THE INTERIOR
THE EXPERIENCER
KOKORO

Towards the
Essence of Place

PhD by Public Works
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Context Statement and Public Works submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Philosophy Doctorate by Public Works.

This PhD by Public Works is supervised by **Dr Maggie Butt** and **Dr Gareth Williams,** in the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, Middlesex University, London, UK.

The skin can explore surrounding areas, limits, adhesions, lumps and bumps....
Many philosophies refer to the visual; few to the auditory; still fewer
put their trust in tactility...
Some look, contemplate, see; others caress the world or let themselves be
caressed by it, throw themselves into it, roll in it, bathe in it, dive into it and,
sometimes are beaten by it.
The skin sees.... It shivers, speaks, breathes, listens, sees, loves and is loved,
receives, refuses, retreats, bristles in horror, is covered in cracks, blotches,
wounds of the soul.

Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*

ABSTRACT

The seven public works described in this context statement, and submitted for this PhD were chosen from a diverse portfolio of interior design projects that I executed between 1989 and 2012. Their typologies vary widely, relating to fashion retailing, advertising, exhibition, health and well-being. The works were chosen to specifically explore the people-centred focus of my design approach. They illustrate how my design ethos and methodology evolved to prioritise empathy for, and understanding of, the sensory experience of the interior's occupants.

My practice as an interior designer spans over thirty years and I have designed and implemented interiors internationally. Throughout my career I have constantly been inspired by the sensibility of Japanese design and culture. This study is entitled *The Interior, The Experiencer, Kokoro – Towards the Essence of Place*, because the 'experiencer', my neologism, is central to my design process and kokoro is a Japanese term that can be translated as heart of things, spirit or feeling. I believe that it is kokoro and its intangibility in relation to aesthetics that draws me to Japan and I constantly seek to embed it in my own work. The influence of traditional Japanese aesthetics in terms of simplicity, emptiness and refined sensibility, led to my preoccupation with phenomenology of place. As a result an objective to elevate the quality of our ordinary everyday experience and actions underpins and interweaves through all of the public works reflected on here.

These designs, also inspired by the writing of Tanazaki, Pallasmaa, Böhme, and others like-minded as referenced, offer evidence of a timely haptic counterpoint to the easy distraction of the visual sense and two dimensional excess of today's digital realm. In so doing, they attest interior design as a multi-disciplinary practice that is informed by and has allegiance with the domains of philosophy, psychology, anthropology, humanities and history, as well as architecture and the visual arts.

I argue that whether interior design adheres to the guiding principles of Modernism, follows fashionable trends, faces creative constraints of commerciality, or confronts challenges from the visually dominated epistemology of the internet, physical sensory experience should be the primary concern. Emotive feeling should therefore lead over function in directing interior form. Furthermore a move towards articulating an aesthetic of atmosphere as illustrated in these works is more likely to instil and evoke kokoro - the essence of each place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to all of the designers, collaborators and clients that I have worked with on these public works and throughout my practice, whose empathy, emotional endeavour and dedication is greatly appreciated.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Professor Shotaro Seki, for introducing me to the word and term *kokoro* in relation to *spirit of place,* during his lecture on Japanese Architecture that I attended with my post graduate students.

Lastly, a very special thank you to my partner, Diane O'Doherty, for her unwavering support, patience and love throughout the period of this study.

CONTENTS

THE PUBLIC WORKS

1: Michiko Koshino – Fashion Store, 1990
Client: Michiko Koshino

2: LSDC Ayer – Advertising Agency, 1993
Client: Ron Leagas and team

3: Uncorked – Wine Merchants, 1994
Client: Uncorked Ltd business team

4: BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year – Exhibitions, 1998 +1999
Client: The Natural History Museum, London

5: Boots Health and Beauty stores and services – Various Projects, 1995-2000
Client: Various business teams

6: D100 – Dental Practice, 2001, 2012
Client: Dr Ed Bonner, Dr Andrew Parkman

7: Relax Health Bar – Massage Centre, 2001
Client: Thaisa Box and Peter Nunn

Note:

I have been a professional interior designer since1981, working for some of the biggest UK design practices. Since 1987 I have run my own practice, including Fern Green Partnership for sixteen years. During my career I have worked with more than a hundred clients on over two hundred interiors. The works chosen for consideration in this context statement illustrate the diversity of interior design projects I have worked on. They also chart the evolution of my practice and ethos that locates the experiencer of interiors and kokoro at the centre of my design process.

Refer also to www.davidfern.com

INTRODUCTION

The public works presented and described in this context statement are interiors designed within a broad range of contexts for individual, corporate and institutional clients. They represent the diversity of interiors that I designed and implemented over a period of twenty five years from 1987-2012. The works have been selected to illustrate how my interior design practice has developed in approach from a preoccupation with a visual, form-led aesthetic, towards an interest in phenomenology of perception and the prioritisation of sensory experience of place.

This context statement is divided into the following four chapters with the public works described and reflected upon in Chapters 2-4.

Chapter 1 – Formative Years and Design Development considers my background as a trained engineer and furniture designer. This chapter describes how I became interested in interior design practice through designing chairs and how my modernist training and early experience in the interior design profession influenced my later design thinking and the public works described here.

Chapter 2 – The Interior and Fashion reflects on my work directly relating to fashion and the role that fashion had in influencing my early projects. Through the execution of these works I was seeking a direction that challenged my modernist education and principles to arrive at new, unpredictable and innovative solutions. The public work considered here was strongly influenced by fashionable trend and an aesthetic of form. However, its design also aimed to create a memorable social place on an experiential level.

Chapter 3 – A Different Kind of Place considers a diverse range of interiors less informed by fashionable aesthetic, but that took inspiration more directly from the typology and use of the place. These places challenged the preconceptions of the user or, what I now term the 'experiencer', regarding the type of experience intended or expected. The design outcomes reflect the interest I was developing at this time towards locating my practice with greater meaning than merely satisfying stylistic and pragmatic requirements. The works were chosen to illustrate how my design approach gradually became less preoccupied with physical form and more focused on physical experience.

Chapter 4 – From Commodity to Service – Instilling an Essence of Place illustrates how design for service and focus on physical 'one to one' human engagement rose in value and importance in the creation of public interiors, as social media activity and commercial exchange gained traction through the increasing impact of the internet. These works specifically relate to interiors for health and well-being products and services offered to the public. They evidence that by the mid 1990s my focus on the creation of an aesthetic of atmosphere and instilling an essence of place for the benefit of the experiencer, was embedded and prioritised in my design process.

A Personal Perspective

In the classic 1959 book, *Experiencing Architecture,* Steen Eiler Rasmussen wrote that "the architect plans the setting for our lives".[1] As the majority of our time is spent inside, it is the interior that relates to the greater part of that setting. The interior touches what we do every day. It therefore naturally follows that the interior designer is responsible for affecting, positively or negatively, the life and well-being of the experiencer through the quality of places created.

As designers of interiors rather than architects of buildings, it should appear obvious that our mission is to design for the particular needs of the users of places being designed. However, in reflecting on these works, I highlight that to do so successful interior design must penetrate beyond function and the visual. It is important to seek an understanding of the phenomenology of place that critically relates to the experiencer, as distinct from merely satisfying the practical needs of the place's users. I propose here that the term 'user' relates to rational pragmatic need while the term 'experiencer' relates to emotional perception. My concern is that the way a place is physically and emotionally perceived can easily be ignored through the preoccupation of satisfying practical and commercial requirements. The design ethos that I have evolved, which connects through all of these public works, therefore focuses on the creation of a sense of place and emphasises the importance of creating an appropriate atmosphere. This is primarily achieved through seeking to understand the potential emotive experience of the place under consideration, from the perspective of the individual.

The importance of stressing the necessity for designers to connect more seriously with a multi-sensory experience of place has been the subject of academic writing on architecture since the late 1990s. But, to date, there has been no substantial study of the subject related to the interior by an interior designer. The discourse was provoked by the emergence of the computer as a drawing tool, the dominance of the internet, and subsequent public reliance on communication through social media. The technological developments involved have led to the distancing and detachment of people from the tangible reality of everyday life. This increasing dependence on the digital realm obviously affected my practice activity and I empathised with concerns raised about its inevitable tendency to prioritise the visual sense alone. The architect and academic Juhani Pallasmaa was the forerunner in highlighting the negative effect of technological advancement on architecture since he wrote *The Eyes of the Skin* in 1996. In a later book published in 2014, *Architectural Atmosphere: On the Experience and Politics of Architectures,* Pallasmaa refers critically to the now established culture of control and speed that has favored architecture of the eye, with its instantaneous imagery and distanced impact. He stresses that "architecture of the eye detaches and controls, whereas haptic and atmospheric architecture promotes, engages and unites",[2] instilling slowness and intimacy. This context statement aligns with and reflects Pallasmaa's ongoing concerns. His writing on the subject inspired my execution of this study and was highly influential on my later public works.

In the seminal publication on aesthetics, In Praise of Shadows, written in 1933, Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki

warned of the loss of shadows in an age that introduced the harshness of electric light.[3] The loss Tanizaki refers to in this poetic book, is both example and metaphor for the loss of the 'spirit' of place, or its soul, which the Japanese often refer to as 'kokoro' that can be translated as the heart of things or feeling.[4.] In architecture this is more likely to be referred to as 'genius loci'[5]. However, I considered it appropriate to use the term kokoro in the context statement, and in particular in the title, as it refers to the special essence that I have been consistently drawn to and influenced by in Japanese design and philosophy throughout my career.

In our image obsessed digital age, where interiors are primarily designed through the computer, empathy and understanding of spirit of place faces a similar and sustained threat from the domination of and public preoccupation with the omnipotent virtual. In contrast, these public works reflect such empathy and understanding by locating my practice as an exponent of instilling kokoro or genius loci in both the design of new and the adaptation of existing interiors. Through critical reflection on these public works I examine how the thinking deployed in my design process has led to design solutions with integrity and a unique spirit or sense of place.

Interior design, as a commercial profession independent of the practice of architecture, is still in its infancy and is consistently undermined by some architects who consider that interiors of buildings should be solely within their remit of design responsibility. Due to this fact, and a persistent public perception that interior design is all about 'cushions and curtains', the practice often suffers from an inferiority complex with regard to its intellectual and hierarchical relationship with architecture. Its public and private outputs often contend with the snobbery of architects in critique of superficial style, transience and lack of interior integrity with the host building. Throughout my career I have been conscious of the hierarchical status of interior design and I have tried to position my practice somewhere between an architectural theory based approach to designing space, and that of commercial interior design practice, typically directed by advertising and marketing forces. These public works illustrate that I sustained a resistance to any potential compromise of design integrity from such forces that focused purely on consumer spend.

When I formed my practice, Fern Green Partnership, in 1989 I felt challenged by an article by Peter Davey entitled "Interior Spaces" that appeared in *Architectural Review* [6]. It expressed concern that interiors and exteriors of buildings had never been more divorced than they were at that time. Citing the Modern Movement's preoccupation with the inter-penetration of space and the formal unity of interior and exterior, Davey highlighted the irony that a very large proportion of commissions were now preoccupied with creating insides alone. He blamed the increasing power of conservation in building and the rapid turnover of interior environments, particularly retail, that had become an integral part of marketing strategies within commercial enterprise. Reluctantly acknowledging that interiors sometimes have a fictive quality and that they reflect the narratives of their owners, Davey mourned the demise in resonance and tectonic integrity between new interiors and their host building.

He negatively implied that due to marketing forces at work in the emerging global economy, interiors had merely become autonomous, hermetically sealed sets in which anything goes. The article insinuated this to be the fault of commercial interior design and examples of interiors designed by architects were illustrated as an antidote to this receding architectural quality.

In a much earlier publication *Inscape: The Design of interiors*, the editor and architect Hugh Casson claimed that the interior can be a mirror of the soul or a reinforcement of the soul. Published in 1968 when most public interiors were still designed by architects, Casson also advocated, paradoxically in relation to Davey's text, that the interior can be spontaneous or contrived, magical or formal, mysterious, intricate, impersonal or dotty.[7] More importantly, Casson believed that the task of the designer of interiors was to decipher the secret purpose of the room, to pin down that evasive quality of atmosphere that results in an interior not only looking right but feeling right. This evasive quality, that I refer to here as kokoro, Adolf Loos claimed to be the essence of place that is embedded within the surfaces of the interior. It is this essence that conditions the inhabitant's response to a place such as, to use Loos' words, "the fear of God a religious building should inspire, respect for a palace or a secular institution, or the jollity of a tavern."[8]

In the realisation of these public works I found empathy with the texts of Loos and later Casson and sought to counter the negative observations made by Davey about interior design. As my practice evolved, increasingly my design approach was driven by seeking an understanding of the physical emotive response in the potential actions of the interior's inhabitants, rather than merely style and trend or rational requirements. Through this endeavour I sought to positively advance the norm of interior sentience and developed a position that advocates the design priority to be, in the words of Juhani Pallasmaa in *The Eyes of the Skin*, "the defense of integrity and authenticity of human experience".[9] I believe it is only through adopting this approach, which places precedence on an aesthetic of atmosphere rather than visual form that interiors of an elevated experiential quality can be achieved and human well-being enhanced.

Notes

1. Steen Eiler Rasmussen, Experiencing Architecture (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1959), 10.
2. Christian Borch (Ed.), Juhani Pallasmaa, Architectural Atmospheres: On the Experience and Politics of Architecture (Basel: Birkhauser, 2014), 12.
3. Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki, In Praise of Shadows (London: Jonathan Cape 1991), 40.
4. Lafcadio Hearn, Kokoro – Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life, (Tuttle Publishing, 2017), vi.
5. Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture (Rizzoli International Publications, 1980), 5.
6. Peter Davey, "Interior Spaces", Architectural Review, (London: EMAP 1989)
7. Hugh Casson (Editor), Inscape: Design for Interiors, (London: Architectural Press,1968), 17.
8. Adolf Loos, Principles of Cladding, Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900 (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987), 66.
9. Juhani Pallssmaa, The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture of the Senses, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1996), 14, 23.
10. I would like to make a note about the method of recording the public works submitted for this PhD. Most of these interiors were designed and implemented prior to the omnipotent presence of smart phone cameras. All of the projects were photographed by professional photographers, usually on a standard five by four inch transparency format. The camera was typically set up on a tripod, making it difficult to photograph the interiors in public use. Also, due to photography costs, the number of shots taken was generally limited. Most new interiors featured in publications were, and still often are today, shown devoid of occupancy. However, as my design approach became more preoccupied with understanding the feelings of the experiencer, I sought to represent people using the interiors where possible, as the later projects in this context statement illustrate.

TIMELINE: EDUCATION, PUBLIC WORKS AND RELEVANT EVENTS

This chronology of events illustrates the timing in realisation of my public works, plus milestones and other influential events relevant to the development of my practice. My public works are in bold.

1956 Terence Conran opened his first design consultancy
1964 First Habitat shop opened
1964 *The Poetics of Space* - Gaston Bachelard, translated and published in the UK
1968 *Inscape – The Design of Interiors*, edited by Hugh Casson first published

1970s

1971 *Design for the Real World* - Victor Papanek, published
1974-79 My Engineering Apprenticeship at Rolls Royce
Punk rock emerged
1979-81 I studied and graduated with a BA Hons. Three Dimensional Design – Furniture

1980s

1981 My furniture designs featured in *The First Design Show* – Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich
Connections: The Work of Charles and Ray Eames exhibited at the same time.
1980 I interviewed Terence Conran, Mary Quant and George Melly for my BA dissertation
1981 Design commences on the interior of North Terminal Gatwick Airport by Conran Associates
1981 Flat for Adam Ant, Camden designed by Powell-Tuck and Connor
1982 I joined Conran Associates as a Junior Designer
1983 Launch of *Blueprint* magazine
1984 I joined The Design Solution as a Senior Designer
1986 Caffé Bongo opened in Tokyo, designed by Nigel Coates
1986 Launch of *Design Week*, weekly commentary on design practice
1987 The first Red or Dead stand-alone shop opened in Soho London
1987 Return to Conran Associates to help detailing fixtures and fittings in the refurbishment of The Conran Shop
1987 Katharine Hamnett store by Norman Foster opens in Brompton Cross
1987 *Conversations with Antoni Tapies* – Barbara Catoir published
1987 20:50 Oil installation – Richard Wilson first shown at Matt's Gallery London
1988 The Royalton Hotel opens designed by Philippe Starck
1988 Katharine Hamnett store opens designed by Nigel Coates

1990s

1990 Metropolis recording studio completed, designed by Powell-Tuck, Connor and Orefelt– last of the heroic 80s interiors
1990 *Reality and Project – Four British Architects* Exhibition at 9H Gallery
1990 **Michiko Koshino London store opened in Covent Garden London**
1990 *Interior Design since 1900* – Anne Massey published
1991 *In Praise of Shadows* – Jun' Ichuro Tanizaki published in Britain
1991 *International Interiors 3* – Lucy Bullivant published featuring Michiko Koshino
1993 **LSDC Ayer advertising agency completed**
1993 My article, *For Love of Shadows* appears in CSD Journal, *Design Review*

1994 Boutique Destroy and John Richmond stores both shortlisted for Minerva Awards
1994 **Uncorked Wine Merchants opened**
1995 **First project for Boots The Chemists started**
1996 *The Eyes of the Skin* – Juhani Pallasmaa published
1998 **BG Wild Life Photographer of the Year Exhibition** –
won Design Week, Best Temporary Exhibition Award

2000s

2000 *The Culture of Design* – Guy Julier published
2001 *Emotional Branding* - Marc Gobé published
2001 Bill Viola – Catherine's Room Exhibition of video paintings
2001 **D100 completed**
2002 **Relax Health Bar opened**
2007 *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture* – Colin St John Wilson published
2008 *The Modern Interior* – Penny Sparke published
2010 My first stand-alone building, Casa Cerro in Cordoba, Spain completed
2012 **D100 - 2 completed**
2016 My article Casa Cerro - *A Contextual-Material Analysis in Andalucia,* published in
International Journal of Interior Architecture + Spatial Design
2017 *Revolution: Interior Design from 1950* – Drew Plunkett published, featuring my interiors
2018 *Designing Interiors through Making* – I.E. Studio, Issue 2 *Making* published on-line

CHAPTER 1

FORMATIVE YEARS AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Technology versus Art
The Act of Making Territory

ONE

Technology versus Art

My initial interest in design evolved after I left school in 1973, while I was working as an apprentice engineer at the aero engine division of Rolls Royce Ltd, based in Derby (Fig.1). As I progressed on the four-year long apprenticeship, I became aware that if I opted to become a design engineer I would ultimately only be designing component parts of the engine rather than the complete engine itself, due to its inevitable complexity (Fig.2). The rigid structure of the design and build process together with the rigorous quality and safety standards implicit in the company's practice resulted in the physical detachment of the designer from the object being designed. The occasions on which the designer would actually be able to touch a product that he had designed were very rare.

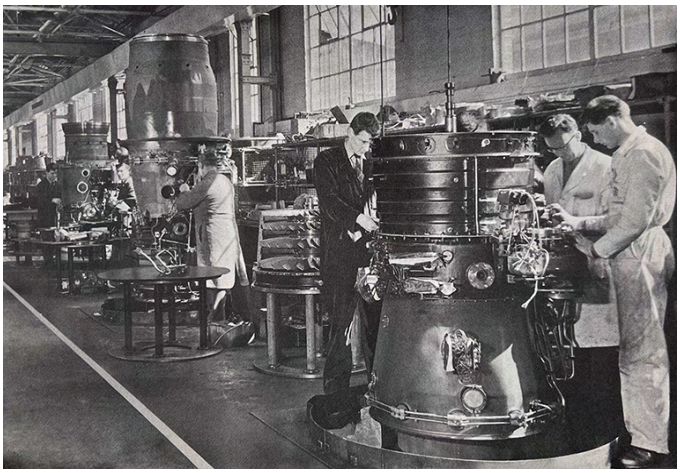
In contrast to my engineering experience, I developed during this time a fascination with fashion and the design of clothing. I became intrigued with the intimate connection that fashion design celebrated between the designer and the wearer. I was intrigued with the notion of the garment as a second skin. This eventually led me to investigate opportunities to learn about design of a more intimate nature that related more directly to people's everyday needs and desires.

After completing my apprenticeship in 1978, I took on a role as junior draughtsman at Rolls Royce, but one year later I left, disillusioned with the production line nature of the industry. In September 1979, I enrolled onto a BA Hons Degree course in Three Dimensional Design at Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education in High Wycombe. The course offered core study design specialisms in Interior, Furniture, Silver and Jewellery, and Ceramics and Glass. The first year was in effect a diagnostic foundation year, that allowed for experimentation and experience to be gained across all of these disciplines.

Through this course, I became familiar with interior design as a discipline. Prior to this, my understanding was more closely related to interior styling, as featured in fashion magazines at the time, such as Vogue. As a result of my broader interest however, I became intrigued about what we may sometimes take for granted and the affect that our surroundings have on us. As George Perec clearly highlights in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*:

> We live in space, in these spaces, these towns, this countryside, these corridors, these parks. That seems obvious to us. Perhaps it should be obvious. But it isn't obvious, not just a matter of course. It's real, obviously…We can touch. We can even allow ourselves to dream.[1]

At this time, I had also been reading novels by the Existentialist, Jean Paul-Sartre and this extract from the novel *Nausea,* in particular, had an impact on me:



1 Publication on The Jet Engine by Rolls Royce (1971) Ltd
2 Typical engine assembly plant at Rolls Royce in Derby

> Something has happened to me…Just now, when I was on the point of coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which attracted my attention by means of a sort of personality. I opened my hand and looked: I was simply holding a door knob. [2]

I'm not sure how this text influenced my interest in interior design at the time but it alerted me to the fact that we are often subconsciously rather than consciously aware of our everyday surroundings. I acknowledged then that design can enhance our consciousness of things, those ordinary things that we take for granted in everyday life, like turning a door handle and entering into a room. Perhaps it was something about the designed form and materiality of the door knob that had suddenly come to the fore in the perception of the novel's character. This moment was cited by Sartre as a profound moment in the recognition of being.

It was at this point that I began to understand what should be obvious to those involved in the subject, that interior design can and does inform our experience of the space that surrounds us, and therefore positively advance our perception of the world. Later, I would also come to recognise an equally fundamental fact about the difference between space and place. As the architect Pierre von Meiss succinctly explains, "space changes with the movement of the sun, but place changes with the movement of human beings", [3] illustrating the fundamental and inextricable relationship between people and place.

Due to my engineering background, I was keen to develop my design interests through making. What had initially attracted me to the creative arts was the immediacy of designing and producing something physical that I could engage with. I recognised that by studying interior design, the physical, tangible realisation of design proposals was a longer and more complex process. In fact, as a student, the opportunity to physically implement and experience interior design visions in response to a design brief is rare. This was an important factor that influenced my decision to specialise in furniture design as the realisation of design proposals was an essential part of the curriculum. Also, as furniture and related products make up essential components of the interior, I was interested in how the design of these components influenced the design of interiors. But also, how the interior's occupants would engage with them.

The teaching and guidance on the BA course was strictly aligned to the ideology of Modernism that evolved in the 1920s and 30s. During the late 1970s period of higher education the structure of foundation and undergraduate courses still conformed to the Bauhaus teaching model and modernist ethos, with the mantras, 'form followed function' [4] and 'ornament is a crime' [5]. This teaching philosophy is evident in the furniture designs I produced at this time and referenced here.

The Act of Making Territory

> The act of making territory starts with our clothes…with their style, with our gestures and postures when we must wear them. With a chair we extend our sense of territory beyond our skin. With a chair we first impose ourselves on blind space. It could be said that when we make a chair we make a city in the small. Certainly this has never been more obvious than in this century.[6]

This quotation from architect Peter Smithson, in 1986, appropriately relates to my preoccupations with design during these formative years of study. It also captures the essence of my decision to study furniture design. The furniture that I designed and made on the course was predominantly focused on my interest in seating as a form of spatial environment. This again was foremost in reaction to my experience in engineering and the chair was the closest, most intimate way that I could connect to the user of my furniture.

As Modernism was firmly embedded in the teaching on the course, in both theory and practice, I was introduced to *Pioneers of Modern Design* by Nicholas Pevsner (1960)[7]. The book was listed as essential course reading and it opened my eyes to the world of architecture and design. Through this publication and the related teaching, I began to understand the value and important influence that the ground breaking designs by Marcel Breuer, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Charles and Ray Eames and their peers had on the contemporary furniture industry. Many of these designs were utilising new processes of manufacture that had evolved from the Industrial Revolution. It was also these architects who introduced modern materials into the home interior, in the 1920s and 30s, that had not been seen before, such as plywood, plastic and chromed steel.

One chair stood out for me, as I was struck by the simplicity of its lines and lightweight structure that could have easily compromised comfort, but I felt at the time had not. This chair was called the B3 Club chair, also known as Wassily chair designed by Marcel Breuer for Wassily Kandinsky in 1925 (Fig.3). It was the first tubular steel armchair that Breuer developed for professors' houses (Meister) in Dessau. Of specific interest to me was the way that the frame of the chair had been structured to suspend the leather supports for seat, arms and back which allowed the body to appear elevated within a steel line construction. The steel structure in effect became a spatial frame to house and support the body. The objective of the design appeared to be to create the most minimal support possible for the body in repose, a radically contemporary 'easy chair' for its time. The spatial transparency inherent within this chair design resulted in greater emphasis being placed on the occupier, as user, while the form of the chair was paired down to the minimum. It could be argued that many of the chairs designed by the aforementioned designers aimed towards lightness of structure and invisible levitation of the sitter, (Fig.4) but ultimately they were all preoccupied with visual form. In this relationship the experience and comfort of the individual was therefore often compromised. This taught me a valuable lesson

3 B3 Club or Wassily Chair, designed by Marcel Breuer for Wassily Kandinsky,
4 Der Stuhl by Heinz and Bodo Rasch - The invisible chair

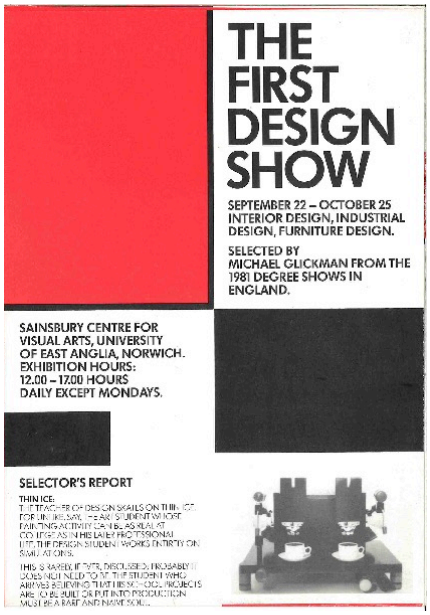
about design. You can only measure a chair's success through its relationship with the experiencer. A furniture designer that I believe did prioritise the sitter was Hans Wegner, who made many beautifully crafted timber chairs and maintained that "a chair is not complete until someone sits on it." [8]

I designed and made three chairs for my degree submission, the most appropriate to this context statement being The Line Chair, made from tubular steel and translucent acrylic. The form represents a single, unobstructed line in space and the chair was designed in homage to Breuer's Wassily Chair. The chair is illustrated on display at the *First Design Show* in 1981 at The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich (Fig.5). This exhibition showcased the best graduate furniture design of the year from schools all around the UK. It was the first exhibition of its kind to be held in the UK and the designs exhibited were selected by Michael Gluckman,[9] a respected architect and academic at this time, (Fig.6).

Inspired by Breuer, I carefully studied the process of manufacture and used techniques that were deployed in the production of other tubular framed chairs. I approached the design as if creating a spatial environment in miniature, an interior structure for personal inhabitation. The main structure of the chair was made from a single line of tubular steel (actually welded seamlessly from several separate lengths). So as not to visually interrupt the spatial flow of the line, the seat and arms were formed from transparent, tinted acrylic. I wanted to create the impression of the body seemingly floating unsupported in space whilst being framed by a territorial line. The inter-relationship between the chair and the user in composition were vitally important to me in this study.

However, aside from creating yet another seating option, the Line Chair did not significantly advance innovation in tubular steel chair design. The chair had adhered to the modernist message of form following function as it recognised the function "to seat" and the physical ergonomics of a chair. But in offering a hard, flat seat and back to the user, the Line Chair compromised function and comfort for purity of sculptural form. My preoccupation with visual spatial form resulted in the well-being of the experiencer not being served as a priority. In doing so I overlooked the essence in value of the chair, an important lesson that was to inform my later public works.

Upon graduating from Buckingham College of Higher Education in 1981, I had fulfilled the aim I set out to achieve by turning my back on a career in the mass production industry of engineering. I had successfully engaged with designing products of a more personal nature and immersed myself in a language of design that connected with the concerns of people's lives in the domestic environment. However, during this period, in which I produced three chair designs (Fig.7,8), my design process was very preoccupied with aesthetic form. Although influenced by functional requirements, I realise now that function and comfort should have been more intertwined In the process of designing these chairs. I never asked the important question, why design another chair? Instead, I strove to create chairs that were different from all the rest and that I hoped would have fashionable appeal.



