns illuminated by white lights on both sides of each display. This intense light allows the exposed products, tools, and makeup to be seen clearly, which would not happen if this space were in the dark. Following the same idea of stock as the central bench, in each of these vertical displays mounted on the wall, there is a drawer with other units of the products displayed. This element facilitates service, since the products on display are just testers, and once the customer makes his choice, the seller does not need to go to the store to get the sealed product. At the back of the store, as a continuation of the exhibitors, including following the same aesthetic, there are two beauty bars where the sellers, who are also professional makeup artists, demonstrate techniques and the performance of the products to the customer. On the side opposite the beauty bars, there is the box, and next to it are small trays with miniature versions of some of the brand’s products.

The general atmosphere of the store is quite sober, as it makes intensive use of black, white, gray tones and very few natural wood tones, but it is not monotonous for several reasons: makeup in the most varied tones possible brings a creative and bold appeal. to space; the lively ambient music matches the salespeople’s stripped-down attitude; and the advertising images used to follow a bold and contemporary fashion editorial aesthetic. All these elements combined create a



*Interior atmosphere, bespoke furniture and lighting.*

Source: Google Maps



backstage atmosphere of high fashion events, which is reinforced by the choice of rectangular elements, with aggressive right angles, and without any curve, which alludes to an extremely professional space, without errors, and of much quality. Besides, the perfect fit between the exhibitors and the product packaging geometry shows the attention to detail present in the design project.

The shopping experience in the store is not extremely interactive and independent, because the product test is always accompanied by an employee, but it is immersive, to the point that all the situational elements of the interior dialogue with each other and create an environment extremely connected to the world of beauty and fashion. In fact, there are no surprises or unusual elements in the store, but all the furniture and the spatial organization are very functional and effectively meet the needs of this type of commercial segment. Although the products and sectors are not classified by gender, and the design elements are gender-neutral, the present advertising only represents images of women.

## >> Considerations

The connection between the brand and the fashion world is evident in the proposed design for the sale space. The appearance of the brand in the midst of this more artistic medium of photography and fashion editorials explains the more “professional” approach to both furniture and the general atmosphere of the store. In fact, it differs from the other stores analyzed, precisely in this aspect more “backstage”, and lighting is an element that plays a fundamental role in this differentiation to be noticeable. Undoubtedly, bright light is a common aspect among all the stores visited, but MAC uses it more dramatically, in a kind of gradual composition in space, from areas in the dark to extremely bright spaces. The experience is not completely immersive, but it creates an environment that incites creativity and the power of makeup without being caricatured and obvious.

The brand describes the spaces in its stores as having “a brilliant sense of drag”, where individuality is valued, and on its social networks it promotes makeup as a form of artistic expression regardless of age, race, and gender. And their stores, in fact, are not gender-neutral, but they encourage consumers’ freedom of expression through a more electric and glamorous bias. And although the set of elements that make up the space/atmosphere - music, furniture, customer service, products - are very efficient and well-executed, there is the impression that this “timeless” design, in which the creative direction of the brand invests, it starts to get a little outdated for contemporary makeup trends brought about by the sudden boom of the digital age, which daily produces content about this niche much more casually, far from this more sharp and professional medium, for which MAC is known worldwide.

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## > Sephora

### >> Brand story and philosophy

The brand calls itself the “leader in prestige omni-retail”, and it proposes to create an inviting shopping experience for beauty products that inspire the courage of its consumers. Through a “continued expertise, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit, Sephora encourages clients to explore the universe of beauty and wellness with an unbiased approach to experiential retail”.

Sephora was founded in 1970 in France by Dominique Mandonnaud, and today it is known for its wide range of carefully selected products and brands, in addition to its own Sephora Collection brand, which appeals to indie audiences and classic audiences. Since 1998 the brand has been in the “industry-leading Champion of diversity, inclusivity, and empowerment”, guided by the commitment to its values. In 2019, Sephora announced its new manifesto “We Belong to Something Beautiful”, which reinforces the brand’s engagement in promoting the feeling of belonging to customers and employees, and publicly striving for a more inclusive view of retail.

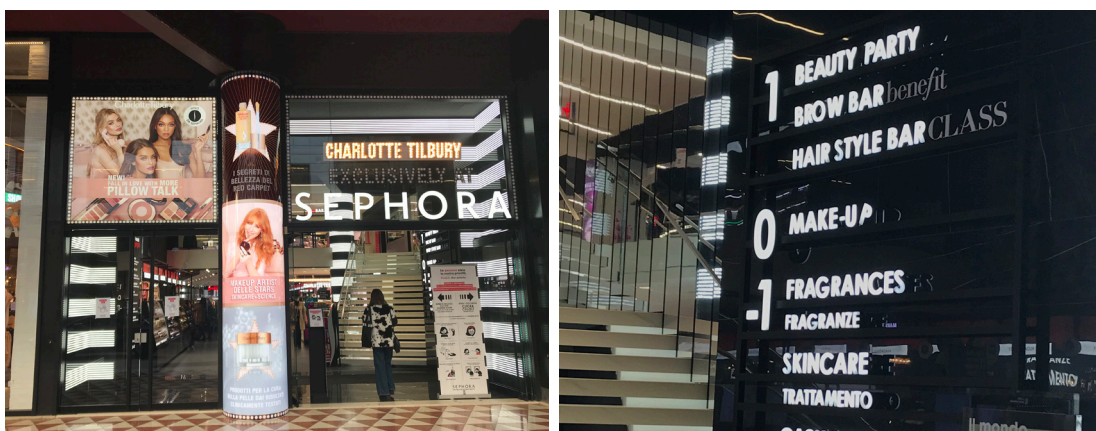
Nowadays, Sephora has become a beauty power in several countries, thanks to its variety of prestigious products in all categories, unbiased service from beauty experts, interactive shopping environment, and innovation. Also, for two consecutive years, in 2018 and 2019, the brand was recognized by Forbes as one of America’s Best Employers. And recently, she scored 100% on the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Quality Index 2019, the national benchmarking tool on corporate policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer employees.

### >> The visit

Sephora is a world-renowned brand and is present in several countries. In Milan, there are 8 branches of the brand, and the one chosen for the visit was the one located in Corso Vittorio Emanuele, a street closed to pedestrians only, located in the city center close to the cathedral, and it is extremely oriented towards tourism. The store was located on the ground floor of a building, alongside other famous brands, and although it is set back from the main axis of the street, it is easily identifiable through the famous black and white stripes - the brand’s visual marketing. In this branch, on the facade, there is no space for shop windows, which

did not prevent the store from intensively exploiting advertisements. At the time of the visit, the advertisement promoted the Charlotte Tilbury brand, through images of the product and women models, in addition to a personalized illuminated sign.

Upon entering, right at the door, a large and luminous panel indicates the services and sectors of products offered by the store, and facilitates the visitor's orientation, since the stairway to the upper and lower floors is also located near the door. main access. The store is divided into four main areas distributed over three floors: on the ground floor are the makeups; aesthetics services are offered on the first floor; and on the lower floor are skincare products, fragrances, in addition to the store cashier. For research purposes, only the ground floor and the lower floor were visited.



Store's facade and floors' guide signage.

Source: author's personal archive

Sephora does not only sell products from its brand but also many other partner brands. In this way, the makeups on the ground floor are divided according to the brand, which each have an individual display, and not by category of use. The displays are of two types, gondolas on the floor or displays fixed on the wall, but both follow a very simple aesthetics in black, which dialogues with the aesthetic approach of the store, and also allows each brand's own merchandising to stand out without having to compete visually with the colors of the exhibitors. In view, the presence of gondolas on the floor, the flow of people inside the store becomes more restricted less organic, which I do not consider negative, since it does not prevent the free movement of the public, it only creates corridors instead of a space wide of free layout. But for the back of the salon, there are several beauty bars, both for the individual use of the client - self-experimentation - and for the makeup service offered by the sellers who are also makeup artists. The whole environment is extremely illuminated by cold lights, coming from different sources, from spotlights, shelves, signs, and mirrors, so that the makeup characteristics can be easily identified, both in the packaging and displays, and on the client's skin, since each one of the products has different shades, sometimes very close to each other, and so the environment needs to allow these variations to be seen clearly.



Interior atmosphere and beauty bars.

Source: author's personal archive

On the lower floor, the organization of space flows - layout - and the exhibition of products takes place in a similar way to the makeup on the ground floor. However, in the fragrance session, in addition to the sectorization by brand, the products are divided by gender - male and female - and this division is indicated by signs and blue and pink lights, to represent products for men and women, respectively. At the bottom of the space, there are feature sinks next to the beauty bars for product testing. However, the physical distance between the sink and the skincare products does not facilitate testing and does not encourage product exploration, even if samples are available to customers for this purpose. This distance suggests that, unlike stores specializing in skincare products, the feature sink plays a secondary and supportive role, in random cases where the customer wants to wash their hands and does not act as a central element of the experience. Another characteristic of the ground floor that is repeated on this floor is extremely strong lighting. Although it is effective in both cases, in the skincare and fragrance session, it seems to be somewhat out of context and to limit the client's psychological apprehension of calm and well-being of the space. To the opposite side of the product exhibitors, there are four till points, and next to them gondolas define the spaces of the rows



Men's (blue) and women's (pink) perfume sectors.

Source: author's personal archive



and create the space of “impulse buys” exposing miniature products and other gifts.

The store does not explore its own advertising with a gender orientation, but because it is a multi-brand store, it becomes just a background for the exhibition and promotion of partner brands, which mostly use advertisements and images with reference to women, and unreasonably creates an environment aimed at the female audience. And taking into account the large amount of information, colors, and different aesthetics contained in the individual products and visual marketing of each brand, Sephora’s aesthetic approach is reduced to furniture and interior design colored in black, white, and gray variations, so that the space does not visually conflict with the exposed brands, and even manages to alleviate some of the visual confusion that this mixture of information causes. The environment, in general, is not immersive, it is not very creative and extremely commercial. However, the simplistic and objective proposal of the space and its elements is extremely effective and serves very well all the activities to be performed by both customers and employees.

## >> Considerations

Sephora is a reference in the cosmetics industry worldwide, so there is no question of its success as a brand. As a space, the store is very similar to a market specialized in cosmetics, more than a store that provides an immersive experience, as it does not invest in a disruptive design full of surprises, but in the functionality and efficiency of activities. Both the layout and the furniture contribute to the dynamics of purchase to happen smoothly and quickly. It can be seen that for being in space for a long time and being a specialist in a certain niche market, the Sephora store seems to foresee any possible need that the customer looking for this type of service may have, and for that reason, it is certainly a great base example for beauty stores. A single detail to be pointed out as possibly negative would be the cashier’s position on the lower floor, which goes against the most likely path of the consumer in the store.

On its Instagram page, the brand is very democratic and makes a point of promoting the image of people and digital influencers of different colors, genders, genders, and this approach is in line with its activist discourse and attitudes in favor of diversity and freedom of expression, present in his online biography. However, this vision does not manifest itself clearly in the space, because as seen the store serves only as a structure and background for the promotion of cosmetic brands. Therefore, analyzing the design of the space without any interference from the visual marketing of the partner brands, in the same way, that it allows the latter to gain prominence, would allow the client not to feel in any way excluded, as it is an extremely generic design, more than properly neutral.

## > Wakeup Cosmetics

### >> Brand story and philosophy

Wakeup Cosmetics Milano is a brand recently created by the company Get Holding. As it is a very young company, the description on the website about the brand is fundamentally about the bets it makes regarding its ambitions and its understanding of the world of makeup. It is characterized as a new concept of the cosmetic brand, which invests in a philosophy designed to “wake up” and enhance the natural beauty of every woman.

The Milanese brand refers to its logo - a sun - to describe the experience it offers its customers as “the bright side of life”. It restricts its target to the female audience and seeks to allow, through its products, that women express themselves in a free, dynamic, and colorful way, regardless of age and lifestyle. Wakeup also promises to install itself on the market competitively, offering a wide range of high-quality beauty products at an affordable price.

### >> The visit

There are two branches of the brand in Milan, and the largest one, located in Via Torino, was chosen to visit. The street, which is located in the city center close to the cathedral, is dedicated almost exclusively to commerce, and the store undoubtedly occupies a privileged commercial space, due to the always intense flow of people



*View from the streets and front facade signage.*

*Source: author's personal archive*



Store's facade and window display.

Source: author's personal archive

in the region. The Wakeup Cosmetics branch was located on the ground floor of an old building, and perhaps intending to respect this existing architecture, the only visual element that represents the brand is the simple black sign above the entrance door. Although exterior visual marketing has not been widely explored, the large glass windows around the entire facade of the store fulfill the role of attracting the attention of pedestrians, both through the products displayed against the windows, such as large windows, as well as the exhibition from the futuristic interior of the store, which from the outside seems to be quite engaging.

The interior of the store is exactly what is expected when seen through the window, and does not gain a more attractive dimension when inside. It is a completely white space, adorned by large colored circles illuminated under the furniture and on the walls. The products are displayed in two main ways, either under the two counters in the center of the hall or in the circular displays, which are also part of the counters or fixed on the wall as part of a composition of circles. In fact, the circular elements are an important part of the composition of the space, as they bring more fun to the latter, through their bright colors, in shades of purple and pink, but they become less interesting when viewed up close because despite playing the dual function of exhibitor and decorative object, seem to occupy a lot of space on the counters in a banal way and the products on display are fitted generically, due to the lack of a design thought especially for this purpose. As for the products on the counters, they are displayed in small circular tray-shaped displays, which due to the limited space, are positioned next to each other, making it impossible to perceive a clear distinction between different types of products.





*Beauty bar and counter display.*

*Source: author's personal archive*

On the ground floor, in addition to the exhibitors and counters, on the left side of the store is a small area dedicated to providing makeup services to the customer, called “beauty bar”. In it, sitting in front of a dressing table, the customer can test the brand’s products and learn makeup techniques offered by the specialist seller. This type of activity is considered quite important to be offered in beauty stores because it encourages the customer to explore the products and consequently acquire it, but in this case, the position of the dressing table next to the entrance and next to a shop window with a broad view to the outside creates a little intimate atmosphere, which can awaken a feeling of exposure in customers and make them avoid such service. On the right side of the store, an escalator, with its balustrades covered with a very attractive prismatic film, invites the customer to explore the upper floor. The latter was banned during the visit, but as explained by the store vendors, and as the signage indicates, there are some other products on display, there are other beauty bars like the one on the ground floor, and a small photo studio or, as called by photo booth store. This last element/space is something quite unusual and interesting because it invites the client, after having tried the makeups at the beauty bar, to have the experience recorded in photos, and to be able to take them home as a kind of souvenir.



*Interior atmosphere and wall displays.*

*Source: author's personal archive*



The aesthetic concept proposal for the store is quite unusual and intriguing. Through glossy white surfaces and flowing shapes with rounded corners, the store's interior is taken with a futuristic approach. Although the design intent is very interesting, how the project was carried out creates some visual noises that prevent the interpretation of the space as, in fact, an immersive environment. The floor with a semi-matte white finish was already brownish in color, most likely because it is not an easy-to-clean surface. The personalized furniture is very daring in its forms, but its materiality is not very elaborate and gives the impression of being something very fragile. The circular displays have similar deficiencies to the furniture, besides that, despite fulfilling its function effectively, as a bespoke element, its function seems to have been improvised and forced, because the products are exposed ordinarily and do not seem to fit properly. Regarding the chromatic approach, the extensive use of white with a few vibrant colors, becomes monotonous, since it does not explore other finishes, textures, and materials, and the general atmosphere seems unfinished and very broad to the elements it contains. The large glass windows, despite bringing natural light to the environment, make it difficult for the customer to feel in fact included in a totally different environment outside. Finally, although the products are not classified by gender, but by categories of use, the ads, choice of colors, and signage show that it is a trade aimed at the female audience.

## >> Considerations

The brand launched with the ambitious proposal to redefine the concept of makeup, through bold and energetic attitudes and freedom of expression. As seen in the description of the space, it does not necessarily mark the customer's experience positively, but I believe that it is more a problem of execution and improvement of technical design than of the design concept. Because, although the space does not stimulate the senses or allow the customer to feel immersed in an immersive atmosphere, the concept of space dynamics is quite different from the traditional beauty store standards. It is contemporary. Instead of the store limiting itself to offering space for product display and testing, it offers a third stage, which is the recording and sharing of the result of this process - photobooth, and it is exactly this dynamic that the world of makeup today appropriate. Thus, the store's design fails to successfully convey the brand's philosophy, but the concept behind it has a lot of potentials.

It is worth mentioning that Wakeup Cosmetics, in its advertising platforms, website, and Instagram, reaffirms its targeting of serving the female public, and in the physical space this targeting is also evident. And although the design approach is consistent with the brand's philosophy in this aspect of gender, the environment becomes much more exclusive and less democratic.

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### 7.1.3 Field research conclusions

Skincare practices are closely related to an individual's well-being because they are usually part of the moment immediately after waking up and of the moment before bed. Whether as an injection of inspiration to start the day well or as a relaxing technique to wash away the tensions experienced during the day, skincare is synonymous with care, tact, and delicacy. As a result of visiting selected stores, it was possible to realize that the most memorable and immersive experiences were those that best explored these feelings of well-being and care that skincare products can provide. What is expected from the atmosphere of a store in this segment, therefore, is that it be calm and convey a feeling of relaxation, as Aesop does. However, Lush's aesthetic approach, proves that through an energetic and cheerful atmosphere it is possible to provoke the same feeling of care and well-being, however contradictory it may seem. Regardless of the theme or the mood orientation, it is noticed that some aspects or elements of the space are extremely determinant to obtain an effective result - immersion capacity - and consistent with this segment: the aroma, the lighting, and the interaction with the products/ space.

Scents, for the vast majority of skincare products available on the market, are as important as their level of effectiveness, as they stimulate sensations in our body. And when these aromas become part of a sale space, they can involve the customer and provoke that feeling of pleasure, at the time of purchase, so that the experience and the testing of the products are enhanced and become more convincing. As for lighting, it was possible to notice that the warmer and more controlled lights are more effective in provoking feelings of relaxation. The drama created by the contrast of light and shadow refers to a warm and delicate space, like a spa and, therefore, relaxing; while the light that washes the space evenly, incites impersonality and artificiality when related to products so intimate to the body. Regarding the direct interaction of the customer with the product and space, their different levels experienced during visits proved that the greater the more personal they are, the more immersive and pleasurable the experience is. For example, at the Caudalie and Aesop store, the feature sink - a key element for the interaction between the customer and the product - is positioned very rigidly, which makes its use by the customer something very "forced", since they do not feel totally at ease to explore it spontaneously, at the Lush store, easy access to the feature sink, positioned in a prominent position, encourages the customer to independently "get down to it" and try the products available for testing, without feeling disrespecting any type of restriction.

If for the skincare store, a relaxing environment is essential, for beauty products, the electrifying and bold stimuli are most welcome. Although both commercial segments focus on the individual's well-being, either strengthening their essence

or multiplying their self-confidence, research has shown that in physical space they behave in slightly different ways. In terms of design and its situational elements, not everything that works for skincare will necessarily work for beauty, and vice versa. This is because, for each type of follow-up, different types of sensations are sought.

Makeup is also related to the well-being of its user, but from a different perspective than skincare. Through infinite formulations, she adds an extra layer to the individuality of each person, who starts to feel more confident with their appearance. For this reason, a person who wants to use makeup as a form of expression, regardless of their personal characteristics and conditions, must be able to access this world without having to face subjective barriers, such as prejudice and social rejection. In this case, the store that sells this type of product must provide a space that, at the same time, accompanies the desire for creativity and expression of the customers and that all of them can enjoy the space in an equal and standard way, without feeling any excluded.

From the analysis of the stores visited, it was possible to notice that for this type of store segment, signs and segregative elements, especially those related to gender, are unfortunately much more common, since most of the existing standards in society involve aesthetic qualities. In general, these gender elements present in the space can be classified into two main categories: design and visual merchandising. For example, the Wakeup Cosmetics store covers both categories, its design - colors, materiality, situational elements - entirely and purposefully refers to what was socially constructed as "feminine", and makes intensive use of visual elements and advertising that refer only to women. Sephora and MAC invest in a generic and neutral design, respectively, as a background for various products and merchandising, which include references to sex and genders; MAC at a lower level, since it only sells its products and therefore has more control over the direction of space.

The visits also showed that other elements are repeated in the three beauty stores: optimized furniture, make-up service, and lighting. I characterize their furniture as such because, in addition to fulfilling a basic function, they optimize and facilitate other activities of the store. Good examples are gondolas or counters on the floor, as they were designed essentially to display products, but they also hold a small stock of products and still contribute to directing flows, such as room dividers. The make-up service is also an important aspect, not only because of the validity and quality of the service but because they require a dedicated area for this activity and specific furniture - beauty bars. In addition, this type of service encourages the customer to participate more actively in the space and makes the consumer experience more dynamic. As for lighting, while for the space dedicated to skincare the lights are less intense, more focused, and warm, in the beauty sale space, where the appearance of products is important and where activities that require

clear vision are performed, the light is intense, distributed more evenly and coldly. However, although the lighting project does not aim at a dramatic light pattern, it does not mean that simply washing the environment with light, without much appreciation, is the ideal solution, as it was realized that when this happens, the environment becomes impersonal.

The beauty gurus of the most varied digital platforms show that the beauty and skincare routines go hand in hand, one being the complement of the other. However, it was seen that in the commercial environment these two aspects behave and have almost completely similar needs. If it were possible to describe the experience/environment at its highest level of use - immersion - in each of them as a single adjective, I would choose “attractive” for makeup stores and “engaging” for skincare stores. The formers are, in general, more dynamic, daring spaces, and invest in elements that are attractive and stimulate almost exclusively the sense of vision, as customers expect immediate results from the products, and that they are visually appealing. It is perceived as a prevalence of vertical, geometric elements and sharp edges and glossy surfaces, in repetition, that sustains this sensation of movement and immediacy. Skincare stores, on the other hand, are spaces that encourage their enjoyment by the customer, and that mainly stimulate the senses of touch and smell, because they are the most exciting senses in moments of affection and care, and it is exactly these feelings of well-being that skincare brands try to list their products. Therefore, it is very common for stores to invest in a wide range of textures and signature scents, and techniques that allow the customer to literally feel what the brand can offer on their skin. Besides, in these environments, there is a preference for broader, horizontal elements and a “quieter” appearance, or different approaches, but that somehow results in a relaxing and calm experience, in which the client feels invited to get involved.

This field research shows that not only are there differences between the skincare and makeup stores, but within these two groups of commercial segments there are different approaches and aesthetics. In fact, some patterns are repeated, and these are understood as essential, but applying the same technique to different situations, especially if they are of different segments, invalidates the individualities of each brand and its history. Therefore, there must exist consistency between purpose, philosophy/discourse, and design since when one of these aspects is forgotten, the space obtained does not transmit veracity and seems to be out of context. The stores that allowed for more successful experiences were those that approached the environment in a holistic way, where all the parts, together or separated, the same or different, seemed to be part of the same narrative and could be interpreted as a single language.





Alma flagship store facade  
Elaborated by the author



# Chapter 04

## Alma flagship store

As a result of the theoretical research, the design project developed is a gender-neutral cosmetics flagship store, strongly connected to the mission of the brand it represents. To present a consistent proposal, the designing process starts from scratch - setting up a brand - to detailing all the elements that will guarantee the uniqueness of the spaces, which will provide an immersive user experience.

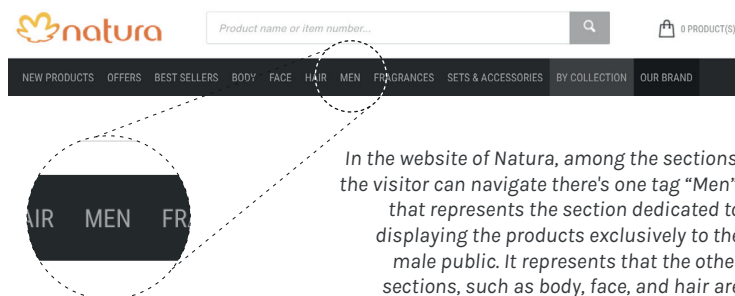


## 08. The brand

Alma was idealized to offer, initially, to the Brazilian market, an avant-garde brand that stands for gender-neutrality in the cosmetics and dermocosmetics segments. The word Alma means “soul” in Portuguese, and this is because it is a brand that believes every individual is unique, like what a soul is. Therefore, supports the respect for the differences and the freedom of expression of those.

### 8.1 State of the art: Brazilian cosmetics market

As previously mentioned, Brazil is one of the four biggest beauty and personal care industries in the world, so it means, constantly new brands are popping up in the market. However, among all the Brazilian brands of those specific segments, one of them represents very well the general national understanding of makeup and skincare: Natura. And for this reason it was chosen as benchmark for the creation of the fictitious brand Alma.



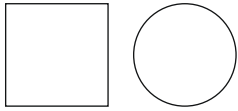
Natura is a renowned brand, which is in the market for more than 50 years. It is engaged with several ambiental causes and is know as the cosmetic brand that produces its products with natural ingredients from the Amazon Rainforest; constantly using this feature as advertsement. This characteristic is seen by this research as a strong and interesting aspect to be used as the basis of Alma, since it represents very wellll the rich Brazillian fauna and flora which are important assets of the Brazilian image.

Despite being a brand that supports social causes related to gender and sexuality in a very consistent way, Natura is not stated as a gender-neutral brand. So Alma is a result of gathering all the interesting aspects of how Natura connects the world of cosmetics to the genuine Brazilian features, adding the strong positioning in favor of gender-neutrality in cosmetics and a contemporary twist to a very traditional brand.

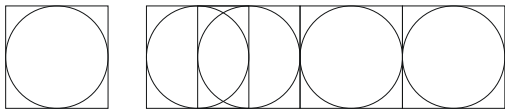


## 8.2 Visual identity

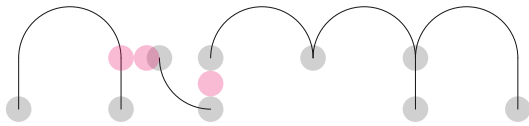
### | THE LOGO



The logo was created using only two geometric shapes: square and circle. These two specific shapes were chosen because they are commonly used to represent opposites in several comparison situations.