5 My Line Chair in *The First Design Show*, held at the Sainsbury Centre or Visual Arts, Norwich, 1981

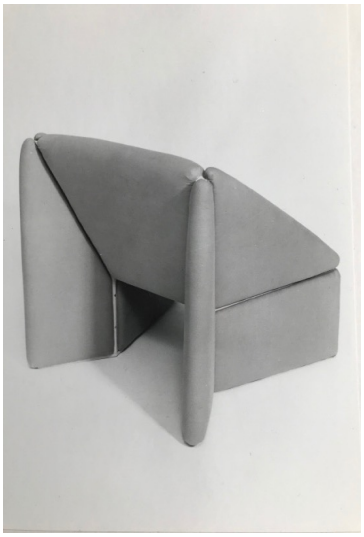
6 Cover of brochure promoting *The First Design Show*

The public works reflected upon in the following chapters of this context statement illustrate how the order of this priority gradually reversed to place the feeling of the experiencer foremost in the design process. In the introduction to *Now I sit me down - From Klismos to Plastic Chair : A Natural History*, Witold Rybczynski writes:

> Chairs are affected by, and reflect, changes in technology, materials, and economic and social conditions, yet they remain intimately connected to peculiarities of the human body – after all, we sit on them. At the same time, chairs, communicate a lot about our attitudes – toward comfort, toward status, toward our physical surroundings. They are inanimate, but they speak to us.[10]

I believe that this statement is equally appropriate if we substitute the word 'interior' for 'chair'. This chapter of the context statement illustrates that my recognition of a chair's intimate relationship with the sitter led to my search for the same quality of intimacy between the experiencer and the interior, evoked through a certain aura and instillation of an essence of place, when successfully achieved.

My sustained interest in interior design, while studying for my BA, developed into a career in the profession. Six months after my graduation in January 1982, I was offered a position as Junior Designer in the Interiors studio at Conran Associates.



7 My Lounge Chair, 1981, comprising individually upholstered panels held on an extruded aluminium frame, produced for my BA Hons Degree Three Dimensional Design - Furniture

8 My Folding Chair and table in painted plywood, 1981, featured in *The First Design Show* and also produced for my BA Hons Degree Three Dimensional Design – Furniture

Notes

1. Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, (London: Penguin,1997), 5.
2. Jean Paul-Sartre, *Nausea,* (London: Penguin 1965), 13.
3. Pierre von Meiss, *Elements of Architecture: from form to place,* (Oxon: E& FN Spon, Routledge,1991), 135.
4. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Co.,1896), 5.
5. Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, (London, Ariadne Press,1998), 19.
6. Peter Smithson, *The Cantilever Chair*, (Hildershein: Herstellung,1986), 86.
7. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, (London: Penguin,1968)
8. Christian Holmsted Olesen, *Wegner: just one good chair*, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2014), 195.
9. Michael Gluckman, *The First Design Show* Promotional Pamphlet, (London: 1981).
10. Witold Rybczynski, *Now I sit me down - From Klismos to Plastic Chair* : A Natural History, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 7.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERIOR AND FASHION

First Practice
New Spirit
Red or Dead
Further Influences

PUBLIC WORKS:
1 Michiko Koshino – Fashion store

TWO

This chapter includes the first of my public works to be discussed in the context statement and is titled The Interior and Fashion for two reasons. Firstly, fashion played an important role in the early interiors that I executed as a sole practitioner. It should be acknowledged that fashion inevitably influences interior design as subject and practice. It has done so since interior design emerged as a dedicated profession within the domestic realm in the early 1900s through the recognition of interior decorators such as Elsie de Wolfe. This extract from *Interior Design and Identity*, (2004) illustrates that:

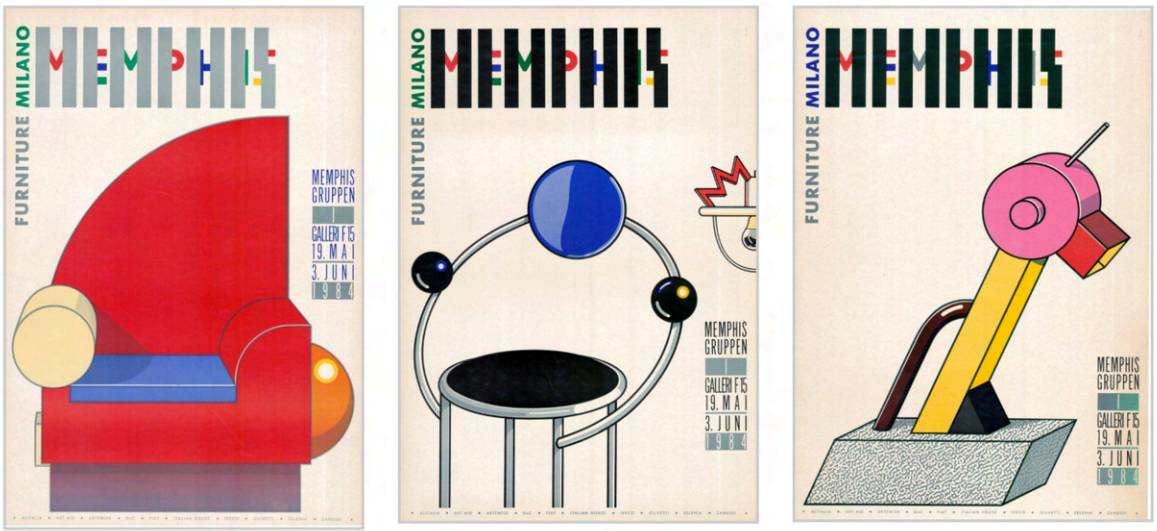
> De Wolfe was a highly fashion conscious woman and perceived the interior as being, following after dress, a layer around the body.[1]

Fashionable influence has been sustained ever since, as the interior's design mirrors changing social attitudes, identity and technological advancements, as seen in the last chapter with the introduction of chromed steel furniture into the home.

The second reason for the title of this chapter is that my own independent practice developed and gained professional acknowledgement due to a number of high profile commissions by successful fashion designers to design their stores. Successful implementation of these designs in turn led to my company designing stores for various fashion brands who possessed or expanded into multiple sites across the UK and Europe during the 1990s.

The public work featured in this part of the context statement was a seminal project that, due to the publicity and recognition it achieved, established my partnership. The project was a one-off store design for Japanese fashion designer, Michiko Koshino. This store was designed and implemented in 1989, eight years after I graduated. In order to fully appreciate the influences and the design approach to this store, it is important to place it in context with the broader scene of architecture and design at the time, in the UK and internationally. It is also necessary to contextualise this work in relation to the evolution of my design practice prior to this commission and the influences on the development of my own design ethos.

Prior to my graduation in 1981 I witnessed the rise and demise of anarchic Punk Rock and the inception that same year of the style dialectic to Modernism, Ettore Sottsass's subversive Memphis movement (Fig.1) emanating from Milan, and the evolution of Post-Modernism and Decontructivism. Although I lived and worked through the periods when these movements fashionably influenced architecture and the interior, they failed to dislodge the modernist principles I had adopted in my early practice. However, when I started to work independently I reflected on these movements in my search for an individual position, which I will describe in more detail later in this chapter.



1 Promotional posters for an exhibition on Memphis design movement, founded by Ettore Sottsass in 1980. Claiming to be the 'New International Style', Inspired by Art Deco, Pop Art and 1950's kitsch, it subverted the strict principles of Modernism

First Practice

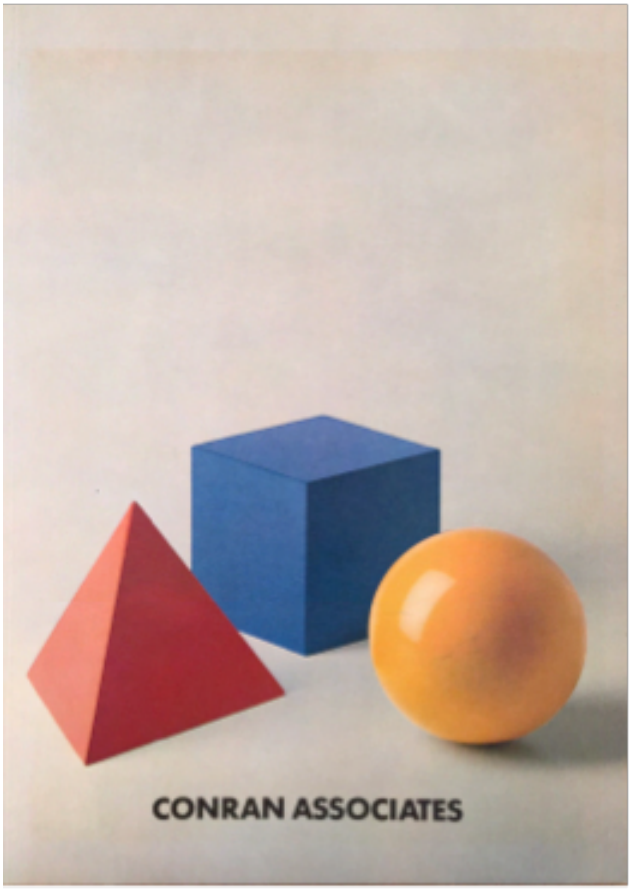
I gained my introduction to interior design practice through working in the Interiors studio at Conran Associates, in Covent Garden, central London (Fig.2, 3). Although initially employed as a furniture designer and for my model-making skills, I gradually took on responsibility for the design of specific parts and eventually complete interiors of projects. Terence Conran[2] was a key contributor to bringing about a greater public awareness of home interiors in Britain and the important role that design can play in the home and also in the retail sector. He led by example through opening a chain of stores called Habitat, the first of which launched in 1964 and later The Conran Shop in Brompton Cross which opened in 1973. These stores were carefully considered in every detail and sold well designed products, many of which emanated from Bauhaus designers and architects or followed the same design principles (Fig.4). Aimed initially at London's young middle class who aspired to a sophisticated, contemporary lifestyle, the Habitat concept was expanding into major cities in the UK by the time I joined Conran Associates in 1982.

Conran started his design practice in 1956 with a store design for fashion designer Mary Quant. But it was through his own retail ventures that he made the biggest impact. He revolutionised retailing in homeware, best exemplified by his introduction of the duvet for sale in his stores in 1968. During the 70s, alongside the evolution of Habitat, Conran's practice developed into a multi-disciplinary design company dedicated to the design of graphics, products and interiors.[3] When I arrived there the company was successfully established and I became immersed in the Conran culture of design, which aligned well with my education and background in design to date. At this point Conran had just secured the contract to design the whole interior of a new second terminal, now called North Terminal, at Gatwick Airport. The terminal building was designed by Yorke Rosenberg Mardall (YRM), a strictly modernist architectural practice. This was the first project that I worked on and I experienced the rigour of the modernist doctrine being applied professionally for the first time, both from the need to comply to the strict modular grid of YRM's architecture to the refined understatement of Conran's interior.[4]

In complete contrast to the terminal design, in both scale and interior typology, Conran Associates were also beginning to have an influence on the design of stores on the High Street, other than the Habitat stores (Fig.5). One design in particular was a forerunner of later retail design developments. Conran worked with Hepworths, a rather dour and traditional menswear retailer, to develop the new retail concept for Next (Fig.6), a more exciting contemporary clothing store that added women and children's wear. In 1981 Hepworths bought Kendall and Sons womenswear chain. Conran was chairman of Hepworths at the time. The first store opened in 1982 just after I joined Conran Associates. The late 1970s and early 80s was a period of important change for the practice of interior design. Its origins were in residential interiors relating to decoration and in the more public sense, under authorship of the architect. But interior design was now in the process of consolidating its independent status, through its focus on the commercial realm and in particular, retail design. This was achieved through the growth of the inter-disciplinary design consultancy model of practice [5], such as Conran Associates, and also

2 Piccadilly Circus 1983 – Image of London when I first moved there in the 1980s, in the pre-digital world of advertising

3 Neal Street, Covent Garden in the early 1980s. Conran Associates' studio was located in a converted warehouse, across the street from Food for Thought



4 Cover of Conran Associates 1981promotional brochure. The primary forms and colour epitomised by the Bauhaus were used as the Conran logo

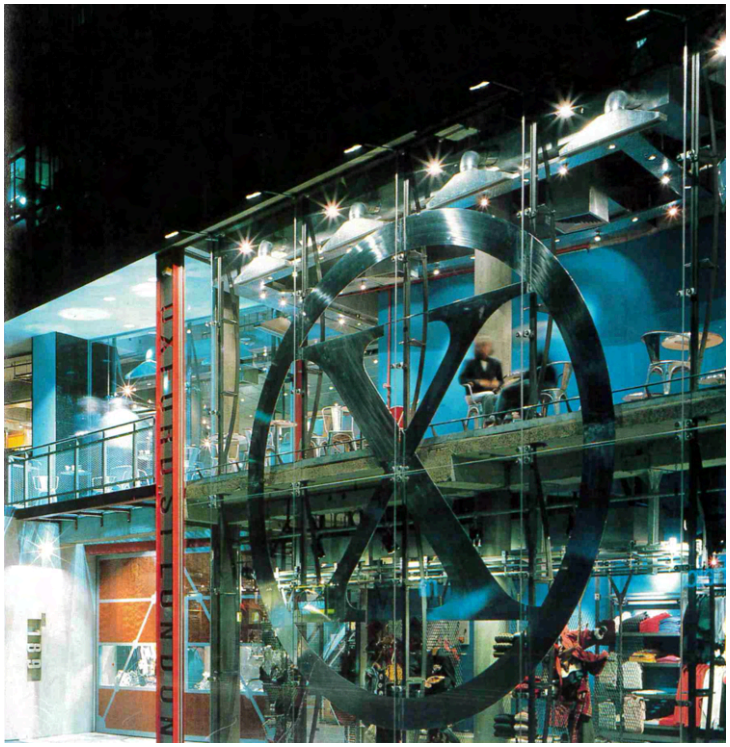
5 Page spread from inside the 1981 Habitat catalogue, showing the Wassily chair and Cesca, B64 cantilever chair, both designed by Marcel Breuer

some rather more subversive and innovative interiors being produced in the UK by a few interesting individuals and small scale practices. At the time I entered practice in 1981, I was therefore centrally placed in the evolution of commercial interior design practice that was most evident to the public through its effect on the High Street. Drew Plunkett's recently published book, *Revolution: Interior Design since 1950* [6], reflects upon and describes the development and impact of interior design practice in the UK from 1950 onwards, placing specific emphasis on the 1980s and early 1990s. Plunkett highlights my design for the Koshino store as a seminal work in, what he cites as, the "next generation" of designers in the interior design revolution. He was alluding here to the brand Next and post "the big guns" as he referred to Conran and Fitch.

One of my contemporaries, in the "next generation" was Rasshied Din, who set up his design practice in 1986 and indeed went on to design an innovative flagship store for Next in London's Oxford Street called Department X, 1988 (Fig.7). Din also developed lasting collaborations with Next's founder George Davis and with Stephen Marks who was behind the success of stores for Nicole Farhi and French Connection. Later he wrote a book to document the emergence, relevance and impact of retail design as a practice. In the book called *New Retail*, Din reflects on the evolving importance of retail design during the 1970s and how it became essential to retailers' development strategies during the following decade. He states:

> In essence the retail designer became involved in 'communication' rather than simply being the means to finding solutions to physical problems. Designers became involved in brand marketing and advertising, through the manipulation of architectural volumes of space, and the effects that these environments had on consumer psychology. [7]

During the 1980s, the UK's economy was booming. Under Margaret Thatcher's leadership, privatisation increased and company profits grew. Commercial business recognised that good design of products, environments and advertising could lead to a positive increase in turnover. Design in all its manifestations became marketable and was seen as a major catalyst in profit making and the move towards globalisation. In 1983 the Design Council launched its 'Design for Profit' slogan. Also its *Profit by Design* pamphlet echoed Thatcher's views, starkly pointing out that, 'the design process is a planning exercise to maximize sales and profits.'[8] In response, the practice of interior design thrived and grew exponentially during the eighties in both turnover and practice size, due to the demand from retail clients. In 1982 Fitch and Co, a rival company to Conran (Fitch was an ex-partner of Conran) was the first design company to be quoted on the stock market. Others followed, including Conran Design Group, with a change of name. Conran's business became so successful, he went on to build it further by buying out other stores including Heals and Mothercare. A sad reflection of this time of economic excess is a comment by Rodney Fitch that "The purpose of life is shopping".[9] In retail in particular, interior design and identity was seen as the greatest driver of company growth and retail interiors vied for attention on the High Street as ephemeral stage sets within which to market products.



6 Above, first Next store façade, 1982 and interior of Next for women 1985, designed by Conran Associates

7 Department X for Next, designed by Din Associates, 1988

Of course these transient interiors were typical of those that Davey riled against in the article I cited earlier (P12). It was accepted that these interiors would usually be changed after a maximum of five years to keep abreast of changing trends and developing technologies.

As brands and chains of stores implemented with the same design concept grew, they began to replace independent high street stores that were offering the same type of product. As this growth accelerated, through market demand, and design consultancies grew in size, a production line type of design delivery strategy was in some cases adopted. Ownership in the delivery of design grew ahead of experience, as less experienced junior designers like me were given far too much responsibility and autonomy. Combined with often inexperienced clients, holding influential decision-making roles the result inevitably was the appearance, in towns and cities, of less sophisticated design solutions that were often preoccupied with visual effect and had a tendency to be functionally flawed (Fig.9) For many of the aesthetically naive employers of design consultancies it was also the first time that they had commissioned design. As interior designer, Mark Landini observed:

> One would say: well, we'll design a cash desk, but that was the end of the discussion. The cash desk would be presented to the people who had commissioned the design and then it would be built and then you would find out that it didn't work. One just assumed that one could design a cash desk and the client assumed that you could because there was this great sense of euphoria.[10]

In 1984 four Associates from Conran's studio left to set-up a new practice called The Design Solution. I joined this nascent design practice from its inception as Senior Designer and it grew quickly to over twenty staff in the first two years of business. Our clients were initially small entrepreneurial businesses but as our portfolio grew it became dominated by shopping centre interiors. This was strongly influenced by the relationship The Design Solution were developing with Chapman Taylor Architects, who were designing the shopping centre buildings.

Shopping Centre design was a lucrative growth sector at this time that evolved from the increase in retail activity and appeal, in the UK in particular, but following the pattern set in the United States and Canada (Fig.8). The growth in shopping centre development led in turn to the emergence, in the UK, of the 'food court' which offered the 'captive' shopping centre visitors a plethora of food options, to eat in or takeaway, relating to an array of different countries and cultures, from pizzas to burgers and curries.

The food court concept again followed a trend that was established in the 1970s in the USA. During the 1970s and early eighties air travel and overseas holidays became more affordable and extensively available to the mass public. Visitors from the UK to other countries had exposure to a diverse variety of international food and cuisine. The food court therefore responded to a demand for new eating out options in the UK that reflected the broader awareness of cuisine experienced through their oversea

8 Themed Food Court in Eldon Square Shopping Centre, Newcastle on Tyne, designed by The Design Solution 1986

9 Naïve, over-complex facia design identifying and promoting Top Man menswear store on the High Street 1987

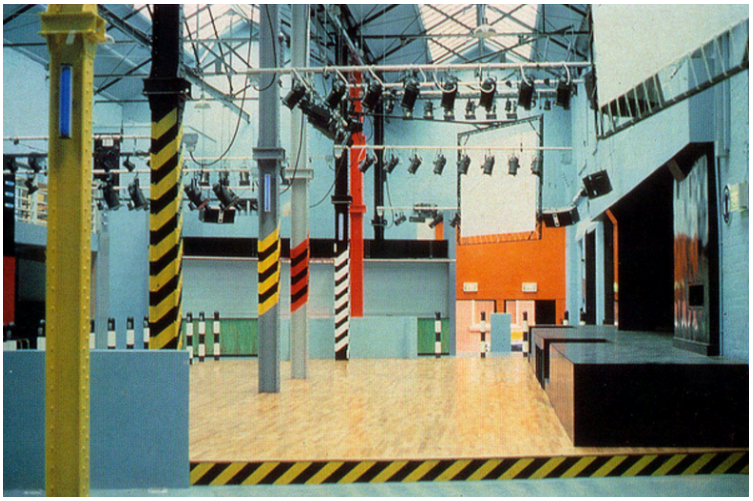
travels. My frustration with this work was born out of the themed nature of the design concepts that were often directed by clients. For example, I worked on a new shopping centre outside Newcastle-on-Tyne, called Eldon Square (Fig.8) that was designed around the theme of a classic English Garden, topiary and all. My concern related to the superficiality of much of this design (Fig.9). It was inauthentic and, I felt, totally lacked integrity; a facsimile dreamt up by my seniors for no other reason or meaning than that it represented Englishness. I did not feel comfortable designing fake places such as this. While working on these types of projects therefore I became increasingly frustrated with the briefs that I was given, the relative design process and the effectiveness of the role that I held as Senior Designer. When not working, I was completely immersed in a London lifestyle that exposed me to an invigorating world of art, architecture, design and music, but unfortunately I was having little opportunity to engage with or reflect upon this within my design work.

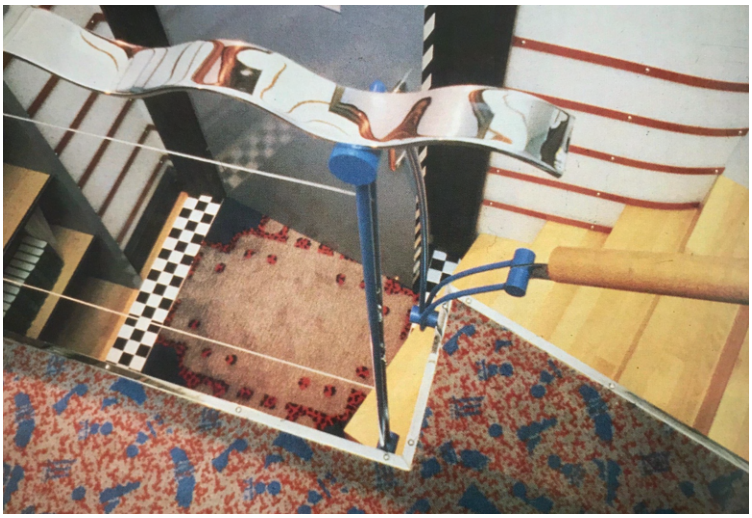
New Spirit

Outside this highly commercial activity of interior design in which the larger design consultancies were thriving, far more interesting, progressive interiors and products were being created by smaller practices and individuals. Catherine McDermott refers to the eighties in her book *Street Style*[11] as the era of the Post-Punk Interior. In 1984 Ben Kelly completed the Hacienda nightclub in Manchester, a seminal project, that morphed the bright colours of Memphis with the hard externality of the motorway, influenced by the industrial quality of High Tech that evolved out of Modernism in the 1970s (Fig.10). Also in 1984 Casson Mann designed Gran Gelato, an ice cream parlour in Kensington, again heavily influenced by Memphis and very form led (Fig.11)

The idea of interior design as stage set was taken to the extreme, by Powel-Tuck, Connor and Orefelt. They designed theatrical settings in the flats of pop star, Adam Ant,1982 (Fig.12) and Marco Pirroni, 1984, following the seminal shop they produced for Malcolm McClaren and Vivienne Westwood called Worlds End, 1981 (Fig.13). All of these designers were gaining recognition and coverage of their work in the few design magazines that reflected contemporary design practice in addition to architecture, such as *Blueprint,* which launched in 1983 and *Designers Journal,* launched a year later. These interiors were original, but there was also greater meaning, integrity and relevance embedded in the design thinking, in contrast to the stylised, facsimile superficiality of the shopping centre and food court designs I had been working on, although they were in a sense also stage sets.

Another designer starting to make headlines at this time, who I encountered whilst working at Conran Associates was Ron Arad. Arad trained at the Architectural Association but set up a shop on a disused parking plot in Shorts Gardens, Covent Garden from which he sold his own highly individual and original designs. His work took the terms 'industrial' and 'High-Tech' onto a different, more subversive and challenging level. I was very inspired by the freedom and unique individual thinking in this work. Arad's designs in every way defied the norm and advanced perceptions of the ordinary, from his Rover car seat repurposed into a scaffolding framed domestic chair to the vinyl playing stereo turntable





10 Hacienda nightclub, Manchester – Ben Kelly 1982

11 Above, Casson Mann's designs for ice cream parlour, Gran Gelato, London 1984
and below a Director's office in Smith Square, London 1985.
Clearly influenced by the form and image led style of Memphis

12 Musician, Adam Ant's flat – Powell-Tuck, Connor and Orefelt 1982

13 Worlds End fashion store, Kings Road, London, Powell-Tuck, Connor and Orefelt, 1981, for Vivienne Westward and Malcolm McClaren. David Connor's expressive sketch distorts and abstracts perspective, echoing the aim of this post-punk store

set in a raw, reinforced slab of chipped and broken away concrete. *Blueprint* magazine called Arad "the Mad Max of design"[12] but there was far more to his work than a dystopian design approach. The material choice in his designs provoked questions about beauty in the typically hidden, by celebrating the aesthetic qualities of familiar building materials such as raw concrete and plasterboard. His designs also challenged fragility and durability in purposely shattered laminated glass sheet; and he subverted conventions in product and furniture design through the creative re-appropriation of salvage. Of particular interest to me was Arad's design of an adjustable desk lamp made from a car aerial and operated by wireless remote control (Fig.14). This unique product epitomised Arad's lateral creativity with its seductive haptic and kinetic qualities. Anyone who saw the lamp could not wait to interact with it. It possessed a uniquely engaging experiential quality.

This raw industrial aesthetic (Fig.15) evolved into an influential style in the eighties seen also in the early furniture designs of Tom Dixon, Andre Dubreuil and glass designer artist Danny Lane, collectively known as Creative Salvage. Gareth Williams points out in *The Furniture Machine: Furniture since 1990* that their work was united by their use of recycled materials, "they made shocking, decadent objects that being urban and streetwise, filled a space between craft, art and design and stood in deliberate contrast to the blandness of mainstream furniture of the time".[13] Creative Salvage claimed that the way ahead did not lie in expensive, anonymous mass produced hi-tech products but in a more decorative, human approach to industrial and interior design. The aesthetic was represented in the work that these designers exhibited in *The New Spirit* exhibition at the Crafts Council Gallery London in 1987 which Anne Massey noted "challenged accepted notions of comfort and taste".[14]

The influence of industrial and urban decay was also very evident in the highly eclectic designs of this period from Nigel Coates who, according to McDermott, juxtaposed different period styles and artful decay like a self-conscious stage set.[15] Coates manifested this approach to most memorable effect in his collaboration with Shi Yu Chen for the interior of Caffé Bongo in Tokyo,1986 (Fig16). In *Creating Interior Atmosphere -Mise-en-scene and Interior Design* Jean Whiteheads comments on the theatrical atmosphere in this Coates interior, embodying the architect's belief that narrative is integral to design.

> Caffé Bongo's mise-en-scene utilizes props developed from a 'bricolage' of European cultural references derived from a narrative that relates to director Federico Fellini's 1960 film La Dolce Vita.[16]

Although containing an eclectic array of references, unlike the shopping centre designs I'd been involved with, the designs of Coates, Arad and Creative Salvage were testing creative boundaries and I found them intriguing both aesthetically and experientially. The interiors of Coates in particular definitely embraced the mise-en-scene of theatre, and set design, inspired by its typical control of atmosphere. For this reason I was drawn to these designers, whose work was in sharp contrast to the

obviously pastiche designs evident in the commercial projects I had been working on. The key difference lay in the former's research into and referencing of historical detail, combined with contemporary material and form to result in exciting, different type of places, while the design approach I had been required to take was to look back at the past in order to copy a particular style or look and reproduce it, blatantly, in facsimile, negating concern for newness in design terms.

I therefore became very interested and influenced, at this time, by the originality and uniqueness in the designs emanating from Coates, Arad and co. Nevertheless, I did not feel completely comfortable with the eclectic and often busy forms of this new spirit, which for me ultimately lacked simplicity and purity and was dialectically opposed to my modernist education and principles. This counterpoint of interests however, was to remain a considerable challenge in the development of my personal design ethos for some time to come.

14 Remote controlled car aerial light, launched at Milan Furniture Fair – Ron Arad 1984

15 Ron Arad's second store, One Off – Neal Street, London, 1986

16 Caffé Bongo by Nigel Coates, Tokyo, 1986

Red or Dead

In April 1987, with this design landscape as a backdrop, I launched my own practice. The opportunity came through an introduction, by a PR friend of mine, to Wayne Hemingway who ran several stalls on Camden Market. The stalls sold second hand clothes, new designs by his fashion designer wife and shoes. Hemingway had secured an exclusive UK retail distribution agreement with the work footwear brand, Doc Marten, and as a result, he was looking to open his first Red or Dead shop in Soho. Although the site was small and the fee and implementation budget were meagre I saw this as an opportunity to at last be involved in a project that I could feed my personal influences into appropriately and effectively. Hemingway approached me in my position at The Design Solution, but it quickly became clear that in fear of the high fees they may charge his preference was to work with me independently. I therefore left The Design Solution to work with this single client and took the chance to seriously consider my personal future in interior design.

The store I designed in Rupert Street, Soho, (Fig.17) was heavily Influenced by the prevalent industrial aesthetic of Dixon and Arad. But the design also owed debt to another fashion store in nearby Covent Garden called Jones (Fig.18). I was inspired by the hard industrial materials and the simple modernist lines and form of this interior which I later recognised had an affinity with the much earlier work of Pierre Chareau. The stand out features of my store for Red or Dead were its hand finished raw metal displays and cash desk, concrete floor with inset mosaic tiles and exposed plaster walls. It was the embryo of what was to become an exceptionally successful and internationally recognised brand, that turned the Hemingways into multi-millionaires and Wayne into a TV celebrity. The venture into store, as opposed to market, retailing was an immediate financial success for the client and within a year I was working on the second store in the more prominent location of up and coming Neal Street, Covent Garden.

Both stores were featured in *Design Week* [17] and *Designers Journal* [18] and also in the fashion press, in the UK and as far afield as Tokyo. Hemingway's aim was to create a shoe store with a contemporary image that subverted the stereotypical and dated image most High Street stores portrayed at the time (Fig.19). In *Designers Journal* Hemmingway stated that he was looking "for a more aggressive, industrial feel than the soft pastel interiors and Perspex shelf displays that characterise most shops".[19] Ironically, although this client had given me the opportunity and the confidence to continue working independently, I was not totally happy with the outcomes. The quality of implementation was compromised on both sites due to constraints on budget and the lack of specialist contractor involvement, which somewhat defied the argument that Hemingway was extolling. I was also concerned that these designs lacked the sophistication and authenticity that some of my contemporaries were achieving in their work. However, Hemingway was delighted with the shops as they had both quickly developed a strong customer base and loyal following. He was therefore very supportive of my work, so much so, that when his friend, fashion designer Michiko Koshino, informed him that she was looking for someone to design her new flagship store in Covent Garden he recommended me.

17 Red or Dead - First store in Rupert Street, Soho, London 1987
18 Jones by Peter Mullins and Jake Morton**,** Covent Garden, London 1986
Hard industrial materials and overall atmosphere that influenced
my design for Red or Dead

19 Typical High Street shoe stores in the 1980s, Barratts and Freeman Hardy Willis

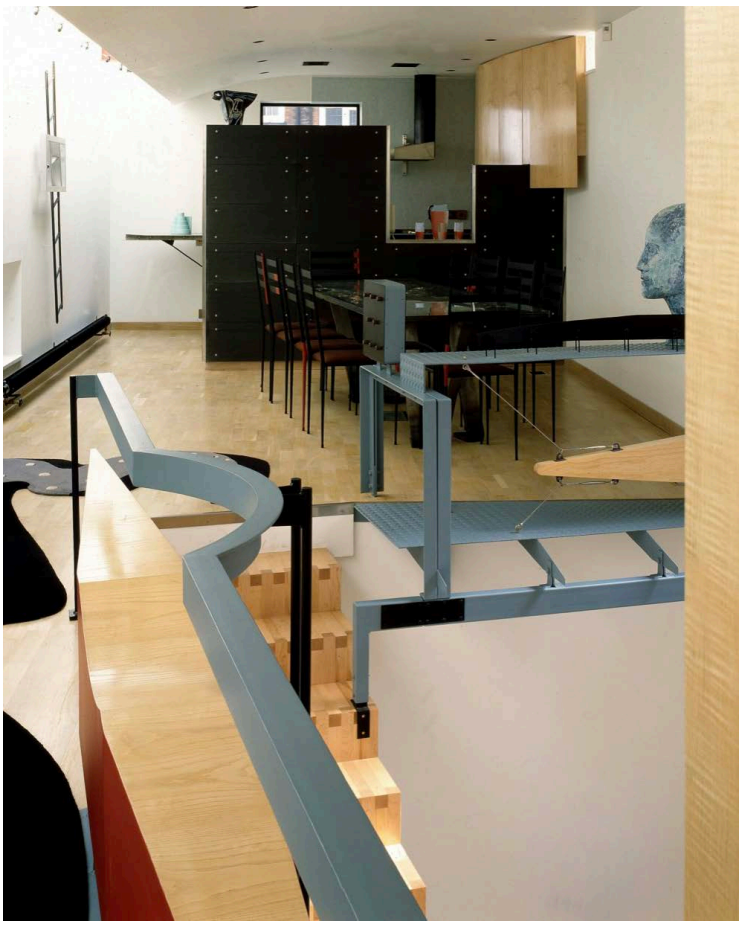
Further Influences

At the beginning of my own practice my work was rather diverse in its references. I was searching for a position and greater meaning in design approach, but I was still heavily influenced by the patrons of Modernism, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe etc. and in detail Pierre Chareau (Fig.20) and also Carlo Scarpa, whose attention to detail and materiality I was particularly drawn to (Fig.21). Although understated and reflecting modernist principles, I was interested in elements of their designs that challenged perceptions, such as typical notions of the door, wall or staircase for instance. On the other hand, I was intrigued by the fictive narrative expression in the interiors of Nigel Coates and the leftfield, raw and honest innovation of Ron Arad. Through the magazine El Croquis, a Spanish magazine newly available at this time in the UK, I also became aware of the quirky trendiness of bars and clubs being designed by the likes of Alfredo Aribas and buildings designed by Miralles and Pinos in Barcelona, during the run-up to the Olympics their in 1992. These dialectic influences were sustained in the appeal of contemporary architects as contrasting as new modernists David Chipperfield, particularly through his book *Theoretical Practice*,[20] Stanton Williams and the deconstructivist Peter Wilson (Fig.22). This was to become evident in the design of the Michiko Koshino store.

It was at this time that I also read Peter Davey's article in *Architectural Review*. (1987) [21] The article provoked me to question my own position within the industry and my potential contribution to it. Although challenging the currency of interior design at the time, all of the interiors featured in the article were designed by architects. This illustrated to me that Davey, representative of the architectural profession, believed that the only new and innovative interiors being built were by architects. They were the only places that, in Davey's opinion, possessed authenticity, were intellectually meaningful and therefore worthy of respect. I disagreed of course that this should be the case. However, I concede that my major inspiration to date had emanated from reflecting on the precedent work and philosophies of architects as referenced in this context statement. The article therefore inspired me to search for a position in my practice that would gain respect equating to that gained for work produced by those architects I was inspired by. The success of the first public work described in this context statement illustrates how this ambition led to a unique outcome and its subsequent recognition was manifest.

20 Sensitively detailed metal structures and spatial mood of Maison de Verre by Pierre Chareau, Paris, 1932

21 Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, Carlo Scarpa, 1961



22 Sculptural design of the interior at Blackburn House, London, by Peter Wilson with Tchaik Chassay 1987

PUBLIC WORK 1

Michiko Koshino

Fashion Store, Covent Garden, London, 1990

1 - MICHIKO KOSHINO FASHION STORE

The introduction to Michiko Koshino, by Wayne Hemingway in 1989, proved to be pivotal in the development of my practice. As a result of securing this project, I formed a partnership with Nigel Green, an ex-colleague who I had met at Conran Associates. Nigel joined me in the team I put together to work on the pitch to design the Koshino store. We had visited the Milan Furniture Fair together previously and discussed our shared interests at a private launch of Ron Arad's aerial light design, a wonderfully atmospheric kinetic installation in a repurposed industrial building. We discussed then, the possibility of working together in the future on projects that could capture the public's imagination and engagement in the same way that Arad's designs were doing. Having secured the contract to design the Michiko Koshino store we felt confident enough about the future to form Fern Green Partnership.

Michiko Koshino was a successful fashion designer, and a household name back in her home country of Japan, but she built her reputation marketing her business as Michiko Koshino London. She started her business in London and opened her first store in Soho in the early eighties, designed by architect Pierre D'Avoine. I was invited to pitch for the design of her new store in Neal Street, Covent Garden, that she was intending to be the London flagship for her brand. We competed for the design contract against more established designers, Pierre D'Avoine for obvious reasons, Ben Kelly and two others and were given one week to produce concept ideas for the store. Michiko's previous store was discreetly tucked away in D'Arblay Street, a quiet side street in central London, easily un-noticed by passers-by. But from this new, prime location, site in the emerging trendiness of Covent Garden Michiko hoped to launch her label to the world.

Our ambition was to create a store that would be the most exciting place to visit and buy the latest fashions in London at that time. I presented the designs at the end of the week that we were allocated to produce our proposals, and the ideas were very enthusiastically received by Michiko and her team. We heard early the following week that Michiko had chosen us to implement the design.

The brief given by Michiko was fairly open to creative interpretation. The key point she stipulated was that the design should avoid literal visual or cultural references to Japan, but reflect Michiko's individual approach to fashion which combines simplicity and idiosyncrasy. She was tired of seeing typical minimalist Japanese interiors, perhaps referring to those designed for fellow Japanese fashion guru, Issey Miyake. The only reference she made to store layout was that she wished the cash desk to be raised up centrally in the space, a preference that appeared to go against conventional retail design strategy, but this was to become an important consideration in our conceptual thinking.

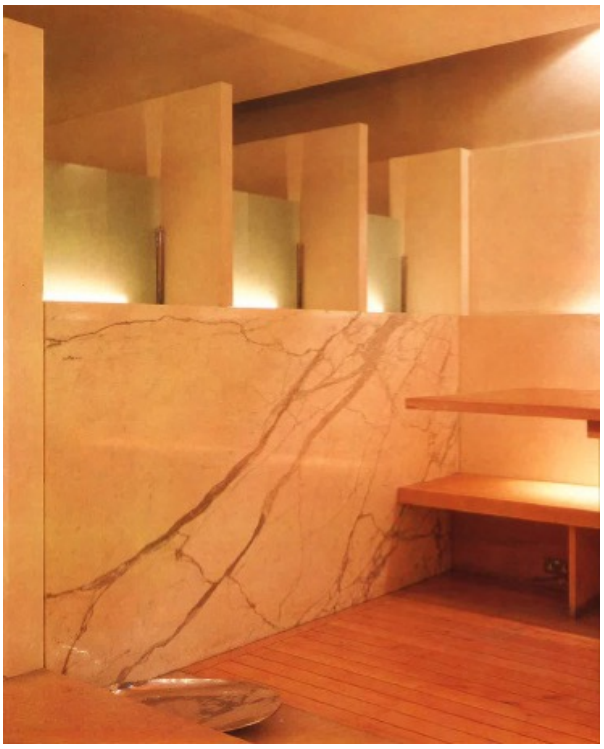
At this time, during the late 1980s, I had become very disillusioned with the type and quality of design being produced by the larger commercial interior design consultancies and manifest in stores on the

High Street. I tended to turn to the designs of stores produced by architects for contextual retail reference. In fashion terms these references included the very stores that Michiko wanted to avoid emulating, such as the Issey Miyake stores designed by David Chipperfield (Fig.23) and Stanton Williams (Fig.24). I was particularly drawn to the clean, ordered lines of the Miyake stores and the rich materiality of these interiors. There was more to these places than the austere simplicity of the white box. Ultimately, what stood out was the high quality of materials used and the attention paid to detail. This reflected the outstanding craftsmanship found in the garments on sale. There was also a softer, more human modernism evident in these interiors compared to the typical rationalism of the movement that was conceived in the 1920s. Natural materials such as stone, marble, solid wood, and glass were framed and supported in finely crafted metal that beautifully aligned with the high level of sensibility inherent in Miyake's garments.

In research carried out for this project I was also drawn to stores designed by Eva Jiricna for Joseph. They represented a highly refined and sensitively detailed High Tech aesthetic blended with understated, clean lined modernism. Innovation and uniqueness was prevalent in the tensile cable and glass structures of the product displays, staircases and balustrades, details that set the interior design of these stores apart from the norm and became synonymous with Jiricna (Fig.25).

A very different and memorable project was a store that architect Norman Foster designed for Katharine Hamnett in Brompton Cross in 1987 (Fig.26). This was a fine example of understatement that left the architectural context of the site, an ex-industrial single volume space, to make an impact on the customer experience. The site also defied retail logic as the single floor space was set far back from the street and it could only be reached through a single narrow corridor linking it to the street. In order to engage and intrigue customers Foster introduced an under-lit arched bridge, with a glowing glass floor, that emphasised the tunnel like approach and also the spatial contrast upon entering the large converted space. This space, reminiscently modernist, was simply painted all in white and the displays were minimal. Narrow, tall mirrors ran from floor to ceiling at either end of the space, creating facades to the fitting rooms concealed behind and serving to enhance the volume and spaciousness of the store. With the sense of quality exuded in the simplicity, came the notion of intimidation and mystery as visitors were unsure what to expect upon entry from the street.

Michiko's clothes were not as expensive as the likes of Miyake, Joseph or Hamnett, although the price-point would appear quite expensive to the average shopper, compared to typical High Street prices. Nevertheless, Michiko's idiosyncratic designs possessed great appeal to a particular young, 'club going' fraternity. Her aim was to more widely expose her brand to this demographic of Londoner in particular, excite them with her ideas and engage with them. This was a definite change in direction and in counterpoint to the niche exclusivity of her previous small shop, hidden away in a quiet Soho street. Consideration of this new objective also directed my initial ideas and was the starting point in the design process. I felt we should avoid thinking of the new space purely as a store, but also as a gallery



23 Issey Miyake store, London, David Chipperfield, 1985
24 Issey Miyake store in Brompton Cross– the softer Modernism of Stanton Williams, 1989

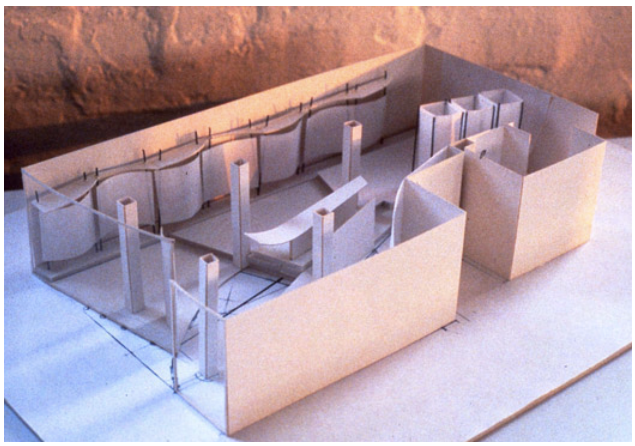
25 Eva Jiricna's less industrial but refined and sophisticated reflection of High Tech in her store designs for Joseph, 1987

26 Mystery and intrigue evoked in the bridge from the street into Katharine Hamnett's store in Brompton Cross, London 1987

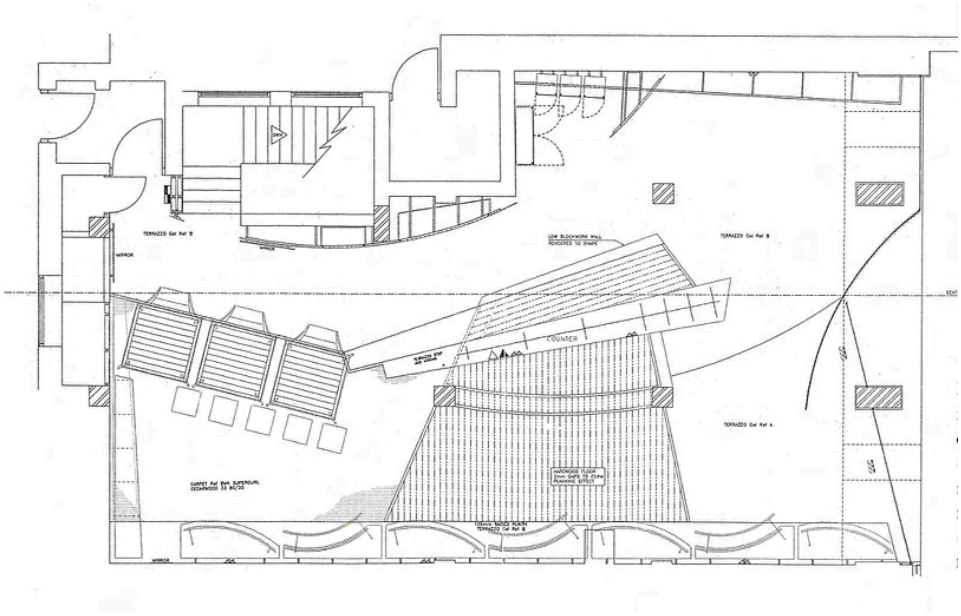
or a club, a place open to the gathering of 'Michiko like-minded' people – a social space. In adopting this approach to the design it was important firstly to avoid any potential intimidation or notion of exclusivity conveyed to the customer. The place where this feeling is often initially witnessed is on the street, at the threshold of entry to a store. Therefore we decided to make the entire store a window for the brand by blurring the boundary between inside and outside with the frameless, fully glazed, shop front. Floor to ceiling glazing was installed within aluminium channels that were invisibly set flush into the rendered columns and plaster-panelled ceiling. I proposed that there would be no window display, which was a new idea. The resulting transparency and openness in the façade allowed clear visibility from the street into the entirety of the store, contrasted and complimented only by two existing structural columns and the new solid timber and metal construction of the curved entrance door that slid from closed to open in a single movement (Fig.27,28,29).

By angling the shopfront line into the store on the left hand side and setting back the line of the curved door, the floor and ceiling finishes were exposed outside on the street. The effect was to further blur the boundary between inside and outside, creating a lobby-like quality adjacent to the entrance that instilled a sense of being inside while actually standing outside. This new approach to the design of the shop front also defied the traditional rules of retail. The conventional form of window display was unnecessary as the whole store was displayed and visible from the street. In contrast to the typical display of merchandise in other stores, it was more common to see a DJ set-up in the window, evoking a club like atmosphere inside, particularly on Saturdays.

My modernist education and training had conditioned in me that the design process should start with organisation and planning of the interior. 'The plan is the generator' as Le Corbusier claimed.[22]
This is evident in the design of all of the public works presented in this context statement. And so the plan was key to the design of this store from the entry point onwards. The interior, prior to conversion, was a jewellery shop, which formed part of a Brutalist concrete and brick development, devoid of architectural merit or character. The site was arranged over the ground floor and basement but the brief required only the ground floor to be used for retail, the basement being dedicated to a staff room, office and stockroom. The existing architecture of the ground floor space lacked any formal order or symmetry, with various structural columns adding a challenge to potential circulation through the space. The new design approach accepted these existing conditions, stripping walls, floor and ceiling back to bare structure and relining throughout, with the exception of the floor, in plaster and a single paint colour finish. The existing structure and parameters of the site therefore provided a neutral backdrop within which the functional elements of the design were incorporated, almost independently, as vehicles of display and service. These vehicles were installed as a series of suspended and floating planes, that echoed the impermanence of transient fashion styles and also the lightweight quality of Michiko's trademark neoprene and inflated puffa -jackets (Fig.30,31). The form of the interior elements was led by function but, also it was abstracted to reflect the desired customer movement through the space and the youthful energy I wanted to instill.



27 Presentation boards and model presented to Michiko Koshino, 1989



28 Michiko Koshino - Floor plan

29 Michiko Koshino - Frameless glass shopfront with curved sliding oak door, devoid of window display

30 Michiko Koshino – Featured in a Japanese magazine wearing her own designs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQXrrPhmnGI
Link to interview Michiko, filmed in the store in 1990

31 Michiko Koshino – 1990-91 Autumn/Winter Collection, still featuring trademark neoprene

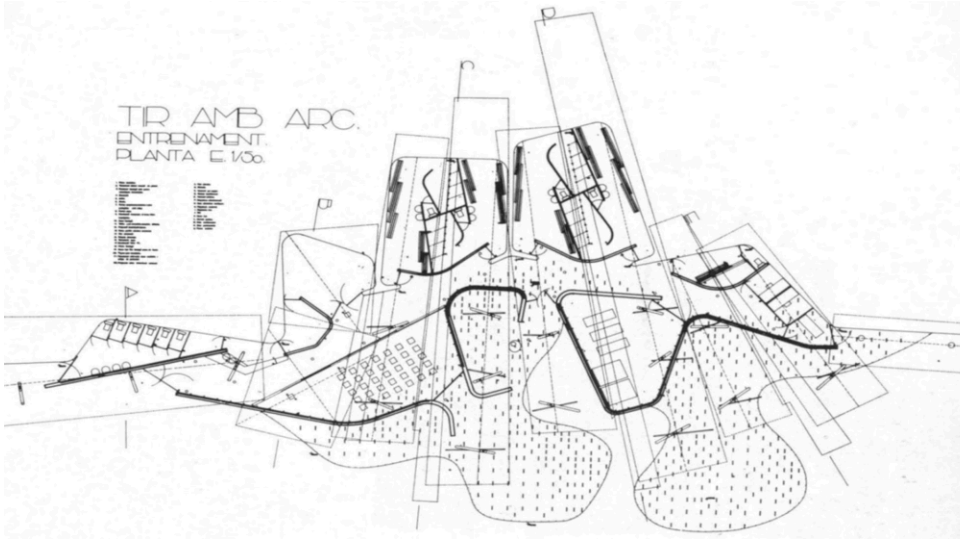
The layout of the store was informed by the internally angled shopfront to one side and the curved entrance door. The angle and the curve served to draw customers into the store. But the plan was dominated by the angular dynamic of the pay and service area which was located centrally in the space, as required by the brief. This form ran tangentially to the angled section of shop front. Suspended above was a lighting feature that created the major source of light, running spine-like from the entry point to the rear of the store – a device aimed again at directing customer attention through the space – with arms like ribs spanning laterally to visually connect both sides of the store. A series of suspended and freestanding planes articulated the organisation of the volume, serving to frame or create a backdrop for display of the product. The focal point of this arrangement of planes was the long tapering walnut desk top, that was spaced off and appeared to hover above the main carcass of the desk. This plane curved up towards the entrance point to present a promotional display to visitors upon entry. The uplifted end helped to avert any potential response of intimidation in visitors by, instead, offering a whimsical aspect to the design and a subtle reference to traditional Japanese roof structures (Fig.32,33).

It is clear from the plan that the spatial arrangement and design of the store was also influenced by Deconstructivism, an architectural style that gained public attention through MOMA's 1988 *Deconstuctivist Architecture Exhibition*. Although I did not visit the exhibition, through reading magazine and journal articles we became familiar with the work of the movement's chief protagonists, including Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaus, Coop Himmelblau and Frank Ghery. Influenced by the Russian constructivists, deconstructivists refused to follow the geometric rules of classical architecture or indeed Modernism. Instead they were receptive to the infinite possibilities of experimenting with new forms and volumes. The resulting architecture was fresh, dynamic and original in spatial terms. In my search for an aesthetic that challenged my modernist training and the ubiquity of the International Style, deconstructivist architects were therefore inevitably referenced and inspirational in my conceptual thinking. Of particular influence was the Olympic Archery Range, designed by Mirales and Pinos in 1989 (Fig.34,35). I was struck firstly by the abstract plan that juxtaposed both angular and curved lines. But also of specific influence was the contrasting form of the weighty, concrete roof planes, suspended on and hovering above skeletal, angled steel columns.

Although there was a requirement to display different styles, ranges and types of garments, shoes and accessories, I wanted the layout to be kept as open plan as possible. Measuring only one hundred square meters in area this was not a large space. The implementation budget for this project was a fraction of the spend allocated to Miyake and Joseph stores. However, we did have the opportunity to specify some materials of substantial quality to reflect the calibre of Michiko's clothes. These materials included terrazzo, solid oak, walnut, and expanded metal mesh. Differentiation between the various product groupings was made through changes in level and the surface finish of the floor. Terrazzo was dominant at the front of the store and extending outside. This was specified for its visually lively, textured quality. Natural solid oak was used centrally on the floor around the customer service area and the floor of the fitting rooms as it was a softer material for shop assistants to stand on all day long

32 Michiko Koshino - View from entrance to the store with raised central cash desk

33 Michiko Koshino - Cash desk looking toward the entrance and Neal Street



34 Olympic Archery Range, Barcelona – Miralles and Pinos, Competition winner 1989. Dynamic curved and angular juxtaposition of forms on plan, creating vistas through the site

35 Olympic Archery Range, Barcelona – Miralles and Pinos, completed 1991 ready for the 1992 games. Angled frames and hovering concrete planes instill energy and movement appropriate to archery

and also for customers to stand on when trying clothes on. To the rear of the store a carpeted area added further warmth underfoot for trying on shoes. The same carpet finish also continued up the rear wall behind a shoe display, subverting perceptions and normal expectations regarding the conventional use of this finish; wall becoming floor, floor becoming wall.

The most obvious reference to the idiosyncrasy of Michiko Koshino as a fashion designer is evident in the design of the fitting rooms made of stretched neoprene, a signature material used in many of Michiko's designs. There were three fitting cubicles located to the rear of the store but visible and on public display (Fig.36). The stand-alone structures were conceptually inspired by Victorian female mobile bathing machines (Fig.37) that were drawn into the sea to protect a lady's modesty. As the timber floor of each cubicle was raised off the ground it was necessary to step up to the entrance. Further effort was then required to unzip the neoprene, as if opening a wet suit, to access the room that also symbolically referenced an outer garment. Although this action was sometimes aided by a store assistant, it was felt this challenge, contrary to possible intimidation, would appeal to the more flamboyant of Michiko's customers and theatrically highlight their intention to purchase in addition to the activity itself. The floating and hovering above the ground aspect of these fitting room structures was intended to equate again to the lightweight quality of Michiko's seminally designed inflated jackets and the soft lightness of neoprene as a material.

The success of the store was acknowledged through its popularity and appeal to London's nightclub fraternity, Michiko's most ardent supporters. It became a place to gather in or outside, whether shopping or not, a place to meet like-minded friends and make new ones, while listening to and experiencing the latest music endorsed by Michiko and her followers – it became a daytime club. The design was featured widely in the design press, including, *Blueprint*[23], *Designers Journal,* [24] *Sportswear International*, plus *The Guardian* and *The Independent*[25] national newspapers. It was also selected for inclusion, the following year, in the publication *International Interiors 3* by Lucy Bullivant [26] "a comprehensive biennial survey of leading new public design". The store was featured alongside projects by our contemporaries, including Eva Jiricna, Powell-Tuck, Connor and Orefelt, David Chipperfield, Ben Kelly, and also some of my international heroes at the time, Philippe Starck, Shiro Kuramata, Morphosis and Lapena and Torres. The project also won a National Association of Shopfitters Award for Best Store Design in 1990 and it was one of only two projects shortlisted for a *D+AD Gold Medal* [27] that year. Ironically, Stanton Williams won the Gold Medal for their first Issey Miyake store.

While clearly influenced by Deconstructivism and related forms, the aesthetic of this design was considered to be original and struck a chord with both Michiko's customers and commentators on contemporary public interiors. Although the recognition of its design contributed fundamentally to the development of my practice, the aesthetic now sits rather in contrast with the understatement of my later work and current thinking. I see the design from today's perspective as rather complex in form and somewhat stylised. Paradoxically, that is probably what led to its appeal, as the store image

36 Michiko Koshino - Neoprene fitting cubicles
37 Victorian female bathing machines inspired the neoprene fitting room design

38 Michiko Koshino – Suspended lighting and wall displays
39 Michiko Koshino – Shoe display area and bespoke seating illustrating the carpet running up the wall, behind the shoe display shelving made from expanded metal mesh

contrasted so strongly, as Michiko had hoped, with the minimal, architect designed, interiors of other key fashion brands such as Issey Miyake. It is also ironic that the designs I produced for my first and only Japanese client were so different in aesthetic to my later works, influenced particularly by Japanese simplicity and restraint, that at the time Michiko was so keen to avoid.

Following the launch of the Michiko London site in Covent Garden, Wayne Hemingway commissioned us to design a third store for Red or Dead in Neal Street (relocating the existing store a few doors down). After witnessing the success of Michiko's flagship store, Hemingway committed to a considerably higher budget on the new store which enabled us to contract a legitimate shop-fitting company to manage and quality control the project. This paid off, resulting in the most satisfying design I produced for Hemingway. The colour and material texture of this store was a complete contrast to the first two stores. Building on the experience of the Koshino design we introduced a rich pallette of materials including woven wire mesh, bronze, sand blasted steel and plywood. This store saw a return to more ordered Modernist principles and influences, chiefly inspired by Chareau, Scarpa and Steven Holl (Fig.40). Colour choice was informed by the colourways used in Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche, that I had recently visited. The rich confidence in colour statement reflected the growing self-assurance of Hemmingway's brand (Fig.41,42).

On completion of the two stores in Neal Street in 1991, I was introduced to another fashion designer who was gaining recognition at this time called John Richmond. This in turn led to us designing and implementing two stores for Richmond, again in Neal Street (Fig.43,44), which was quickly becoming a destination for the more edgy, trendy fashion brands to establish themselves. The street therefore became a showcase for Fern Green's interior design output for a while and this led to contacts being made with other fashion retailers and wholesalers.

Nigel Green and I developed a close working relationship during this time and we were in practice together for sixteen successful years. We generally collaborated at the design stage of all projects. Our roles differed in that I tended to front up projects, being more client facing. So I would generally lead the concept thinking and presented most projects. Nigel often took greater control during implementation, with responsibility for organising the detail drawing package and day-to-day studio management.