Putting them together - merged - and repeating this combination, it is achieved a series of lines, as a result of the intersections.



From the grid, the name ALMA appears represented through arches in a smooth and fluid composition. The stroke of the letters and the distance between them are also based on the circular shape (diameter is 1/4 of one side of the big square).



At last, Alma's logo is the representation that differences exist, but can coexist. They are essential to creating a well-balanced, eclectic, and...neutral composition.

The letter "L" inside the logo, represents the seed that brought the character Alma to life, in the brand's tale.

### | BRANCHES

Alma is brand composed by three affiliates. To differentiate them without changing drastically their identity, the letter "L" (or the seed) of ALMA is colored in three colors depending on the branch they are representing:



**Alma Terra**  
The skincare branch



**Alma Gem**  
The makeup branch



**Alma Roots**  
The well-being branch



NCS  
S 2020-G60Y



NCS  
S 5020-B10G



NCS  
S 2040-Y60R

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## 8.3 Background

The brand's mission translated in the story of a character in a self-searching journey.



### ALMA

The story about freedom

*They* were born from the ground. *They* sprouted; from a place where it was possible to admire the tree crowns. Verdant, tall, strong. But *they* were so different. Short, flimsy. *Their* leaves were not green, were not strong. The trees, as a fortress, attached to the ground, were *their* safeguard in that soil. *They* wanted to belong the ground, but *they* didn't have roots. *They* used to travel. Traveled so much searching for *their* equals. *They* found another fortress. A stoned fortress. Above *their* head, a blue immensity. *They* had never seen that before. Down there the trees were like a green ocean, the leaves were swinging with the wind, which from up there it was a song. Guided by this melody, *they* threw themselves. *Their* soft leaves, side by side, were wings! Colorful, delicate and, as the green leaves, *they* were strong. In a free flight, *they* felt that *they* belong to that place. The same place *their* Alma had come from.



#### \* They

/ðeɪ/ pronoun

2. used instead of he or she to refer to a person whose sex is not mentioned or not known

(Oxford Languages)

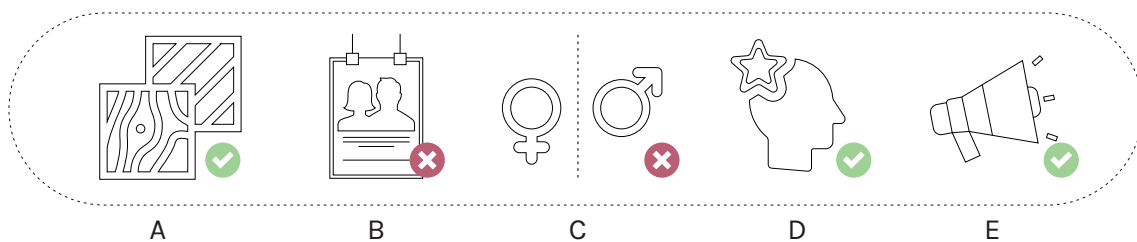


## 09. The project

The developed design project is a gender-neutral flagship store of the fictitious cosmetics brand Alma. It takes place in the Brazilian city São Paulo, one of the most important cities of entire South America, and it's strongly committed to breaking beauty stereotypes around gender. It also takes advantage of the contemporary social media tools to promote the brand and state its social mission.

Before getting started with the description of the project itself, let's understand how the discussed "gender-neutrality" performs in the designed spaces. Besides being strongly related to the physical perception of the space, designing a gender-neutral retail environment is also connected to the mentality that supported the project decisions, which means that not only the presence of neutral situational elements are the drivers to achieve a consistent design; sometimes, or most of the times, the lack of elements, that were designed exclusively to a specific gender, is what gives strength to the notion of a gender-neutral-space. It's more about not feeling (the gender-specific approach) than feeling neutrality itself.

Having said that, Alma's gender-neutral approach to a retail space includes:



### LEGEND:

- A. Truth to materials: prioritize the use of materials in their natural form, and avoid biased interpretations of gender-stereotyped decor/materiality;
- B. Suppress the use of advertisements representing men or women because they can mislead the visitors' interpretation and accidentally restrict areas and products to one specific gender. It's also important not to create any beauty standards, understanding each individual is unique;
- C. Not categorize products or store's sectors by gender, but by the purpose of use;
- D. Instead of focusing on the gender of the target audience and designing spaces to fit gender, choose to focus on the immersive experience space can provide to anyone;
- E. Provide spaces and services to give voice to diversity, inclusive ideas, and support freedom of expression.

## 9.1 Site location

The flagship store is located in São Paulo, Brazil, in the Bela Vista district. According to Vasconcelos (2020), pointed out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, São Paulo is the largest commercial hub in Brazil, attracting people from all over the country.



### 9.1.1 Situational relevance

#### > Paulista Avenue

Besides São Paulo being a commercial reference inside South America, Paulista avenue has a great relevance in the city for several aspects.



On the left Avenida Paulista on Sundays. On the right LGBTQI+ Pride parade.

<https://vejasp.abril.com.br/cidades/avenida-paulista-sera-interditada-para-montagem-de-palco/>



According to Veja (2020) It was opened in 1891 and has become one of the most important landmarks of the city. The long avenue was also stage for important protests and cultural manifestations in the Brazilian history. Since its a very diversified area of the city, attended by heterogeneous public, in every corner there might be something interesting happening, becoming a great option for bushwalks, specially on Sunday and holidays when the whole avenue is restricts te access for pedestrians.

Also in the avenue, two blocks from the project site, there is one of most important Brazliam museums, designed by Lina Bobardi, the MASP. Furthermore, every year, since 1997, the LGBT Pride Parade takes place there, to celegrate pride and protest against prejudice.

### > The site: Why this specific place?

In October 2014, the state government of São Paulo called for a tender for the new Museum of Sexual Diversity. The project looked for the renovation of the Joaquim Franco de Melo Palace - heritage listed by Condephaat in 1992 - and the implementation of an annex building. This initiative aimed to expand the cultural and preservation activities, and the historical engagement towards the memory of the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community. Unfortunately, in 2019 this initiative was canceled by the state's government.

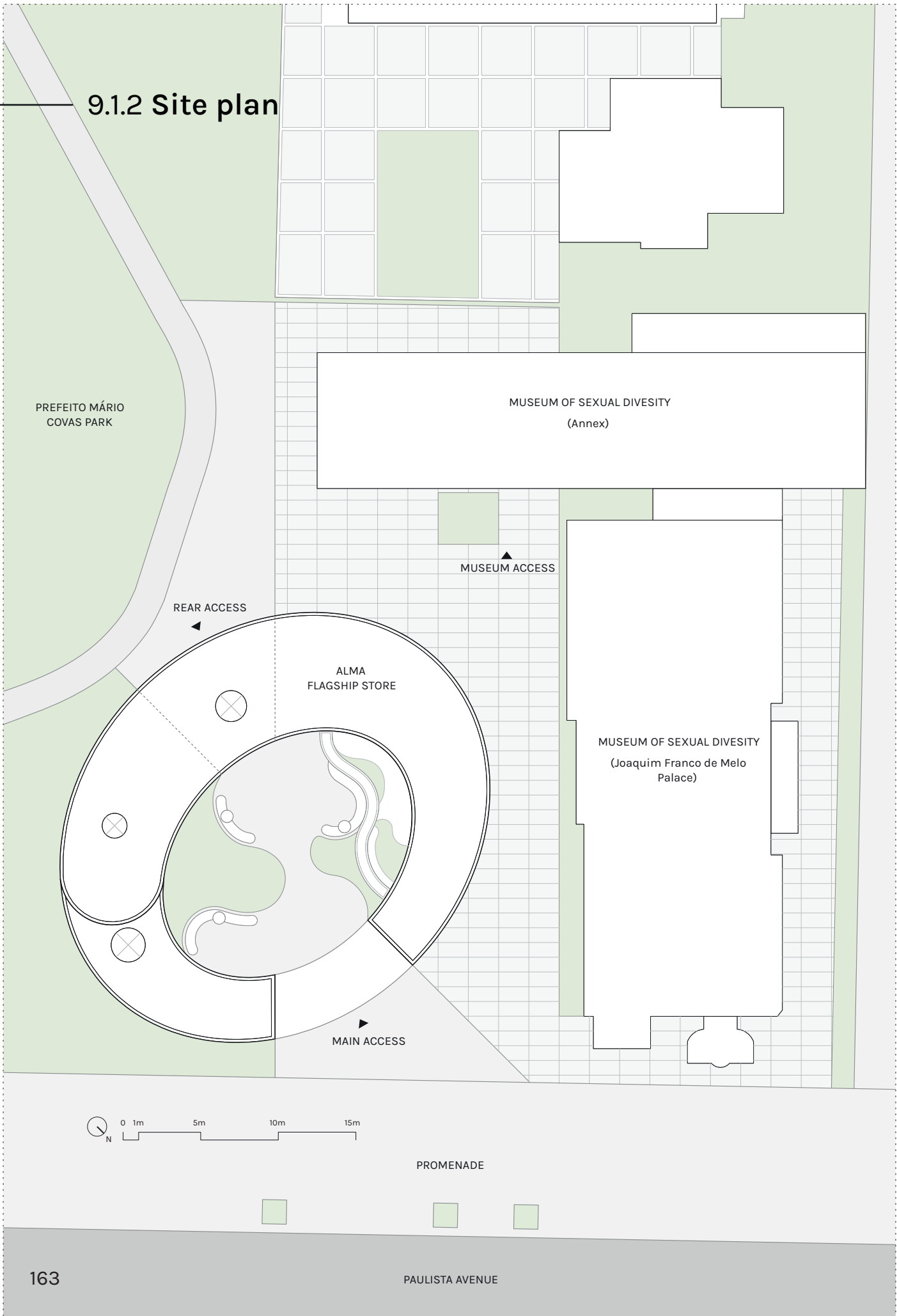
Even though the initiative will no longer be put into practice, the idea is still valid and for this reason, it was chosen to be the starting point of this thesis design project. The latter is not directly engaged with LGBTQIA+ causes, even so, it's understood that locating a gender-neutral retail space in the same complex of a museum that is also human rights-oriented, increases the outreach of Alma's social mission.

Among the tender participants, the project of DMDV Arquitetos [9] was chosen to orient the site positioning of Alma's building inside the site, aiming to create a spatial organization that could get along well with the surroundings and brings a nice addition to the clients and bystanders of the are. Because, in addition to being a brand with strong social roots, Alma as a physical element in the space - building - can and should contribute to improving the urban landscape, and make the use of the city spaces more exciting. It is relevant to mention that this specific proposal for the museum was chosen solely and exclusively as a reference for the site planning, and no other value judgment was taken into consideration.

Finally, this site location seems to be ideal for the purposes of Alma as a brand and as a physical store to play a meaningful role in society.

| 9. Access link to the project: <http://dmdv.com.br/pt/projeto.php?id=19>

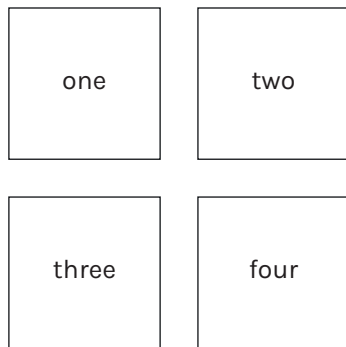
# 9.1.2 Site plan



## 9.2 Spatial formulation

It goes without saying that the efficient organization of spaces is the primordial purpose of this project. However, it's important to raise the idea that spaces can be subdivided, as such each one of these parcels should be self-reliant but also work well as part of a holist spatial experience, especially in this project where the major concept is about interconnecting spaces. So was the process of conceiving these spaces?

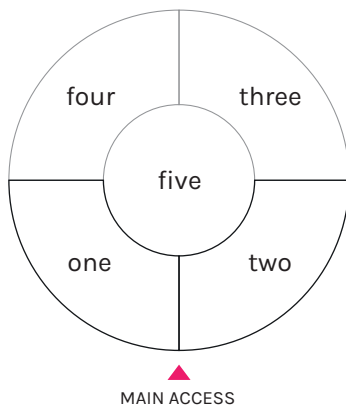
1.



Based on the functions and services the store would need to comply with, 4 main plots were established:

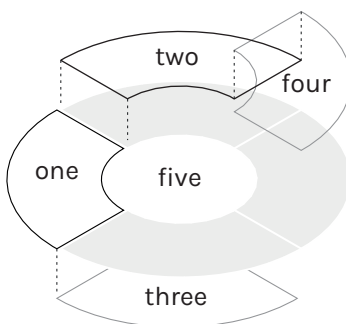
- one: skincare space
- two: makeup space
- three: well-being space
- four: brand's mission space

2.



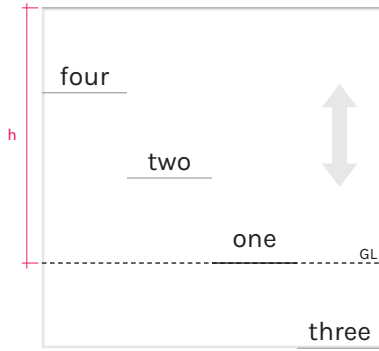
Subsequently, it was decided how they would be spatially organized, and how they would relate to each other, taking into consideration the hierarchy of uses, and having in mind the portion facing the great avenue is the most prominent one. By doing this step the 5th space emerged.

3.

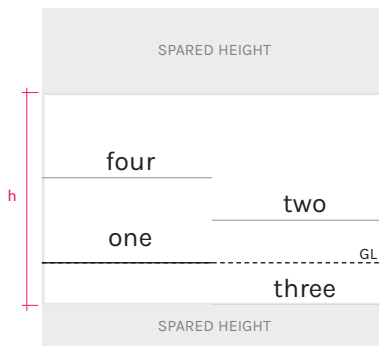


Merging the spatial articulation with the rising concept behind the brand, the tridimensional perspective comes up, and inherently the spaces are arranged in a stepped organization.

4.



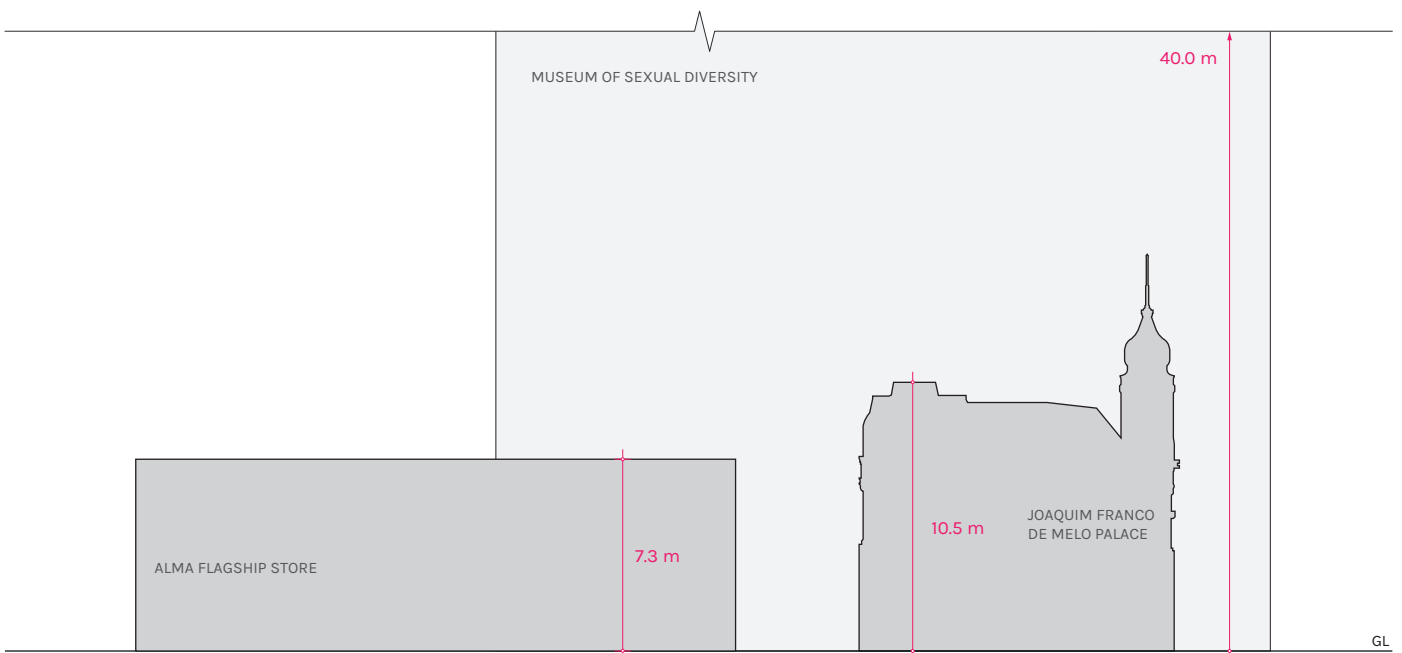
Verticality is an important asset for the communication of the spaces within the idea of rising, which is the symbol of Alma's sense of freedom. However, the building wouldn't be isolated inside the site, but next to other existing volumes. For this reason, it was essential to consider the scale of the building in comparison to the palace next to it, since the latter is an iconic symbol of the avenue and shouldn't be overshadowed.



In order to maintain the verticality - one level after the other -, the same height between floors and still preserve the visual composition with the adjacent palace, the floors are overlapping two by two, creating intermediate levels.

5.

Finally, the store space, both internally and externally, is arranged in a way to enhance the shopping experience, to follow the immersive poetic concept, and to stand out in the urban landscape respecting the surroundings. In short, this design project is perceived as a series of spaces that coexist, part of a greater





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## 9.3 Designing connections

The central square

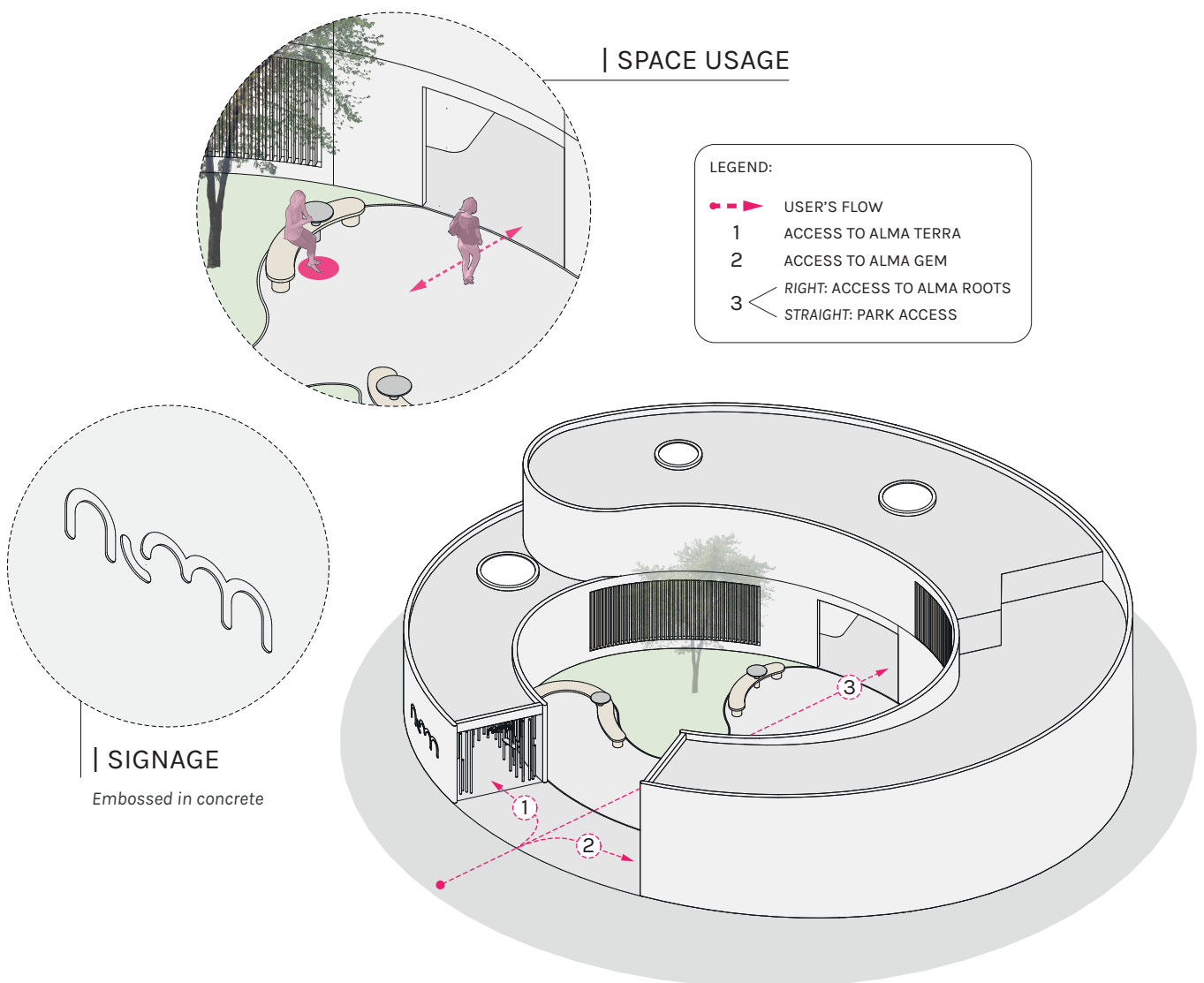


*Inside and out, the store embraces the visitor. The central space, as part of the city, grants to the big São Paulo an intimate square and connects the crowded avenue to a green area.*

## 9.3.1 Building x City

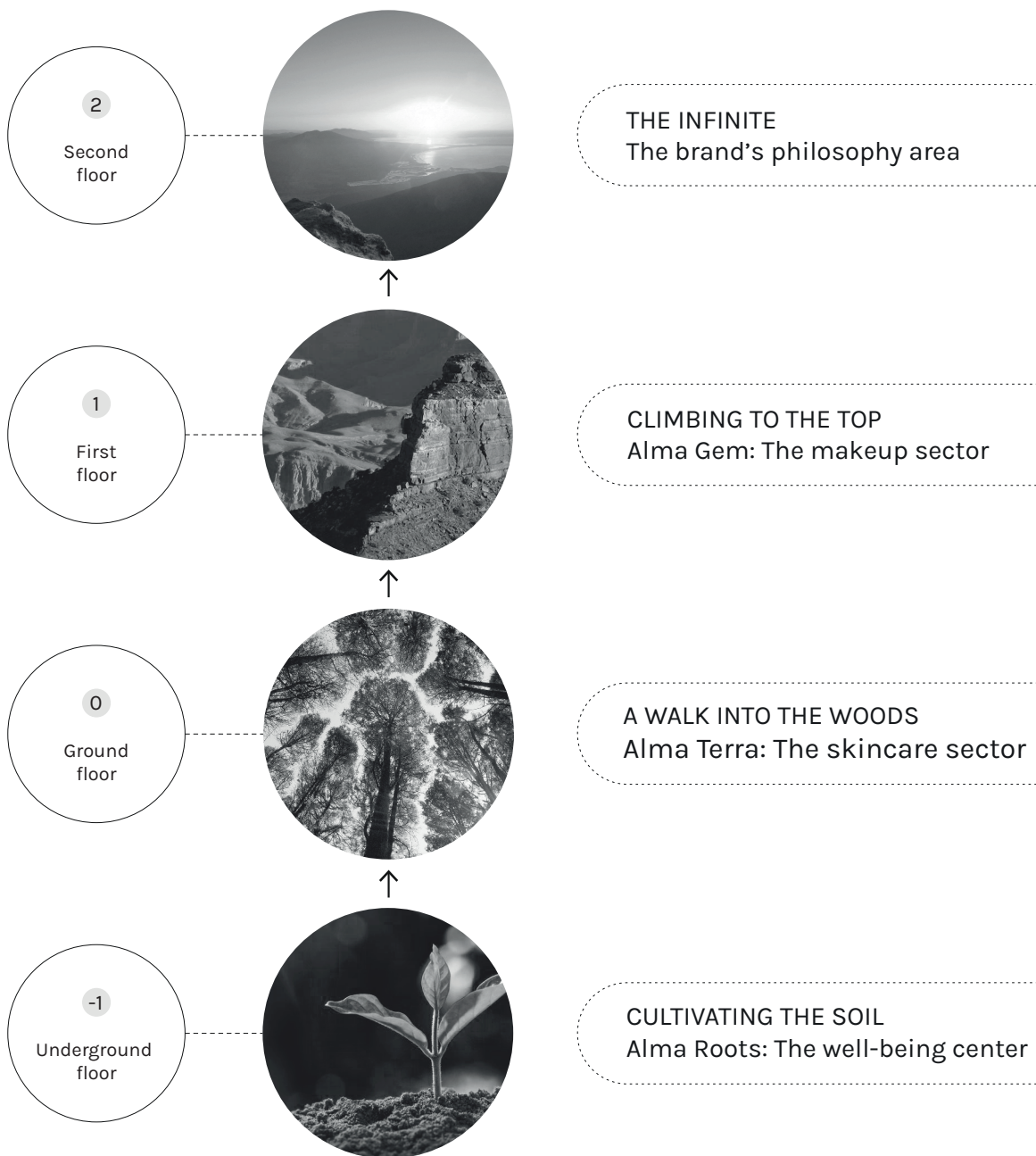
The city center of São Paulo is very vibrant and energetic, but it can be overwhelming sometimes. The Paulista avenue is in the middle of two massive walls of tall buildings, and it lacks places to have a break. With that in mind, the building was designed to embrace the visitors instead of closing in on itself. In the center of the revolving “arms” a green square takes place and invites both clients and bystanders to have a seat and relax for a moment.

The building is not only open but also totally permeable. This is because next to the project site, there is a small park that can only be accessed by a secondary street, and is currently undervalued. So, the building becomes itself an uninterrupted connection between the avenue and the park, encouraging people to use the park more, and experience nature on the other side of the concrete jungle.



## 9.4 The interior: Design concept

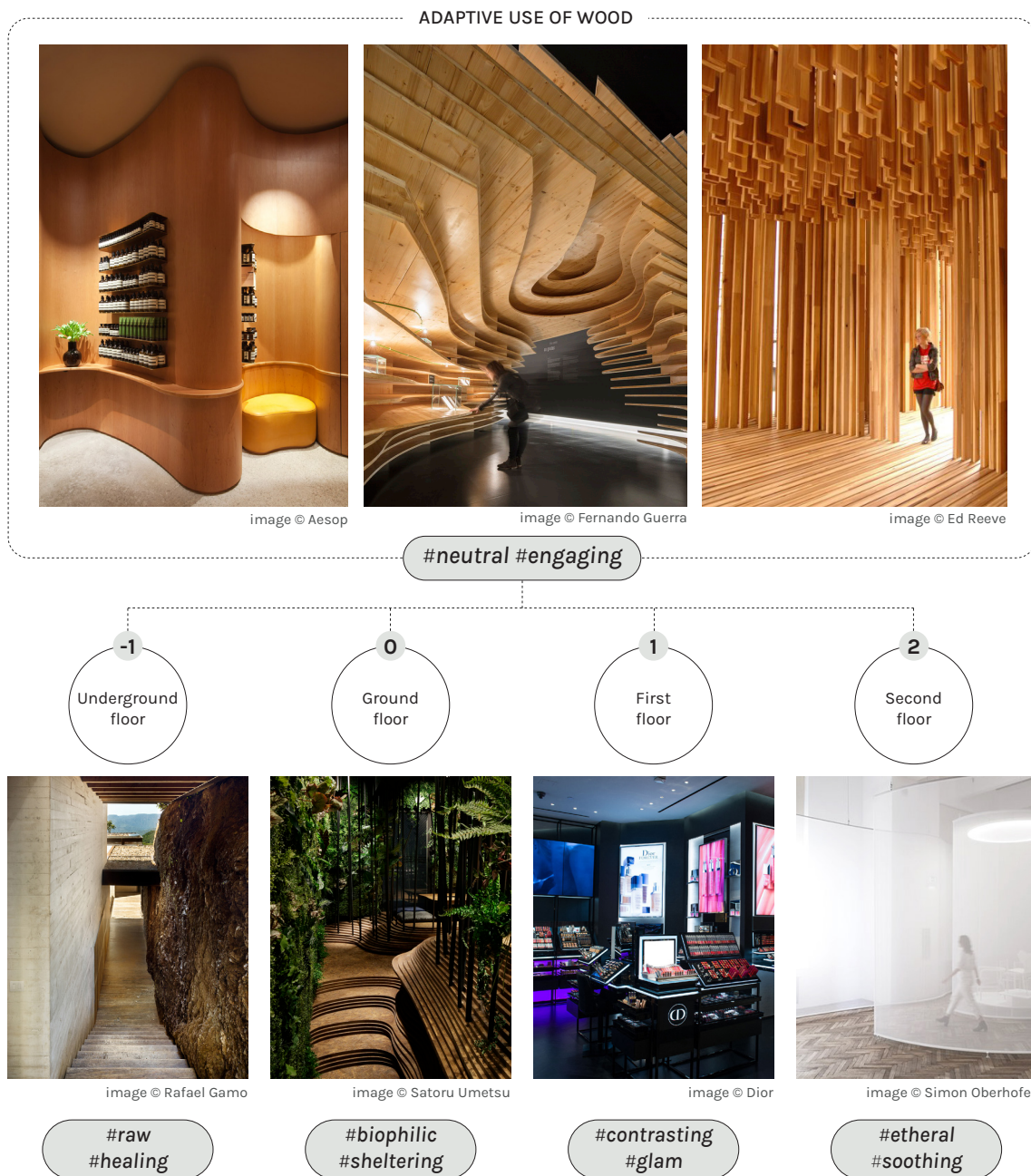
In the background story of the brand, the main character goes on a journey of self-empowerment. And that represents what Alma wishes for their clients, being confident about their existence, by making their own journey inside the store and discovering what makes them feel beautiful and free. Having that in mind, each one of the storeys represents a part of Alma's climbing to the top. Even though the concept represents a rising sequence it doesn't mean that there should be a specific order to be followed by the user, it exists exclusively as a consistent representation and articulation of the spaces - holistic experience.





## > Concept x Mood board

Aiming to meet the main design premise - **gender-neutrality** - the color composition of the spaces follow the **achromatic** pattern, to avoid misinterpretations associated with gender-stereotyped aesthetics. The neutrality is achieved through the application of wood as the main element, which is adapted to different uses along with the unfolding of the store. This element that repeats also **unifies** the look and feel of the four interior spaces of the flagship store, and becomes Alma's signature, together with the building's shell concrete. Lastly, other textures, color shades, and finishes are added to the composition, in order to be **coherent with the function** of each space/ commercial segment.





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## 9.4.1 Alma Roots

The well-being center



*Nourishing our roots is revealing the beauty that exists inside all of us.*



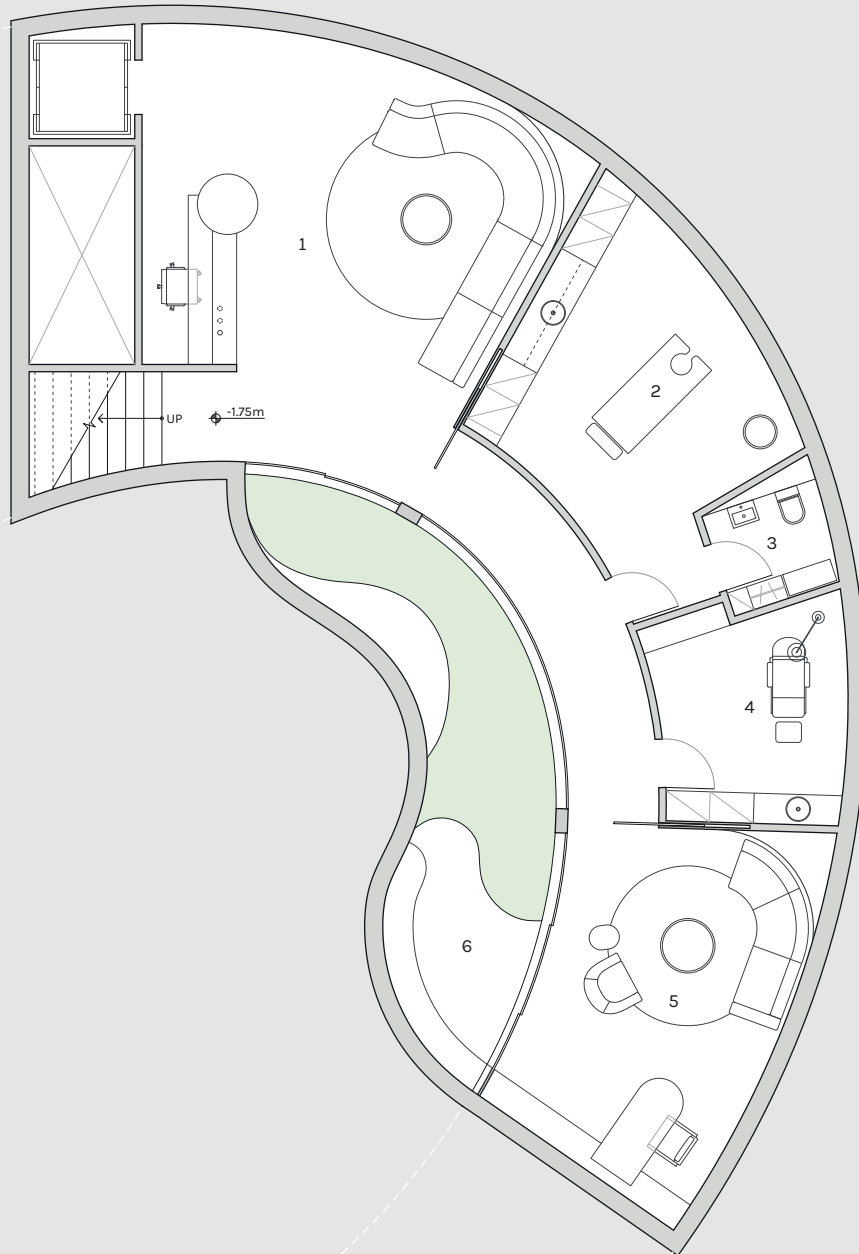
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## 9.4.1.1 About the space

Like a diamond in the rough, this space aims to reflect the genesis of life - the moment when everything is naturally sensible and naturally beautiful. If on one hand, the other sectors of the flagship store seek for the minimum exterior contact to preserve the immersive aspect of the interior, in this environment the key element is to enhance the connection with the exterior, blending the two spaces into one. Despite being part of the flagship complex, Alma Roots is not destined for sale purposes, but to offering services by appointment related to the well-being of the client. A great percentage of the personal issues involving body image and social acceptance is related to the missing sense of belonging. The services offered in this center are destined for the clients who need a deeper treatment, in addition to the skincare and makeup products the brand offers. Alma wants to bring back the clients'/patients' confidence and wellness.

The above-mentioned naturalness is achieved by the materiality of the space, which highlights elements with a rough finish, and by the interaction with the exterior. In some cases, the harshness of natural materials can be perceived as a dramatic move, but in this case, it is applied with the intention to transmit the unpretentious character of the space. Feeling safe doesn't mean feeling caged, means feeling confident to exist wherever one is.

## 9.4.1.2 Floor plan



### LEGEND:

1. RECEPTION AREA
2. TREATMENT ROOM 1
3. CHANGING ROOM / WC
4. TREATMENT ROOM 2
5. COUNSELING ROOM
6. PATIO



### 9.4.1.3 Spatial organization

Going down one level from the ground floor, the visitors have access to the well-being center and have the perspective view of a sprout planted in the soil, looking up to the world above it. Having the side patio as an important element to space, the users' flow becomes very intuitive, since it goes always alongside this greenery area.

Welcoming the visitors, the front desk area is the first in the row of spaces. It also works as a transition between the public space and the controlled-access areas. After the main door, a well-lit corridor gives access to the three rooms of the center. The first one is the treatment room dedicated to the therapy of the body. The second room is for face skin treatments, and both the first and the second rooms don't have a direct connection with the exterior, to block the visual contact with the patient's body and guarantee their privacy. The corridor ends in the counseling room, where the interior and exterior are completely merged.

Having in mind the importance of the psychological impact the spaces have on people, the greenery area was designed based on the same idea of the biophilic aspects used in Alma Terra's design. And not by chance, the peak of this encounter between humans and nature happens in the counseling room where this sensorial aspect is required the most.

### 9.4.1.4 Look and feel



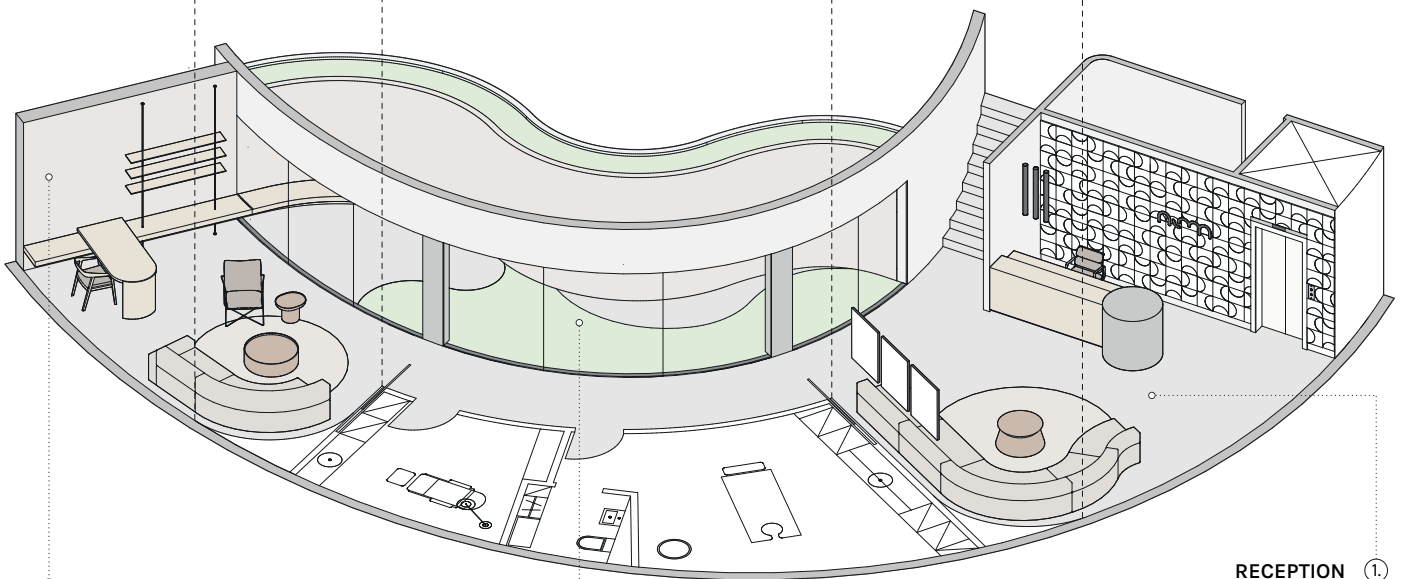
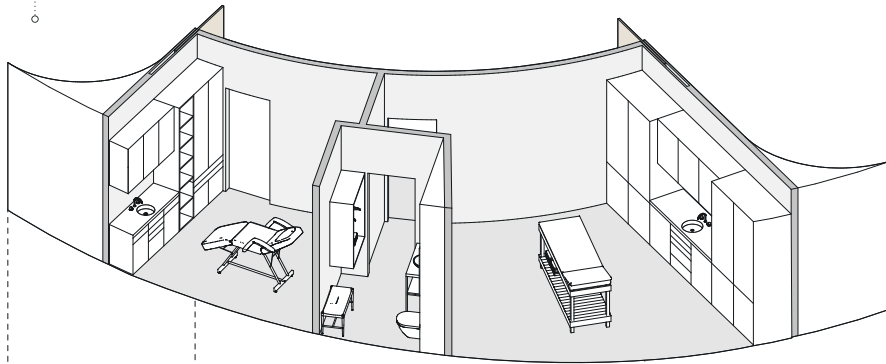


## 9.4.1.5 Introducing the zones

### 2-4. TREATMENT ROOMS: ROOMS WITH HIGHER PRIVACY LEVEL

These rooms have no direct interaction with the outside area to look after the clients' privacy. In room no. 1 the treatments are related to the body, as such a changing room is available for the clients to use before and after each treatment session. The second room is for facial treatments.

Besides offering the service is the main objective, the promotion of the brand's products - used in the sessions - comes as a consequence. Being satisfied with the relaxing treatments, clients automatically feel more inclined to trust the products and buy them.



### 6. COUNSELING ROOM THE MAIN SERVICE

The room can be divided into two main spaces: the inside and outside. But together they become a delightful blend, as a hybrid space. The interaction with the outside is the key element and allows the patient and the psychologist to use the space in a freer way.

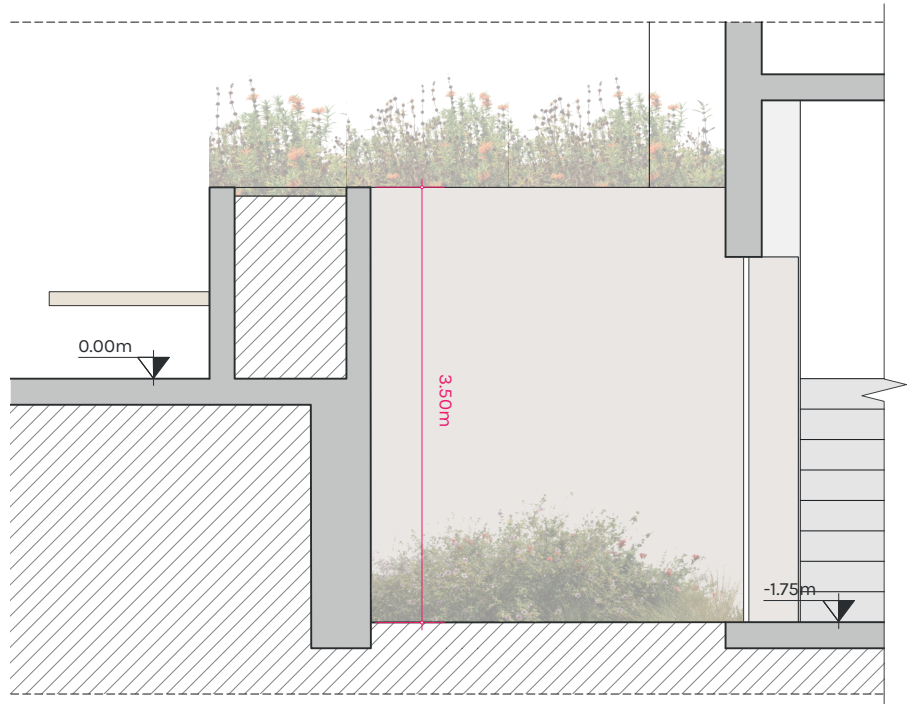
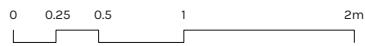
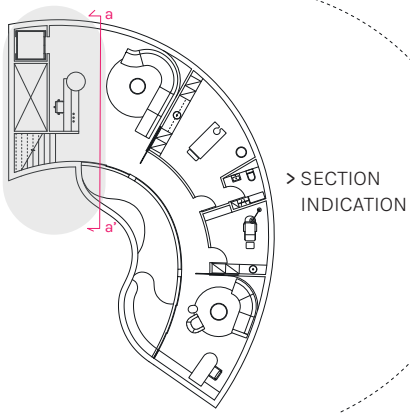
### 1. RECEPTION WAITING AREA

Destined area to welcome the visitors. The "homey" aesthetics of the space was aimed to avoid the clinical aspect of well-being centers. Here visitors can pay for their appointments, and get information about the services at the front desk, and wait by the sitting area.

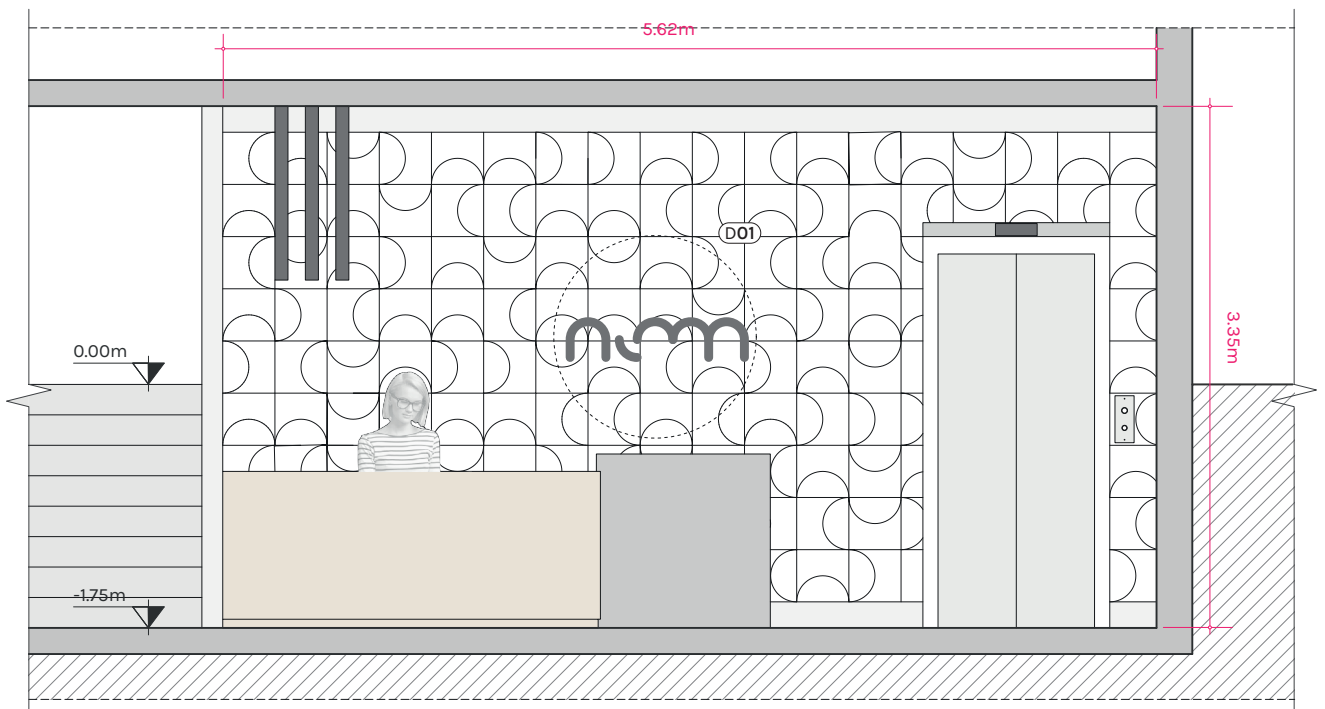
### 6. THE PATIO GREENERY AREA

This open space brings natural light and ventilation to the underground floor. The bushy vegetation becomes the background of the entire circulation of the space. Its access is exclusively for the users of the counseling room or for maintenance.

## 9.4.1.6 Breakdown



SECTION a-a'



SECTION a-a'

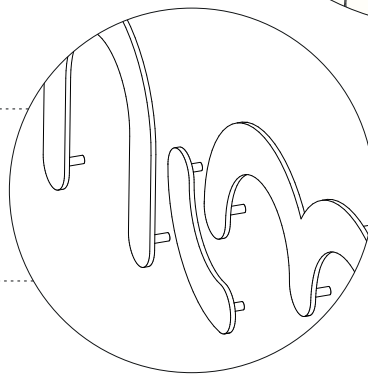
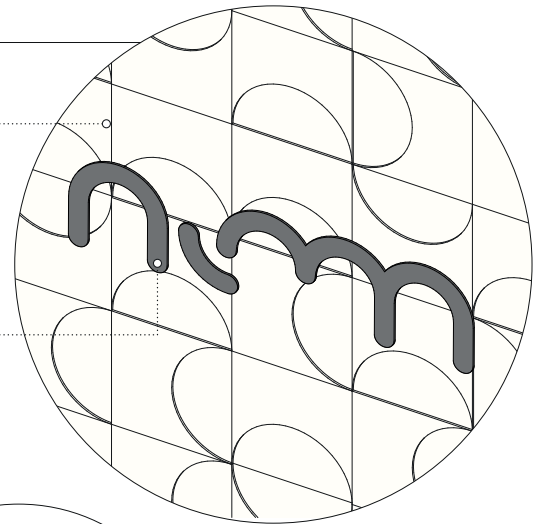
## D01 | FRONT DESK WALL

### BESPOKE TILES

The tiles - 300 x 300 mm - are made of **white limestone** and are the result of the combination of two geometric shapes that are the Alma's signature: square and circle. The multiple matching combinations create a fluid pattern on the wall.

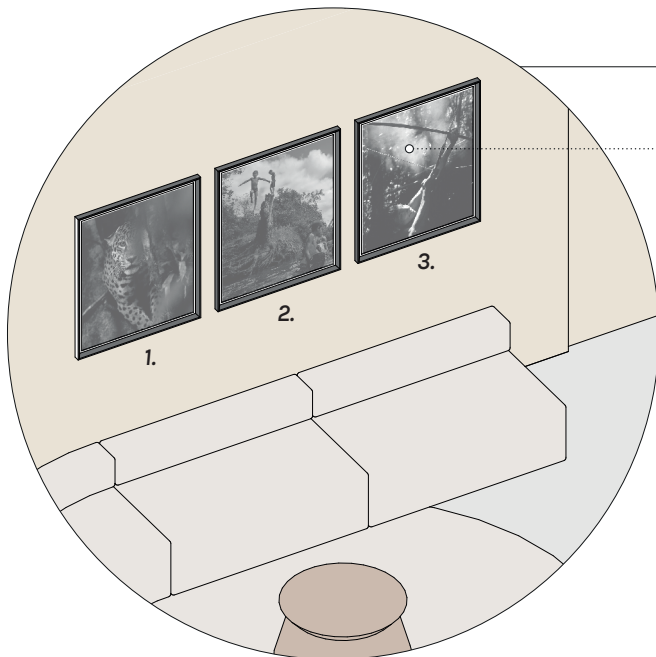
### FREESTANDING SIGNAGE

The loose letters of the signage are made of **black zinc plates - 8 mm -** and are attached to the wall through **built-in studs** on the back of each letter.



Fixing studs method

## | LOUNGE DECOR D02



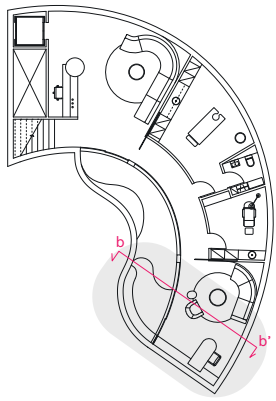
### BRAZILIAN ROOTS

To support and value the national artistic production, it was chosen 3 pictures of 3 different Brazilian photographers. All the images portraits precious aspects of the Amazon Rainforest:

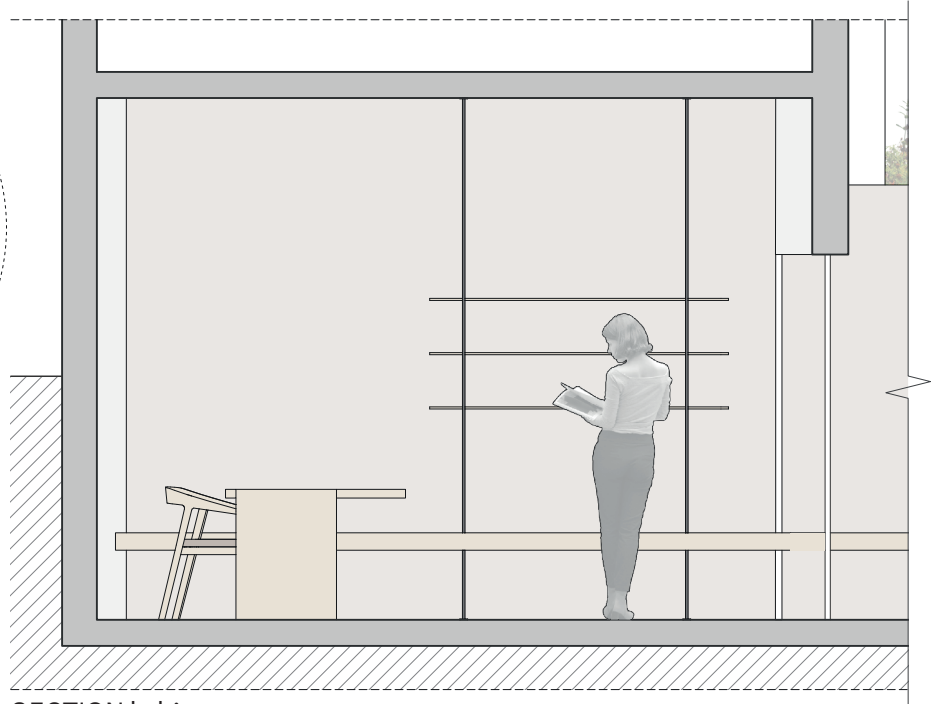
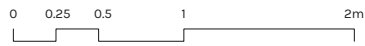
> 1. Female jaguar: one of the great symbols of South American fauna. Photographed by Bruno Kelly.