40 Giada Showroom, New York - Steven Holl, 1987

41 Third store for Red or Dead, Neal Street, London, 1990
Ground floor viewed from the entrance
42 Third store for Red or Dead, Neal Street, London, 1990
View from staircase connecting to the basement

43 Boutique Destroy store for John Richmond, Neal Street, London, 1991
44 Second store for John Richmond, Neal Street, London, 1991,
dedicated to selling his couture range

Notes

1. Penny Sparke and Susie McKellar, *Interior Design and Identity* (Manchester University Press, 2004), 75.
2. Anne Massey, *Interior Design since 1900* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990), 173.
3. Ibid. 174, 187.
4. Ibid. 201.
5. Penny Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and Culture - 1900 to the present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 200.
6. Drew Plunkett, *Revolution: Interior Design since 1950* (London: RIBA Enterprises Ltd, 2016), 116-119.
7. Rasshied Din, *New Retail* (London: Conran Octopus, 2000),
8. Guy Julier, *The Culture of Design* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2000), 16.
9. Rodney Fitch, *Fitch on Retail Design* (Oxford: Phaidon,1990), 8.
10. Guy Julier, *The Culture of Design* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2000), 19 – quoted in Jones 1991:18.
11. Catherine McDermott, *Street Style : British Design in the 80s* (London: Design Council, 1999), 119.
12. Ibid.
13. Gareth Williams, *The Furniture Machine: Furniture since 1990* (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 20.
14. Anne Massey, *Interior Design since 1900*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990), 172.
15. Catherine McDermott, *Street Style : British Design in the 80s* (London: Design Council, 1999), 104.
16. Jean Whitehead, *Creating Interior Atmosphere -Mise-en-scene and Interior Design* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2017), 34, 35.
17. *Design Week,* (London: Emap Publishing, December 1987)
18. Henry Sutton, "Foot Fantasies", *Designers Journal*, (London: Emap Publishing, April 1988)
19. Ibid.
20. David Chipperfield, *Theoretical Practice* (London: Artemis London Ltd, 1994), 9.
21. Peter Davey," Interior Spaces", *Architectural Review*, January edition (London: Emap Publishing,1989)
22. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (Butterworth and Co., 1989), 2.
23. Martin Pawley, "Zips, neoprene and Koshino's new shop," *Blueprint,* (April 1990): 10. See Appendix 1
24. David Redhead, "Made to Measure," *Designers Journal,* (July/August 1990): 29-32. See Appendix 2
25. Claire Haggard, Still crazy after all these years, *The Independent, (25* August 1990). See Appendix 3
26. Lucy Bullivant, *International Interiors 3* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 152-153. See Appendix 4
27. *Design and Art Direction Awards,* https://www.dandad.org/en/d-ad-awards/

CHAPTER 3

A DIFFERENT KIND OF PLACE

Haptic Experience
Emotion and Spirit
Kokoro and the Senses
Challenging Perceptions

PUBLIC WORKS:
2 LSDC Ayer – Advertising Agency
3 Uncorked Wine Merchants
4 BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition

THREE

During the period 1995-2000, in contrast to the growth in studio activity with high street brands and roll out retail designs, my practice also designed a number of one-off interiors for other types of use. The public works selected for this chapter are a workplace reception, a retail space for wine and a temporary exhibition. I have selected these particular interiors as they illustrate how my design approach developed after the execution of the earlier projects for Red or Dead and Michiko Koshino. Importantly, each of these projects exemplifies a different kind of place and a different experience from other places of similar use seen at the time. These public works challenged conventional perceptions of their particular typologies and in the case of the wine store offered a unique new way of retailing wine, going beyond the typical experience customers would expect.

Haptic Experience

There is a holistic spirit to these places that emanates not only from their fundamental purpose, but also from an additional layer to the design that elevates, reinforces and celebrates that purpose, on an experiential level. Each project extends the design response beyond the practical needs of the business or client. While the aesthetic was also important and design trends of the time influenced this, the way the space would be physically experienced and emotionally responded to became a more fundamental concern in informing the appearance of the place. In the design of all of these projects I therefore became far more preoccupied with individual experience than in earlier projects.

In addition to their primary function, these projects offered a cultural experience. It was through executing these projects that I became more interested in the atmospheric and haptic quality of space. Materiality and mood rather than the superficiality of the place's aesthetic form came to the fore in the design process. I was aiming to instil a sensory experience in the inhabitant's perception of each place. However, it is evident in the advertising agency reception that I still felt it necessary to add interest through the dynamic of visual form, rather than rely on the restraint of lucid design ideas relevant to the subject, as illustrated in the wine merchants and the exhibition. Materiality had previously played an important role in my design process, but now its haptic quality and relationship with light became primary considerations, which had a major influence on the resulting mood of these particular places.

It was during this period of practice, in 1996, that *The Eyes of the Skin* by Juhani Pallasmaa[1] was first published. Pallasmaa wrote this text out of concern about the dominance of the visual image and the suppression of other senses in the way that architecture was taught, conceived and critiqued. The emphasis he placed on haptic and other senses in the experience of buildings resonated with me greatly and endorsed the thinking that I had adopted in executing these projects. Through applying this thinking to the execution of the public works described in this chapter I began to confidently develop my personal position in approaching the design of interiors.

Emotion and Spirit

Other influences on my design thinking at this time were diverse. In addition to work of contemporary architects and designers, I was inspired in particular by artists and sculptors, such as Giorgio Morandi for the attention he drew towards the ordinary, by highlighting the presence of everyday objects in his sparely executed still life studies (Fig.1), and Eduardo Chillida's simple but denotatively spatial and textural sculptures in alabaster, stone and steel (Fig. 2).

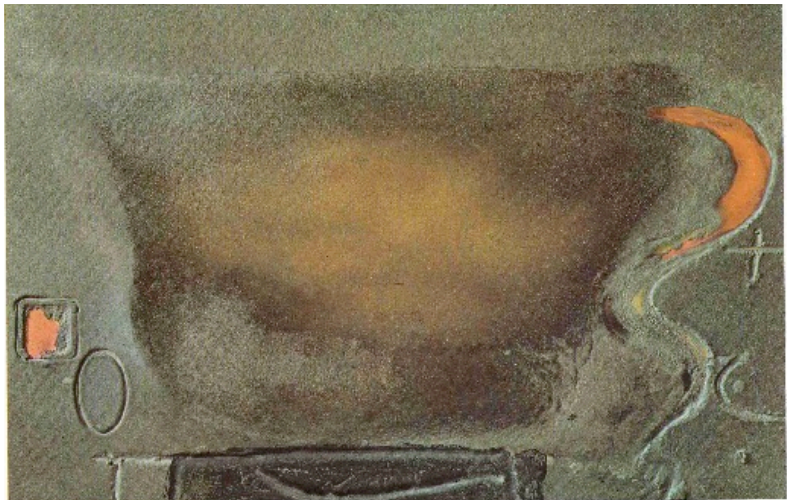
I became familiar with the work of Catalan artist and theorist, Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) whilst studying on my BA and my fascination with this artist has been sustained to this day. Initially drawn to the abstract texture and rich materiality of his paintings, (Fig. 3, 4) I also empathise with an intense spatial quality in them. The layering of each work in terms of material and meaning engages on both an emotional and spiritual level. The response that this work evokes in me, through the sometimes almost violent marks on his canvases and its rich colour sensibility I find deeply moving. The following quotation is from an interview with Tàpies in an *Omnibus* documentary about his work, first aired on BBC2 in October 1990. The film had a profound effect on my design philosophy. It connects his work pertinently to my practice and also to the context of my earlier furniture designs.

> Designers only think of the material use of things: if they are making a chair for example, the only question that interests them is whether it is comfortable to sit on, ignoring the fact that it has a spiritual function to fulfil…I think that works of art should startle the viewer into thinking about the meaning of life. We are all aware that people are growing more and more alienated as a result of advertising, publicity and consumerism which is foisted on us by mass media. [2]

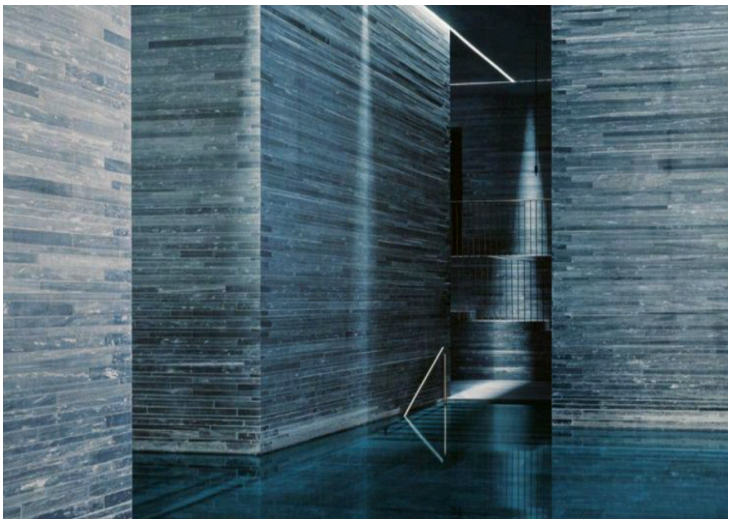
The inference of alienation instilled by advertising and publicity, before the dawn of the internet, resonated deeply with my retail work. Also, I reflected again on Davey's article, referenced earlier, that undermined the merit of transient retail interiors and their lack of tectonic integrity. I concluded that the design of commercial interiors can and should have equal capacity to evoke such a response as Tàpies, stated, whether they relate and respond to the host building or not. Furthermore, it was specifically this spiritual quality that I recognised in the interiors that I was attracted to and that I found inspiring.

During the late 1990s I became aware of the work of the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor. I was drawn to his emotionally evocative work and his, inside first, approach to designing buildings. Like other architects who I have found empathy with, such as Juhani Pallasmaa, Alvar Aalto, and Colin St John Wilson, Zumthor's concern is to capture the essence of a place through the creation of a particular atmosphere in his buildings, the most eminently successful of which is the thermal baths he designed at Valls, Switzerland (Fig. 5,6). Zumthor designs by starting with material and the bringing of material together in a crafted construction process. His design ethos and process have been well documented and my later practice was strongly influenced by his writing on architecture, in particular *Thinking Architecture* (2005) and *Atmospheres*: *Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects* (2006).

1 Topos IV – Eduardo Chillida, 1985
2 Still life with five objects – Giorgio Morandi, 1956



3 Huella de cesta sobre ropa – Antoni Tàpies, 1980
4 Taza – Antoni Tàpies, 1979



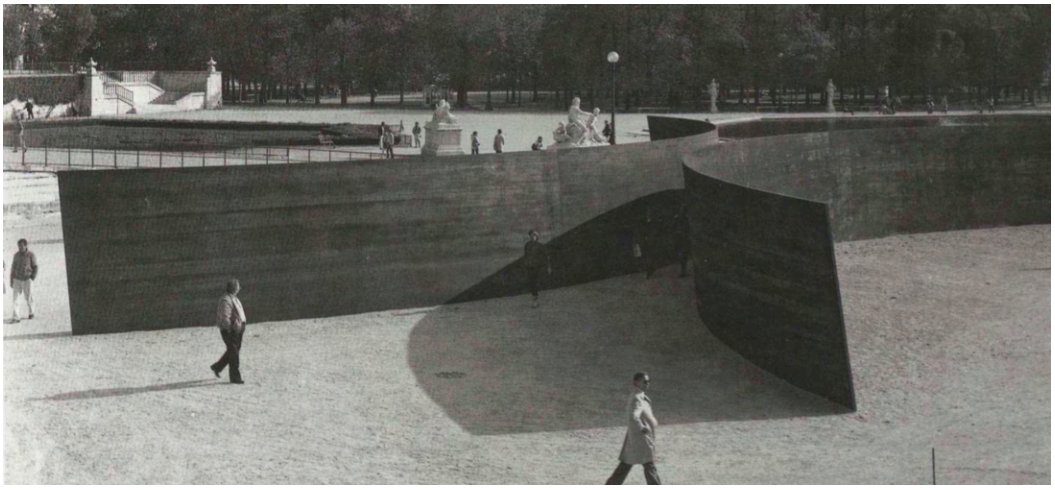
5 Therm Vals - Relaxation area, Switzerland – Peter Zumthor 1996
6 Therm Vals - Pool, Switzerland – Peter Zumthor 1996

Material selection and spatial organisation generally drove the initial design thinking in these selected projects. Design concepts were developed by gathering appropriate materials together and considering how they could be deployed, arranged and manifest in the finished interior.

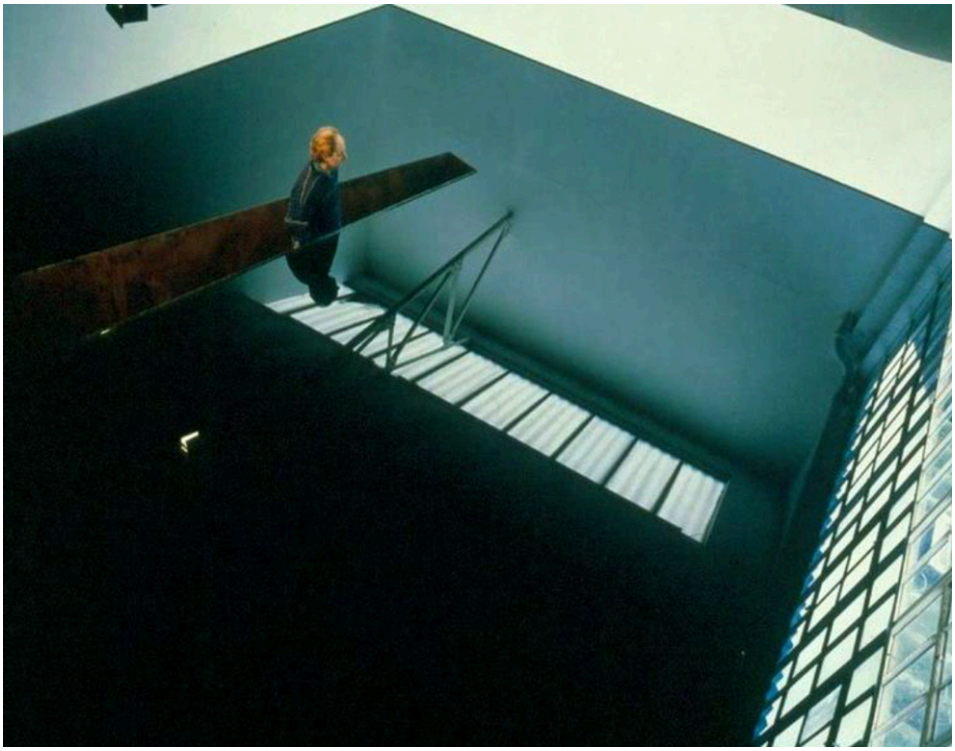
Kokoro and the Senses

In 1993 I wrote an article for *Design Review*, a journal produced by the Chartered Society of Designers. The article appeared as part of a series entitled *My Bible*,[3] which identified specific texts that had inspired and influenced the contributing designers. The book I chose was *In Praise of Shadows* by Jun Ichiro Tanizaki.[4] This short narrative on aesthetics was first published in Britain a couple of years earlier, although it was written in 1933. The article illustrates my emotional response to reading the book at the time. I make specific reference to it here as the book had an important influence on the design thinking relative to these public works. The narrative sensitively relates to public preoccupation and obsession with the visual image. It focuses in contrast on celebrating the multi-sensory experience of everyday life. The text concludes with a warning that in the potential disconnect with tradition, sensitively progressive design will be compromised and the atmosphere evoked traditionally by a world of shadows will be lost. It was clear from reading this text that Tanizaki was concerned about the demise of what I refer to here as kokoro [5], the heart of things. Tanizaki blamed this loss on the technological advances of the industrial age.

Inspired by *In Praise of Shadows*, atmosphere and mood within the interior became increasingly important to me, as I aim to illustrate in the design of the following public works. Influences were also found in the work of particular sculptors and installation artists at the time, due to the atmosphere created and the resulting impact it had on those experiencing their work. Two works in particular have had a lasting influence on me due to their material quality and spatial impact. Richard Serra's Inclined Rolled Steel installations had a dynamic spatial presence due to their scale in a single material and colour (Fig.7,8). The raw and industrial imposing quality of the thick self-structured steel sheet contrasts with the architectural scale of their elegantly fluid shapes, evoking an essence of beauty but also uncertain stability. Richard Wilson's 20:50 oil installation,1987 (Fig.9) was also mesmerising in its meditative quality that challenged preconceptions of the room. On entering the gallery room, the impression perceived was that the gallery was filled with sump oil up to waist height, emphasised by a walkway constructed, as with Serra's sculptures, in Corten steel. This cut through the oil, allowing the visitor to experience a feeling of being almost immersed within the oil. The reflective quality of the oil's perfectly flat surface mirrored the ceiling and its pungent odour added to the illusion of the exaggerated volume of oil present. In fact, the oil layer was only a few centimetres deep. The strategy common to both of these installations was to evoke a potent emotive experience through mentally engaging the occupant encountering the space in an exaggerated reality. Movement and the way the visitor is drawn through the space were particularly important factors in the enhanced experience of the rooms that these installations occupied. These works also evidenced that the atmosphere of a place is not necessarily manipulated merely through the careful control of light within a place. It can also,



7 Torqued Ellipse – Richard Serra, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao 2003-4
8 Clara-Clara – Richard Serra, Place de la Concorde, Paris 1983



9 20:50 Oil Installation - Richard Wilson, 1987
Challenging and advancing ordinary perceptions of a room

importantly, be activated through physical human encounter with and movement through the place's spatial form and inherent materiality .

Challenging Perceptions

When I turned to other existing interiors for influence, it would be more likely that they were designed by a select few architects whose work I empathised with, as noted earlier, rather than other interior designers. Although, an exception would be the interiors produced by the French multi-disciplinary designer Philippe Starck in the late eighties and early nineties. Each of Starck's interiors were original and fresh. They eclectically combined historic detail with modern, wit with irony, and complexity with simplicity. These places were memorable both aesthetically and experientially, through the theatrical atmosphere that pervaded. Also particularly relevant here, these interiors were atypical places. Mainly restaurants and hotels, they were social places but of a different kind, that challenged visitor perceptions. Starck appeared to take great pleasure in subverting the norm often through witty exaggeration.

> Starck stages his effects not at random but to unleash carefully orchestrated perceptual environments where the visitor can never afford to be complacent, but must be braced for a repertoire of visual tricks which invert customary visual and functional associations. His ironic devices play with our prejudices about taste. [6]

In the early to mid 1990s (Fig.10) Starck's work resonated with me as I was still interested in challenging my Bauhaus principled education and early training in practice with Conran Associates. There lingered a feeling that in order for my work to gain attention, respect and publicity my designs had to communicate more than conformity with principles of order, harmony and symmetry. The influence of this sustained preoccupation is evident in the reception design for LSDC Ayer, illustrated by the going off-grid planning of the inclined curved wall and the lilac frame skewed obliquely across the window line (Fig.11,12). This juxtaposition of asymmetry with the otherwise ordered approach to the rest of the interior, again influenced by Deconstructivism, seemed appropriate to this client's needs and image. However, looking back on this project now, I am rather critical of its visual over indulgence, perhaps too influenced by Starck's indulgent interiors.

The objective with the three public works described in this chapter was to create in each case a different kind of place, by adding an experiential quality that was authentic and relevant to the use but that also added an emotive, sensory layer to influence the visitor's perception. These works therefore illustrate a gradual move away from prioritisation of form and function and the visual sense, towards a greater preoccupation the experiencer's potential physical encounter and engagement with the interior. As I illustrated in the last chapter the inception of this preoccupation is evidenced through challenging preconceptions of the typical cash desk and fitting room in the Michiko Koshino store.

10 Paramount Hotel, New York – Philippe Starck, 1990
Exaggerated notion of place, through inverting customary visual and functional associations

PUBLIC WORK 2

LSDC Ayer

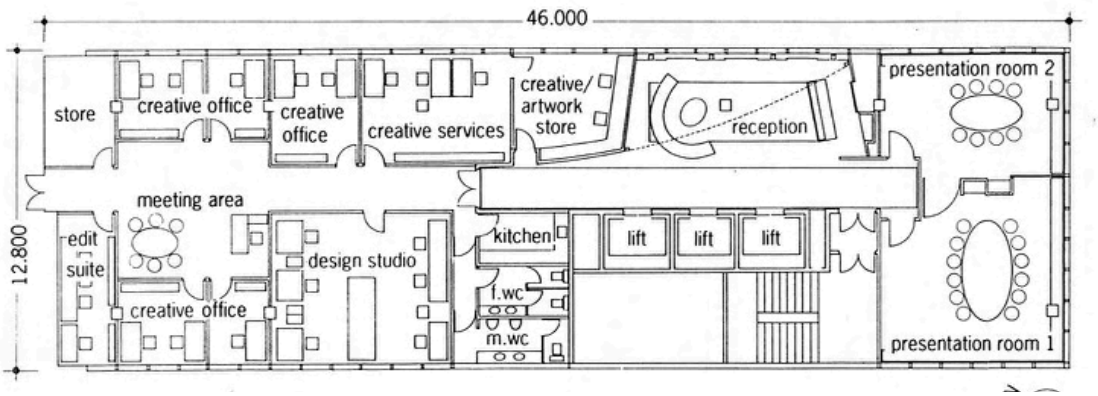
Advertising Agency, London 1991

2 – LSDC AYER ADVERTISING AGENCY

This commission involved the relocation of LSDC Ayer advertising agency into two floors of a sixties tower block in central London. We were required to completely refurbish the ninth and tenth floors and design and fit out the agency's new offices (Fig.12). This move was necessary as the company had far outgrown its previous premises. Although the agency was in its infancy it had witnessed rapid creative growth since its formation due to the split of the successful partnership Leagas Delaney. In the early 1990s video advertising was becoming established as a ubiquitous marketing force, exploiting mainstream television and successfully aligning itself with the new growth in influence of video promotion in popular music. LSDC Ayer were at the forefront of video advertising at this time and they were attracting some of the best creatives in the business to work for them.

The creative focus in this project was in the design of the reception area, which would be the visitors' first point of physical contact with the agency, the place where the initial perception of the company would be imparted. The client brief was quite open, the main concern being to keep the creative advertising personnel close to the presentation and meeting rooms on one floor and the administration staff on the other floor, in an open plan office space that would foster collegiate interaction and social community. The layout of the floor space, inherited prior to refurbishment, comprised of cellular office space accessed via a single, central corridor. This arrangement was insular and failed to exploit the natural light that entered the building at this level on both sides, via continuous ribbon glazing on the outer walls. Our design was to address this issue. The only other key requirement of the brief was to do something special, but reflective of the agency image, with the reception area, that would have a memorable impact upon visitors. The agency had a reputation for wit and irony in their work and they were keen to subtly reflect this in the interior design.

As access to the agency would predominantly be via the lifts, due to the high level location, it was important that the reception was adjacent to, and obvious, when exiting the lifts (that were aligned three in a row). The client agreed that it would be preferable for visitors to arrive on the tenth floor and then if they were required to go onto the ninth floor it would be better for them to walk downstairs rather than up. The lifts were existing and centrally located on the long side of the rectangular floor space and so this resulted in the reception space splitting the usable floor space into two distinct but separated areas. This functional requirement led to a significant organisational and visual influence on the reception design. We planned the floor so that the creative areas, where the inception of the advertising concepts took place, were located on one side of the reception and the rooms where the creatives were briefed and their ideas were presented back to clients were positioned on the other side. The connection between these two areas was manifest, physically and visually, through the introduction of a wooden floor finish that created a ceremonial pathway from one side of the reception to the other that symbolically celebrated the relationship between the creation and communication of



11 LSDC Ayer, advertising agency reception, with inclined curved wall and oblique frame

12 Tenth floor plan showing the reception area

ideas. The timber lining ends by merging into a matching wall lining at the point of entrance to the meeting rooms, to enhance the connection of the two. Awareness was raised, through this detail, of the floor as navigator, deliberately acknowledging and enhancing the experience of physical transition between creative and client areas. The pathway was influenced by the carpeted route through from restaurant to bar in the Royalton Hotel, New York, designed by Starck (Fig.13), and it was also emotively informed by the directional formalness of typical stone paths seen in traditional Japanese gardens (Fig.14) . A further contemporary influence was the bridge link from outer street to the inside of Katherine Hamnett's Brompton Cross store. (Fig.26, P57) as also referenced in the Michiko Koshino project.

The choice of a light maple wooden floor for the pathway was to add visual and tactile warmth on arrival for the visitor who had to traverse the pathway on entry to the reception. It also metaphorically related to the warmth aspired to in the collaboration between the creative and client. The same finish of maple was also articulated in the form of a hard 'rug' beneath the seating in the waiting area. The remaining floor area in the reception was in a light porcelain tile that provided a sharp background contrast to the timber. This material contrast elevated the importance of the activities, both active and passive evident to the visitor experience.

Three other important features contributed to the resulting design of the reception. The wall adjacent to the door that connected the creative area to the reception precariously leans and curves towards the reception, emphasising and opening up the connection between the visitor greeting area in the reception and the creative hub of the organisation. The weight of this wall, emphasised visually through the application of external quality render and its inclined orientation, metaphorically relates to the weight of creative energy bursting into the reception area (Fig.15). The quirky quality and the weight and texture of this wall pays homage to Richard Serra and the engaging experience of his steel sculptures as previously referenced. But this feature also owes a debt to the unique and idiosyncratic wall form of Le Corbusier's Chapel in Ronchamp (Fig.16). The curve of the wall continued through the line of a vivid lilac coloured frame that obliquely terminated on the window line. The frame served to accentuate, particularly through its colour, the importance and contrasting porosity of the full height glazed elevation that ran the length of the waiting area.

Both of these features, the wall and frame were introduced to reflect the agency's tendency towards wit and irony in their campaigns, such as "Safe sex" for car manufacturer SEAT. These ideas also reflected the conflict I still felt at this time between a coherent, modernist but personal design approach and the need to subvert this in striving for originality, through visual statements with oblique influences. So rather than safely and purely adhering to the formal order of the rectangular building, I introduced asymmetry and uneasiness into the spatial form of the reception. As a result this may have excited or invoked unease in the client visitors, matching the uncertainty of what to expect from this untypical advertising agency.

13 Royalton Hotel, New York – Philippe Starck 1988
14 Stone pathway in the gardens of Katsura Imperial Villa, Kyoto
Exaggerating the formal route

15 LSDC Ayer reception – View along pathway towards meeting rooms
16 Inclined textured walls of Ronchamp Chapel – Le Corbusier, 1954

The design's most successful and pertinent feature was in the exploitation of the dramatic view across London's cityscape, seen through the expansive window of the reception. However, this expanse of daylight entering the reception needed to be controlled and diffused, particularly in days of bright sunlight. Importantly, we felt that the view could be emphasised and made more significant if it was limited and controlled. The cityscape was therefore brought sharply into focus by reducing the open window area down to small clear viewing apertures within fine mesh screens which were introduced to cover the entire elevation. The bespoke screens, inspired by the mesh and mild steel detailing in Pierre Chareau's Maison de Verre, (Fig.17), were introduced as a practical but more innovative option to blinds, required to diffuse the sunlight that would sometimes harshly penetrate the fully glazed elevation. But the apertures added a relevant appropriation of the city view.

The open apertures were alternated with media generated images of a city skyline, displayed on small video monitors, wittily commenting on the false and real dichotomy of living in the metropolis, as reflected through advertising (Fig.18,19). Upon arrival at the reception visitors were drawn at first to the window view and then the relationship between the recorded and real time image and the also the agency's connection to the city and city dwellers that its advertising reaches out to. This detail proved to be even more successful than expected as the blurring of peripheral vision by the fine mesh led to the perception of an even sharper, more focussed image of the real view through the open apertures. Reflecting upon this detail in the design brings to mind Juhani Pallasmaa comment on focused vision in *The Eyes of the Skin.*

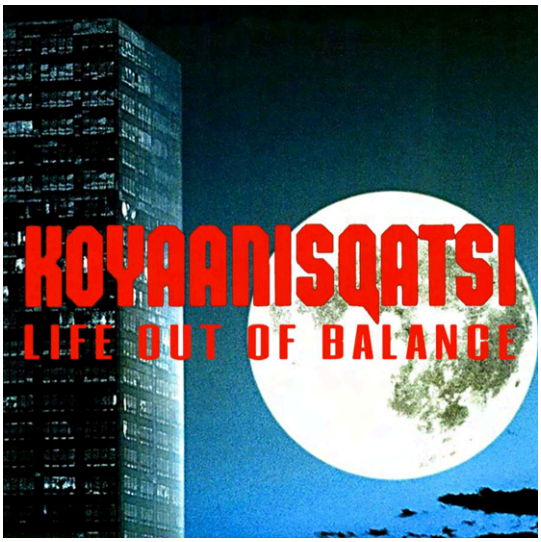
> The very essence of the lived experience is moulded by hapticity and unfocused peripheral vision. Focused vision confronts us with the world whereas peripheral vision envelops us in the flesh of the world. Alongside the critique of the hegemony of vision, we need to reconsider the very essence of sight itself. [7]

The focused view would not have been so successfully achieved without the blurred counterpoint of the peripheral mesh screen which enhanced its sharpness and clarity. Through framing and focusing on parts of this cityscape and alternating these viewpoints along the window line with advertising film from LSDC Ayer's portfolio, emotions and perspectives that conflict between real and ideal aspiration, past and present, true and false are evoked and challenged. In our initial design proposals we suggested that the film Koyaanisqatsi (Fig.20) should be played and alternated with presentation of the agency's show-reel to further enhance the impact on our lives of the global city. But perhaps this was seen as too much of an affront to global consumerism as I don't recall that the agency took on this proposal. The film has a website that states:

> Koyaanisqatsi attempts to reveal the beauty of the beast! …If one lives in this world, the globalised world of high technology, all one can see is one layer of commodity piled upon another. There seems to be no ability to see beyond, to see that we have encased ourselves

17 Raw mild steel and woven mesh screen in Maison de Verre, Paris, Pierre Chareau, 1932 – Influenced the window screen design

18 LSDC Ayer reception - Woven mesh screens fronting the window line. Framed and focussed image of the cityscape alternated with film on small monitors



19 LSDC Ayer reception - Woven mesh screens showing diffused view of the cityscape

20 The film Koyaanisqatsi played on reception monitors at launch party of the new premises. Made 1975-82 with music by Philip Glass. Featuring slow-motion and time-lapse footage of cities and landscapes reflecting on the contemporary human, social condition

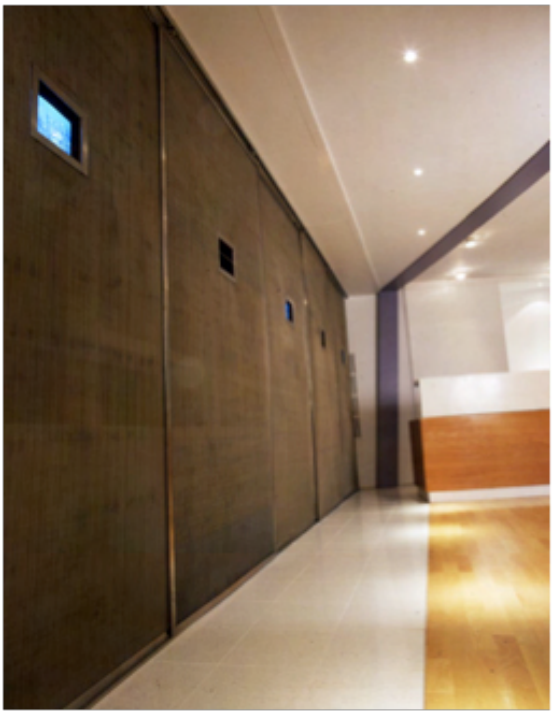
in an artificial environment that has remarkably replaced the original, nature itself. [8]

The interior became more closed to the view and internalised as natural light diminished at night-time, resulting in the mesh elevation turning darker and more opaque (Fig.21), and the internal facing monitors becoming visually dominant. If kept waiting, visitors were encouraged to relax on bespoke seating, freestanding in a sculpted arc, arranged to encourage inclusive discussion. The simple curved and inclined seating structure again referenced the engagingly elegant and pure sculptural forms of Richard Serra. The dialectic adjacencies of material and colour in this interior represented contrast in tactility, density, warmth, transparency and brightness to reflect the paradox between whimsy and seriousness in the ethos of the agency itself.