> 2. Kids playing by the riverbanks of Jari river: The community living inside the Iratapuru Sustainable Development Reserve works on the processing of Brazil nut, which, transformed into oil, is sold to the cosmetic industry. Photographed by Victor Moriyama.

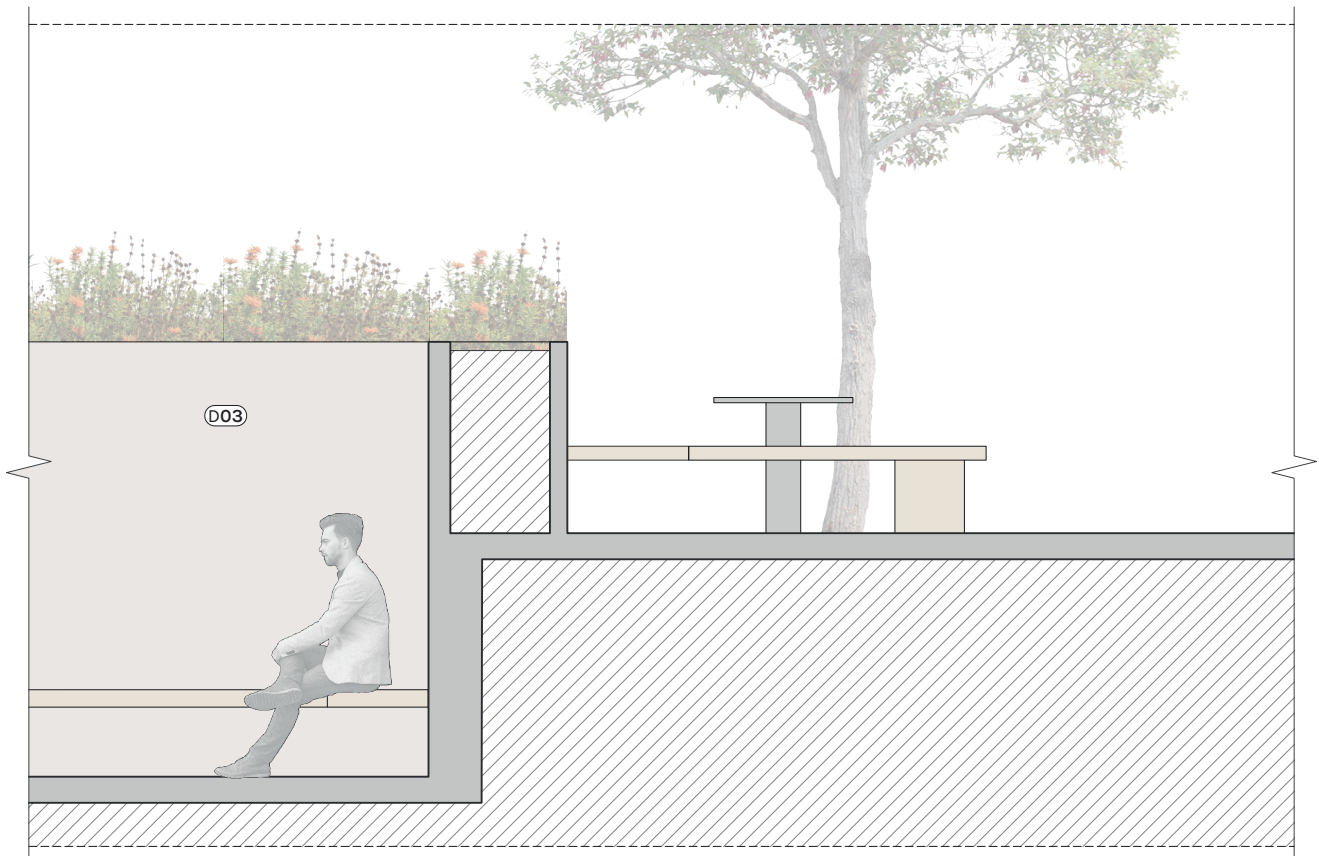
> 3. The Yanomami: they are one of the largest relatively isolated indigenous peoples in South America. They live in the forests and mountains of northern Brazil and southern Venezuela. Photographed by Lilo Clareto.



> SECTION INDICATION

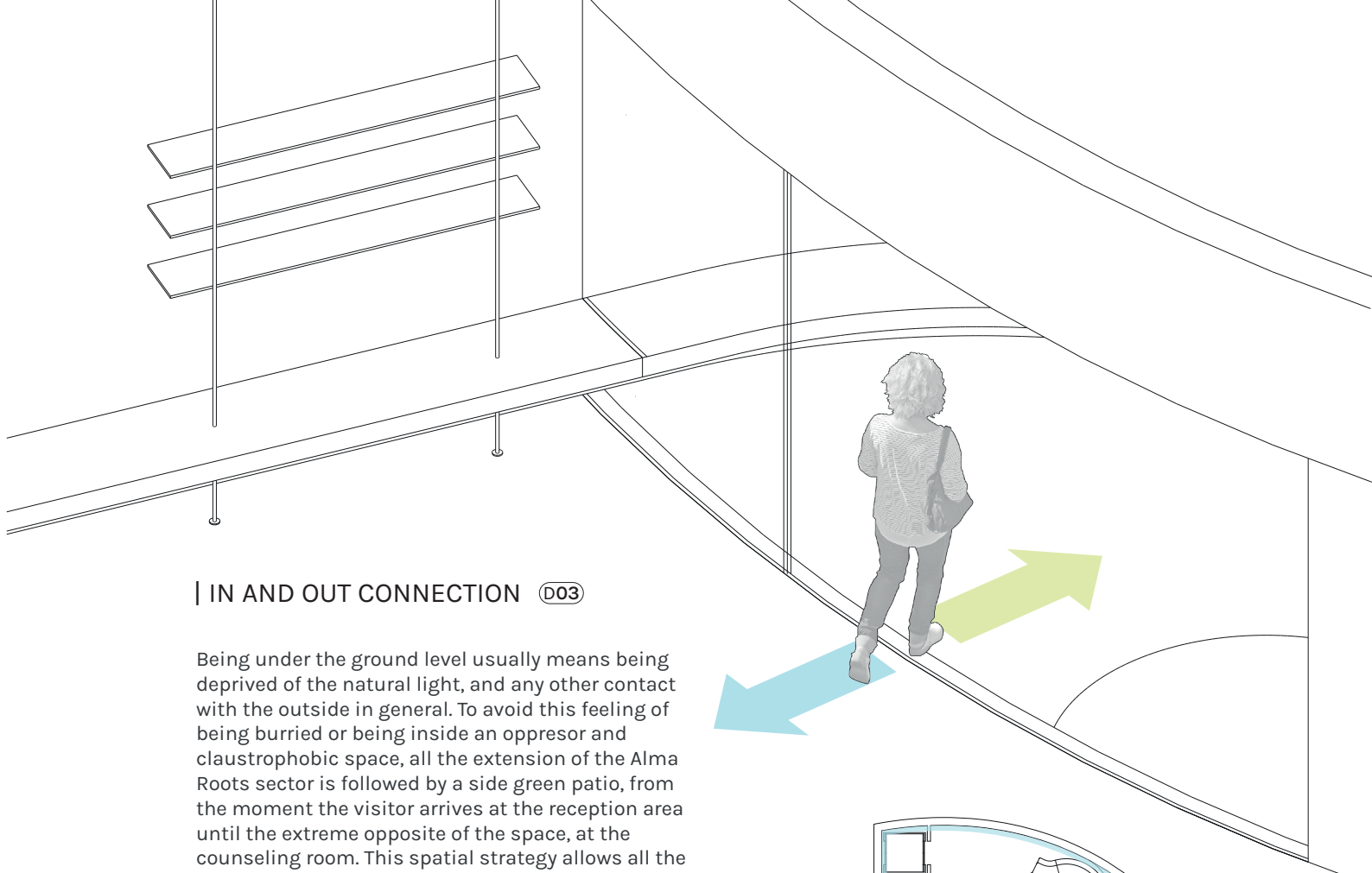


SECTION b-b'



SECTION b-b'



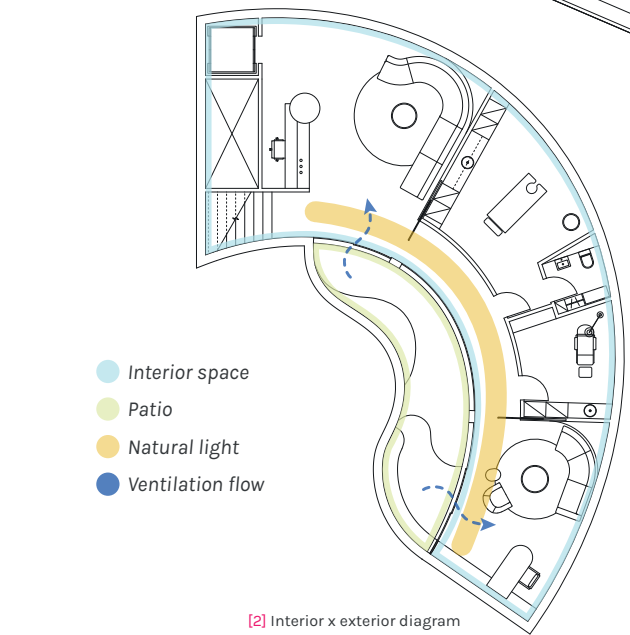


## | IN AND OUT CONNECTION D03

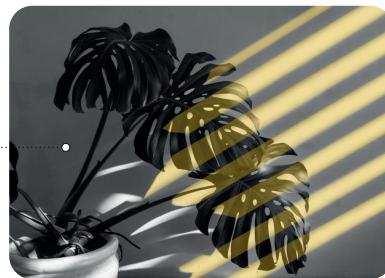
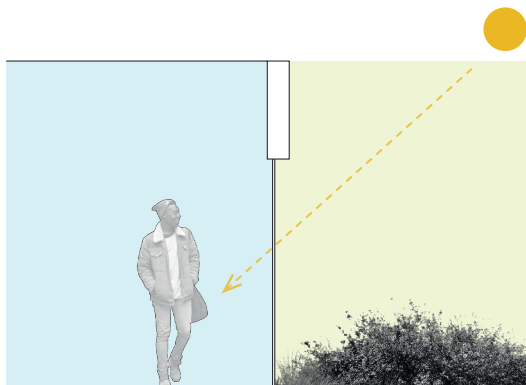
Being under the ground level usually means being deprived of the natural light, and any other contact with the outside in general. To avoid this feeling of being buried or being inside an oppressor and claustrophobic space, all the extension of the Alma Roots sector is followed by a side green patio, from the moment the visitor arrives at the reception area until the extreme opposite of the space, at the counseling room. This spatial strategy allows all the areas to be indirectly illuminated by the sunlight and be naturally ventilated [2].

The connection with the exterior gets more intense in the area of the counseling room, where the psychologist and the patient can take the conversation outside and enjoy the fresh air. This space, in specific, deserves this “in out” interaction because, very often, patients feel caged inside society, and this is the place where they can feel safe inside but knowing that there’s a whole world outside to be lived as well. And, eventually, they can bring this “safety” outside, when they feel healed.

The idea of creating spaces constantly connected with the exterior emerged from the analogy with the plants in our homes [3]. The same way they are protected under the roof, they are also sitting by the windows receiving natural light, and this way they can grow strong. Housed but also alive!



[2] Interior x exterior diagram



[3] Analogy diagram

## 9.4.2 Alma Terra

The skincare sector



*From the bustling streets of the Paulista avenue to inside the store, Alma welcomes the visitors with a refreshing walk into the woods.*



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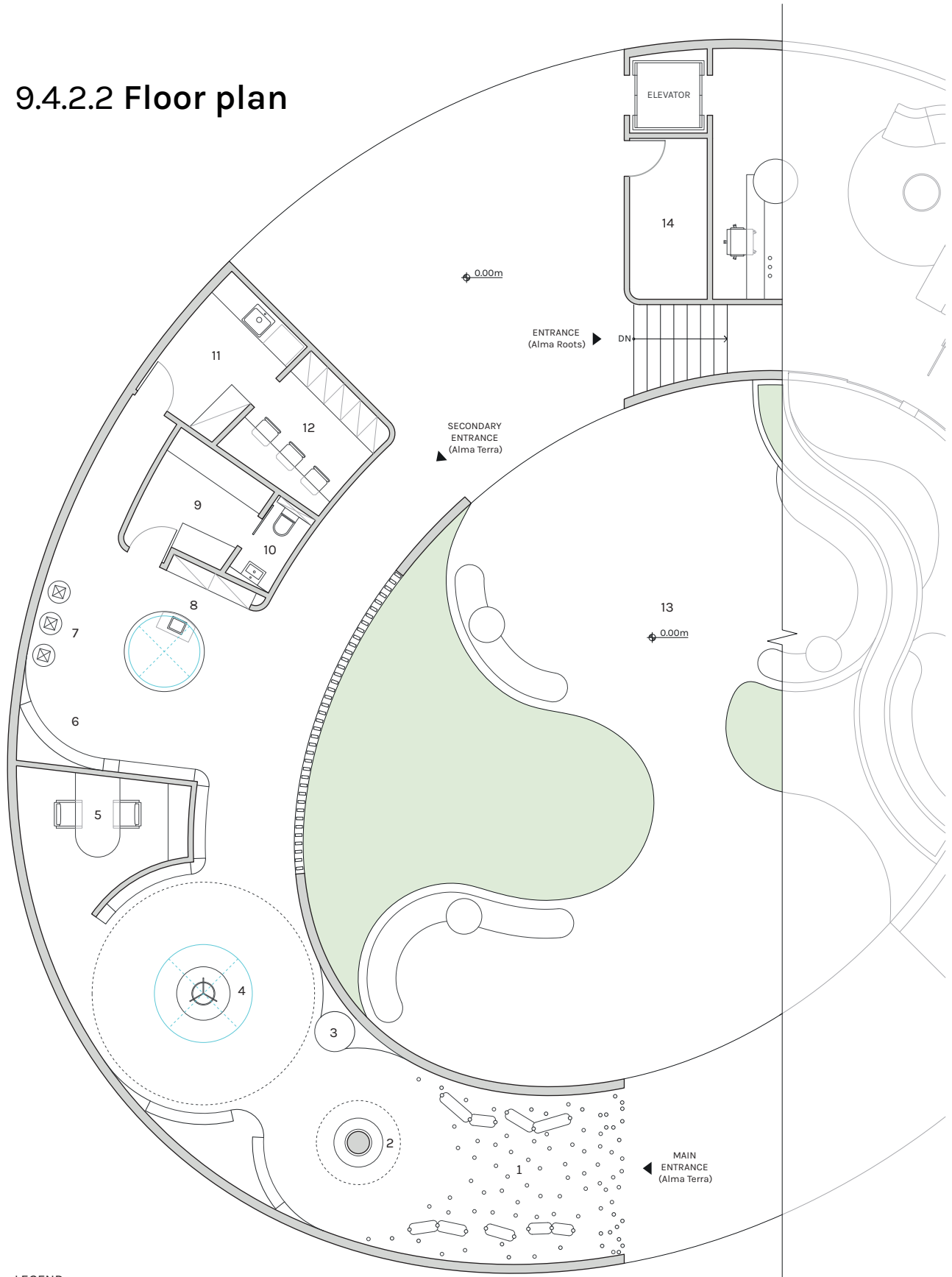
## 9.4.2.1 About the space

It's impossible to think about skincare products without relating it to self-care, intimacy, protection and delicacy. For this reason, it was aimed to create a space to place Alma Terra where the clients could leave the chaos of living in a big city behind and feeling relaxed and sheltered. But it was also important to provide an engaging configuration of the space that could stimulate the clients' confidence to explore the whole store and, consequently, get to knowing the whole range of products.

According to Wilson (1984), as a heritage from our ancestors whose dwellings were seamlessly integrated into the natural surroundings, humans tend to feel more comfortable and safer in contexts where the natural environment is present - biophilia. He explains that humans hold a biological need for connection with nature on physical and mental levels, but fulano adds that it should not necessarily be natural elements exclusively, but elements that somehow make us recall any delightful experience we had with nature.

Based on this premise, everything in the atmosphere of Alma Terra aims to stimulate the biophilic notion during the shopping experience. In this space, the visitors will be able to experience different scenarios of a real forest in the middle of São Paulo. Even though the interaction between nature and humans is important, for this retail context it was considered relevant to maintain certain level of privacy of the interior, not proposing a high visual interaction with the exterior; understanding that skincare is a very intimate and personal activity.

## 9.4.2.2 Floor plan



LEGEND:

- |                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. DENSE FLOREST: BODY CARE       | 8. CASH-DESK       |
| 2. TREE OF LIFE: HAIR CARE        | 9. STORAGE         |
| 3. SPOTLIGHT ZONE                 | 10. WC             |
| 4. FEATURE SINK + FACIAL CARE     | 11. KITCHENETTE    |
| 5. CONSULTATION AREA              | 12. STAFF ROOM     |
| 6. MINIS/TRAVEL SIZES + HAND CARE | 13. CENTRAL SQUARE |
| 7. GIFT WRAPPING                  | 14. PLANT ROOM     |





### 9.4.2.3 Spatial organization

The process of walking in the store can be compared as a path inside the forest that guides someone from a dense tree area to a bright and open glade. Taking advantage of this poetic concept of discovery, each space has a unique way to represent a moment of this “trail”, as taking care of our body is also a process of self-discovery. As such, considering the products are categorized by purpose of use, every area displays one different category of products.

Right in the entrance, the client can find the body care products, followed by the next “step” where hair care products are displayed. Adjacent to those areas, there is the feature sink - important situational element of the segment. In that area, visitors can experiment all the products, washing them off right after the test. Facial products, such as soaps and scrubs belong to the rinse-off category, for this reason they are displayed next to the sink, to facilitate the testing. For those who need a one-to-one assistance, in the same area, they can find the entrance to the consultation room, and get a custom skincare routine from a specialist. Further the way, in the cash-desk zone, a substantial counter can be find placed in the center, which can be used not only as a till point, but also as a gift-wrapping station. As a commercial strategy, displays for smaller products and travel-sizes are positioned close to the cash-desk to instigate the impulse buying. Finally, the staff amenities of the flagship are located in the back of the store.

### 9.4.2.4 Look and feel



Warm white to neutral  
[3000K ~ 4000k]

LIGHTING



Fresh [Herbal and Leafy]  
+ Dry woods [Smoky]

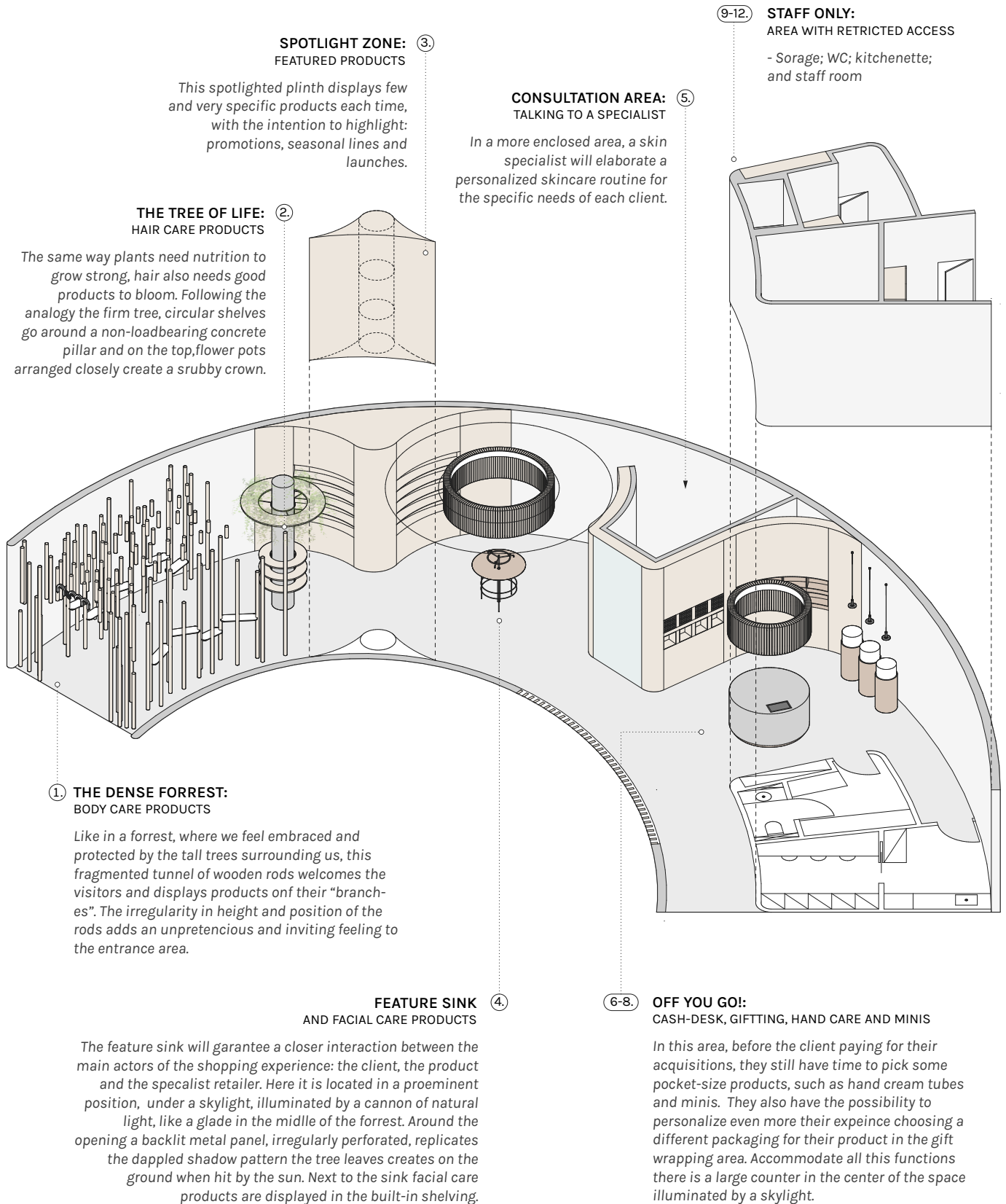
SCENT



Ambient music

MUSIC

## 9.4.2.5 Introducing the zones



**1 THE DENSE FORREST:**  
BODY CARE PRODUCTS

Like in a forrest, where we feel embraced and protected by the tall trees surrounding us, this fragmented tunnel of wooden rods welcomes the visitors and displays products on their "branches". The irregularity in height and position of the rods adds an unpretentious and inviting feeling to the entrance area.

**4 FEATURE SINK**  
AND FACIAL CARE PRODUCTS

The feature sink will guarantee a closer interaction between the main actors of the shopping experience: the client, the product and the specialist retailer. Here it is located in a prominent position, under a skylight, illuminated by a cannon of natural light, like a glade in the middle of the forrest. Around the opening a backlit metal panel, irregularly perforated, replicates the dappled shadow pattern the tree leaves creates on the ground when hit by the sun. Next to the sink facial care products are displayed in the built-in shelving.

**5 CONSULTATION AREA:**  
TALKING TO A SPECIALIST

In a more enclosed area, a skin specialist will elaborate a personalized skincare routine for the specific needs of each client.

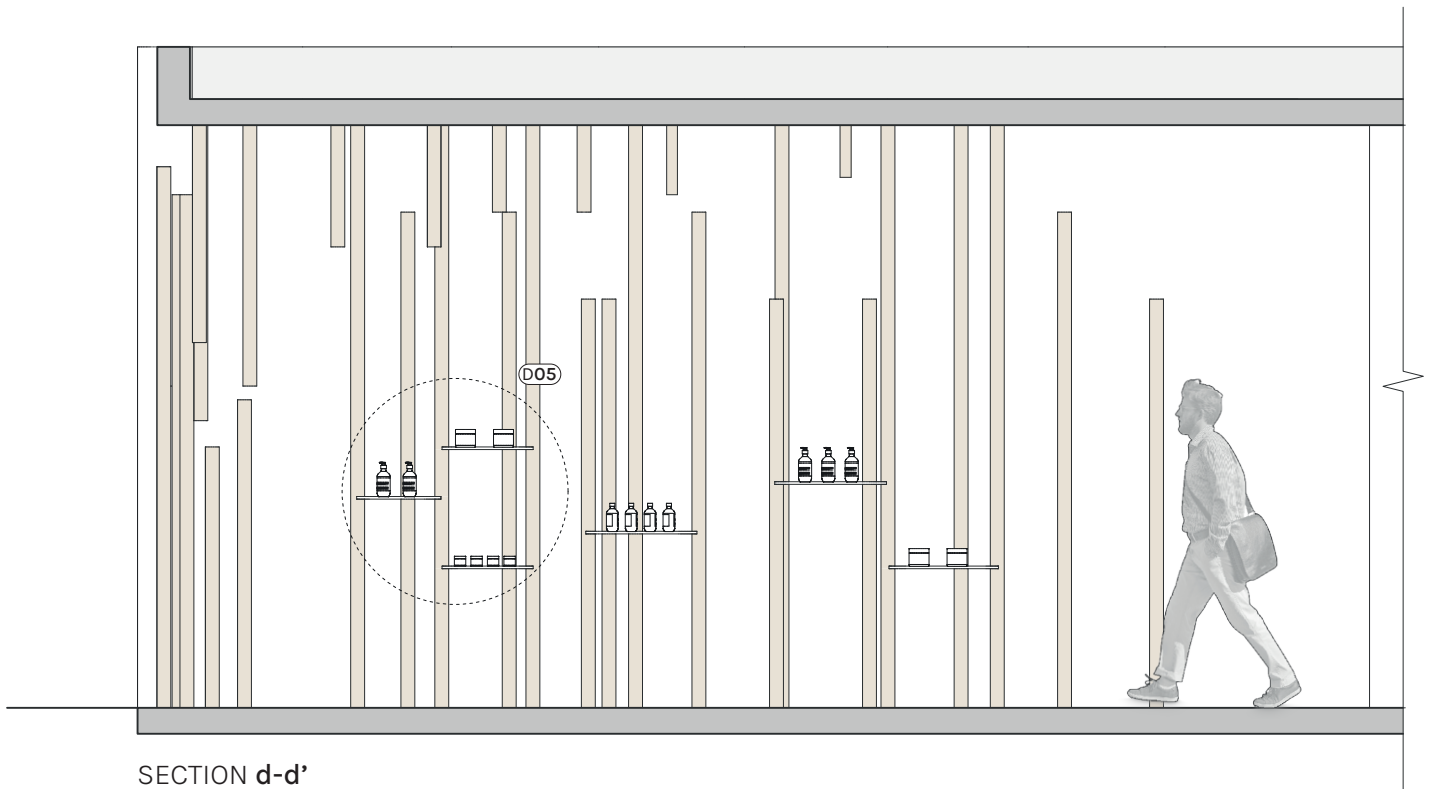
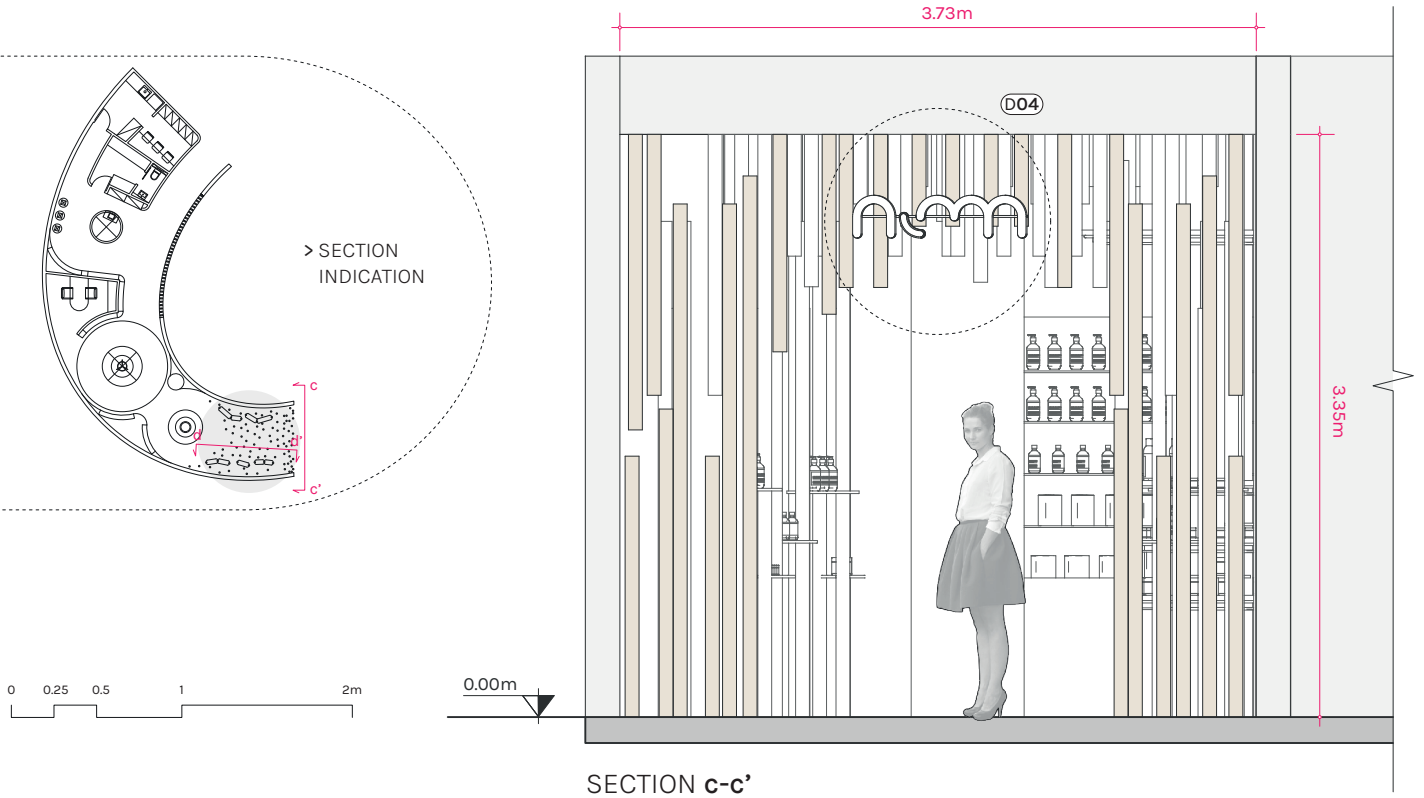
**9-12. STAFF ONLY:**  
AREA WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS

- Storage; WC; kitchenette;  
and staff room

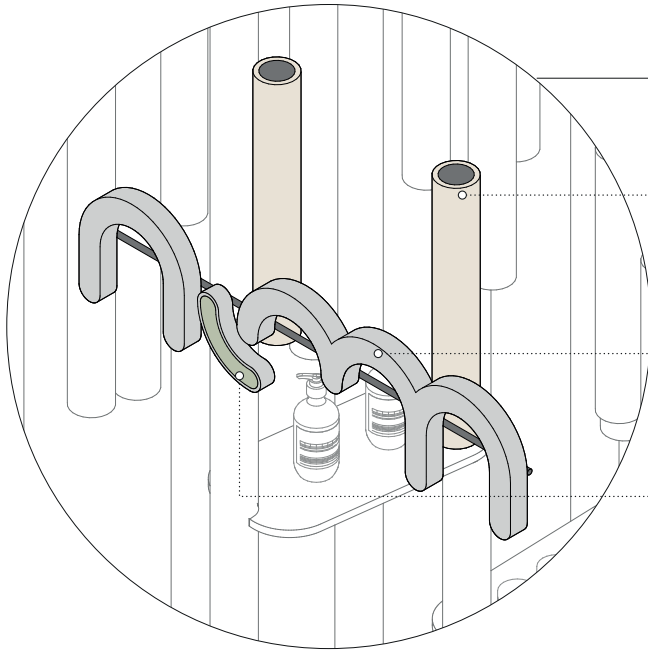
**6-8. OFF YOU GO!:**  
CASH-DESK, GIFTING, HAND CARE AND MINIS

In this area, before the client paying for their acquisitions, they still have time to pick some pocket-size products, such as hand cream tubes and minis. They also have the possibility to personalize even more their experience choosing a different packaging for their product in the gift wrapping area. Accommodate all this functions there is a large counter in the center of the space illuminated by a skylight.

## 9.4.2.6 Breakdown



## | HANGING SIGNAGE D04



### → SUPPORTING RODS

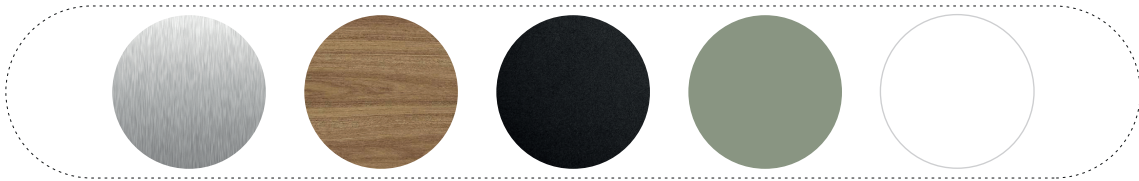
Structure -  $\varnothing$  80 mm - that upholds the signage to the ceiling, with internal path for electric circuits. Clad in natural wood veneer - 0.6 mm.

### → ALMA SIGNAGE

Body shaped in brushed aluminium plates, and metallic grip coated in matte paint [Color S9000-N].

### → ALMA SIGNAGE - Backlit

The "L" of the signage that indicates the brand's segment is backlit. The front part of the letter is covered with a polycarbonate sheet [Color S 2020-G60Y] to transform the color appearance of the light.



BRUSHED  
ALUMINUM

WOODEN VEENER  
[Brazilian-walnut]

NCS  
S 9000-N

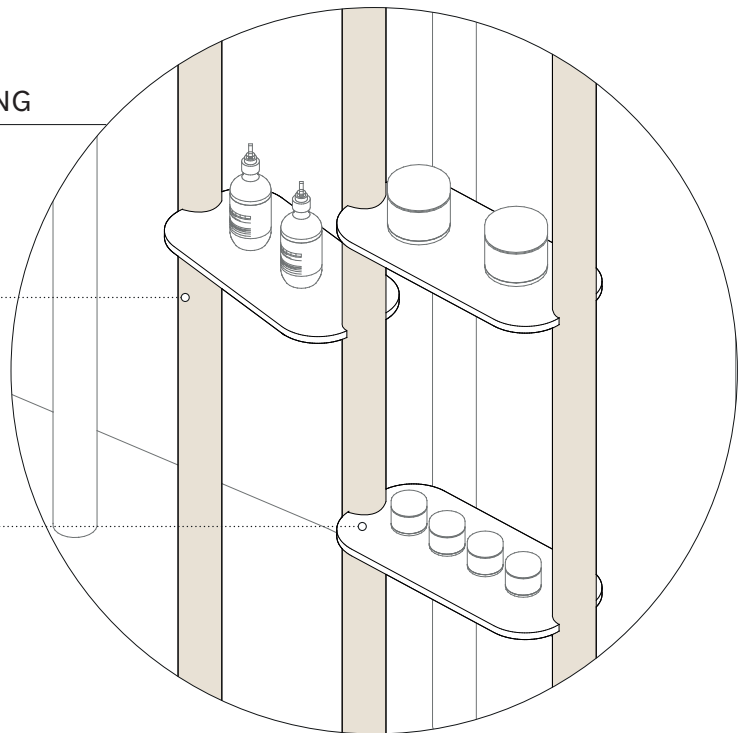
NCS  
S 2020-G60Y

NCS  
S 0502-G

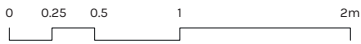
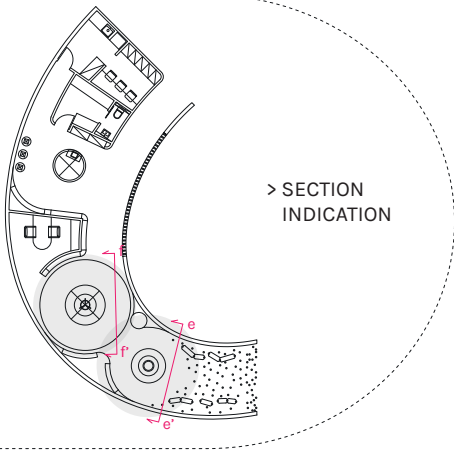
## D05 | BRANCHES SHELVING

**SUPPORTING RODS** ←  
Structure -  $\varnothing$  80 mm - mounted to the floor, that supports the shelving trays. Clad in natural wood veneer - 0.6 mm.

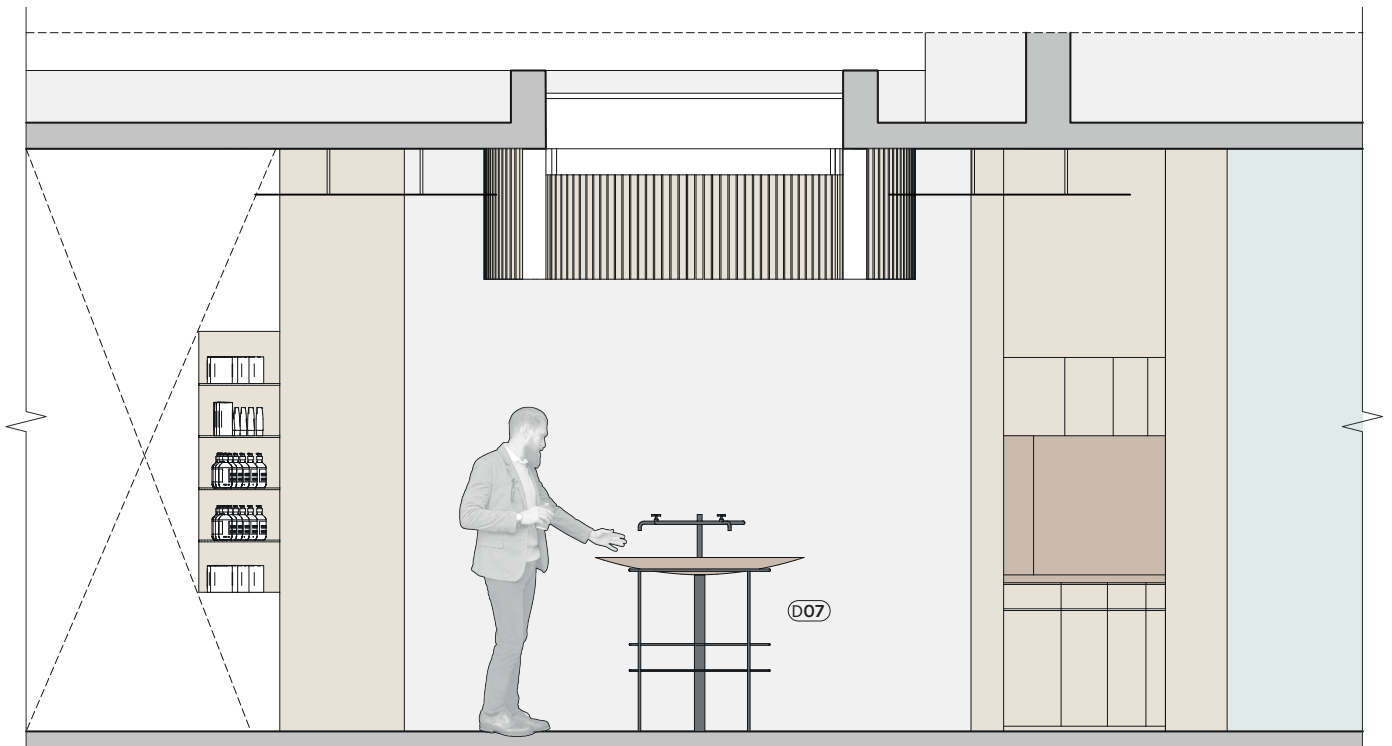
**SHELVING TRAYS** ←  
Lacquered [Color S 05002-G] trays built in plywood - 16 mm.



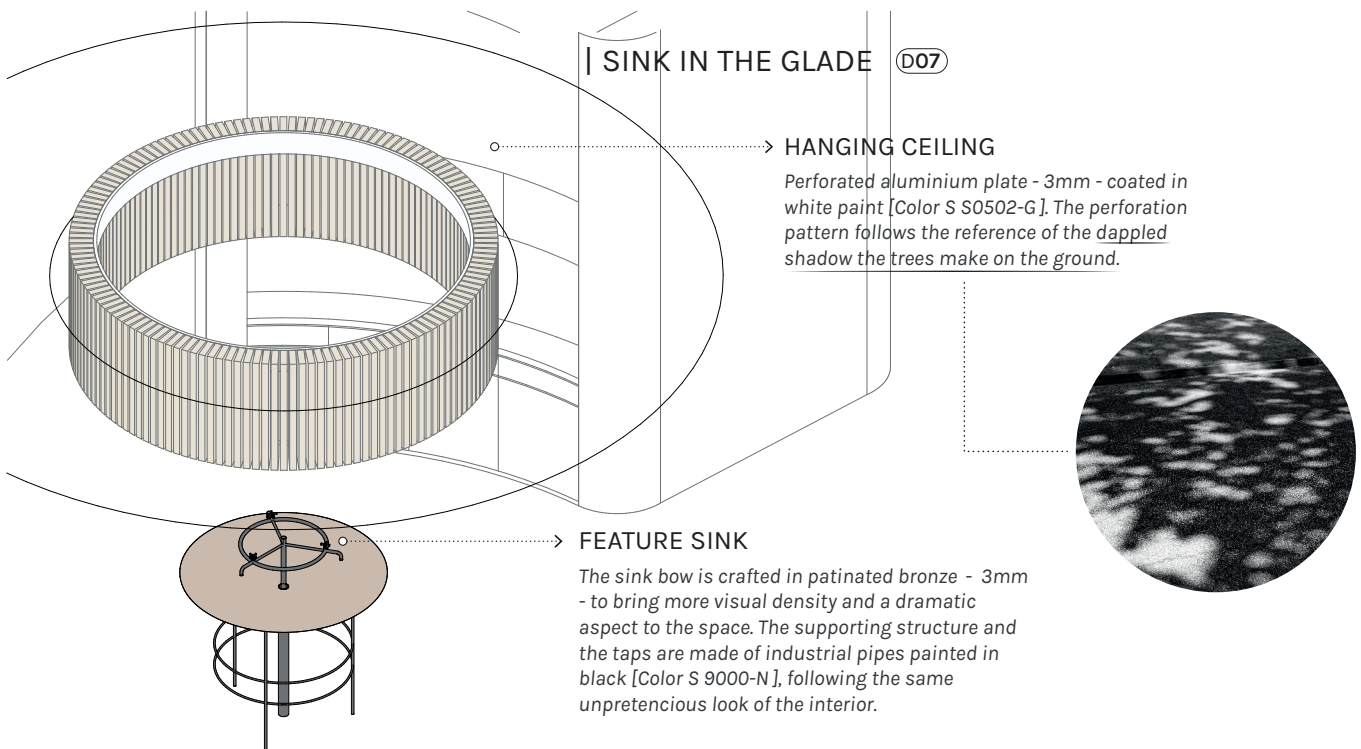
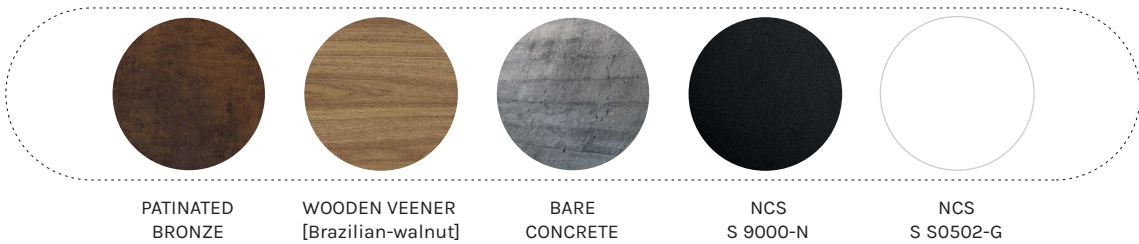
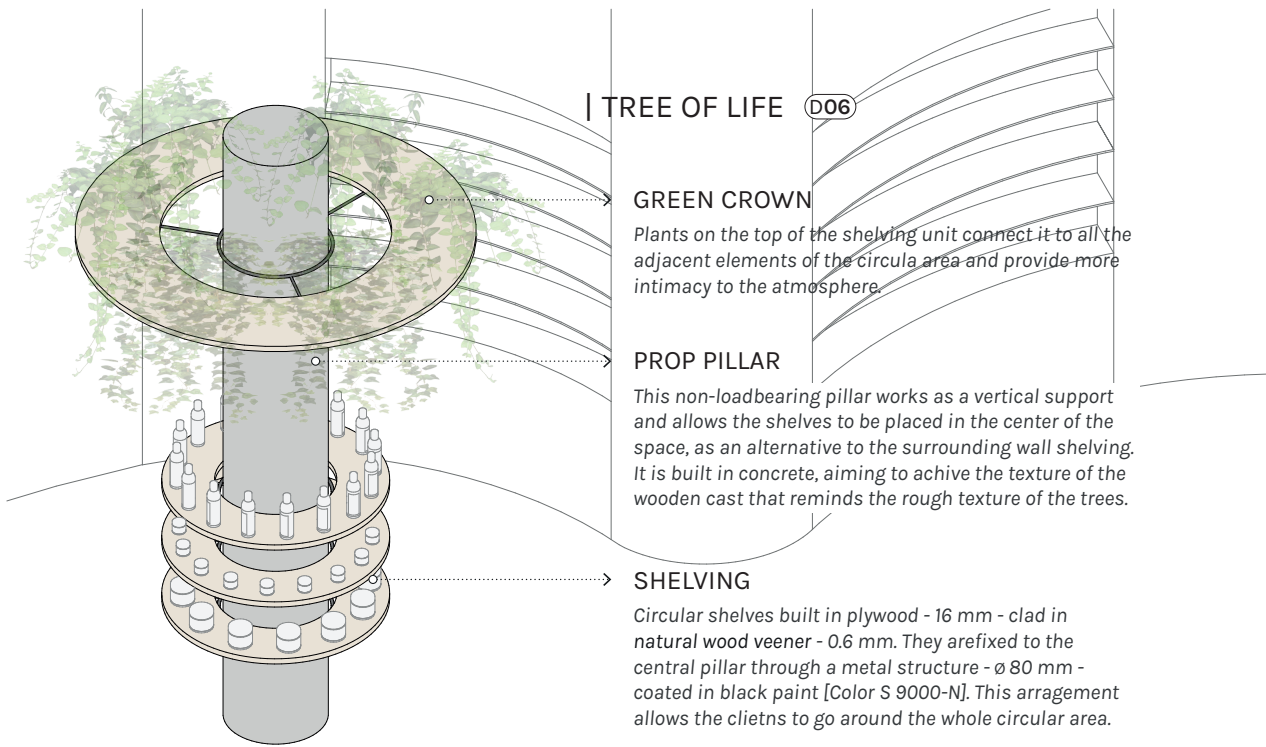


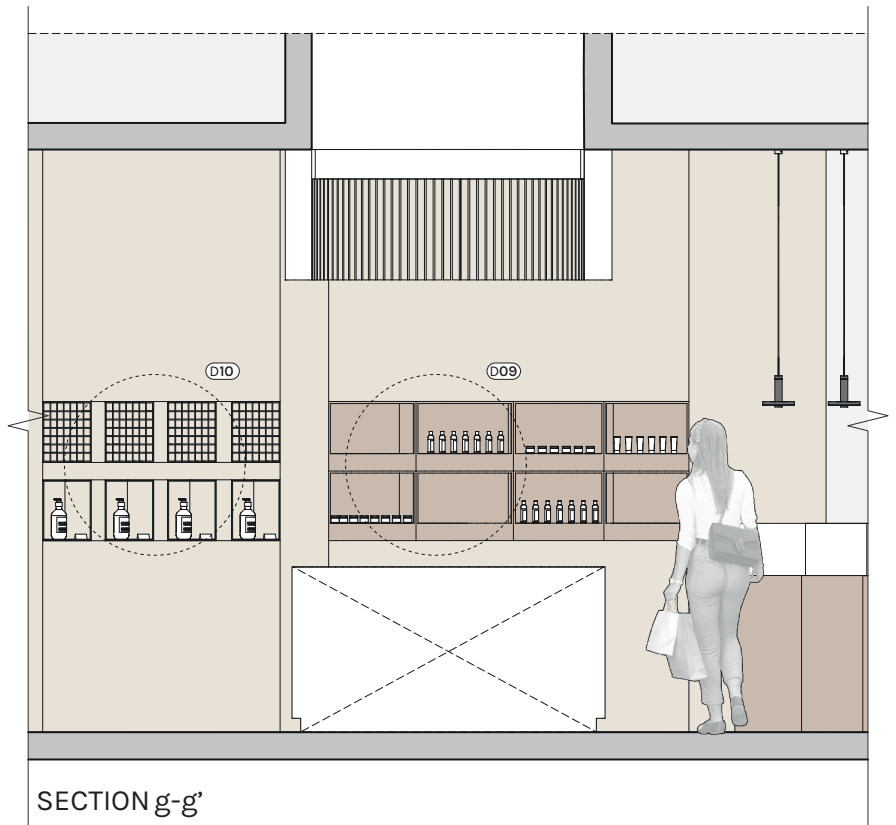
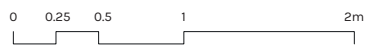
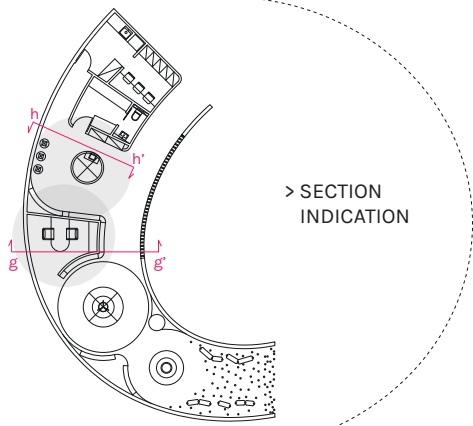


SECTION e-e'



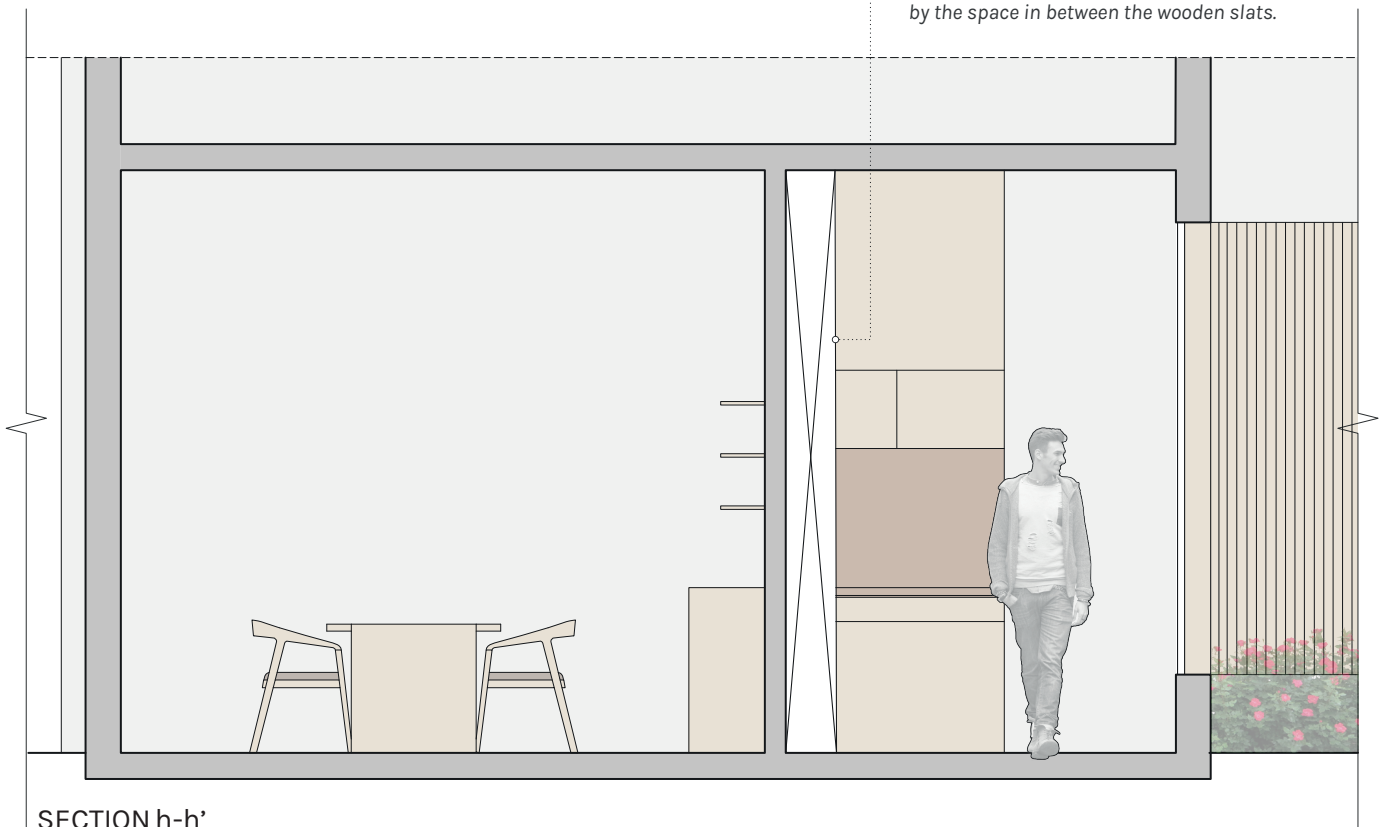
SECTION f-f'





SECTION g-g'

→ This mirrored wall, floor to ceiling, plays the role of reflecting, and bringing inside the natural light and the image of the outside greenery that passes by the space in between the wooden slats.