The project also illustrates the contrast in influences between the formal linear order of modernist principles and Deconstructivism evident in the tilted and curved wall and frame that broke the formal geometry. The latter, form dominant idea reflects traces of the subverted order evident in the Michiko Koshino store. I question now whether it was really necessary to angle the wall and frame, or to highlight them in brighter colours. Curving the wall to open up the space adjacent to the creative offices to the reception was a logical endorsement. Also angling the reception desk slightly towards the entrance lifts made sense, to emphasise a notion of greeting in the contact with clients. On reflection, perhaps the wire mesh and aperture window treatment was an adequate single statement to connect with the company ethos and its context within the city. The success of the art installations I had been inspired by at this time was in the impact of a single authentically executed idea, that relied on human experience through physical encounter, engagement and action rather than merely visual perception.

This public work evidences a moment of transition in my design thinking. The interior is still reflecting a preoccupation with the aesthetic of form in my work. But the influence of both site specific context and the emotional experience of the visitor are foregrounded in this interior. I propose this to be a different kind of place because the design intent locates it as more than merely a front to represent the advertising agency and its ethos. The intention was to create an installation akin to art, that could be both appreciated by the visitor as a physical experience and represent the idiosyncrasy in the agency's approach to advertising. The aim was to create a place that went beyond simply addressing the practical requirements of a company reception, a place that advanced ordinary expectations and connected the experiencer to the everyday preoccupations and peculiarities of the agency.

LSDC Ayer was documented in a publication produced by exhibition design specialists Imagination, aptly titled *Experience.*[9] It was also recognised and featured in articles on the work of Fern Green published in *Blueprint* [10] magazine by Michelle Ogundehin in 1995 and in *Architects Journal* [11] in July 1994.



21 LSDC Ayer reception - Screens darkened at nightfall highlighting monitor image
22 LSDC Ayer reception - Seating area, screens and greeting desk

PUBLIC WORK 3
Uncorked
Wine Merchants, London 1993

3 - UNCORKED WINE MERCHANTS

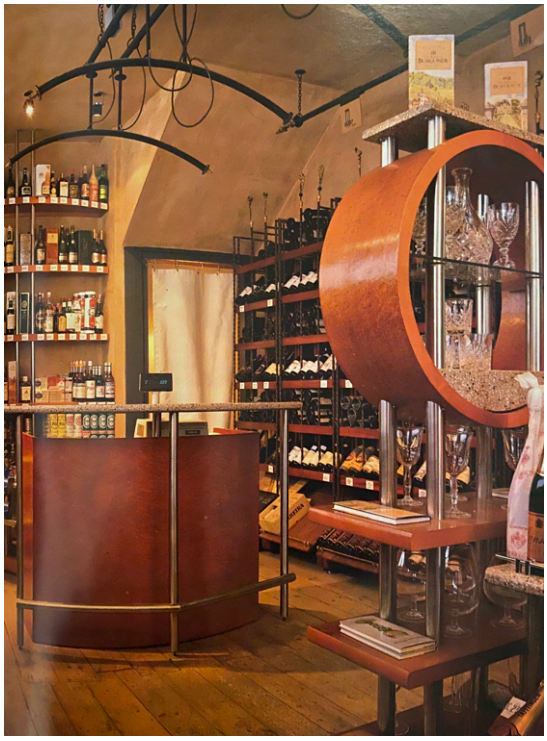
> The taste of an apple.....lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself. [12]

In this statement, the writer Joseph Luis Borges refers to the physical sensory experience of taste, elevating its importance above visual impression. This is specifically pertinent to cite here as the sense of taste was key to this public work. Uncorked Wine Merchants celebrates the ritual of wine tasting. Although the thematic focus and methodological interrelationships of all the public works cited here relate to the sensory experience of place, this particular project uniquely sets the subject as a starting point from the client perspective. The function of this place was unusually focused on sensory experience.

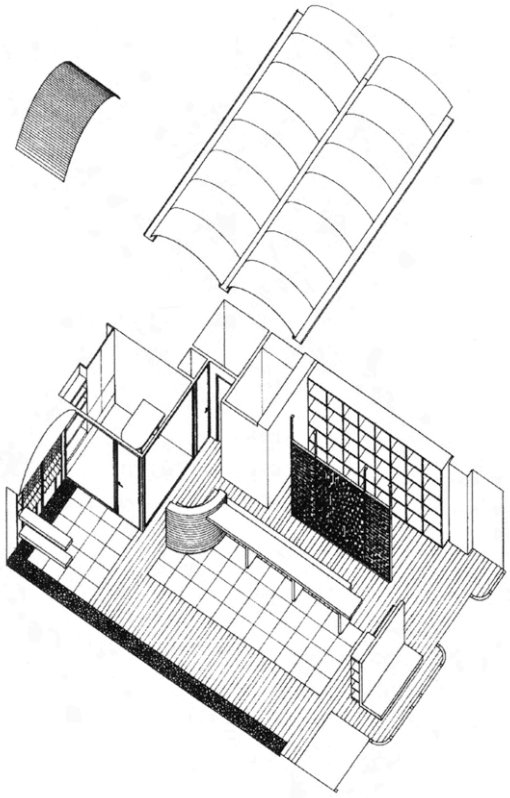
I was approached to design this wine store by two successful London businessmen. They were also wine connoisseurs and their passion for wine had led them to set up a retail wine business that was more concerned with celebrating the sensory quality of wine than 'shifting bottles off shelves'. They felt that there was something missing in the sale of wine at the time. Therefore, they were seeking someone to design a shop that focused on the experience of tasting wine. The brief was minimal as were many of our briefs at this time. The client was mainly concerned to differentiate their offer from typical competitors of the time, such as Oddbins and Threshers, by refraining from lining the walls with shelves full of bottles (Fig.23). But they also wanted to create a place where customers could learn about wine and physically experience its diversity. In initial conversations, the client was keen to replicate the image of typical traditional wine cellars. Instead, not willing to create a pastiche interior, we reflected on traditional wine making references, and sought opportunities to translate them into a contemporary design language.

The design was therefore intended as an innovative, contemporary response to the traditions of wine making, resulting in a subtle but rich composition of natural colours, textures and materials. I saw the opportunity with this brief to create a unique type of place. It would be a place of consumption but also, as with the Michiko Koshino store, a social place. In this case, a place where those interested in learning about wine and its complexities could gather to share their interest and experience. The intention was for the place to have more of a gallery feel, with a lot of open floor space (Fig.25,26). The idea of purchasing wine in the way that you might choose to buy a piece of art was a rather satisfying and appropriate metaphor.

The location of the site was within the Broadgate Centre, a large, thirty two acre (thirteen hectare) office and retail estate in the City of London, developed in the 1980s. The one hundred square metre rectangular, ground floor space was perfectly situated to appeal to the surrounding business community who were to be the target customers. Typical of this kind of retail development, the interior



23 More typical interior of High Street wine store
24 Esprit du Vin – Fitch & Co. (Mark Landini and Gabriel Murray)
Design led by form rather than sensory experience.
Metalwork by a young Tom Dixon, late 1980s



25 Axonometric presentation drawing of Uncorked interior
26 Uncorked - View across serving table towards fine wine display to rear of the store

shell was of concrete and block construction, devoid of any architectural character. It was therefore necessary to completely line out the found space with a new inner skin. However, the exposed ceiling beam structure presented the opportunity to connect metaphorically and visually to the traditional notion of the wine cellar (Fig.27,28) and its typical brick vaulted ceiling. The ceiling of the new design became an important feature of the space. In between the beams, vaulted linings of bleached oak were introduced and under the beams, galvanised metal trays carried concealed fluorescent lighting that emitted light discretely upwards onto the coffered oak ceiling, effusing a warm light and evoking a calm mood. The detail immediately set the scene and announced a different kind of interior to the visitor. At the time, generally wine shops were functionally lit with bright spotlighting to highlight product laden shelves. However, the defused form of lighting proposed was in empathy with Tanizaki's remarks about the harshness of the electric light bulb[13] . While providing ample ambient light, the feature also produced an appropriately relaxed atmosphere, for the tasting and drinking of wine; an untypical atmosphere that most wine stores did not elicit and nor do they, very often, even now.

As the focus of the store was to be placed on tasting the wine on offer, the tasting activity became the focal point of the spatial organization. The client specified that six different wines were to be available at any time to taste. A long tasting table was therefore incorporated centrally within the space to highlight its importance and enhance the ritual quality of the tasting experience. I wanted the form of the table to make an impacting impression on the space, to engage visitors in the same way that the installations of Wilson and Serra did, to heighten the experience. The table was orientated so the wine 'on taste' was offered on one side facing the entering customers and on the other side staff were always available to dispense and serve the wine and advise on selection. Bespoke wine bottle holders were designed to clamp to the service side of the table that presented the bottles on taste inclined towards the customer as a waiter might present at the table. The detail of these metal holding devices was influenced by the sensitive but raw honesty of Carlo Scarpa's metal displays for artworks in the Castleveccio Museum, Verona, a further reference to a gallery feel (Fig.30). The bottle holders were equally spaced along the table, adding to the formal order and the ritual of tasting (Fig.29). The detail of the holders emphasised the offer of the bottle typically placed on a table ready to be poured, by orientating it primed and ready for the action of pouring and angled so to invite.

A sense of ritual was also imbued through the notion of the tasting activity, reminiscent of the Japanese tea ceremony, that I became aware of through the *Book of Tea* by Kakuzo Okakura. As an expression of the principles underlying the chanoyu (way of Tea), Okakura refers to the phrase "harmony, respect, purity, tranquillity" (wa, kei, sei, jaku). "In chanoyu, practitioners enter a world in which – through common consent, discipline and long training these human ideals prevail, in contrast to the business of everyday activity".[14]

The tasting experience is as much about smell as taste. Materials and colours selected for the interior

27 Interior of Uncorked with private tasting event taking place
28 Typical traditional wine cellar

29 Uncorked - Tasting bottle holder in mild steel, clamped to the tasting table
30 Museum display detail, Castelvecchio, Verona – Carlo Scarpa 1958-64

attempted to evoke an empathy with the scent of wine in its diversity and also the traditional wine harvesting, making and maturing environment. In *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies,* Michel Serres refers to the important effect that smell can have on memory over time as follows:

> Smell appears to be the sense of the singular. Shapes return to the same position, constant or modified, harmonies are transformed, stable despite variations, perfume indicates the specific …years later, such and such a forest at that season a sunset, before the rain…a rare sense of the singular smell slips from knowledge to memory and from space to time.[15]

The intention with this interior was that the tasting experience would impart a positive memory on visitors, endorsed by bestowing greater knowledge of the subject of wine, and the engaging sensory impression of the interior.

The only bottles that were on display apart from those displayed for tasting were located in a dedicated area for fine wines, on the rear wall of the space. These wines were presented either inclined towards the viewer, as with those on offer to taste, or horizontally in a more conventional wine rack manner. The ceiling over this area was again vaulted, but here comprising of a white ribbed timber surface, to identify it as distinctive from the rest of the store. The floor was finished in York flagstones, another feature reminiscent of floors often found in wine cellars.

A cash-taking facility was physically linked to one end of the table structure. It was round and contrasting in form to project the purchasing activity. The design visually and materially references the traditional oak wine cask, with horizontally routed lines dividing the front vertically into strips echoing the modular strip construction of wine barrels. The curved form also purposely aimed to dilute any intimidation associated with cash taking and somewhat disguise the activity.

The entrance to the store was located to the left hand side of the site and was inherited as part of the Broadgate Centre generic façade that couldn't be changed. Therefore, on the left hand wall, which would typically be a prime retail space, we set-out a minimal display consisting solely of cases of wine and a mid-wall frieze which introduced and led customers into the store. Depicting maps of wine making regions in Europe, the frieze was positioned to intrigue, inform and engage visitors in the manner that an art gallery may at a private viewing. The wall was finished in textured render and the wine cases were stacked on the floor above a thin strip of sea pebbles that ran the length of and adjacent to this wall, referencing rough cellar walls and well irrigated soil that healthy grapes emanate from. The pebble detail was also influenced by the spare-ness inherent in Japanese garden design (Fig.31, 32). The floor finish was predominantly made up of solid oak planks but the area around the tasting table also consisted of York stone. Other walls were painted in tones to emulate the colour of red and white wine. It was necessary to locate the staff areas within the single open space in addition to the

31 Uncorked - Fine wine display area with office to the right. Contrastin textural floor finishes indicating Japanese garden influence

32 Japanese garden- layers and textures, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto

retail space and these areas therefore were confined to the far right hand corner of the site, to maximise the retail area. In order to make the limited retail space as open plan as possible, some of the walls to the private and non-public areas were treated less conventionally than the usual painted plasterboard partitions. The office was screened off from the retail space in timber framed glass that maintained a high level of privacy through being etched, while appropriately integrating into the store with the names of grapes reading clear out of the etched surface. Rather than totally obscuring the stock area, and thus visually compromising the spatiality of the store, a semi-transparent screen was installed to divide the stock area from the retail space. Customers could therefore see through to the stacked wine cases, which were left partially exposed due to the characterful attractiveness of the packaging. The screen itself was a woven willow hurdle, commissioned and handmade by a specialist craftsman of this traditional fence type. The hurdle was intended to symbolically relate to willow baskets traditionally used to gather grapes at harvest and it was contextualized within the contemporary nature of the interior by framing it in a raw finished angle steel frame (Fig.33-35).

The sourcing and referencing of everyday conventional items and symbols in order to repurpose them within a contemporary context and create a heightened emotive resonance aligns with architect Adam Caruso 's claim in his book, *The Feeling of Things:*

> In this environment of excess, we have found ourselves attracted to the more intimate artistic ambitions of past (architectural) traditions. …Typologies provide familiar images that can provide certain collective emotional responses. More topological material assemblies make a kind of atmosphere that can elicit an almost physiological reaction.[16]

We collaborated closely on this project with graphic designer Karen Wilks who was responsible for creating the corporate identity for Uncorked. Elements of the identity were integrated into the interior in the form of shelf information labelling; grape names etched onto the glazed office screen and collaged images representing wines and grape harvesting printed onto clear glass, layered in turn over a low wall frieze of maps, depicting wine regions (Fig.36).

The design of this store exemplified a clearer position in terms of the approach I wanted to take with my work and that I subsequently established. Previous projects, as illustrated in the earlier public works cited here, had grappled with a sort of subverted Modernism that was inspired by a mixture of contrasting references. The influences on this project however returned to and aligned more closely to my modernist education. But the objective of creating the necessary sensory experience led to a softer form of modernist vocabulary, where texture, light and materiality played a larger role. The rich textural and material quality owed a debt to Carlo Scarpa and in particular to Steven Holl and his notion of Intertwining: [17]

> With this fresh chiasma of a phenomenal architecture…The aim for a vision that … is culturally

> grounded, propelled by the idea toward touch-vision axis and toward phenomenal experience. Not only an architecture of feeling, our aim is for the intertwining of subjective and objective…The intertwining has a 'between' that alternates from within to without. Our body moves through and, simultaneously is coupled with the substances of architectural space – in philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's words 'the flesh of the world'.[18]

Holl's description of Intertwining is exemplified here in the subjective sensory engagement with and experience of the 'objective', in this instance wine. The linear organisation of the space also evidences my return to a formally layered and ordered geometric plan. This referenced the clean, ordered simplicity of traditional Japanese houses, which in turn had influenced David Chipperfield, whose quite, minimal interior for Issey Miyake I had particularly admired. In his book *Theoretical Practice*, Chipperfield claimed that modernist creeds such as 'form follows function' and 'clarity of structure' became an "excuse for a lack of real consideration and justification for ill-considered decisions".[19] In reaction Chipperfield supported his contemporaries, including Carlo Scarpa, Luis Barragan and Alvaro Siza who "explicitly addressed those elements absent in the International Style. Universality, abstraction and timelessness were confronted with the demands of a theoretical practice rooted in place, material and tradition."[20] Through acknowledgement and concurrence with this viewpoint I began to understand that rather than seeking originality in new spatial constructs, innovative interior solutions can emerge through rigorous study of the typology of use, relative to its precedents, memory and the intended sensory experience and response of the experiencer. This softer form of Modernism was advocated by Colin St John Wilson, the architect of the British Library in his seminal publication, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture*. Wilson describes:

> a persistent counter-tendency – a resistance movement opposed to Modernism's reduction to formulaic schema, unresponsive to the vagaries of human life.[21]

In the book Adam Caruso also posits that mainstream architectural practice:

> has embraced the rhetoric of the market to make work that is infused with brand recognition…each strive to generate completely original forms, unusual shapes, in plan, in section, sometimes both. Who will produce the largest and most formally outlandish project? Who will finally say stop? [22]

The book was published in 2007 and although its message was aimed at architects and an approach to building, I believe that its reflection on modernist principles, in particular relative to form following function, is also specifically relevant to anyone designing interiors, whether as part of a new build or in the reuse and remodelling of existing buildings. Although it didn't directly influence these public works, on discovering this text and Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin,* also published after the execution of Uncorked and the other earlier public works, I acknowledged the common ground in our thinking and

33 Uncorked - Curved cash desk to the left of the tasting table with tasting bottles removed. Willow hurdle screen to open plan wine case storage area in the background

34 Wicker and cleft oak harvest hotte, used to pick the grapes off the vine and transport from the vineyard to the press

empathise with this point of view and position.

The many design layers of Uncorked aimed to compose an interior and create an atmosphere that would stimulate visitors to immerse themselves and enjoy the sensory experience of wine relating to smell, taste, touch and sight. The design intent is exemplified both in the human value that St John Wilson refers to and the ethos of Pallasmaa who advocates that the design of all buildings should start with an understanding of, and focus on, the sensory experience of the inhabitant. [23] Importantly, I should emphasise at this point that the use of the term sensory experience does not infer that all of the senses should be explicitly activated through the design of the interior. To clarify, I use the term in relation to the feeling of a place, that may involve all senses or a singular sense, as opposed to merely how the place may look or visually appear.

The primary purpose of Uncorked was of course to sell wine at profit. But the business objective strove to go beyond this rational commercial objective and connect with human emotion. In doing so it provoked a design response that manifest as a different kind of place to those of the typical wine retailer; a place that delivered a unique authentic experience for the visiting customer. Uncorked hoped to gain customer trust in its knowledge of wine and therefore loyalty and a guarantee that they would return. The emotive experience of the visiting customer came first.

Uncorked was featured in *Architects Journal*, [24] illustrating the respect it gained in design terms from the architectural profession. It was also shortlisted for a Minerva Award in 1995, an Interior Design Award accredited by *Blueprint* magazine. [25]

Typically, retail interiors are built to last around five years, after which they are usually refurbished to keep up with latest trends and developing technologies. But this store has traded with the same interior for over twenty years, adhering to the same principles and offering the same reliable service. This success is a credit to the foresight of the entrepreneurial client and the resulting design concept. However, it is probably fair to say that the sustained existence of the store is also a result of adding more stock to the public space to make the place more explicitly representative of a wine distributor. The original manifestation of the design concept reflected a different kind of wine retailing experience. However, due to the lack of wine, physically on display (which was the initial client preference) the function of the place could easily have been considered ambiguous to both visitor and passer-by. The place may well have been misconceived as a wine bar. It's a shame we never had the opportunity to revisit the design and to adapt it to incorporate more display which we could have achieved without undue compromise to the original design. Irrespective of this, the design was seminal in my portfolio, as it illustrated that I could marry modernist principles, related to order, proportion and geometry and the dictate of 'less is more' with a personal empathy for the sensory experience of the inhabitant. Although sensory experience was inherent to the function of this place, I acknowledged that it should be within any place, whatever the function.

35 Uncorked - Details showing raw finished angle steel frame clamped to willow hurdle screen

36 Uncorked - Frieze detail showing map of wine region map overlaid with glass printed with wine inspired imagery reflecting the brand identity created by Karen Wilks

PUBLIC WORK 4

BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition

The Natural History Museum, London 1998 and 1999

4 - BG WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR EXHIBITION

> I enter a building, see a room, and – in a fraction of a second – have this feeling about it. [26]

So wrote architect, Peter Zumthor in his evocative book *Atmospheres*: *Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects* about the connection he identifies between buildings and the experience of them. The first impression that Zumthor refers to is an immediate emotional response; a form of perception that is felt and embodied through all of the senses, rather than merely observed. In this public work the objective was, in acknowledgement of this notion, to create an atmosphere that would evoke a feeling of still, quiet reverence and a different kind of experience of a photographic exhibition. The subject of this project was the annual exhibition of wildlife photographs and my aim was to create a particular type of atmosphere for viewing the exhibition. As with the design of Uncorked Wine Merchants, inspiration was sought through focusing on the use and the sensory experience of the visitor, the experiencer of the place. Both of these projects exemplify a change in emphasis in design approach, away from influence by visual form and latest trends in design and architecture, towards a preoccupation with physical sensory experience and the intended atmosphere of the place.

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition is an annual event featuring the best wildlife photography from around the world. We were commissioned to design the exhibition in 1998 and 1999. The exhibition was at that time sponsored by BG plc, and organised by BBC Wildlife Magazine and The Natural History Museum, where it is staged. Our design response was inspired by the study of three fundamental aspects of photography: light, focus and scale.

Previous iterations of the exhibition had always displayed photographic prints, conventionally mounted in picture frames (Fig.37). However, having had the opportunity to view some of the previous years' work in transparency form we were struck by the definition and richness of colour in the work in this format that brought a greater sense of reality to the image. We therefore decided we wanted to exhibit the photographs this way. Another fundamental influence on our design thinking was the location of the exhibition. Its home for six months was to be one of the great exhibition halls of the Natural History Museum, which are each cathedral-like in scale and architectural character (Fig.38).

> The Museum's collection of 80 million specimens is one of the world's greatest scientific resources. It was built over centuries and represents 4.5 billion years of the solar system and life on Earth. [27]

The brief set by the museum was preoccupied with functional requirements, including the quantity of images to be displayed, only eighty three chosen from over forty thousand submitted, and how they should be organised into specific categories, under titles such as 'In Praise of Plants', plus the point of visitor entry and exit. We were given no guidance or parameters to work to regarding the actual design

37 Previous photography exhibition at The Natural History Exhibition typically displaying framed prints
38 Exhibition hall in The Natural History Museum, prior to the exhibition

of the space, other than the constraint of a very tight budget. The restriction on what we could afford to build was, of course crucial and therefore the design had to be simple and easy to manufacture and implement. But aside from the financial concerns we felt it imperative that the design should be understated, as its primary objective was to clearly and engagingly showcase the photographs. Our design therefore created a neutral backdrop to allow the images came to life.

Consideration of light was the starting point, as the transparencies needed to be backlit in order to be effectively represented and registered. We presented our entire concept design to the client on mini A5 size lightboxes (reminiscent of today's smart phones and tablets). This appropriately reflected the concept of our design proposal to display the images in a bespoke light box design, formed in MDF and wrapped in corrugated plastic. The client was totally engaged by this unique form of presentation. There were only three people at the presentation representing the museum and two of us and so we sat around a small table. This led to a certain level of informality and intimacy about the proceedings that was enhanced by the miniature scale of images communicating our proposals. We presented the design ideas, again in a pitch situation, competing with other practices for the contract. The uniqueness of the presentation which reflected our simple but authentic concept made us , according to the client, "unquestionable winners".

We were concerned that each image in the exhibition should be equally worthy of being viewed by visitors. We also noted that when prints had been displayed on the wall previously the organisation of the display had made it easy to glance at a group of images at once without focusing on each individually before passing to the next. We wanted to make it difficult for the viewer to do this. Therefore, we created wings to each side of each image to make it difficult to glance obliquely across at an image (Fig.39,41). As referred to earlier in this context statement (P91), Juhani Pallasmaa states that we experience the world through the combination of focussed and peripheral vision, each affecting the other.[28] The aim was to focus attention so that each image could only be fully appreciated by standing directly in front of it. Furthermore, the view would not be impaired by the peripheral vision of adjacent images but rather enhanced by the surrounding darkened ambience of the room. By adopting this display strategy, we intended to capture complete attention from each visitor to each specific image, encouraging pause, concentration and contemplation. We had never seen this approach to the display of images in an exhibition before. The objective emulated our approach to the focussed cityscape views in the LSDC Ayer reception, and was also reminiscent of the action of looking through an open window.

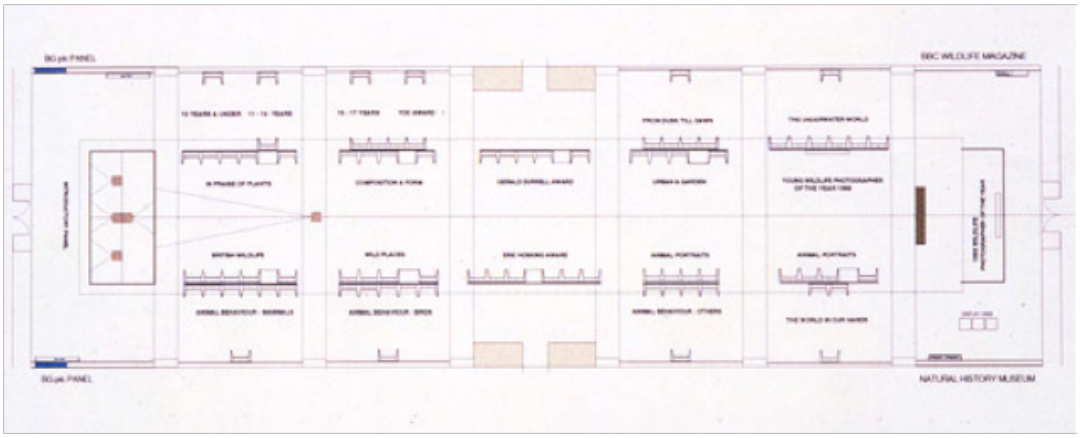
Just as scale plays an imperative part in the composition of a photograph, foreground and background, micro and macro, it was an equally important aspect in the design of this exhibition. We observed that previous iterations of this exhibition and other exhibitions held in the Natural History Museum's large halls had failed to embrace and celebrate the scale of the interior's architecture and make it inherent to the successful experience of the exhibition. We aimed to achieve this in several ways.

Firstly, we recognised the importance of displaying all of the images shortlisted for competition at the same size and at the same height, with equal respect and to be viewable easily by both adults, Children and those with wheelchair access. The winner and runner up would be exceptions in size, each being represented at larger scale, and the winner being the largest, illustrating a hierarchy of success. Secondly, as required by the brief, the images were arranged into specific, differentiated categories, each with its own identified competition winner. To highlight and signpost each category, tall panels of translucent fabric stretched up to the ceiling to create a dramatic backdrop with screen printed titles applied for each category. This feature also served to celebrate the huge volume of the hall. The height of the taut fabric panels enhanced the scale of the room and the formal order of the existing architecture (Fig.39,40).