SECTION h-h'

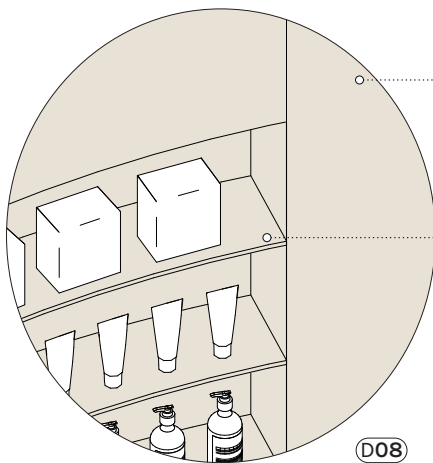
## | BUILT-IN SHELVING

On account of having a layout arranged in circular areas, to give the sense of wider aisles, the periferic shelves were embedded within the walls. This configuration also creates the feeling of unity in a bespoke setting.



PATINATED  
BRONZE

WOODEN VEENER  
[Brazilian-walnut]



### → BACKDROP

To create the extra envelope over the concrete walls, which accommodates the embedded shelving, it was used plaster boards - 12 mm - clad in natural wooden veener - 0.6 mm.

### → SHELVING

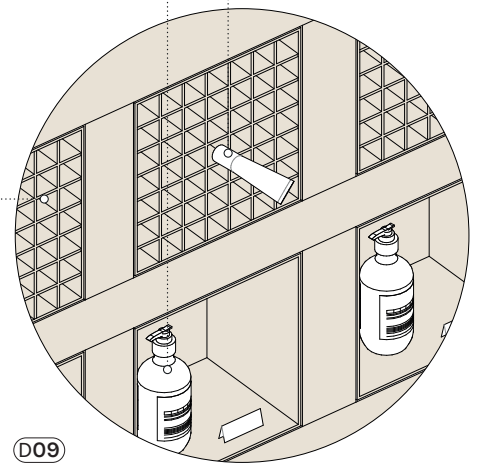
Plywood boards - 16 mm - clad in natural wooden veener - 0.6 mm.

D08

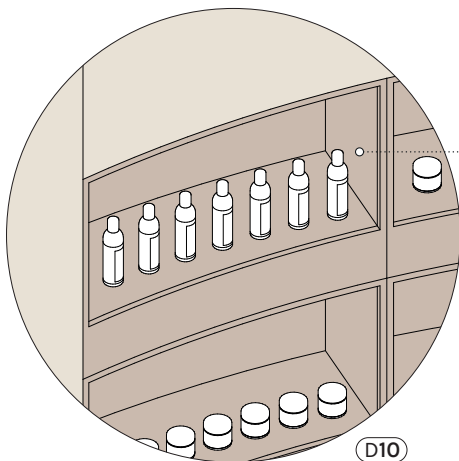
Hand cream tubes →  
Hand cream testers ←

### SLOTS ←

Plywood boxes (350 x 350 mm) - 8 mm - subdivided in smaller slots (45 x 45 mm) built in thin plywood - 2 mm - to fit hand cream tubes placed horizontally and rotated 45°. All the elements are clad in natural wooden veener - 0.6 mm.



D09



### → MINIS' BOXES

To differentiate the travel size products from the standard range of products, they were placed over metal boxes shaped in patinated bronze sheet - 3mm. The products stand over a plinth, built in the same material, so they are not overshadowed because of their size.

D10



## 9.4.3 Alma Gem

The makeup sector



*Makeup is a form of expression. Alma Gem helps their clients to be the best version of themselves every day, and stream it to the world.*



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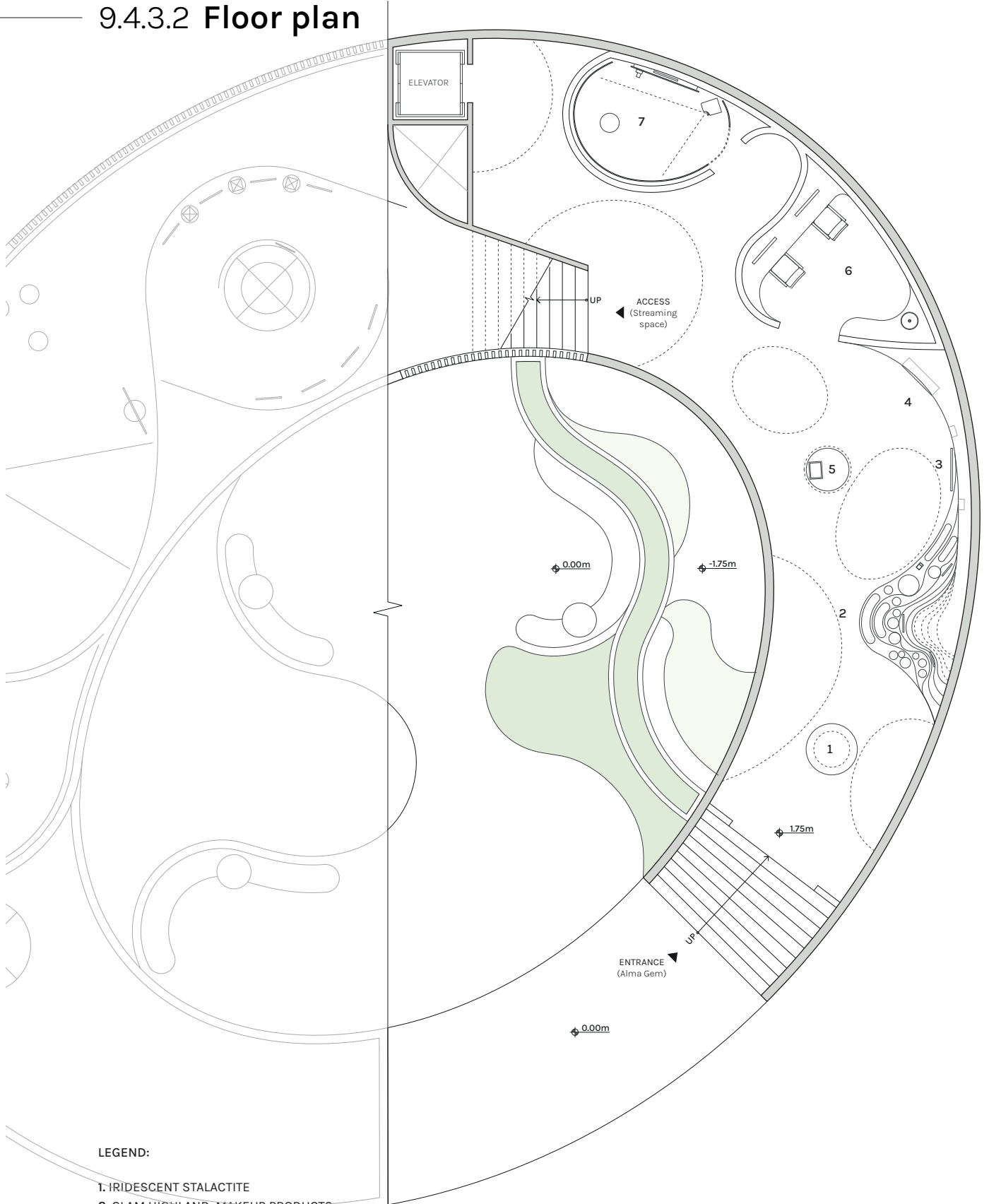
### 9.4.3.1 About the space

From the non-makeup look to the drag queen extravaganza, makeup enables any form of expression to be seen. In front of a well lit mirror of a dressing table everything is possible. And that's exactly what Alma Gem wants to bring to their space: the glam moment of applying makeup.

Makeup is an important ally for the fashion industry, and for this reason is always related to the electric energy of the fashion shows. Alma sees all their clients as their models; and like in a backstage atmosphere, where all the background is dark and the face of the models are illuminated by the strong light of the mirrors, the sale space simulates this feeling and highlights the main characters of this show, the clients and the products, letting all the situational elements composing the backdrop create a dramatic and energetic environment.

Eventhough colors represent very well the mutiplicity of styles, characteristics and mindsets of the different individuals out there in the world, having a colorful space not necessarily do justice to this perception. The neutral-color store respects all the distinct ways of understanding makeup and stimulates the visitor to discover their own way to the spotlight. Like climbing a mountain to reach the top, and being able to feel the freedom rushing through the body, this space gives the clients all the tools needed to climb the mountain of self-acceptation and lead the path until the top of it where they can be who they really are, or who they want to be. Everthing in the space combines the tortuous and unpredictable profile of the mountains, the warm nurturing feeling of the wood and some details in glossymaterials. Exciting, welcoming and glam.

## 9.4.3.2 Floor plan



**LEGEND:**

- 1. IRIDESCENT STALACTITE
- 2. GLAM HIGHLAND: MAKEUP PRODUCTS
- 3. DIGITAL COUNSELING MIRROR + MAKEUP TOOLS DISPLAY
- 4. CASH-DESK
- 5. NAIL POLISH DISPLAY
- 6. BEAUTY BAR
- 7. PHOTO BOOTH WITH PROJECTION



### 9.4.3.3 Spatial organization

Every rise has a starting point and it's necessary to have solid bases to feel confident on climbing until the top. The space simulates this ludic self-growth progress taking over the space with horizontal boards of irregular and wiggly profiles, then creating a single element that permeates the whole space. This mountainous element allows all the functions and essential services of the sector to happen around it, shaping the space into an holistic experience that follows the client from the beginning to the end.

Detached from the the rest of the other functions, the eye shadow display welcomes the visitors in a central position right after the entrance, allowing them to go completely around it. The reason it's placed in an "isolated" position, is because eye shadow is usually the flagship product, then deserves a highlighted position. Next to it, the highland element is placed and can be divided in three main areas flowing a logic sequence: 1. Makeup display; 2. Makeup service; 3. Photo booth.

The first area displays all product range of the brand, from skin preparation to eyes. The second area is dedicated to a one-to-one assistance, for those who want more personalized advices having the opportunity to have a full-face makeup made by a specialist. Finally, the third one is a private area that can be used by the general public to register their makeup and make a statement. After this the clients are ready to reach the top.

### 9.4.3.4 Look and feel



Neutral to cool white  
[4000K ~ 5000k]

LIGHTING



Soft floral [Powdery]  
+ Floral oriental [Spicy]

SCENT

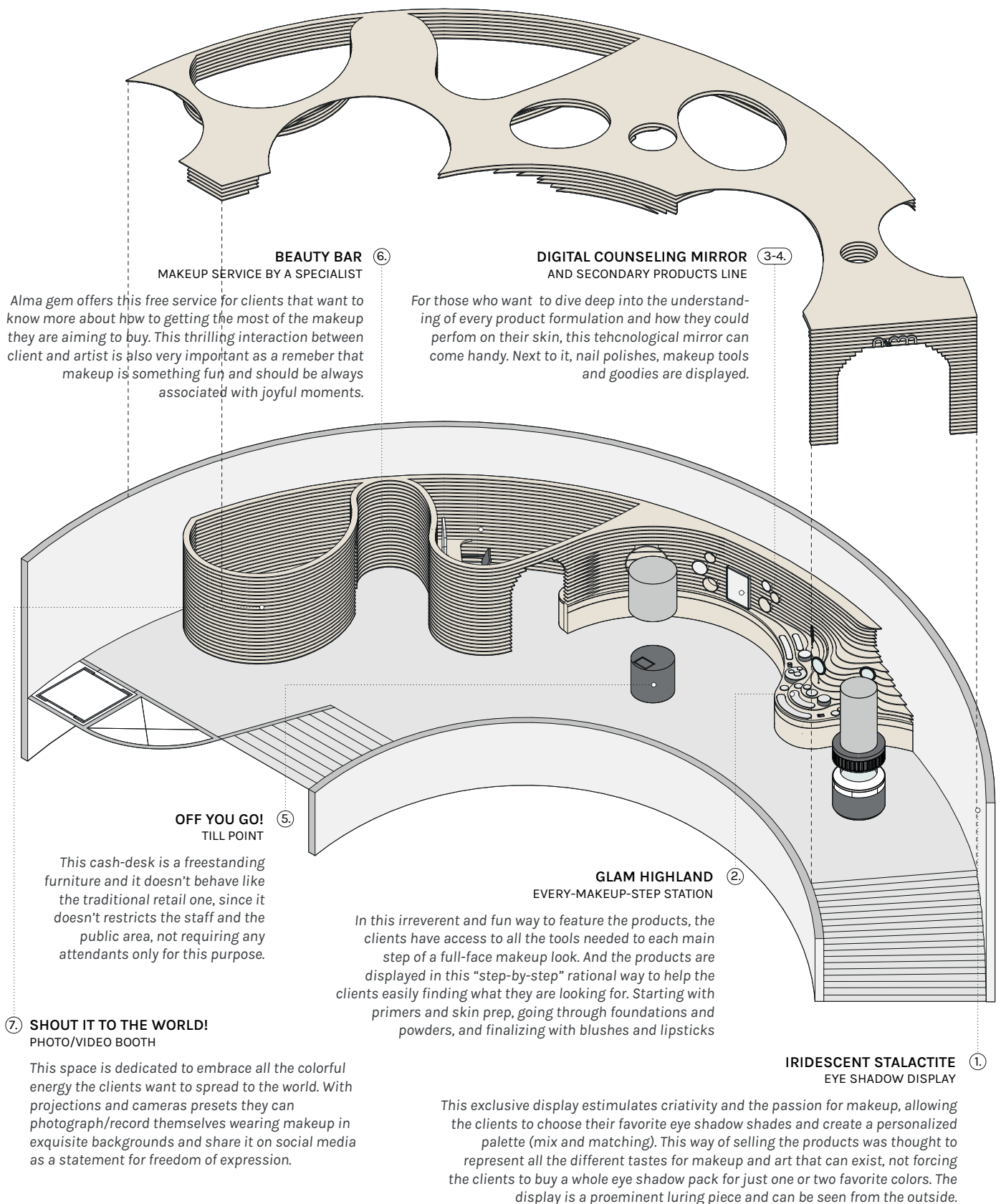


Cosmic pop

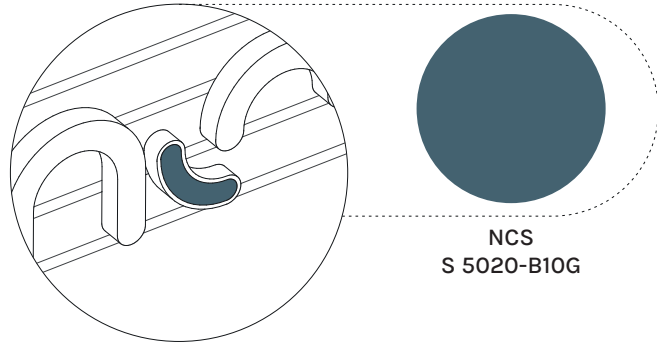
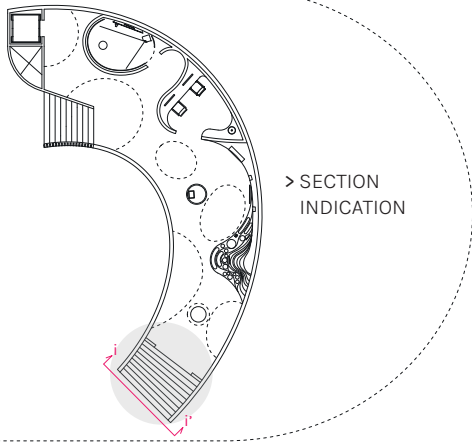
MUSIC



## 9.4.3.5 Introducing the zones

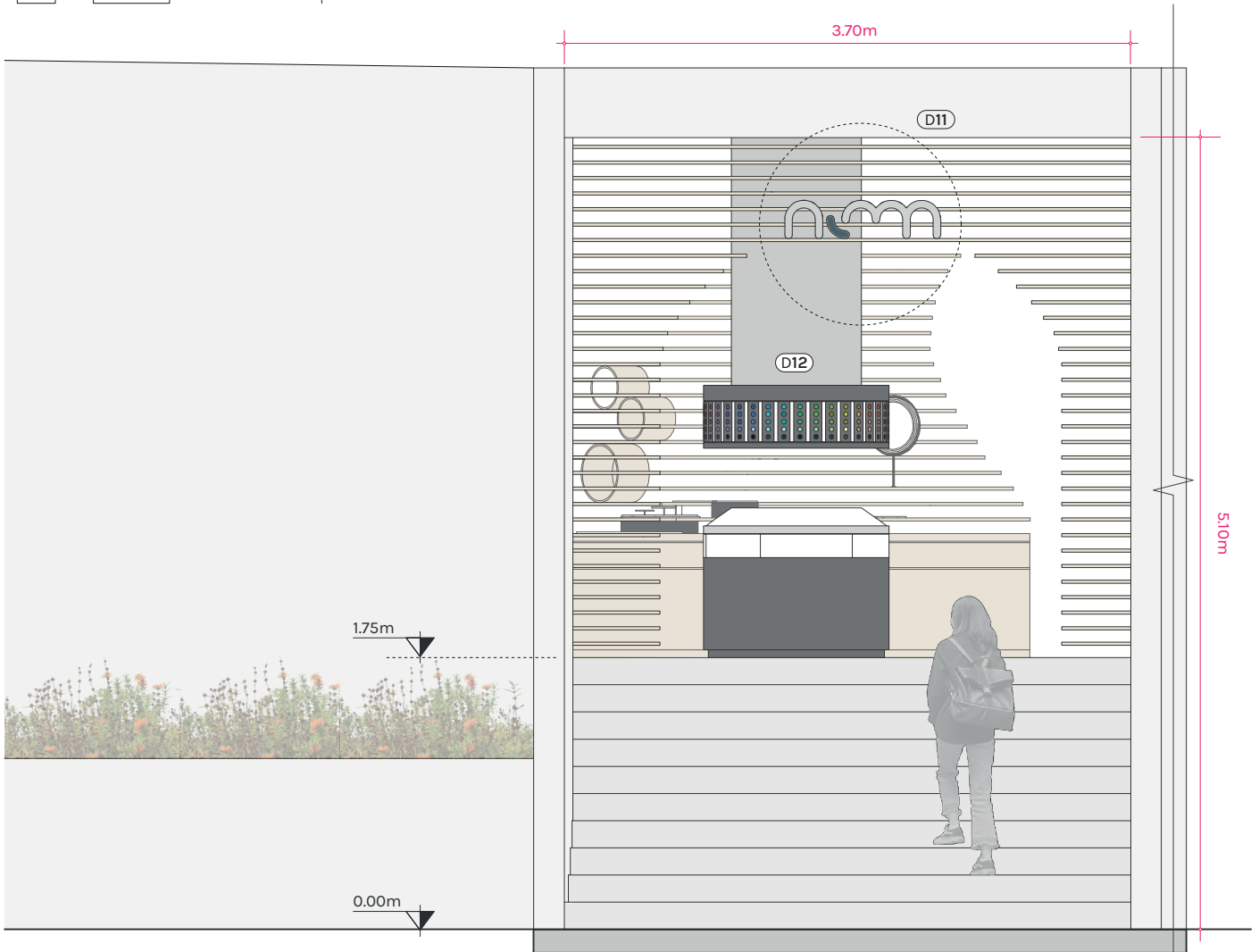
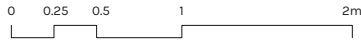


### 9.4.3.6 Breakdown



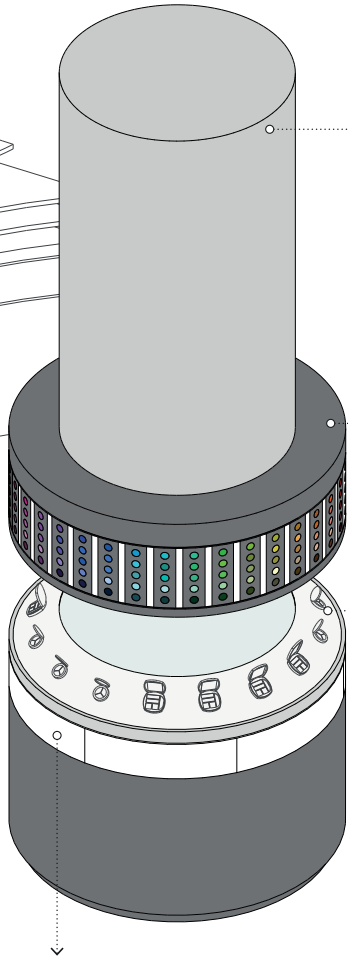
#### | ENTRANCE SIGNAGE (D11)

The dimensions and manufacturing of this signage are identical to the Alma Terra's one. However, the backlit part is different, since it stands for the makeup segment of the brand. In this case the front part of the "L" is covered with a polycarbonate sheet [Color S 5020-B10G] to obtain a blue shaded light.



SECTION i-i'

## | IRIDESCENT STALACTITE 012



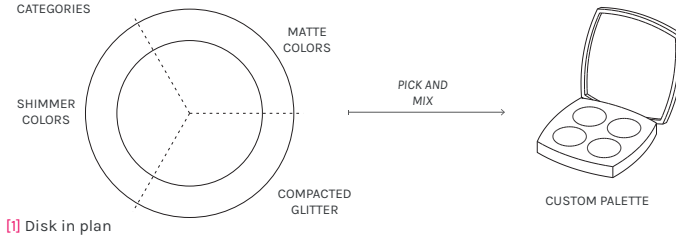
### → HANGER PIER

This pier -  $\varnothing 800$  mm - is a support for the eye shadows iridescent disc, creating a cavernous look. Its oversized dimensions work as a prominent element that can be seen from the outside of the store. Built in concrete with bare finish.

### → EYE SHADOWS DISK

Display built in acrylic - 9 mm - in glossy black [Color S 900-N] with  $\varnothing 1200$  mm. The eye shadows displayed are only for testing, available in a very large range of colors and finishes [1], inviting the clients to pick and mix the ones they like the most. In the bottom of the disk LED stripes are installed to illuminate the display below.

> FINISHES CATEGORIES



[1] Disk in plan

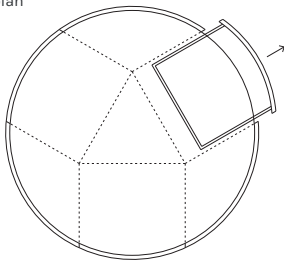
### → ALMA'S SELECTION DISPLAY

This clear acrylic - 9 mm - ring supports the brand's ready-to-use eye shadow palettes. Under the transparent ring a mirror softly reflects the light provided by the LED stripes above promoting a "glam" feeling and facilitating the selection of products [2].

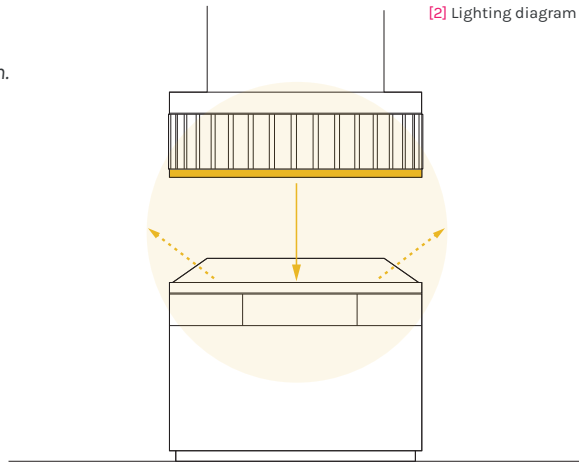
## DRAWERS + BASE

Three drawers [3] are the storage for each category of eye shadow finish, and they open with the "push to open" system. Both the base of the display and the drawers are built in plywood - 12 mm - painted in glossy black [Color S 900-N] and glossy white [Color S S0502-G] respectively.

[3] Drawers in plan



[2] Lighting diagram



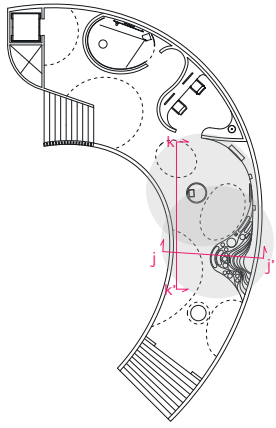
MIRROR

ACRYLIC

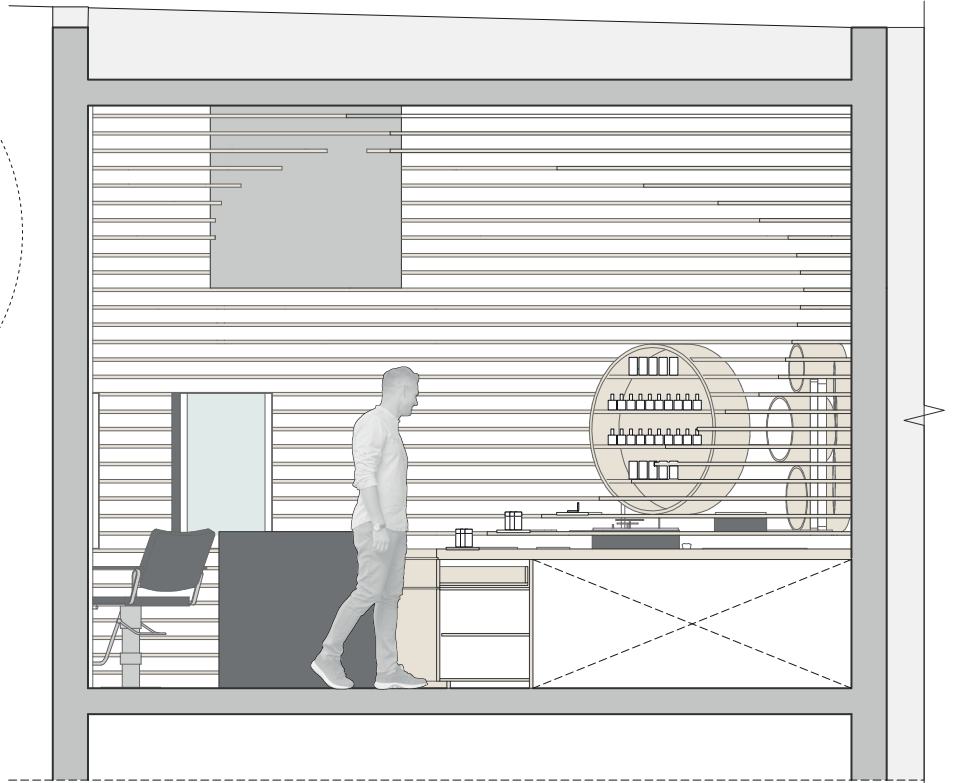
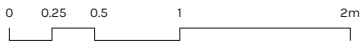
BARE  
CONCRETE

NCS  
S 9000-N

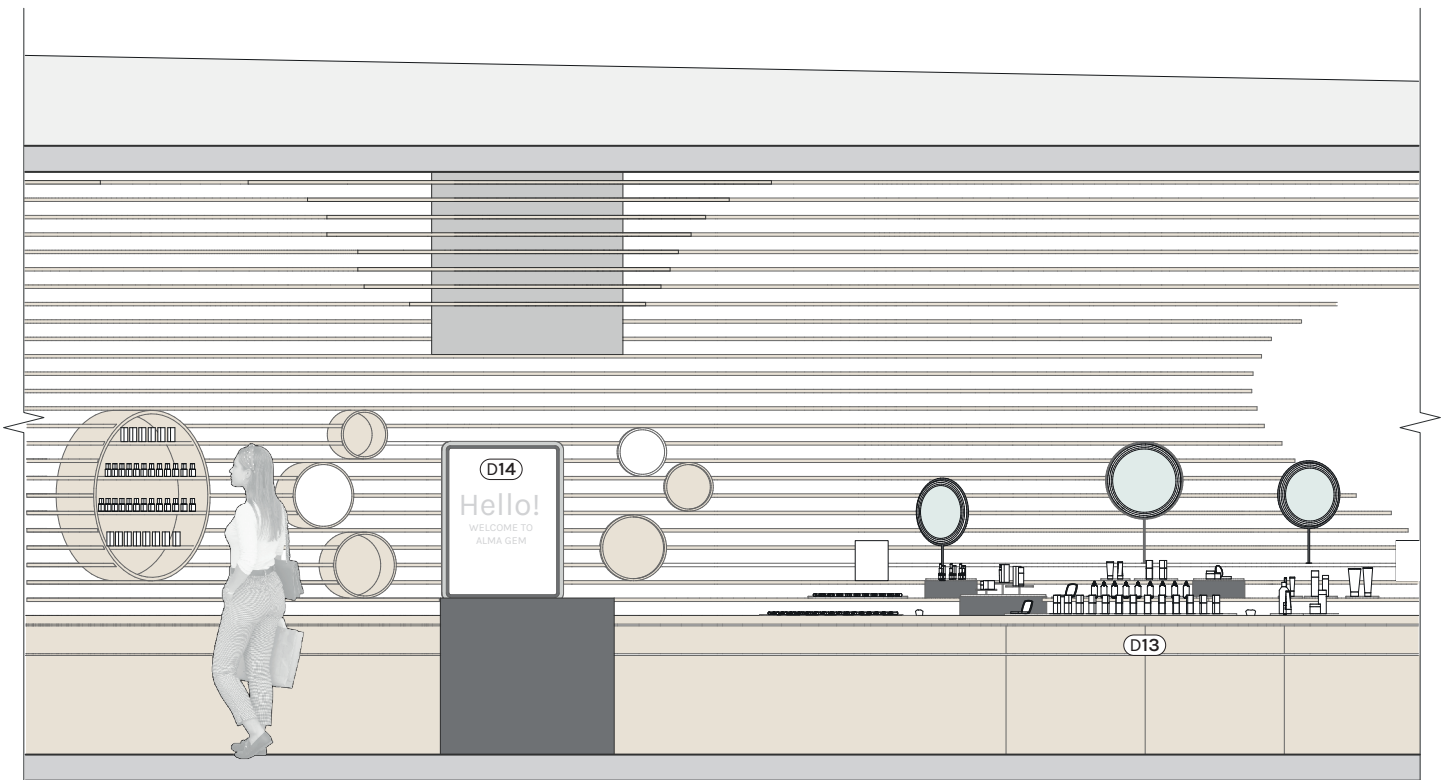
NCS  
S S0502-G



> SECTION INDICATION



SECTION j-j'



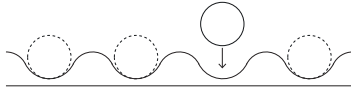
SECTION k-k'



| GLAM HIGHLAND D13

LIPSTICK DISPLAY ←

The surface of this bespoke display is built in clear acrylic - 25 mm - and is waved [3] to fit perfectly the cylindrical shape of the lipsticks (gloss and bullet) in each lap.



[3] Display in section

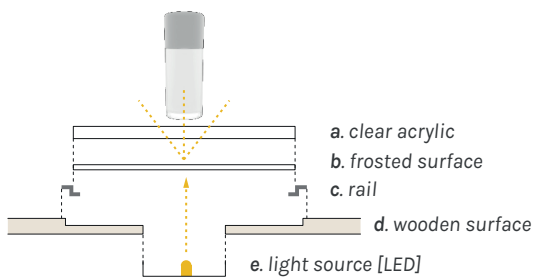
GENERAL DISPLAY ←

Different from the lipstick display, the general ones have a flat surface. As such, the clear acrylic that it is built of can be thinner - 9 mm. They are divided in two main categories:

- > 1. The long ones: Due to the wide range of foundation shades, the display surfaces are long and placed in the center of the "hill", since it's one of the main steps of the makeup;
- > 2. The circular ones: Considering the makeup collections are frequently changing, these displays don't require a perfect and can be easily adapted to new products.

**SHINE!**

All the display surfaces are back lit to achieving a glam/backstage look. The general illumination of Alma Gem is low, as such the focused spots of light complete the dramatic atmosphere of the space, and allow the clients clearly see the products displayed.



> STORAGE

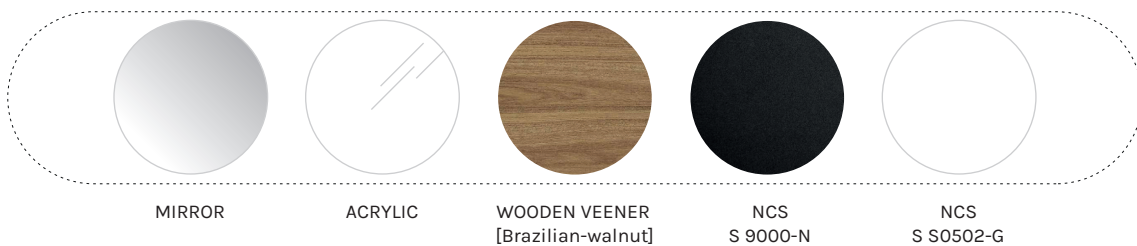
In the center of the "glam highland" wide drawers and cupboards make space for storage. Dealing with the selective product range of a single brand, having a walk-in storage is not necessary. Furthermore, having the spare products in the sale space speeds up the shopping process.

SEASONAL DISPLAYS ←

Seasonal products don't belong to the brand's permanent collection, and should be in a highlighted position for sales promotion. For this reason, these displays are popping out of the surface, as a plinth built in acrylic - 9 mm - glossy black [Color S 900-N]. They are 100 mm high and come in two different diameters: 300 and 500 mm.

MAGNIFYING MIRROR ←

Mirrors are positioned in strategic spots to ease up applying makeup. They magnifying and enlightened for more precision.



MIRROR

ACRYLIC

WOODEN VEENER [Brazilian-walnut]

NCS S 9000-N

NCS S 0502-G

## DIGITAL COUNSELING MIRROR D14

All the attendants working in the Alma Gem store are makeup specialists and are trained to provide all the assistance the customers need. However, to give more autonomy to the clients and to enrich the purchase experience, this smart mirror, which is equipped with a touch-panel system, offers a personalized, in-depth counseling, allowing anyone to digitally try all the products' range of the brand.

By operating the mirror system, the consumer can access a very detailed information, including the products' description, application instructions, linked recommendations and the skin evaluation based on a full-face scan.

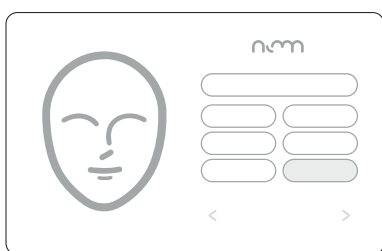
The intelligent system creates a digital-twin of the customer based on the data collected and stores it in the cloud service. This technology allows the clients to always follow their purchase/counseling history everytime they are back to the store or even from home. Through a QR code, clients can access all the information on their smartphones.

This exclusive service aims to engage the visitors, but also to bring a confidence feeling to them, by allowing them to control their own experience inside the store - individuality.

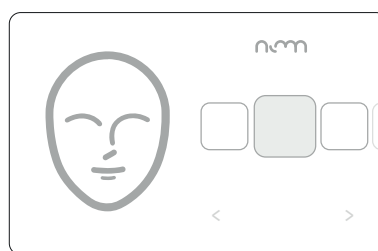


## DATA VISUALIZATION INTERFACE

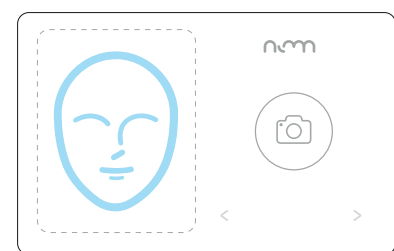
User's perspective. A premium experience.



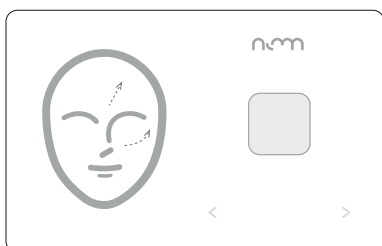
1. Select target skin



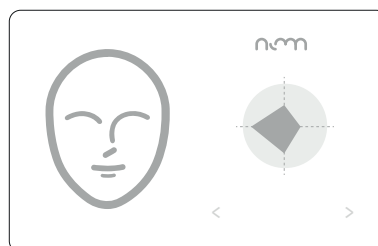
2. Select product/product



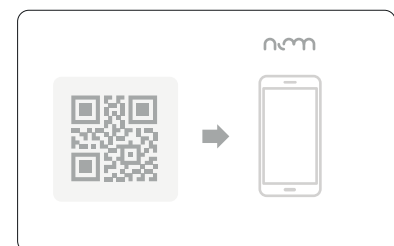
3. Face scan



4. Application step-by-step

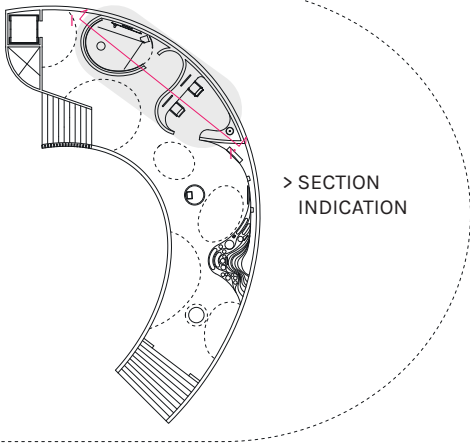


5. Results and recommendations

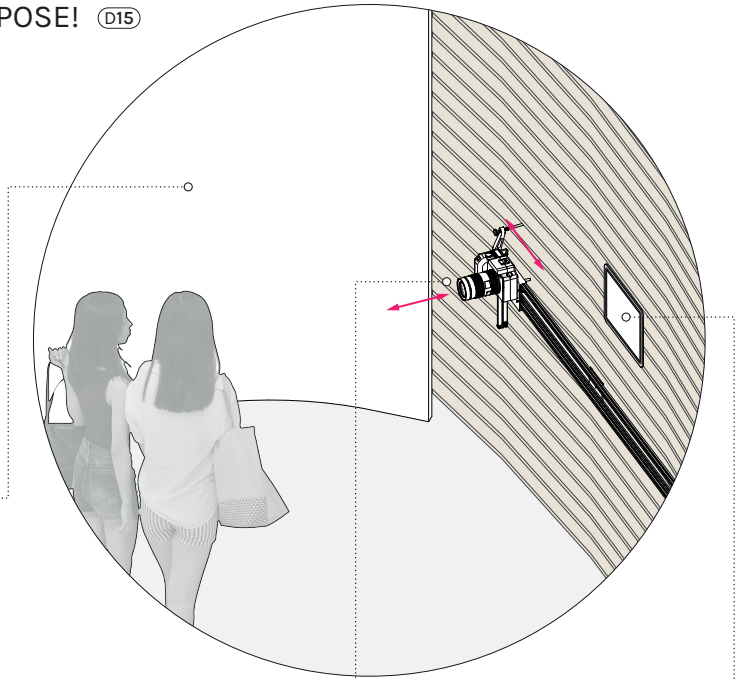


6. Smartphone pairing

| STRIKE A POSE! (D15)



> SECTION INDICATION



BACKDROP ←

This white backdrop blocks the visual connection with the outside of the booth and works as a screen for the projections. The curved feature of the screen makes possible the constrained space to transform into a wide one through the lens of the camera.

CAMERA ←

CONTROLLING PANEL ←

The easy user interface of this panel/tablet guides the clients to choose a projection background and camera movements for their videoshoot, or for a fun portrait. Once the shoot is done, the image/video is available to be downloaded through a QR code or sent to Alma's instagram account adm to be further posted in the social media to the public.

> Note: On the next page, the idea behind the idealization of the recording booth can be found.



SECTION I-I'

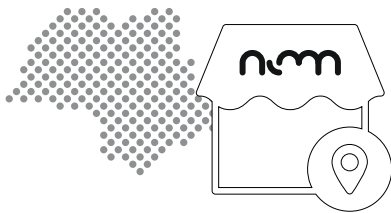
0 0.25 0.5 1 2m

> THE INSPIRATION: Vogue x Instagram

The Met Gala's Vogue, in partnership with Instagram, created in 2017 a video booth, where the famous guests of the night could perform anything they want to be recorded in a "fashion video" that would be posted on Vogue's Instagram account. The initiative was a huge success because it promoted the event in a very contemporary and engaging way. All the different backgrounds, and images projected on the guest's body, combined with movements and poses added extra excitement to an event that is mostly for movies and music stars, but was spread to the masses.



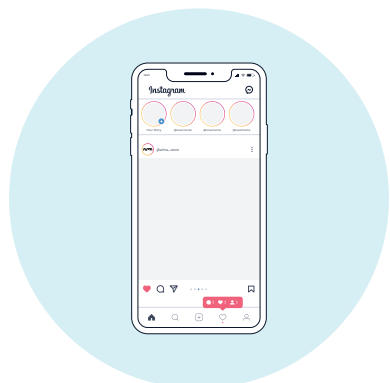
> THE IDEA BEHIND: Expanding the physical boundaries



**A=** As previously mentioned, the flagship store is itself the ultimate representation of the brand's mission and identity. As such, the services provided by the store translate the same ideals to the clients, and consequently, the latter, end up representing the brand as they use its products and services. By recording the clients' performances and posting them online, Alma's making a statement at the same time that is giving the chance to the clients to express their truth.

Physical flagship store in São Paulo

A



Alma's virtual space

B



Worldwide positioning

**B=** Indirectly, the physical space of the flagship store is expanded once it reaches the internet through its post on social media. Therefore, people from all around the world can be part of the dynamic of the store even they are not physically present in the space.

This attribute is relevant when it comes to a brand that has social missions and wants to be heard. And as a result of the virtual interaction, the brand can promote itself commercial-wise, spread its beliefs, and be positioned worldwide, without necessarily being in all these places physically.



## 9.4.4 The top floor

The brand's philosophy area



*Alma proves that on the top of every mountain, on the other side of the clouds, there's always a clear bright sky ready to be sailed. Confidence is the key to get there.*



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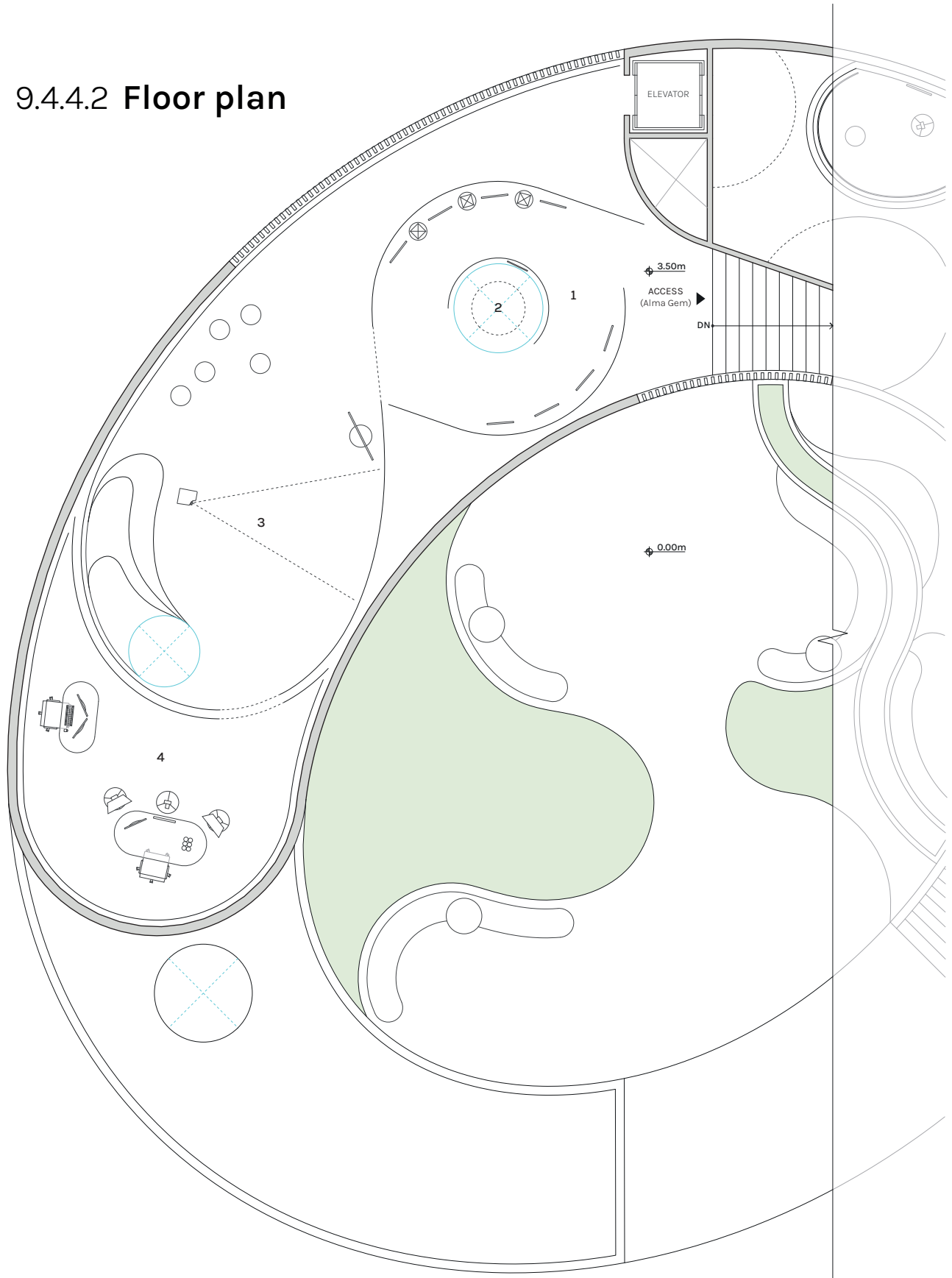
### 9.4.4.1 About the space

A calm and light space is what people need to stop and think about the real meaningful aspects of their lives. Alma believes in the power of respect, confidence, and freedom, and wants to make this statement clear by creating a space inside their store that can transmit to their clients their support, making them know that whenever they feel insecure about themselves, there's always someone holding their backs. But Alma also shows that there's no reason to feel as such, that makeup and self-care are the keys to get to the top and let all the true colors burst!

Believing representativeness and inspiration can awake the confidence that exists inside everybody, Alma offers this space for brilliant minds to come and share their breakthrough stories, linked to the power of makeup, with any interested clients and digital influencers. To take one step forward the boundaries of the physical flagship store, the brand bets in the power of spreading the information through virtual platforms, and for this reason, create a recording studio where they can invite prominent people in the makeup and skincare field to make tutorials while promoting the brand's products and disseminating positivity.

With no need for extra sensorial stimuli, the top floor can be described as an ethereal and bright space, where sensibility and calmness seem to reign. This space can be seen as a white canvas waiting to be "colored". When someone needs to meditate any noisy distraction should be avoided.

## 9.4.4.2 Floor plan



**LEGEND:**

- 1. ALMA'S HERITAGE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS
- 2. THE CLOSURE OF ALMA EXPERIENCE
- 3. PROJECTION SPACE / WORKSHOP SPACE
- 4. RECORDING STUDIO



### 9.4.4.3 Spatial organization

A “going with the flow” kind of space is what was aimed for the top floor. Dedicated to hosting a permanent exhibition and workshops, the semi-translucent fabric screens create a straightforward layout with lots of permeability to stimulate the client to explore it the way they prefer. Avoiding materiality layering, the neat organization of spaces makes the experience very intuitive.

Going up the stairs from the Alma Gem sector, visitors will find the permanent exhibition with all the brand’s path throughout the years, as well as the social initiatives on behalf of freedom of expression they are engaged to. In the center of this circular area, a skylight points out the encouragement message Alma wants to transmit to their clients. After revolving around this area, the client can decide either to go back to the store or moving forward to the projection room, where they can watch documentaries about life-changing makeup and body care stories, which will be periodically changed. On special occasions, the projection room becomes a stage for workshops with specialists in the cosmetics field.

In addition to the space dedicated to the public, after the semi-translucent screen and a heavy acoustic curtain, the invited digital influencers can find a recording studio to prepare their skincare and makeup tutorials to be shared on the brand’s social media.

### 9.4.4.4 Look and feel



Neutral to cool white  
[4000K ~ 5000k]

LIGHTING



Soft Marine  
[Aquatic notes]

SCENT



Projection video  
audio

MUSIC



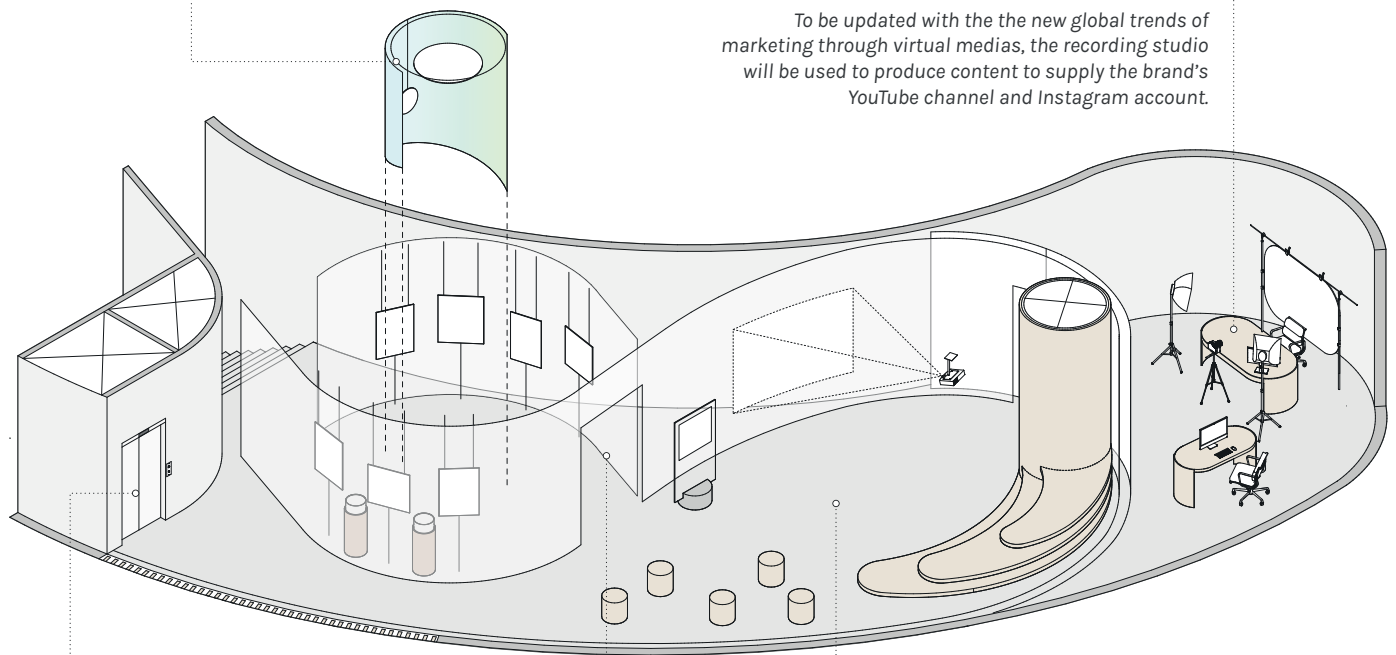
## 9.4.4.5 Introducing the zones

### ② THE CLOSURE OF ALMA EXPERIENCE

Besides being a sale space, the flagship store provides to the customer an welcoming experience that travels through the concept of rising untill the top. This symbolic set represents the end of the journey of self-love and freedom of expression.