Thirdly, the images were arranged in a linear manner on plan, inspired by the way 35mm slides used to be viewed on a lightbox and in particular by an photograph I had come across, taken in the studio of Charles and Ray Eames (Fig.42-43). The linear display format also related to and respected the exhibition room's symmetrical structure (Fig.41). The central space was left open to emphasise the spacious quality which, reflective of places of worship, also encouraged a slow processional pace in viewing the images. The overall winning photograph was located as an altar would be typically, at the far end of the exhibition and much larger than the other images, emphasising greater respect for the winner (Fig.44).

Public acknowledgement of the life-like quality of the photography was an intended and controlled objective in the design. This was endorsed through the atmosphere created by the emission of coloured light from the photographs. The multi-coloured lines of light effusing from the light boxes was the major source of illumination in the purposely darkened room. On reflection, I feel that the resulting effect was redolent of the light pouring into churches through stained glass windows which create an ethereal glow in the space. I'm thinking in particular here of the ethereal coloured light that enters the Chapel in Ronchamp designed by Le Corbusier and built in 1955 (Fig.45).

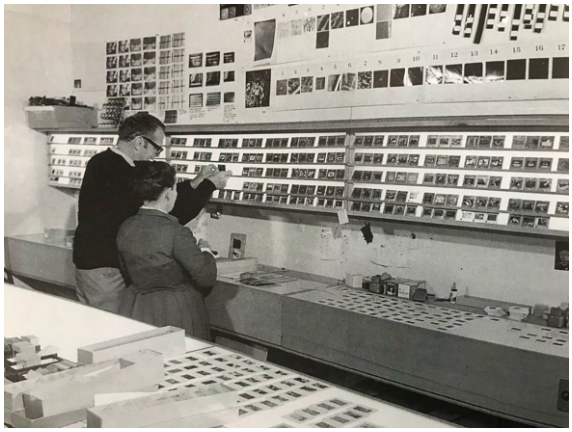
There was a single entry and exit point to the exhibition at one end of the hall. The layout of the photographs allowed visitors to enter and circulate in a route of their choice, ultimately arriving at the winner at the opposite end of the hall to the entrance. The mood of the exhibition was set upon entry. Visitors were greeted by a high wall of stretched fabric that was one side of a tall room enclosed with translucent fabric. The objective was to create immediate intrigue as to what was contained in the room that was inaccessible and empty bar three slide projectors set on pedestals. Exhibition information and shortlisted images were projected onto the fabric walls from inside the fabric enclosure. The inside outside effect of this fabric room was conceived in ephemeral homage to Rachel Whiteread's inverted plaster room, Ghost, a plaster cast completed in 1990 (Fig.46,47). Charlotte Mullins celebrated Ghost for "mummifying the air in a room".[29]



39 Exhibition - Nave-like quality of the central space, looking towards the entrance light room

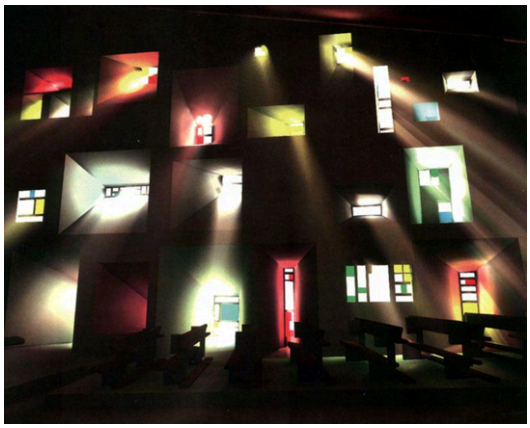
40 Exhibition - Formal linear order or the image displays, with the entrance and light room on the left and the overall winner located, centre of room, on the right of the plan

41 Exhibition - Images arranged within winged light boxes to encourage focussed viewing of one image at a time



42 Exhibition - A group of images with descriptions and credits on panel to one side. Title above is printed onto translucent stretched white fabric

43 Transparency display and organisation, influenced by this image of Charles and Ray Eames studying their slide collection



44 Exhibition - Oblique view through to the larger scale winning image positioned alter-like at the far end of the room

45 Stained glass windows at Ronchamp Chapel – Le Corbusier, 1955

We collaborated again on this project, as on Uncorked, with graphic designer, Karen Wilks, who created titles and descriptive text. To add another layer to the sensory experience we also commissioned musician, Peter Spencer to compose a soundscape especially for the exhibition. Sound was particularly influential in setting the atmosphere, enhancing reverential respect and slowing the pace of the visitor. The ambient music of Brian Eno was a particular influence here. Peter Spencer's brief was to combine synthesised music with sounds from the natural world to create a soundscape with a similar ambiance.

This project won a *Design Week* Award for Best Temporary Exhibition in 1999.

> Fern Green's winning design for the BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition uses back projection to display the winners and highly commended images in this prestigious awards scheme. The judges felt that this was a very effective and appropriate technique, given the nature of the competition, and the concept worked well in the equally appropriate venue – London's Natural History Museum. The overall impression was quite beautiful.[30]

The design was recognised for its success in creating a fully immersive experience for the visitor and the calm mood instilled, primarily through the illuminated images, enhanced by the ethereal soundscape. The Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition is the Natural History Museum's most popular and well visited exhibition and visitor numbers increased year on year during our involvement. The client representing the museum was therefore very happy with the resulting design, and asked us to design the exhibition again in 1999. The ideas relating to focus, light and scale were repeated but this time the order and organisation of images was more random The transparencies were arranged within their respective groupings in shell-like structures, but less formally, like trees in a forest (Fig.48). The shell shape again allowed for only one image to be clearly viewed at a time. The second iteration of our design concept marked the tenth anniversary of the exhibition. To celebrate this we created an entrance wall in the form of a lightbox that contained hundreds of 35mm slides, representing entries submitted and shortlisted for exhibition over the ten years (Fig.49).

The success of the design concept, evident in both iterations, was in the emotionally respectful mood that was set by the sensorial atmosphere created. Nothing in the design was more important than the objects of the exhibition. The mood was also influenced by the scent of the place. The wonderfully fusty smell of this historic museum combining curiously in the mind with the natural aroma evoked and imagined through the sense of reality reflected in the stunning life-like photography.

This again was a different kind of place, and a different type of experience. We had never witnessed photographic images exhibited in transparency form at this scale. Looking back on this work for the Natural History Museum, I consider the first exhibition to be one of the most successful projects that Fern Green executed, due to its experiential and atmospheric impact.

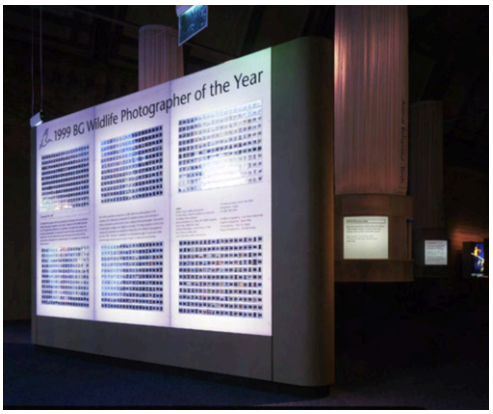
The interiors I have designed during my career have rarely been located in buildings with any architectural merit. But the inspiring setting of this hall within the Natural History Museum presented the opportunity to create an installation that integrated with empathy and respect into the existing architecture. In reflecting on this project, I am reminded of another influential interior that I had often visited and enjoyed, The Sackler Gallery at the Royal Academy, designed by Foster Associates in 1986 (Fig.50,51). The contemporary intervention of a new gallery within the characterful old RA building informed me about designing with restraint. Authenticity emerged here from the sensitive collaboration between old and new, experienced primarily in public movement, through one to the other via the intervening metal and glass staircase. The historic context was highlighted rather than ignored or abused and the new design setting provided a sensitively executed backdrop for the precious artefacts on display. I like to think that a similar aspiration was achieved with our design for the wildlife photography exhibition. I regret though that due to the large number of images required to be displayed it was not possible to arrange all of the images as a free-standing installation. Some images therefore had to be displayed on the walls, which somewhat compromised the original installation concept.

Also, due to the very tight budget allowed for implementation of the design in the first exhibition (a mere £30,000) the technology involved in suspending the large tensioned fabric panels was limited. The panels therefore lacked precision in squareness and tension desired which resulted in both printed and projected text also lacking sharpness and clarity. However, these details did not unduly effect the quality of the overall design and experience.

The works detailed in this chapter illustrate how my design process became less influenced by fashionable image and trends as my practice developed. Instead designs sought inspiration from within the very subject of study and the site context itself. The design methodology was driven primarily through seeking to understand the potential sensory experience, beyond merely the visual, of those who would occupy and visit the place in question. Designers of interiors typically design through analysis and representation in two and three dimensions. I illustrate, through these exhibitions and the interior for Uncorked that sensory experience was considered as the fourth dimension in my design process. This was articulated through anticipating real, physical movement in time of the experiencer and influenced by history, memory and the sensory perception of the individual. These projects also illustrate the importance I placed on light and its relationship with spatial form and materiality to create and express a specific and appropriate atmosphere within the interior that would in turn improve the experiential quality. In the next chapter I will describe how the requirement for greater emphasis to be placed on physical sensory experience of the interior became a crucial factor in the retail and service related public works that I executed between 1995 and 2002, in particular, due to the developing omnipotence of the internet.

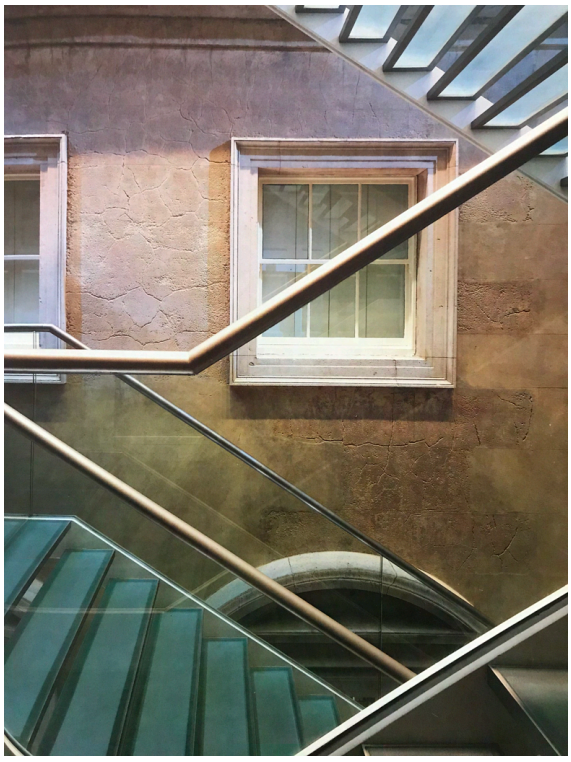
46 Exhibition details projected onto translucent fabric greets visitors on entry to the exhibition. The light from within the room, sealed to the public, creates an ethereal glow, invites intrigue and elevates expectations

47 Rachel Whiteread's inside out room, 'Ghost' inspiration for the idea above, was cast and completed in 1990



48 Second exhibition, implemented in 1999, adhering to the same concept, but with less formal arrangement of images

49 Entrance lightbox wall to second exhibition, again illustrating the influence of the slide library of Charles and Ray Eames



50 The Royal Academy's Sackler Gallery extension, Foster Associates, 1989

51 New meets old – staircase leading to the Sackler Gallery

Notes

1. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 23.
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3. David Fern, *For Love of Shadows,* Design Review, Volume 3, Issue 9, (London: October 1993), 64. See Appendix 5
4. Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (London: Jonathan Cape 1991).
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6. Lucy Bullivant , *International Interiors 3* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991),130.
7. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 10.
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9. Sean Perkins, *Experience: Challenging Visual Indifference Through New Sensory Experience* (London: Booth – Clibborn Editions, 1999), 106-107.
10. Michelle Ogundehin, *Material Worlds, Blueprint* Volume 1, Issue 113 (London: January 1995), 50. See Appendix 8
11. Marcus Field, *Architects Journal* (London: Emap Publishing, 1993). See Appendix 6
12. Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Poems 1923-1967*, (London, Penguin Books 1985) as quoted in Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* ((Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 14.
13. Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows,* (London: Jonathan Cape 1991), 53.
14. Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, (Tokyo: Kondansha International Ltd, 1989), 139.
15. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2008) As cited by Pierre von Meiss, *Elements of Architecture: from form to place* (Oxon: E&FN Spon, Routledge, 1991), 18.
16. Adam Caruso, *The Feeling of Things*, (Ediciones Polgrafa, S.A., 2008), 43.
17. Steven Holl, *Intertwining,* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 7.
18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *"The Intertwining - The Chiasm," in The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 248.
19. David Chipperfield, *Theoretical Practice* (London: Artemis London Ltd, 1994), 22-24.
20. Ibid.
21. Colin St. John Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture – The Uncompleted Project*,(London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 8.
22. Ibid, 11.
23. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005).
24. Marcus Field, *Architects Journal* (London: Emap Publishing, October 1994), 41. See Appendix 7
25. Rowan Moore and Deyan Sujic, *Blueprint* , (London: September 1994), 34.
26. Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects*, (Basel, Birkhauser, 2006) 13.
27. The Natural History Museum, London, https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/collections.html
28. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005), 10.
29. Charlotte Mullins, Rachel Whiteread, *Rachel Whiteread*: *Transient Spaces*, exhibition catalogue, (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2001)104 https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/whiteread-untitled-rooms-t07938
30. *Design Week* Award for Best Temporary Exhibition (London: EMAP Publishing, March 2000).

CHAPTER 4

FROM COMMODITY TO SERVICE – INSTILLING AN ESSENCE OF PLACE

Digital Communication
The Experiencer
Emotional Branding
Essence of Place

PUBLIC WORKS:

5 Boots The Chemists - Various projects
6 D100 - Dental Practice
7 Relax - Health Bar

FOUR

The public works described in this chapter and carried out between 1995 and 2012 further illustrate how the focus on human experience became core to my design process and key to instilling a specific essence of place in these interiors. These particular works show how my practice evolved from implementing projects predominantly focused on the retailing of commodities to a wider participation in the design of interiors for well-being services. This shift came about due to our relationship, commencing in 1995, with one particular retail client, Boots. Key aspects of the work carried out for Boots influenced my future design ethos and the public works in this chapter.

During this time, design practice was heavily influenced by the developing world-wide-web, invented by Tim Berners-Lee in1989. The internet was to have a dramatic effect on the retail and service sectors through facilitating globalised access to both commodities and services. As Guy Julier indicates in *The Culture of Design*, internet use during the 1990s grew at a staggering rate. The number of hosts, i.e. computers that offer some sort of service to networked users, grew globally from 213 in 1991 to 3,864,000 in 1994 and by 1997 there were 19,540,000.[1]

Despite the early 1990s recession that brought the 1980s financial boom to a halt, the economy grew steadily from 1993[2] and by 1995 the global expansion of retail brands was also well under way, resulting in many brands from Europe and the USA expanding into the UK, such as fashion brands Esprit, Benetton and Gap and sports brand Nike.

Julier noted that in the UK, annual expenditure on leisure activities rose by fifty per cent between 1992 and 1997. By the end of the 1990s, UK consumers as a whole spent more on leisure and tourism than on food, rent and rates put together.[3] An ever growing number of design practices were dependent on this retail expansion and due to our involvement in designing stores for leading names in fashion, High Street brands began to nourish Fern Green's development. One brand that we worked extensively for was the French women's-wear brand Kookai. Between 1992-95, we implemented fifteen stores and concessions in department stores for Kookai in the UK, plus five stores for a separate franchise in Northern Ireland. The experience we gained working for this company led, in the latter half of the nineties, to commissions to design multiple stores for Spanish womenswear retailer, Blanco and Danish shoe manufacturer and retailer Ecco. With this client list to cite in our portfolio, Boots felt confident to commission us to work with them.

Digital Communication

The transformation that the internet brought to everyday communication was mirrored in the introduction of new technology that radically affected how we represented and communicated our designs. By the mid 1990s, our design studio was transitioning from analogue methods i.e. hand drawings produced on a drawing board to digital, through the computer and Computer Aided

Design (CAD). CAD revolutionised the way that the design industry relayed information. Using CAD as a tool to communicate our ideas was quicker than drawing board drafting. The direct haptic association with drawing through pen onto paper and the making of physical schematic models, which we and our clients had previously valued was gradually displaced with the more efficient, speedy actions of the computer keyboard and mouse. This brought a different level of professionalism and accuracy to the representation of our design ideas. What we didn't appreciate at the time was the loss of individual personal expression that this new, generic mode of representation introduced. I am reminded again here, of Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* [4] that mourned the loss of sensibility and tradition to a more globalised form of efficiency. I also reflect upon the importance of maintaining a connection with haptic engagement in the design process in my recent paper, published on-line in 2018 called *Designing through Making*. [5]

The Experiencer

The focus in retail interiors is on the customer as user and buyer, because obviously commerce relies on customer consumption of goods to build profitability and success. But by the mid 1990s, due to the pressure and potential of on-line shopping plus globalised competition, retailers were seeking ways to improve and diversify the shopping experience and customer service in their physical stores. Customers' practical needs had always been of primary importance to retailers, but now their physical experience began to a primary consideration and experience became in itself part of the commodity for sale.

Adrian Forty referred to the term 'user' in *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, as one of the last terms to appear in the canon of modernist discourse. He claimed that it was unknown before around 1950, but from this time was often used to refer to a building's occupants or inhabitants. By the 1990s the term's currency was more likely to refer to the generic 'customer', implying those who could potentially "contribute to the design brief, so in this respect…an abstraction without phenomenal identity".[6] Forty references Henri Lefebvre, who suspicious of the term, wrote in *The Production of Space*, [7] "The word 'user' has something vague – and vaguely suspect – about it…The user's space is lived – not represented or conceived." Forty further explained that as far as Lefebvre was concerned, "the category of the 'user' was a particular device, by which modern societies have deprived their members of the lived experience of space (by turning it into mental abstraction) and achieved the further irony of making the inhabitants of that space unable to recognise themselves within it, by turning them into abstractions too". [8] Lefebvre also states that it would be inexact and reductionistic to define use solely in terms of function, as functionalism recommends.

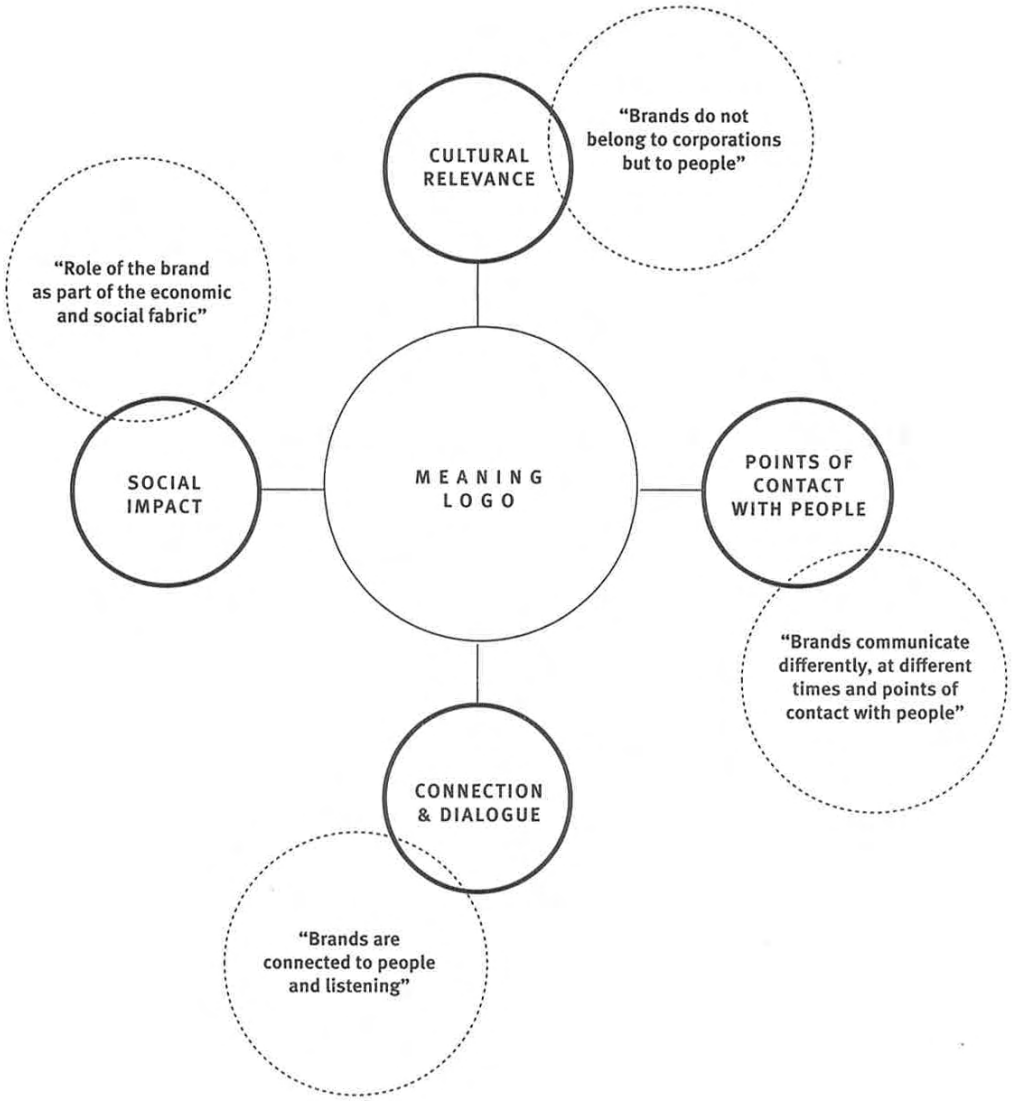
I therefore prefer to use the term 'experiencer' in this context, in an attempt to more specifically connect with actual people and empathise with the emotive potential of their lived experience, or reflecting Heidegger, their existential being. [9] My term experiencer strives to relate more personally, beyond the homogenous, mental abstraction and preoccupation with commercial gain from the customer.

Emotional branding

As internet sales grew between 1995 and 2000,[10] the need for physical stores in the future was questioned. Pine and Gilmore's seminal paper published in 1998, called *The Experience Economy,* acknowledged the internet as "the greatest known force of commoditisation of goods as well as services. It eliminates much of the human element in traditional buying and selling. Its capability for friction free transactions enables instant price comparisons across myriad sources".[11] But as Pallasmaa states, comparing virtual to real experience, in Christian Borch's book, *Architectural Atmospheres: On the Experience and Politics of Architecture,* "architecture of the eye detaches and controls, whereas haptic and atmospheric architecture engages and unites". [12] Qualifying this viewpoint, Robert Pogue Harrison also infers in *Architectural Atmospheres*, "when we enter a space the space enters us, and the experience is essentially an exchange and fusion of object and subject."[13] I concluded that the defence for maintaining physical stores was to offer the important option of an embodied experience for the experiencer and also crucially, the opportunity for physical social interaction. I therefore acknowledged that real engagement and interaction with product and place should not be undermined or displaced by virtual retailing, but acknowledged as a tangible compliment to it.

Marc Gobé's book, *Emotional Branding: The New Paradgm for Connecting Brands to People* (2000), focused on the changing attitude of brands and customer behaviour in the internet age. Gobé claimed to have written the book because he felt that whilst people loved brands, brands didn't love people back. It was time, he believed, to move from 'don't touch' to 'please touch' and for brands to recognise the importance of emotionally connecting with their customers. This message resonated with the approach I had to the design of the public works described in this chapter. Gobé highlighted the transition that was occurring, from a culture of rationality, based on functions and benefits of product, to one of desire, based on the emotional bond people have with a brand [14]. He illustrated this through a diagram proposing The Corporate Identity Relationship model, (Fig 1). In developing this model Gobé identifies three generations of consumers: Baby Boomers, born 1945-64 (approx.30% of the population), Gen-X, born1964-80 (approx. 17% of the population) and Gen-Y, born 1981-89 (approx. 28% of the population). He further cites Baby Boomers as major influencers in the demand for services and experience led retail at the turn of the twentieth century stating that, " They are now at the stage in their lives where they have acquired most of the goods they need, and they are looking for quality of life solutions and services." [15]

Rather more pragmatically, Pine and Gilmore claimed that, "Experiences have necessarily emerged to create new value. Whereas commodities are fungible, goods tangible and services intangible, experiences are memorable".[16] The paper referred to buyers as guests and the company as the experience stager. My concern with this claim is that Pine and Gilmore were turning experience itself into a commodity and elevating it to the level of spectacle. This condition was not exactly new, rather it had evolved over decades. As Guy Debord wrote in his 1967 book *The Society of Spectacle*,



1 The Corporate Identity Relationship model proposed by Marc Gobé
Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People (2000) 14

"commodification is not only visible, we no longer see anything else, the world we see is a world of commodity…life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles.[17]

Guy Julier refers to Nike's flagship store concept Nike Town as a "visitor attraction", a brand experience that blurred leisure and retail. Julier observed that it interweaved advertising with a sportswear store and company museum, translated in a cacophony of images, video walls and stage set architecture to convey the narrative of Nike and the brand experience.[18]

Commodification of the term 'experience' has become embedded in brand-speak. For example, Bruce Mau's Massive Change Network claims to "craft identities and experiences out of pure aspiration".[19] This is typical of the message exhorted today by the branding agencies that evolved from design practices specialising in retail identity in the 1990s. They have a tendency to elevate and associate the term experience as special, setting it uniquely apart from the real experience of everyday activity. In *An Introduction to Design and Culture: 1900 to the present*, Penny Sparke acknowledges the separation between experience as commodity and the real experience that we focused on enhancing in our designs for retail clients such as Boots and the public works described here. Sparke noted that:

> Through the 1980s and '90s the culture of consumption, with design at its centre, affected many areas of everyday life, from shopping to tourism. As town centres emulated theme parks and shopping malls were transformed into fantasy environments, it became increasingly difficult to separate the real from the designed experience.[20]

The public works described in this chapter offer a counterpoint to the typical branding strategy of advertising experience as spectacle. Focused on the real experience of products and services in the health and beauty sector, these works illustrate how, from 1995 onwards, concern for human centred, emotive experience was at the heart of my practice and the experiencer, rather than simply the user, was prioritised in the study of the relative commercial activity. The designed form and organisation of these new interiors did not seek to theatrically elevate the experience, but rather the designs were primarily informed by the potential encounter of the experiencer with the place and the real, everyday activities involved. The over-arching objective was to enhance the quality of the lived experience and well-being of the experiencer. Concern for human experience was therefore a salient and natural part of the strategy rather than an add-on to the process of design, or a special feature of commercial benefit to the business.

Through these works, I became far more interested in the experiencer's actions, and the agency related to those actions to lead the design process, as opposed to the form aesthetic of the interior being influenced by current trends and style. Since the turn of the century this approach has been consistently influenced by and endorsed through the writing of Juhani Pallasmaa. In 1994 Pallasmaa wrote:

> Emotions deriving from built form and space arise from distinct confrontations between man and space, mind and matter. An emotional architectural impact is related within an act, not an object or a visual or figural element. Consequently, the phenomenology of architecture is founded on verbs rather than nouns. The act of approaching the house, not its mere façade; the act of entering, not the door; the act of looking out of the window, not the window itself – all these verb expressions seem to trigger our emotions.[21]

Understanding the potential actions inherent to each interior is key to the design of these public works. The creative process was led by how the respective elements of the design, such as a merchandising system, service desk, façade or door would be engaged with and experienced through action. I am reminded here of Sartre's acknowledgement of the door handle and his character's own consciousness of being that was triggered through the action of opening a door. Although in this case the door handle was not described beyond it feeling cold to the touch, it illustrates consciousness can be activated and experience elevated through interaction with objects and the built interior form. Therefore, it follows that in advancing design quality informed by action consciousness of the designed form will be activated through haptic engagement.

In *New Retail*, (2000) Rashid Dinn reflected on the important transformation that was taking place in retail. He claimed that:

> For a large group of society who are juggling work with endless other responsibilities, traditional methods of shopping are being questioned. Since electronic shopping and home delivery are threatening at least some categories of retailers, the reassertion of shopping as a social activity is a point of difference which they need to address. [22]

As a result, we saw the emergence of hybrid places where, for instance, cafes were introduced into bookshops and banks (Fig 2), to endorse the opportunity for real social exchange. In *The Interior Comes Home*, Susan Yelavich, in reference to Gaston Bachalard's *Poetics of Space*, examines the appeal of and nostalgia for the intimacy of home in the public domain. She states that "couches have migrated to bookstores, televisions populate doctors' offices, cushions double as library chairs, and offices are sprouting small cottages and huts". [23] At the same time, flagship stores for major brands, such as Nike and Prada emerged to offer multiple experiences in their more 'spectacular' environments, such as fashion shows (Fig.3) personal shopping and an opportunity to customise your own trainers, (Fig.4). Consumers thus became prosumers, a term coined originally by Alvin Toffler in his 1980 book *The Third Wave*.[24] The term amalgamates the words producer and consumer in reference to the customisation of goods.

As Dinn highlighted, "Businesses have changed emphasis from dealing with money to dealing with people."[25] This change in strategy resulted in an attempt to make places of consumption more

personable, social, informative, friendly and therefore more enjoyable. However, the over-riding focus was still on increasing business profit.

Essence of Place

The design of the public works in this chapter evidence my position in counterpoint to the adoption of event based commercial strategies or the more obvious connections with the notion of home to manufacture experience. The essence of each of these places was not instilled through striving towards spectacle. Rather it was realised through the atmosphere created, as the quotation below describes poetically, in intangible non-matter and the relationship generated through the physical engagement between subject (human) and object (space).