### RECORDING STUDIO COLLAB HUB ④

To be updated with the the new global trends of marketing through virtual medias, the recording studio will be used to produce content to supply the brand's YouTube channel and Instagram account.



### 😊 ELEVATOR ACCESSIBILITY

The elevator connects the four floors of the flagship store, and allows everyone to live the same experience inside the store. Following the same ideal, all the store's aisles and accesses are wide enough for diseabled people to comfortably move around.

### ALMA'S HERITAGE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS ①

This permanent exhibition takes the visitor through the whole history of Alma, adding some details about the scientific side of the products formulation. It also presents the brand's gender-neutral philosophy and the social initiatives they are engaged with.

### ③ HERE AND NOW! PROJECTIONS AND WORKSHOPS

This space was designed to host inspiring stories of people who have had a great experience with Alma's products and can share all that positiveness with others. The flexible and free layout invites the customers to use the space the way they feel more comfortable, sitting on the bleachers, the movable stools, or even on the floor. There are two ain different ways these motivational stories are shared:

> 1. Special events: Makeup and skincare specialists will use the space to offer workshops and present Alma's new products to invited digital influencers and bloggers engaged with social actions. This marketing strategy aims to promote the brand's image but also to reinforce their position as a support for social actions.

> 2. Documentaries: Alma in collaboration with inspiring people will produce documentaries that enlighten the importance of self-acceptance and respect regardless of gender and will showcase in the space non-stop, allowing the visitors to watch it and feel inspired.

## 9.4.4.6 Breakdown

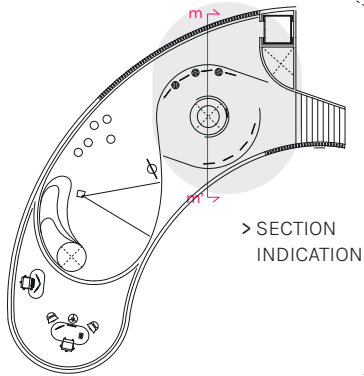
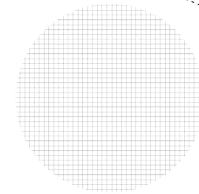


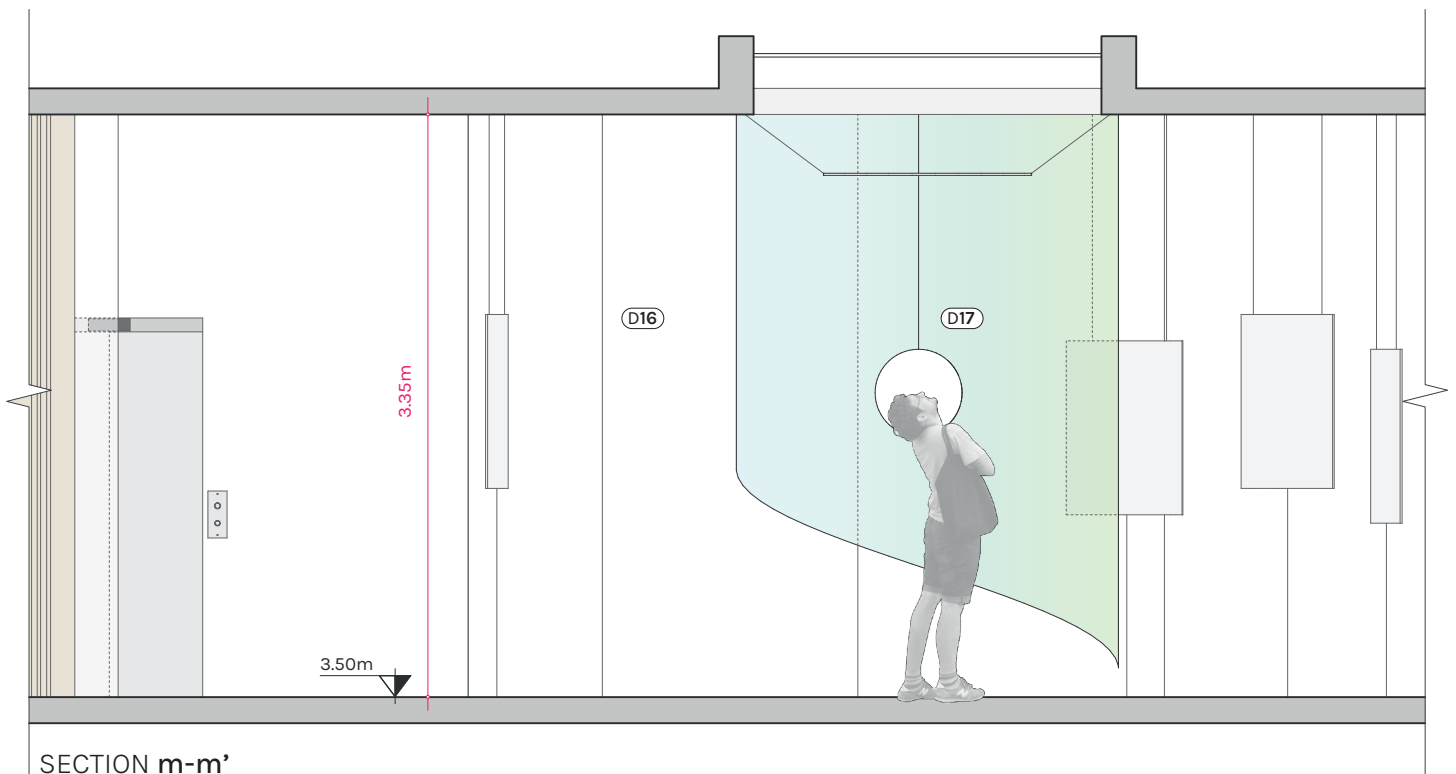
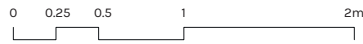
image © Simon Oberhofer



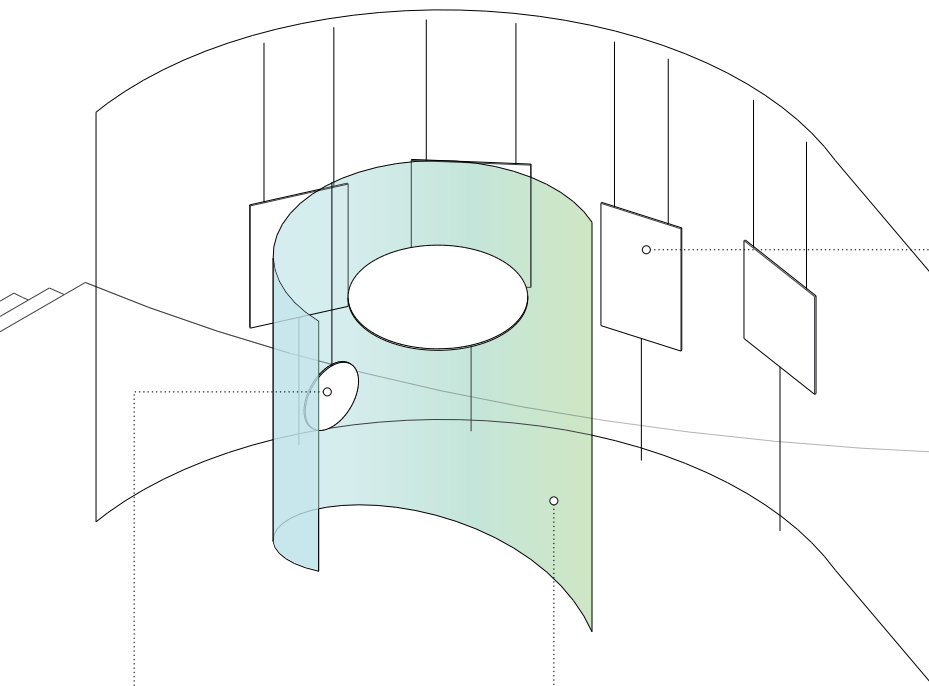
LYCRA FABRIC

### | CURTAIN/SCREEN (D16)

The top floor is subdivided into smaller portions by lightweight curtains made in semi-translucent white **lycra fabric**, which are stretched and fixed both in the ceiling and floor, becoming soft partition screens. Their semi-translucent and light features transform the rigid transitions from space to space into something softer and less aggressive. They also allow that the natural light travels through the entire space in an indirect way creating an ethereal atmosphere. The almost-temporary look of the curtains/screens is very welcome in the space since it's dedicated mostly for exhibitions.



SECTION m-m'



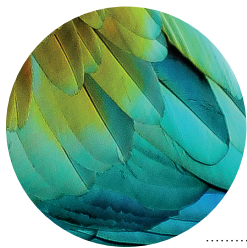
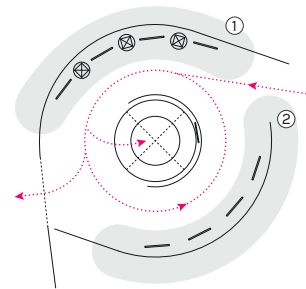
> STORYTELLING BOARDS

Foam boards - 10 mm - wrapped in high weight paper for printing information. These informative boards can be clustered in two diferent ends [1]:

> 1. Timeline: Tell the history of the brand, from its creation until the present time, as well as the cosmetics formulation basis the brand relies on.

> 2. Social engagement: The philosophy of the brand and its actions towards gender neutrality in the cosmetics industry, told in a fun and engaging.

[1] Alma's heritage installation plan

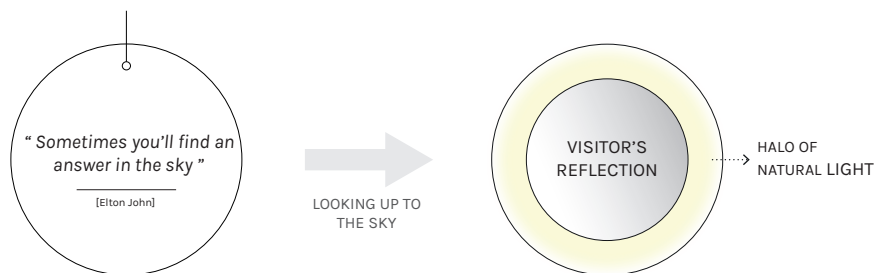


> THE FLIGHT

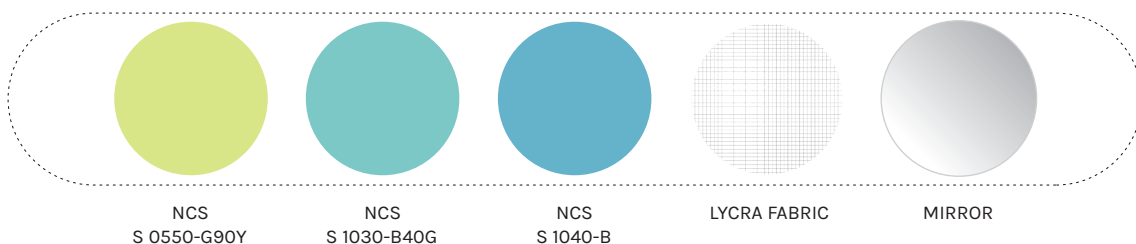
This spiral curtain that smoothly lifts from the ground represents the end of Alma's story, when they finally find themselves free to fly high. The semi-transparent lycra fabric is tinted in a gradient pattern combining three colors [refer to specification below] that make reference to the colorful feathers of an

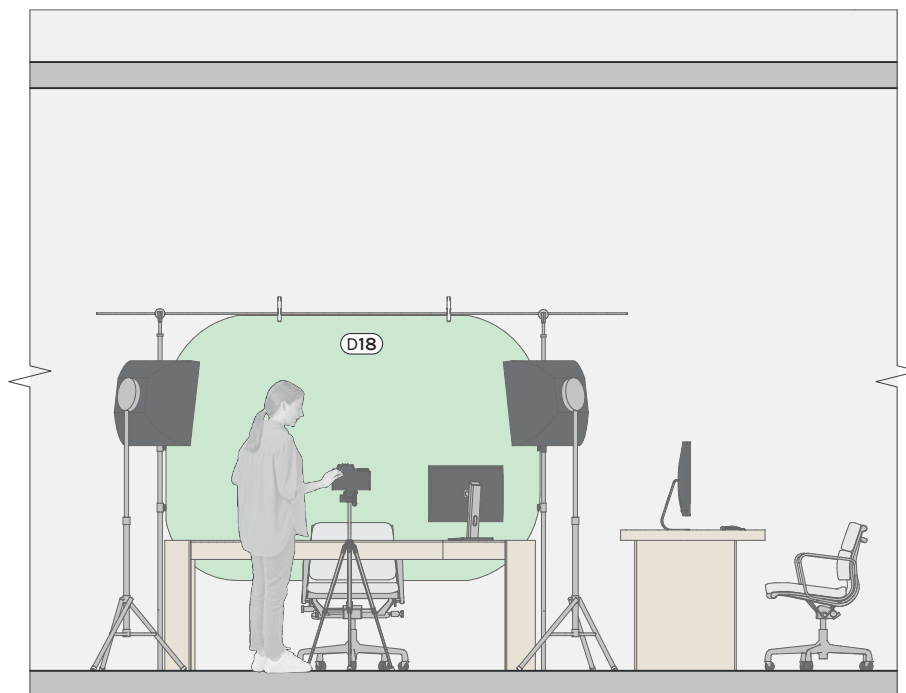
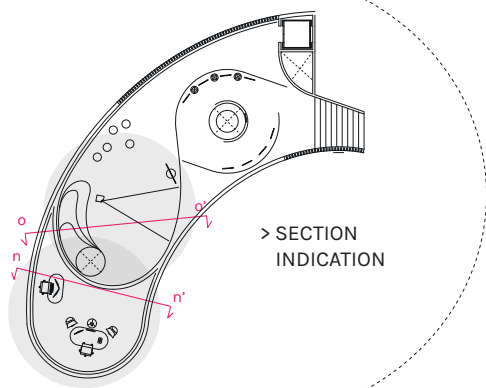
> THE CLOSURE

Through a poetic approach, this permanent installation tells the importance of the self-acceptance, as an empowering action to change the current worldwide paradigm of social inequalities related to gender. Beauty is currently part of a rigid standard inside society, but it should not be. Beauty is multiple like people are, and no one should be ashamed of their true colors.

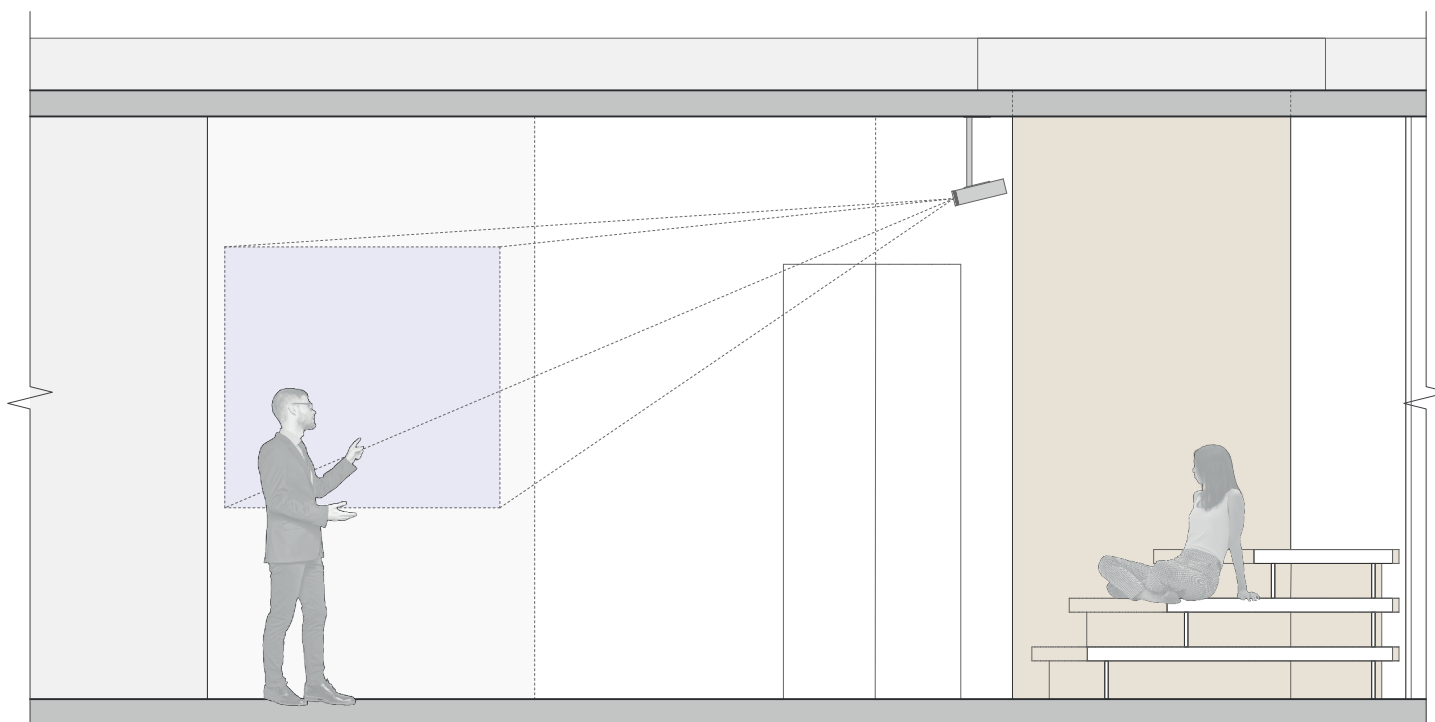


Having reached the top floor of the flagship store, which means the infinite sky/freedom inside Alma's concept, the visitor will find, in the center of the Alma's heritage installation, a hanging signage with a passage of Elton John's song suggesting them to look up to the sky. The visitor then will find themselves reflected in a mirror as a representation of the strongest answers for any problems they might have in life. Supporting freedom of expression regardless of gender is Alma's motto, and the brand understands that making their customers believe in themselves is a huge step towards a more equitable future.



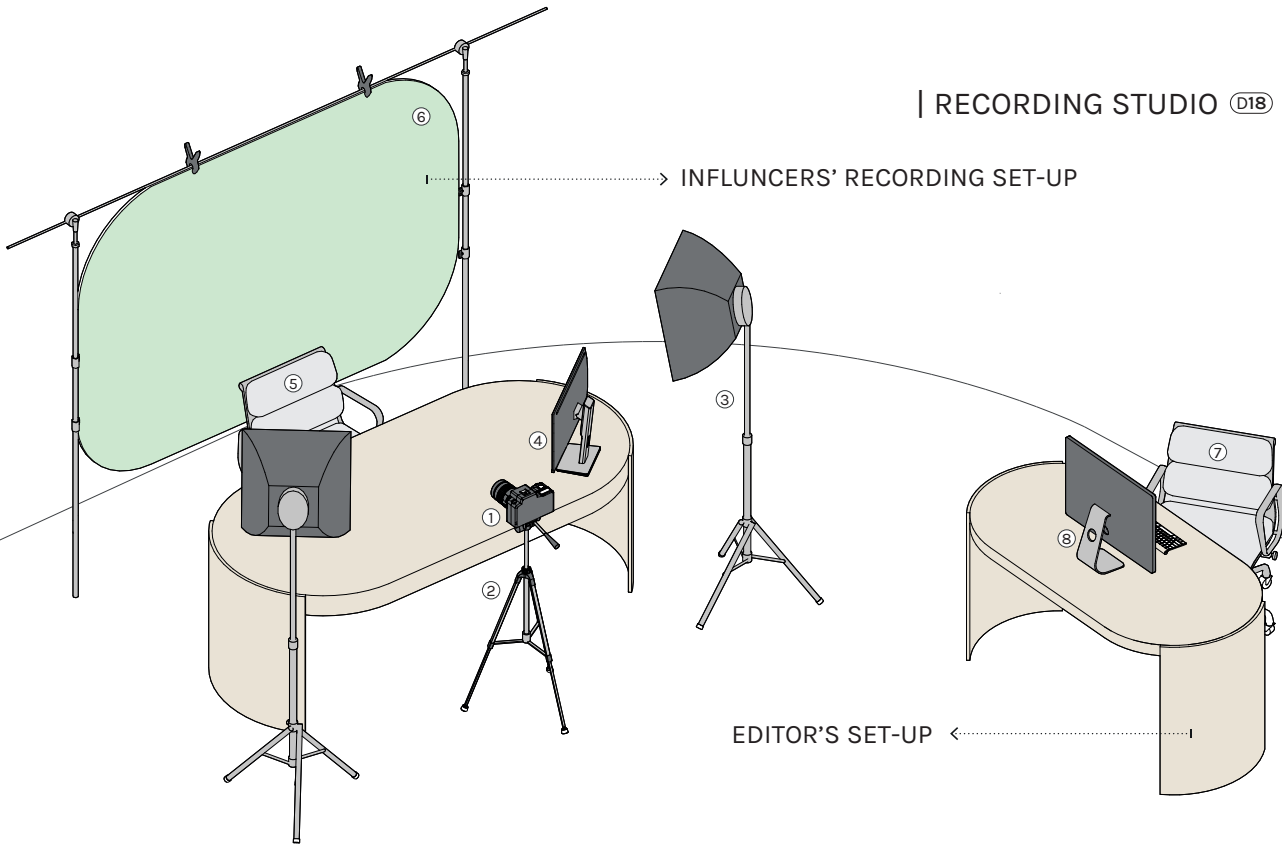


SECTION n-n'



SECTION o-o'





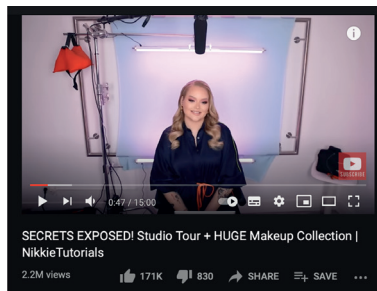
THE DIGITAL INFLUENCER ERA

The studio set-up was idealized based on the needs of the digital influencers, who this studio is destined for. Contrary to what one might think, the recording studio of a beauty guru doesn't require a huge amount of equipments. One of the most succesful youtubers of the era, Nikkie de Jager, shows in one of her videos of the Youtube chanel "Nikkie Tutorials" a tour on her private recording studio, revealing the simplicity of it. She explain that the only equipments she needs to record a makeup tutorial are the ones that will guarantee a good quality image when she wants to give a close up look to specific features of her face. Having Nikkie's studio as a reference the equipments of Alma's studio are:

- 1. Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV;
- 2. Tripod: Manfrotto MT055XPRO3;
- 3. 2No. Softbox: ESDDI 50x70;
- 4. Display for image return: DELL UntraSharp;
- 5. Chair: Eames Soft Pad Executive Chair;
- 6. Backdrop: EMART 5x10ft;

Editor's set-up:

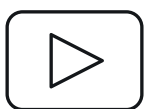
- 7. Chair: Eames Soft Pad Executive Chair;
- 8. Computer: iMac 27';



The makeup artist and beauty blogger Nikkie de Jager came out as transgender woman in January 2020, and has been since then a huge inspiration not only as a super talented artist but as symbol of power to the LGBTQIA+ community.

COLLABS

The ideia of having a studio inside the flagship store is to foster collaboration contracts with digital influencers, and use their voice to spread gender-inclusive ideals about makeup and skincare, while introducing and promoting the products of the brand.



ALMA'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL



DIGITAL INFLUENCER engaged with social matters.



PRODUCT REVIEW/TUTORIAL VIDEO

A. Representativity;  
B. Promotion of the brand (business perspective);



n3m



# Final Considerations

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Interior Design is responsible for creating experiences and sensations that translate into spaces, which belong to society, in a smaller or larger scale of privacy. Therefore, it is impossible to understand any space as something isolated, since it cannot be explained only by its physical existence, but mainly by the way it is experienced and the significance it plays in people's lives.

Contradictorily, issues involving gender stereotypes, despite being strongly connected to contemporary social relations, the unfold within the scope of Interior Design is still very timid, not consistent with its level of public relevance. And this lack of attitude means that only a portion of society feels represented in the environment they live in.

The experience of designing a project, aware of the purposes it was intended to achieve, but above all, aware of the environment in which it was to be inserted and the changes it aimed to make, made the process much more genuine and less utopic. It is true that it is not possible to cover all problematic social issues in a single project, but it is important to understand that it is possible to add values to a space other than the main ones, such as selling for sale spaces. As we have seen, spaces have the power to communicate with their users, so why not channel this dialog to encourage the change of non-inclusive paradigms?

Even though this project is concluded, the discussions it proposes must be carried forward, not only as a contribution to the scientific research, but as ideals that echo and need to evolve at the same pace as society does. The latter is a living organism and is constantly changing, so stopping in time should not be an option.

I hope that this research can inspire other curious people to put their projects into practice on behalf of a more fair and inclusive society, and evoke new discussions and ideas around Design and gender issues.

“ *I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody. (Lily Tomlin)*

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# Sitography

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