> Thirty spokes meet in a hub
> But the empty space between them is the essence of the wheel
> Pots are formed from clay
> But the empty space within is the essence of the pot
> Walls with windows and doors form the house
> But the empty space within it is the essence of the house
> The principle:
> Matter represents the usefulness
> Non matter the essence of things [26]

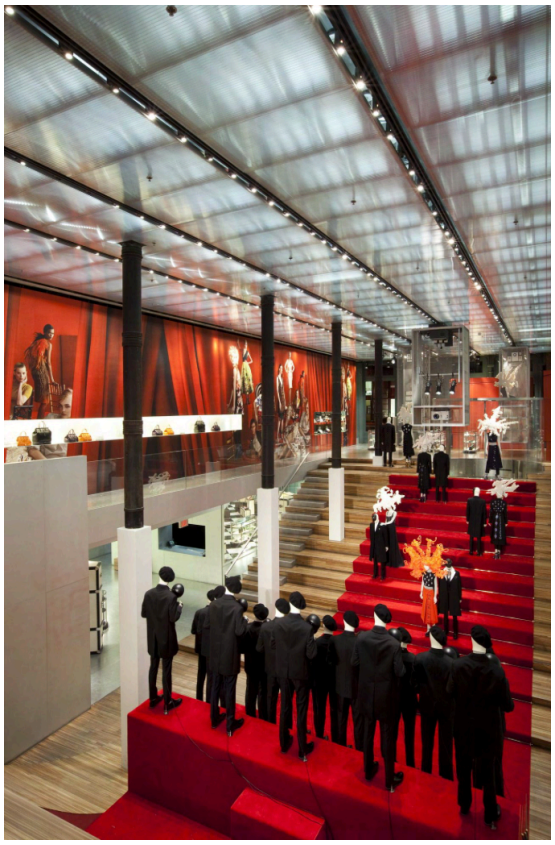
This text by Lao-Tse was referenced by the leader of the Bauhaus, Johannes Itten, to describe his teaching methods in1918. It not only sensitively acknowledges the spirit inherent in the essence of good design, but also it represents the paradox between the emotive quality in self-expression advocated by the Bauhaus and the rationality embedded in the less emotional modernist mantra of form follows function.

The objective of creating a greater sense of intimacy between each of these places and their experiencers was key to the recognition of their essence. Crucial to this aim was the embedding of agency through choice of possible actions or experiences. Also acknowledgement of the effect of personal memory on the preconception and perception of the experiencers was vital to understanding the essence of each place. As Yelavich states, "An interior that hints at memories recognises its inhabitants and gives them something of themselves to recognise. Interiors that are crafted attentively engage the brain and the senses, making room for both to explore."[27]

In Christian Norberg-Schulz's study into genius loci he describes his primary aim as investigation into the "the psychic implications of architecture rather than its practical side". He claims that a place is a space with a distinct character. Further, "genius loci" or "spirit of place", has been recognised as the concrete reality man has to come to terms with in his daily life… the task is to create meaningful

places".[28] I believe that this message is as profoundly important in the design of any interior, as it is in the design of a new building.

To discover and instil the essence of place in these public works it was necessary to search beyond the essence of the brief or brand. Notions of intimacy and memory were fundamental to my aim of crafting places of greater meaning that respond to everyday public actions and behaviour and establish, in Malgrave's words, the "humanisation or enculturation of space".[29]



2 Café within Waterstones book store, London, 1990s
3 Customising trainers in Nike Town, Oxford Street, 2010
4 The spectacular theatre of Prada, New York, 2001

PUBLIC WORK 5

Boots The Chemists

Various projects 1995-2000

5 - BOOTS THE CHEMISTS, VARIOUS PROJECTS 1995-2000

Although our previous involvement in retail had been focused on fashion stores, a key moment in the evolution of Fern Green and the consolidation of my own design approach came from outside the fashion world. We were invited in 1995 by Boots (then called Boot The Chemists) to be included in a pool of design companies, led by their then brand guardian and Pentagram Design Group partner John McConnell. The practices in the pool were to be called upon to design future Boots stores or parts of stores, both new and existing. This marked the beginning of a five-year relationship with the retailer, during which time we implemented more design concepts into a greater number of stores than any of the other design consultancies in the design syndicate. These consultancies included high profile and well established practices such as Conran Design Group, Pentagram, Hosker Moore Kent, 20.20 , product designers Priestman Goode and Eva Jiricna Architects.

Internet access threatened to make the world a much smaller place; far quicker and easier to navigate than ever before. Time and distance were therefore being challenged in meaning, through the digital provision of instant global communication 24/7. From Boots' perspective, their customers, the general public, would soon be able to seek medical advice from their competitors on-line and purchase digitally the same type of products and services that Boots offered. New government regulation was also being considered that would deregulate the sale of pharmaceutical products, allowing pharmacies to be located in supermarkets.[30] Therefore, in the near future Boots would no longer be able to rely on its heritage and dominant role as the nation's chemist. For decades the retailer had built its reputation on trust of 'the man in the white coat', represented in the form of the authoritative pharmacist who was a reliable fixture behind the pharmacy counter in every Boots store.

In consideration of these challenging factors, Boots adopted a strategy to review all aspects of their brand identity, but importantly relative to improving the quality of their store environments and their customer relationship. As a part of this initiative they proposed to move from an emphasis on the purchase of products of need, related to health, to broadening the sale of products of desire, related to beauty. This aligned with Gobé's later acknowledgement of a general societal shift from a culture of rationality, based on functions and benefits of product, to one of desire, based on the emotional response people have towards a brand.[31] Boots' aim therefore was to consolidate its expertise in Health and Beauty equally, rather than primarily focus on Health products. It further aimed to be the leading retailer of Health and Beauty products.

A further key Boots initiative was to evolve its service relationship with its customers through developing a core strength, its then unique health related expertise. During the five years that we worked for Boots, the fundamental objective was to further enhance customer trust and broaden visitor awareness of the brand through the implementation of new service ventures into Dentistry, Chiropody, Hearing Care Centres and Laser Eye Clinics, plus the remodelling and expansion of their established

Opticians service. With the exception of Chiropody we produced and implemented designs for all of these ventures. Redesigning the interiors of Boots stores and creating the interiors for new services was not an exercise in style, aimed at improving the look. Rather it was an exercise of restraint and sensitively applied understatement, focussed on engagement with the customer and improving the physical 'feel good' experience.

I do not intend, in this context statement, to describe in detail each project, as the length of text does not enable an extensive reflection across the whole range of projects. I will however, describe the key aims and outcomes in the implementation of our new designs for both stores and the larger services we were involved in. Importantly, I will illustrate how customer perception and experience of both brand and space was improved, through instilling an essence of place, specific to the brand and its retail intentions. We sought to do this by creating an appropriately engaging atmosphere that would be mediated through the relationship between the experiencer and the place itself. Inspiration for these interiors rarely referenced precedent architecture or interiors but rather evidence of mood and atmosphere created through lighting, material and the intended engagement and actions of the visitors.

Perception and critique of existing stores

The existing Boots stores were constructed very practically, with a minimally refined palate of materials, but they had previously lacked professional design input and design direction. Pentagram was therefore commissioned as brand guardian, to guide the future design strategy, due to their highly respected modernist values and ability to focus on identity and service with sensitivity and subtlety.

The existing store interiors were rationally pragmatic in layout and appearance, but were soulless. They exemplified places that Mallgrave claimed had to be "endured rather than enjoyed". As he notes in *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design*, "to live in such environments is to be diminished as a human being".[32] This analogy perhaps appears harsh, but the stores lacked any humanising aspect relating to the environment or any engaging personable quality. The lasting memory of a typical Boots store, at that time for me, was the functional simplicity and overall image of characterless white.

In *Non-Places : An Introduction to Supermodernity*, the French sociologist, Marc Augé exemplifies airports and railway stations as typical of the bland in-between spaces that he calls "empirical non-places, meaning spaces of circulation, consumption and communication". [33] Such places, Augé claims are "constrained by uniformity, by universal sameness." Mark Pimlott also comments in *Without Within* that, "Today, one is struck by the multitude of interiors that resemble each other regardless of their location. Shopping malls, airports, office lobbies, museums – interiors for a mass public – all share the same morphology, the same tropes. They have submitted to the devices of publicity and become distended scenes of consumption."[34] These observations could easily be aligned with the perception of Boots

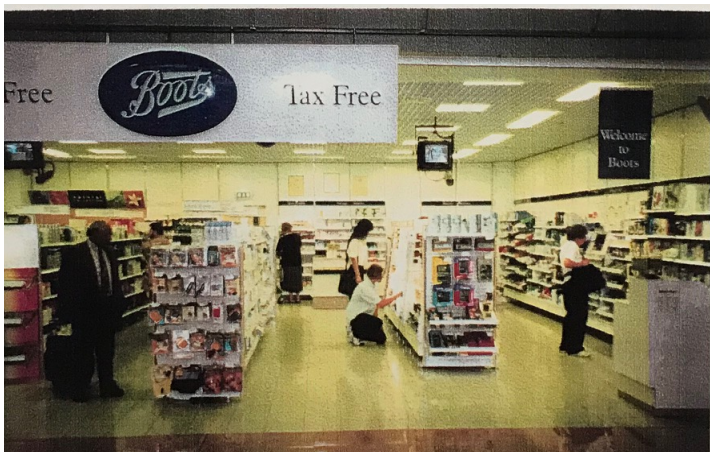
stores in the 1990s (Fig.5,6,13). In both layout and appearance they differed little from a multitude of supermarkets and as Gabriel and Lang points out in *The Unmanageable Consumer* (1995), a growing number of "US- style cheap mass retail outlets were substantially undercutting both High Street and out of town supermarkets".[35] Boots' own research concluded that its stores were perceived by customers as functional places that they passed through to purchase products of necessity. However, in readdressing the design of their stores, Boots wished to retain the understated simplicity of its existing image, while at the same time align with a more contemporary reflection of its 'look good, feel good' brand values.

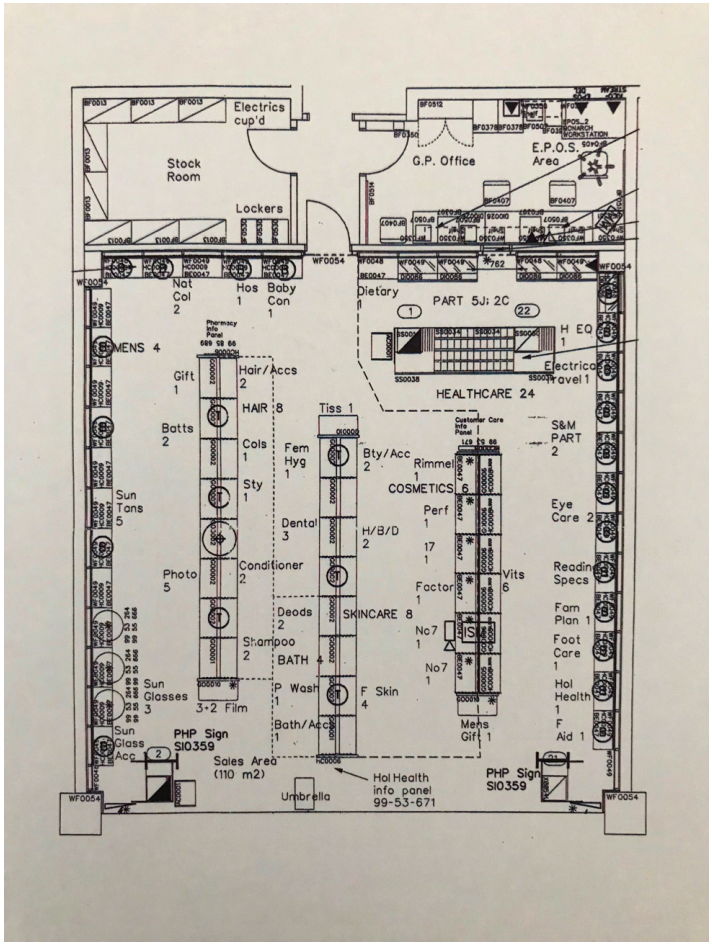
In an attempt to relate to the needs and desires of its consumers and communities in differing locations and contexts, Boots had developed its retail offer into different formats which varied in size, product focus and density. We were commissioned to create new designs for two contrasting formats of stores. The smaller Travel Store Format, comprising approximately 100 square metres of retail space, was typically located in airports and railway stations. The second format Boots called Edge of Town. Much larger in scale, with around 1500 square metres of retail space, these stores were located in large, custom built sheds on retail parks. The parks, predominantly accessed by shoppers in cars, were located on the periphery of major towns and cities. The overall objective required by the brief with both format redesigns, was to improve the quality of shopping experience and service consultation for the customer and to endorse the core brand values.

Display

Our aim in addressing the display of products was to improve visibility, access and clarity of offer and the layout and organisation within each store, in order to make it more interesting and engaging for the experiencers to shop there.

For the new design of the Travel Store Format we had the opportunity to introduce a new bespoke merchandising and integrated signage system (Fig.7-10). The existing display system used in the majority of Boots stores was a fully adjustable metal spur and shelf system, typical of the type used in most supermarkets, with no facility to differentiate between product groups. In an attempt to divorce from this basic, pragmatic image, the adjustable uprights of the new system were discreetly concealed between the back panels to create a more distinct and bespoke look and the system was built into the wall and recessed rather than applied directly to it, as previously. Although still densely merchandised, back panels of green glass and veneered wood were introduced to define and differentiate product groups on both wall and floor displays. The displays were further punctuated with promotional towers, to add visual contrast and highlight beauty and skincare products. Floor displays were made shorter in length than those existing, to allow greater freedom of customer movement and choice of direction around the store. These units were radially arranged around the central customer service and pay area, to draw customers into the heart of the store and endorse the emphasis placed on customer engagement and service (Fig.10).





5 Boots Travel Store Format, Airside at Heathrow Terminal 4 – Shopfront and interior prior to redesign

6 Boots Travel Store Format, Airside at Heathrow Terminal 4 – Floor plan prior to redesign

With the Edge of Town Format, due to overall budget constraints, we did not implement the new merchandising system. Instead we reutilised the existing wall and floor display, but again integrated it into the wall lining and focused on exploiting the architectural volume of the place. Large scale structures were introduced to help organise, categorise and highlight specific product areas (Fig.14,15). These elements penetrated the higher level space, previously ignored, and through the application of illuminated category signage and promotional offer products, they helped to orientate, navigate and direct the pace of the customers journeying through the store.

Hierarchy played an important role in this large volume, in terms of ceiling levels and size and location of signage and graphic imagery. Inspired by classical architectural order, symmetry and the formal arrangement of places of worship, (as also referenced in the later Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition) we created a high, nave like core public space with contrasting, lower ceilings in symmetrical side spaces that offered a more intimate shopping ambiance. The size of promotional images was increased to billboard scale at the far end of the store, intended to draw the customer's attention through the store.

Again, as with the later photography exhibition, the design of this store aimed to enhance both the presence and diversity of product groups and the scale of the place, to create a more rewarding experience for the visitor than they would have previously had in this type of shopping environment. But also the less prescriptive layout facilitated optional routes around the store, and greater ease in identifying specific product areas. This move away from the previous, typical supermarket layout allowed visitors the opportunity to change pace and focus, and freed up a state of agency for the experiencer to wander more freely around the store.

A similar approach to hierarchy and order was applied to the product displays in Boots Opticians
The choice of frames and lenses was made easier to understand and try on through redesigned product displays that clearly projected the frames against a backdrop of opal white tubes. Varying levels of display were introduced, from table to wall, and long runs of merchandise were avoided by projecting some wall units out from the wall at ninety degrees to the adjacent runs. The displays were therefore divided into bays that allowed for a clearer differentiation between the various categories of eyewear than was previously evident in-store (Fig.23-25).

Service

To highlight, specifically, the importance of customer service in the Travel Store Format, the central pay and information island comprised of user friendly, curved pod cash points (Fig.10). A clearly identified, separate pharmacy area was also brought to prominence through back-illuminated displays and clear signage to the rear of the store (Fig.7). This project gave us the opportunity to develop the thinking behind our design for in-store customer service areas that we had previously designed and trialled in a separate project (Fig.12). The area incorporated service pods rather than conventional heavy, linear

counters, that allowed both customer and assistant to stand side by side, endorsing a 'friendlier' mode of exchange. Emphasis was placed on amicable alliance between seller and buyer rather than the more familiar 'us and them' pressured sale across the counter as barrier. We later also integrated similar service pods into Beauty areas that we designed and trialled in Boots stores in Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Fig.11). This open form of consultancy and sale was new at the time but is these days utilised extensively. It is a familiar sight in department stores, particularly in beauty areas, internationally.

In the redesign of Boots Opticians, greeting, payment, prescription dispense and eye exam areas were also all made more open and accessible, to instil equitability in dialogue between optician staff and customers. Aided by the integration of the latest computer technology into consultation pods, customers and staff were able to view and share technical information about their eyesight, side by side, rather than across a counter. The ocular inspired form of the counters and screens appropriately facilitated the relative actions served and distinctly identified contrast between service areas and the linear product displays (Fig.20-25).

A major feature of the designs we implemented for Boots Dentalcare was the introduction of consultation pods into each of the surgeries (Fig.19). These areas offered the opportunity for the dentist or hygienist to give friendly consultation on treatment and mitigating any potential anxiety in the patient prior to being seated in the dental chair, which can often intimidate.

Atmosphere

Ceilings and lighting were elements of the stores to which Boots had traditionally allocated a meagre budget. Typically, budgets only allowed for a basic tile gridded ceiling with inset fluorescent lighting panels, which provided a consistent but functional and bright level of lighting throughout the store. This financially driven initiative contributed significantly to the soulless quality of the existing stores as the lighting schemes generally lacked contrast and mood. The changes we made to lighting across all store formats included introducing both ambient and display directed lighting, plus integral illumination of some of the signage elements. The aim in contrasting the light source and effect was to positively improve the atmospheric quality of these interiors.

It was through the design of the Boots stores that I focussed more than previously on the important relationship between atmosphere and positive perception, in the experience of a place. In recent years, atmosphere has become a subject of specific focus in both architectural and philosophical theory in relation to phenomenology of perception. The way a place is organised, the materials it is constructed from and the way that it is lit, together exude a particular ephemeral character, an atmosphere. Through studying atmosphere specifically, as a subject since 1989, Professor Gernot Böhme refers to it as the "prototypical 'between' phenomenon… between object and subject". Böhme calls for an aesthetic of atmospheres to replace the judgemental aesthetic of visual form, describing the new aesthetic as "the

mediation between the aesthetics of reception and the aesthetics of production."[36] Such mediation in the experience of any place by the inhabitants elicits their mood and the resulting atmosphere therefore actuates our emotional response towards that environment. [37]

Although the airport stores were located in busy, highly trafficked areas we aimed to take some of the stress out of travelling by instilling a calm atmosphere that encouraged visitors to stay longer. This was achieved through the soft scalloped and diffused wall lighting contrasting with edge lit, transparent acrylic signage that hovered ethereally above the displays on translucent clear or colour tinted acrylic panels (Fig.7,9). Overall the resulting new design aimed to soften and break down the utilitarian quality of the display and create a more intimate and friendly feeling in the mediation between the place and the experiencer.

The nature of construction of the prefabricated architecture of the Edge of Town stores meant that most of the interiors had their roofs visibly exposed from within, with between 6-10 metre high single level floor space. However, due to height limitations in accessing product, usually there was little to distract the eye or engage the senses above 2.5 metres, the height at which it was usual to suspend an open grid lighting raft. Minor expenditure was allocated to treatments of the interior beyond this height (Fig.13). Instead, the higher volume was typically painted black as a way of ignoring its presence or potential utility. By focussing on articulating the architecture of the space to exploit the whole expansive volume, we created varying ceiling levels that integrated a variety of light sources. The result was a combination of ambient, task (product focused) and mood lighting effects that instilled both contrast and shadow and ultimately a more appropriately engaging atmosphere. Internally illuminated category signage was also incorporated, as with the Travel format stores, to further enhance both atmosphere and customer orientation (Fig.14,15).

In Boots Opticians lighting was again carefully considered to emphasise a calm mood and to relax customers. White, typically representative of Boots, dominated the interior, in various tones influenced by material and light. But less typically, the whiteness was punctuated by fresh colours of purple, blue and green, manifest as translucent film applied to glazed screens, washed or back illuminated with light to enhance atmospheric quality. The new identity was also endorsed graphically through the introduction of pixelated photographic close ups of the eye, that challenged visitor perception and quality of vision relative to distance and focus. Product categories and service areas were clearly signposted using translucent, coloured acrylic, edge lit to illuminate the letters. Product displays were back lit and top lit to add atmosphere and also to aid product differentiation and invite customer interaction. The form and organisation of both products and services reflected the intentions for customer engagement, that resulted in enhanced access and freedom of circulation. This positively and authentically contributed to the overall mood, instilled through the expertise on offer (Fig.23-25).

Our design for Boots Opticians was successfully implemented into both in-store and stand-alone sites, across more than thirty locations in total. Subsequently, we also designed a new concept for Boots Laser Eye Clinics which were rolled out to a further twelve stores. After five Boots Optician stores had been implemented, Stephen Haynes, Head of Brand Development, commented that the "design, based on light and translucency, takes Boot Opticians significantly forward in both look and feel of the environment." Haynes endorsed this by stating that the five stores had showed strongly improved performance and one, in particular, had been the top performer in the chain for five weeks. [38]

Although our designs for the Travel and Edge of Town store formats received an equable response from both client and customers, they were not rolled out to further stores, due to a change in Boots' strategy that resulted in budgets being directed towards the expansion of their services. Dentalcare was one of the services that we were involved in expanding. Again our designs for this service were implemented in twenty in-store and stand-alone sites, following a successful trial in Milton Keynes (Fig.17-19). Rather than describe in detail the project for Boots Dentalcare, I have decided to focus on the design we executed for another dentist, D100, who approached us through being impressed by our designs for Boots Dentalcare.

At the time of writing this context statement, Boots announced that 200 of its approximately 2500 stores were under review for possible closure. Patrick O'Brien, Retail Research Director at Global Data warned that the Boots' review could be too late to address its market share decline. He said that "Shoppers have been trading down to discounters, and trading up to higher end retailers for more expensive treats and gifts", noting that the lack of investment in Boots stores recently had become more noticeable to shoppers [39] (Fig.26,27).

I feel that Boots' latest attempt to increase the efficacy of its brand resulted in the introduction of over scaled signage and neon lights, a return to basic, generic display formats and desensitised atmosphere due to a lack of contrast in lighting levels and ceiling treatments. Ultimately the stores today evidence a renaissance of rational implementation that appears to negate emotional concern for the experiencer.

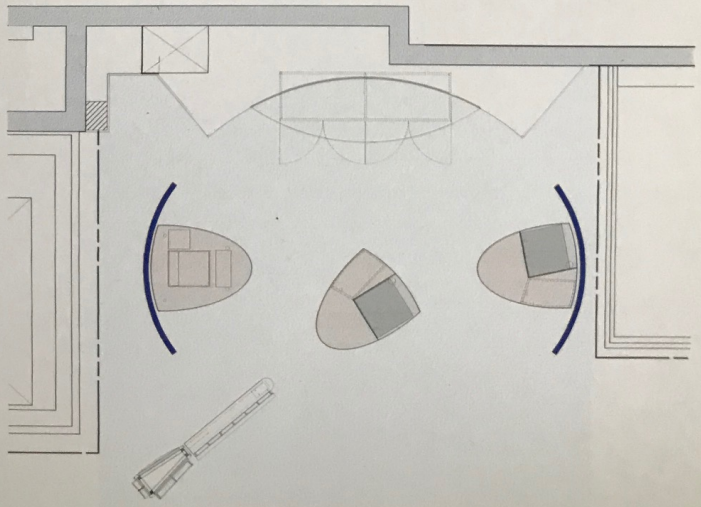
7 Boots Travel Store Heathrow T4 - Interior and frontage with clear access and visibility into the store

8 Boots Travel Store Heathrow T4 - Pharmacy area

9 Boots Travel Store Heathrow T4 - Shelf and edge price ticket design

10 Boots Travel Store Heathrow T4 - Central pay and service desks
11 Beauty product area with highlighted product displays, mood lighting on bulkheads,
edge lit brand signage,
consultation table and service pods. Implemented in stores in Amsterdam and Rotterdam

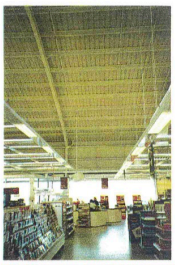
Peterborough



Peterborough floor plan

12 Concept proposals for generic in-store Customer Service area

Store Design Critique



BTC standard fit-out has not to date embraced the opportunities of the large shed style of architecture. There is little distinction between this and the large destination format

industrial shed image lowers perception of the standard BTC quality offer

large areas of white too clinical, and combined with very high ceilings is uninviting and intimidating

suspended light grid visually defines height of store - but only one third of available height

it creates a bland, even level of light - a consistent but distracting line across the store

high level space is exposed although ignored - it is uninteresting, industrial and incompatible with the BTC image

lack of visual activity at high level between top shelf and lighting grid

uncreative uniform lighting lacks contrast and poorly defines product

lack of clear differentiation between product groups

aisle displays too linear and regimented - supermarket psychology

lack of promotion of product groups and core products

signage lacks definition and impact

unsophisticated shopfront signage

facade treatment and window promotion under exploited

uninviting entrance - trolley bank untidy and poor greeting for customer

Boots The Chemists - Edge of Town Stores

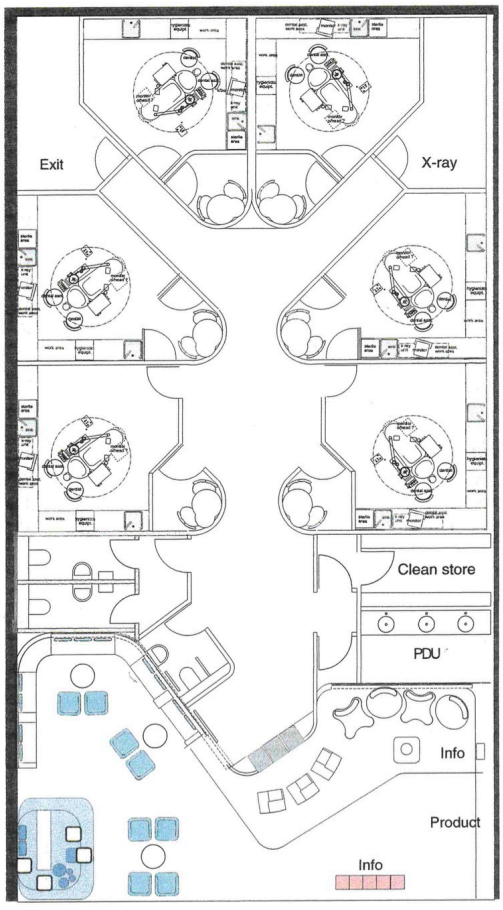
fern | green | partnership

13 Edge of Town Store Format - Client presentation sheet illustrating our critique of existing store format

14 Edge of Town trial site in Peterborough – Interior with central beauty counter to the front

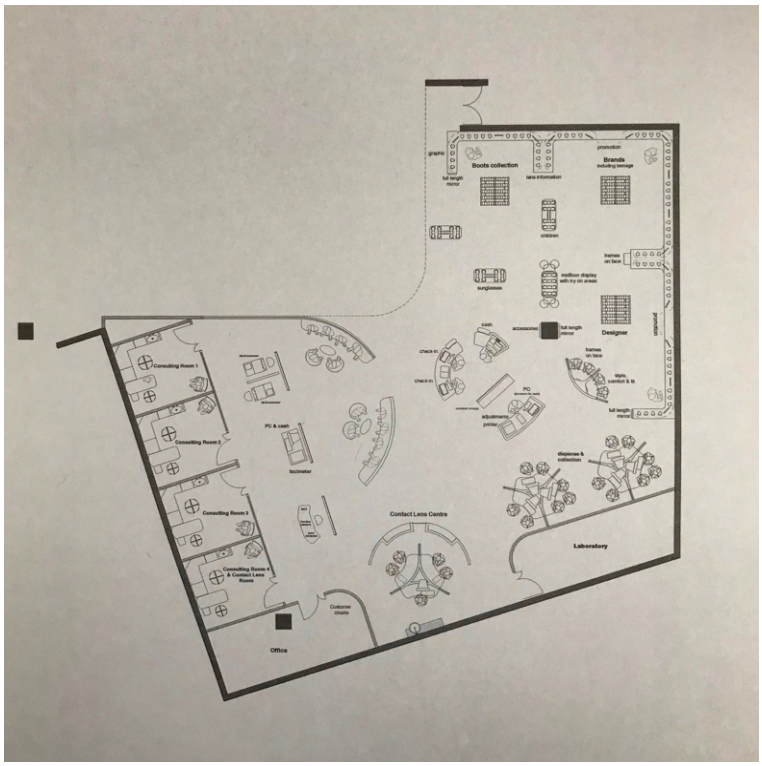
15 Edge of Town trial site in Peterborough - New design with totally open shopfront

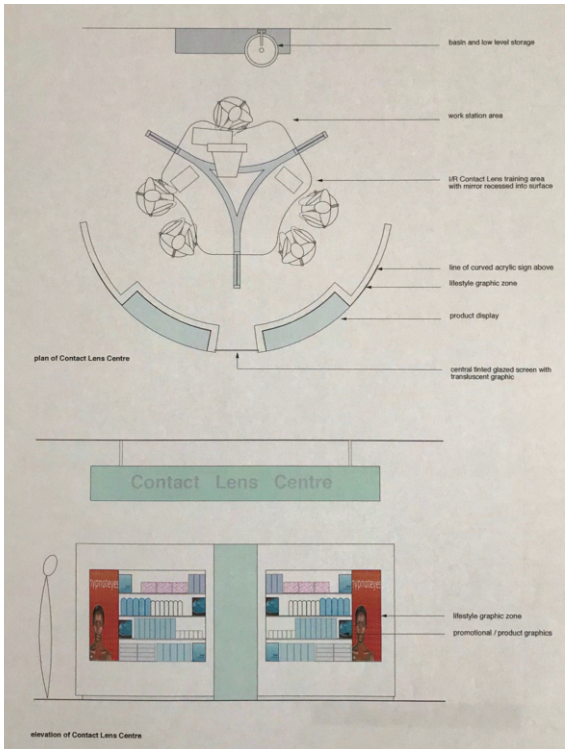
16 Edge of Town trial site in Peterborough – Floor layout



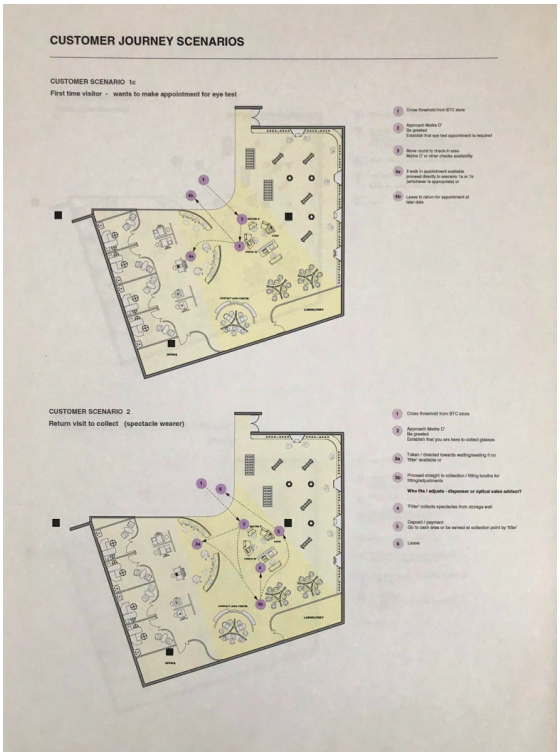
Floor Plan

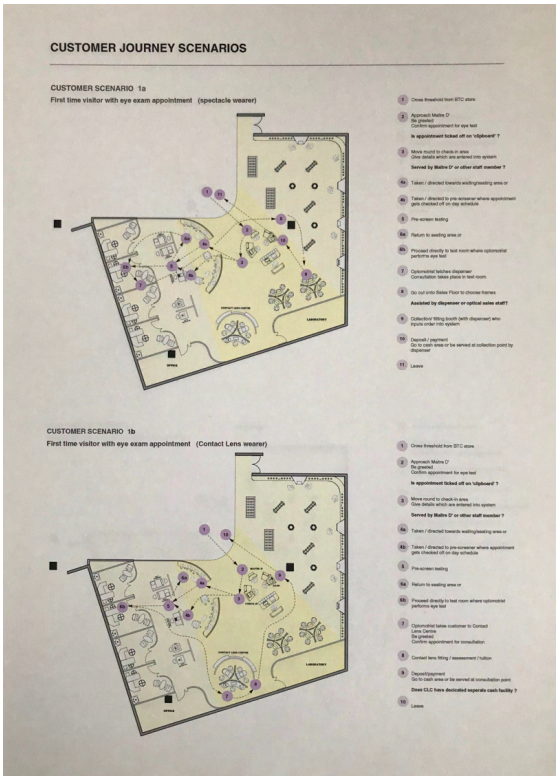
17 Dentalcare – Waiting area, Peterborough (stand-alone store)
18 Dentalcare – Greeting point, Peterborough (stand-alone store)
19 Dentalcare – Concept design, proposed floor plan (in-store)





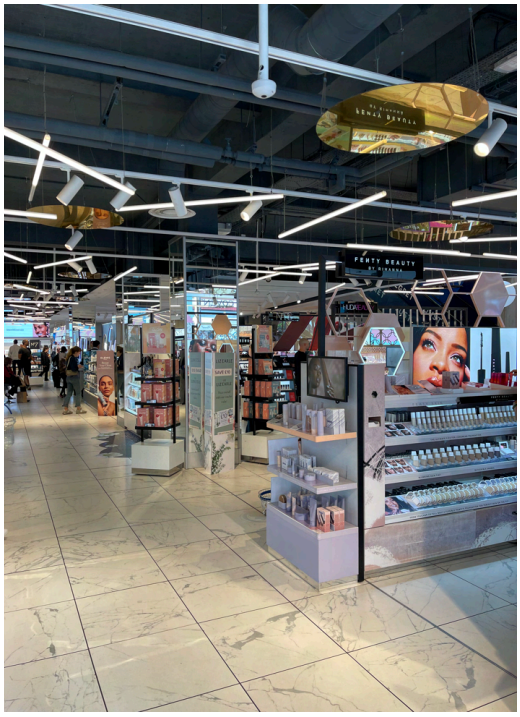
20 Boots Opticians - Final plan proposal – in-store, Bromley
21 Boots Opticians - Proposals for Contact Lens Centre





22 Boots Opticians – Design studies of potential customer journeys, Bromley

23 Boots Opticians – Greeting point, Bromley
24 Boots Opticians – New spectacle displays, Bromley
25 Boots Opticians – View from service area through to product displays, Bromley



26 Boots, 2019 – Large Format store by others, Covent Garden, London

27 Boots, 2019 – Travel Format Store by others, Gatwick Airport

PUBLIC WORK 6

D100 – Dental Practice

Barbican Centre, London

6 - D100 DENTAL PRACTICE

> If place has a tangible physiognomy, it would be atmosphere – that is, its familiarity and appropriateness, defined by how its sensory appeal and emotional attunement perceptually enlist attention and are understood by those experiencing it.[40]

Dental practices are traditionally perceived as functional environments that merely offer a necessary public service. They often do little to welcome their patients beyond the practical attention paid to the reception and waiting area (Fig.28,31) and the obligatory, clinical cleanliness of their surgeries. They are not generally perceived as places of inspiration, but rather places of intimidation, that emanate fear or caution. The physiognomy that Harry Francis Mallgrave refers to above, in his book *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design*, is therefore often not evident. As Mallgrave points out "perception is an active process. It is a form of thinking we do with our bodies – with our hands, our movements as well as our heads". In a dental practice our feelings are highly attuned. "…memory and anticipation are able to wield sensory impacts into a stream of experience"[41] and so we arrive with a preconception that is lodged in our self-conscious.

The objective then in this public work was to challenge and change perceptions of experiencing the dentist, to create a tangible physiognomy instilled with reassurance and positive emotion, which would thereby allay any negative fearful preconceptions. This interior was to inspire, not intimidate.

Dentist, Dr. Ed Bonner, approached us in 2001 to design his new private practice, following the series of successful health service projects we had carried out for Boots, which included Dentalcare. Dr. Bonner was operating from a single practice in west London but had acquired a new site located in a re-purposed basement car park within the Barbican Estate, London. Bonner proposed to launch a new approach to dentistry, placing an emphasis on the combination of electronic interaction and personal comfort. His aim was to embrace new technology in order to enhance the customer experience and detract from potential fear of the dental service, through the creation of a more welcoming and engaging atmosphere around the activity. The practice also had an ethical and ecological objective to become a paperless operation. Bonner's philosophy aligned with that of Boots and the research it had previously carried out. He concurred that in order to alleviate individual paranoia about visiting the dentist and change perceptions, emphasis must be placed on preventative rather than curative care. Bonner believed that the dentist should not be feared any more than a visit to a personal trainer. The aim therefore was to create a contemporary environment that would be uplifting to visit, a place that would make people feel better on leaving and happy to return to.

The constraints of the site were challenging relative to spatial organisation, but constraint ultimately led to opportunity. The space was long and narrow with an awkward 'dog-leg' shape on plan and

28 D100 Reception waiting area – Photographer Hannah Starkey specialises in staged settings of women in city environments. Her hyper real photograph illustrates her explorations of everyday experiences and observations from a female perspective

29 Typical dental practice reception in the late 1990s, commonly located in converted residential accommodation

as it was located in a basement there was limited natural light available. The client required four generously sized dental surgeries and a hygienist's room, plus the usual X-Ray, OPG facilities, staff-room, office, store-room and toilets and of course a reception area. Due to the length and shape of the site it was necessary to locate the various rooms in a linear arrangement with access from one side and the reception area at the front of the site. The practice was required to share access from the ground floor entrance with the adjacent health club, Virgin V. This meant that D100 had to be sealed off from the stairwell. However, the double height stairwell was an important source of natural light as its entrance connected directly to the outside street. We therefore exploited this daylight by installing a translucent screen with glazed entrance door between the stairwell and the reception. The entrance screen, while being private and bespoke to D100, also softened any potential intimidation through its transparency and the resulting visibility of the inviting reception area beyond.

The name D100 was born from the address, 100 Aldersgate Street and we worked on the creation of the graphic identity with Jane Alexander, a freelance graphic designer, who had worked with 20.20 in the Boots pool of design consultants. The target customer was the nearby city professional who, it was acknowledged, would be very familiar with the progressive use of modern technology at that time. Being also aware of the growing need for their customers to always be contactable, even during a visit to the dentist, Bonner briefed us to incorporate custom designed computer stations within the reception to allow customers to continue with their business while waiting for treatment. Years before the advent of the smart phone, it was hoped that this opportunity to engage with technology would help to distract visitors from any negativity they may be feeling about the dental experience. But also the facility of internet access, plus the opportunity to move around the lightweight seating blocks was intended to instill a sense of agency in those waiting, and help them to relax (Fig.28) The reception was therefore designed to evoke a sense of calm and comfort reminiscent of a contemporary hotel bar or cafe of the time, with warm fresh colours and soft seating. The client often referred to the place as a Spa Practice.

The reception provides that initial point of contact with the practice. It can have the effect of endorsing any potential inhibitions or completely alleviate them. Our approach to the design of this greeting and waiting area and of the whole practice was therefore focused on openness and transparency. Too many personal memories resonated of dental practices with intimidating corridors between surgeries and the sound of the dentist's drill emanating from behind closed surgery doors.

The design for the reception desk had to be functionally appropriate to store and conceal all equipment necessary to aid communication with customers, their engagement and treatment. However, in addition, our design enhanced the desk's presence and the action of greeting through embedded emotive features. A section of floor immediately in front of the desk was treated in a soft rubber finish that wrapped up the front of the desk, a kind of 'welcome mat', signalling a point of arrival to the visitor and subliminally offering a point of engagement with the receptionist. This detail also served to soften

any notion of a barrier between the receptionist and the visitor, as did the integrated and back-illuminated image of wheat-grass, which spans the length of the desk. The freshness of the image was intended to instil an alliance with nature and healthiness and in so doing enhance a feeling of well-being in visitors.

Rather than seal off the reception completely from the dental surgeries, as is often found in practices, a glass screen and door were installed, which acted partially as a sound barrier but also brought a sense of openness and inclusivity to the overall space, creating vision through to activity beyond the reception (Fig.30).

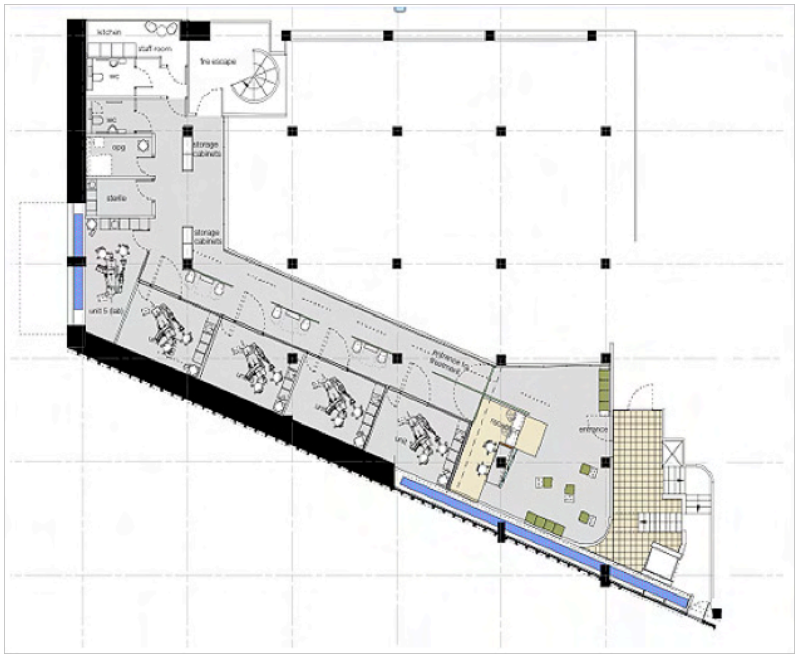
Due to the awkward, thin shape of the site, one of the biggest challenges was to avoid access to the surgeries being via an intimidating long corridor, a detail we were also keen to mitigate with the interiors for Boots Dentalcare. This was addressed through widening the access route to the surgeries and introducing consultation areas within the wider space. An important feature of preventative dental care that we had experienced and implemented whilst working with Boots was the incorporation of consultation areas within the surgery rooms. By locating the consultation area adjacent to, but outside, each surgery the aim was to instil a less formal welcome to the patient and help to relax the patient prior to entry into the surgery. Although, in theory, these meeting points were within the circulation route through the practice, they were located behind clear glass screens which divided the space, while also maintaining an open feel. (Fig.33-36)

Transparency was further enhanced through constructing the entrance wall of each surgery in translucent polycarbonate panels (Fig.35). The surgery entrance doors were formed as extra wide, full height pivoting sections of the wall that were internally illuminated on the surgery side to add softly diffused light to the surgeries (Fig.34). When open, which was at all times during consultation, these doors added another spatial dimension to the practice and further helped to alleviate any intimidation that may normally be sensed through conventional doors, that would more typically be kept closed, in dental surgeries.

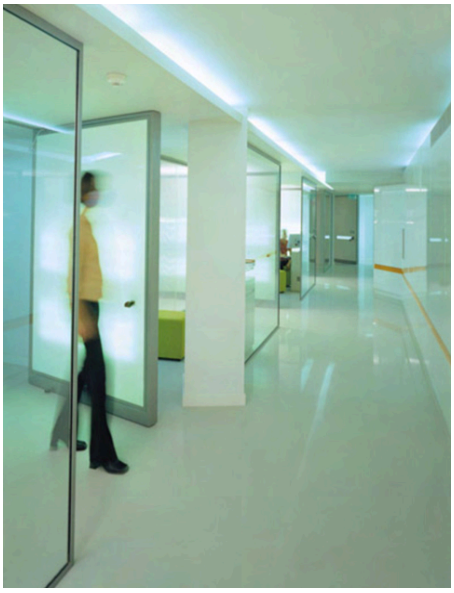
The concept of openness and inclusivity, expressed in the transparent screens and moving walls was inspired by the spatial, interior - exterior quality of traditional Japanese interiors (Fig.37) and iconic Modernist interiors. Returning to my modernist influences, I cite in particular the Barcelona Pavilion designed in 1929 by Mies van der Rohe (Fig.38) and the Rietveld Schröder House, in Utrecht (Fig.39), designed by Gerrit Rietveld in 1929, for their spatial depth, porosity and organisational layering.

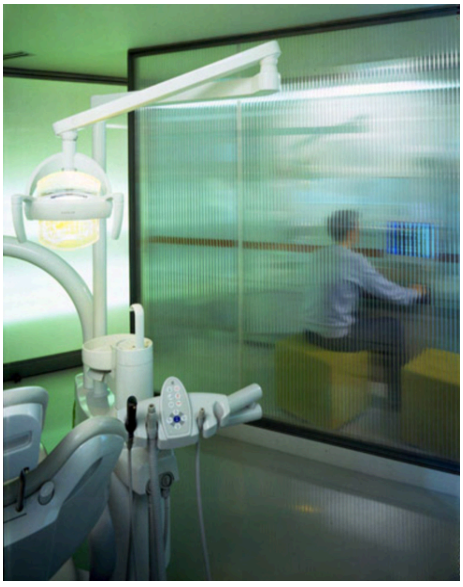
Materials were selected to reflect a concern for health and cleanliness. The floor throughout was formed in a polished plastic resin, which was free of joints and therefore easy to keep clean. All bespoke furniture such as the reception desk and storage units were finished in easy to wipe down, high gloss paint. The handles to the surgery doors were made bespoke for the practice in brown leather (Fig.36),

30 D100 - Reception greeting area



31 D100 - Waiting area with moveable seating and interactive IT pods
32 D100 - Floor plan





33 D100 - View towards reception , showing consultation area adjacent to the surgeries
34 D100 - Client leaving a surgery, showing illuminated door
35 D100 - View out from the dental chair
36 D100 - Detail of leather surgery door handle

37 Katsura Imperial Villa – Kyoto, Japan 1624
38 Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona 1929
39 The Rietveld Schröder House by Gerrit Rietveld, Utrecht 1928

and hence were soft to the touch; an attempt to disassociate from the feeling of metal. The design of this particular door handle relative to consciousness of being in a particular place brings to mind again the text previously cited from Sartre's novel, *Nausea* (P18,20).

Lighting was recessed, and except in the reception area, it was concealed and diffused to avoid source glare, particularly beneficial when seated back in the dental chair looking up at the ceiling. The lighting design, level and colour contributed greatly to the sense of calm and uplifting reassurance instilled in the interior.

The design for the practice was acknowledged at the time for its ground breaking vision in the dental sector and was shortlisted for a National Association of Dental Practitioners design award. The interior was also featured in *Frame*, an international magazine that showcases the best examples of contemporary interior design, architecture, product design and exhibition design.[42]

D100 operated successfully for over 10 years and in 2012, I was approached by a new owner (Dr. Bonner sold the business and retired in 2010) to relocate the business into a nearby Smithfield site, also a single floor basement. I maintained the original concept and spirit of the previous design, plus also some of its features, including the re-use of the large surgery doors. In this iteration, due to the larger scale of surgeries, made possible with the new space, the client preferred to incorporate the consultation areas within them. However, as the reception desk incorporates a lower section for wheelchair access, initial consultation is facilitated and often carried out there. Floor to ceiling glazed screens were again included, this time to segregate staff circulation between the surgeries from public access to and from the reception area. The graphic identity was also developed to include more colour and symbolic images, inspired by tooth profiles, which were applied to screens and parts of the walls and natural wood finishes were incorporated to further soften the mood and distinguish the interior from its predecessor. By 2012 technology had advanced to the point of the smart phone being omnipotent. Therefore the computer stations were no longer required and a more relaxed waiting area was introduced into the reception, comprising softer upholstered seating and lighting more reminiscent of a hotel lounge (Fig.40-46).

The website of D100 features press reviews about the practice including *Blueprint* magazine: "Rewriting the whole dentistry experience with interactive technology and personal comfort at its heart." And the Islington Gazette: "Pioneering, and setting standards that will become the norm in a few years time - an oasis of calm."[43]

Again, with the second iteration of the design concept, the intention was to instil a quality of positive preventative care for the experiencer, rather than a curative service. The engaging health spa essence prevailed in the atmosphere created; the practice's tangible physiognomy.

40 D100 - Visual proposal for reception area in second site following relocation in 2012

41 D100 - Reception looking through to adjacent surgery
42 D100 - Surgery corridor with translucent screen looking through to reception desk

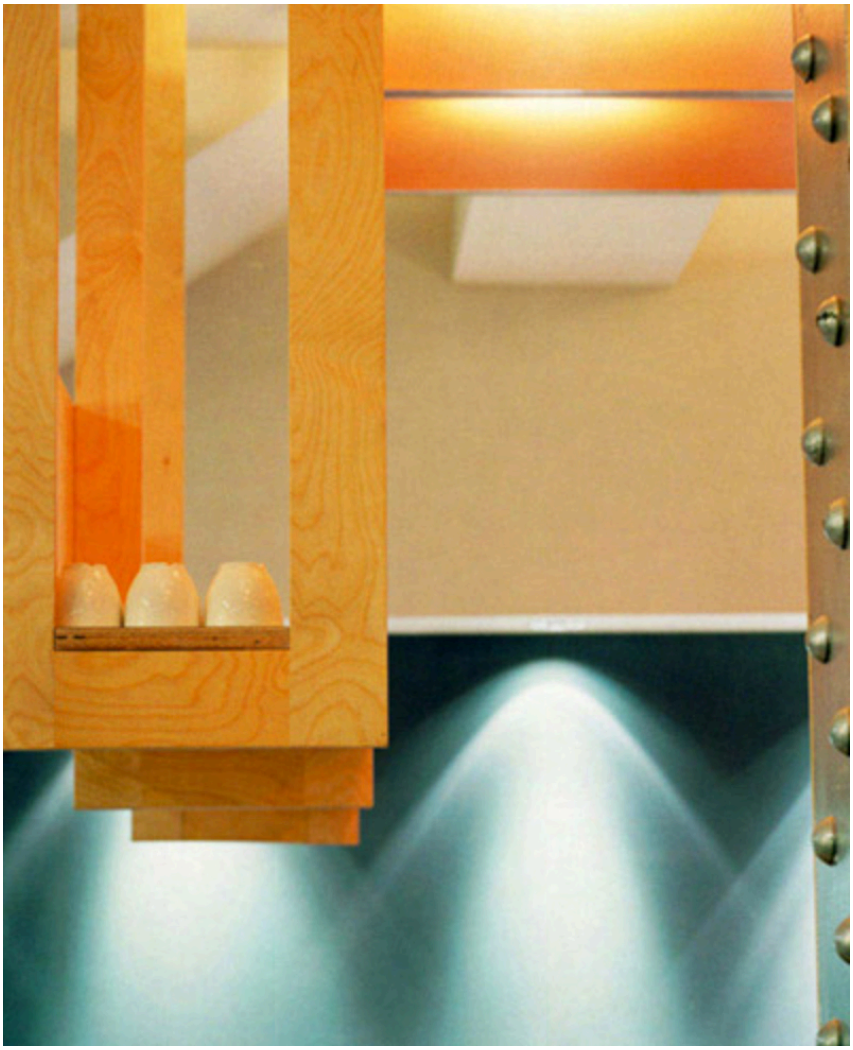
43 D100 - Surgery access corridor with screens to aid privacy
44 D100 - Reception waiting area

45 D100 - Translucent glazed screen and adjacent surgery door
46 D100 - Reception seating cubes and wall graphics

PUBLIC WORK 7

RELAX – Health Bar

Central London



7 - RELAX HEALTH BAR

> *Places of Possibility*
> One of the most crucial if overlooked aspects of architecture is the capacity of buildings to either support or diminish the spontaneous powers of human beings to act in space. These 'acts' take place whenever we have a chance to decide how we are going to occupy, move through or directly affect the place we are in.[44]

Searching for the possibility of empowering visitors to act in a personally chosen way, as Plummer identifies, in The Experience of Architecture, was unconsciously embedded in my design approach to all of the public works described in this context statement. The objective to instil agency where possible, was and is fundamental to improving the individual experience of each place. Furthermore, the intention was to anomalously elevate the experiential quality or everyday public actions in the place, such as entering, greeting, waiting and consulting. In this public work the key action was massage.

Continuing our involvement in the design of services focused on well-being, in 2000 we were approached to design a new innovative concept for the UK, focused on body massage. The client was a husband and wife partnership who were self-funding the venture. The name they had come up with was 'Relaxez-vous' which I felt strongly was inappropriate for an innovative new concept, originated and to be piloted in London. I therefore suggested the name be changed simply to 'Relax' and the word became the focus of our inspiration for the project. The aim was to create a place where walk-in, fully clothed acupressure massage could be carried out by fully qualified practitioners. This was to be a new iteration of one of the oldest healing arts. Massage was to be easily affordable, with no prior appointment necessary and would be conducted in a relaxed, unintimidating environment.

The client referred to stress as the twentieth century plague. Their brief to us claimed that in an average lifetime a typical employee loses one and a half years from work through stress induced illness. Muscular skeletal disorders account for more than 5.5 million lost working days per year in the UK. It is proven that massage releases tension. The therapeutic, holistic technique eases stiff muscles, boosts energy and releases pent-up tension and repressed emotions. Used as a health maintenance programme, massage is natural, enjoyable and inexpensive.

The new massage initiative was aimed at AB socio economic groups,45 with professional occupations. The first site in Brewer Street, Soho was chosen because it was located in a well trafficked street and aptly adjacent to a popular Health and Fitness club called Third Space. White collar professionals aged 25-55, working in high stress, fast paced industries nearby were the target customers, including a high proportion of female executives. This profile was based on research carried out by the client into similar operations in the US and similar customers in the UK who use health related products and services. Client research also showed that there was, at the time, a growing interest in self-help and

complimentary medicines and the market for health products had shown an upward trend for the proceeding five years. Massage therapy was being offered at Granada motorway service stations, Virgin offered massage to first class airline passengers and The Body Shop had had created The Doorway, part natural health clinic, part beauty salon, offering express, fifteen minute seated and clothed massage. A similar concept to that proposed by Relax called The Great American Backrub had also been developed in the US with over 25 outlets, raising $6.5 million from a share offer.

In addition to the offer to visitors to indulge in a unique mix of fully clothed chair massage or full body massage, the client wanted to introduce additional areas within the ground floor to sell revitalising food and drinks, flowers and aromatherapy and skincare products. This was to be a 'health bar', focused on well-being and the offer of a multi–sensory, feel good experience. Today we are used to experiencing hybrid spaces with a multi-functional offers, but the idea was unusual in 2000. The site spanned two floors and at street level the environment promoted openness and accessibility, through the predominantly glazed faade, encouraging customers to enjoy an unintimidating experience of massage. Upstairs offered a change of pace to a more private setting for a longer, full body massage. The open visibility of the ground floor interior from the street was particularly important in this location, as Soho at this time was still trying to shake off a more sleazy image related to massage on account of its long established reputation as the sex shop and prostitution quarter.

Our priority was to create a balance in atmosphere between relaxation and invigoration, the idea being that people would enter feeling tense and stressed but should leave feeling invigorated. Key aspects to be addressed, therefore, were the spatial organisation of the component functions, and the sensitive articulation of light and colour. The site was rectangular and open plan on both floors with a single structural column in the middle of the space, which indicated that at some point it had been converted from two spaces into one on each level.

Although massage was the innovative offer in experiencing Relax, visitors were greeted on entry from the street by a display of flowers that were for sale (Fig.47,50,51). The front area to the left of the entrance was sub-let to a florist, as we felt that the floral aroma would provide an unexpected sensory stimulant but an appropriately inviting introduction to this different kind of place. We also felt that the massage activity, though clearly visible from the street (Fig.47,50), should not be the first thing to be encountered once inside, due to the possibility of intimidating less confident visitors, particularly as the service involved being physically touched by a stranger. Therefore, the space was arranged so that visitors were given the opportunity to view the massage activity prior to committing themselves. The food and beverage area was located centrally on the ground floor (Fig.51). It had the appearance of a mini-pavilion, anchored around the structural column, with a lower ceiling plane hovering over the whole area. The bar signalled a more familiar social offer to attract incomers from the streets of Soho, where there were a plethora of coffee bars. Customers could check-in and pay for the massage at the entrance

facing end of the bar. Whether or not they decided to have a massage they could opt to have a drink or snack at the bar and overlook the massage taking place along the side wall of the open plan space. Although the individual massage chairs were not physically segregated, the space allotted to each masseur was demarked and the activity highlighted by a wall and lower plywood framed ceiling plane, lined with sound absorbent felt panels. The lower ceiling structures and related wall linings, as with the bar area, served to partially frame the activity and subtly affect a more intimate mood in each massage space (Fig.46). For those visitors who simply wished to soak up the atmosphere and browse around the space, well-being related products were also on sale in bespoke displays on the left hand side and rear walls of the interior.

The perception from the street and from within was that this was an unusual place. It was an alternative type of coffee bar, a retail space and a massage centre, all offered together to create a different kind of experience. The first floor was dedicated to a more familiar form of full bodied massage, divided into four private rooms, a small reception space and a waiting area (Fig.48,52).

As this was a private venture, the budget was not generous and so material selection for the whole design was economically sought. For the floor, the existing ground floor concrete slab was lined with a warmer, softer to the touch feel of rubber, in sheet form. Different colours were used to demark the various spatial functions (Fig.51). On the first floor an engineered plank floor made from recycled bamboo gave a slightly more indulgent feel, while also illustrating the adoption of our client's interest to source sustainable materials where appropriate. The bar, book and pay area, upstairs reception and product displays were formed in a combination of sprayed medium density fibreboard (MDF) and plastic sheet made from recycled yoghurt pots. Seating was made from solid oak frames upholstered in leather. The bar ceiling structure and crockery display were formed in birch faced plywood frames to match those used to designate the massage chair positions. Translucent, twin wall polycarbonate sheet, lined with an orange film was back illuminated and suspended between the plywood frames above the bar to effuse a warm glow above the area. The same material was used on the first floor, this time in white, and inset into the plasterboard ceiling to create a diffused daylight quality above.

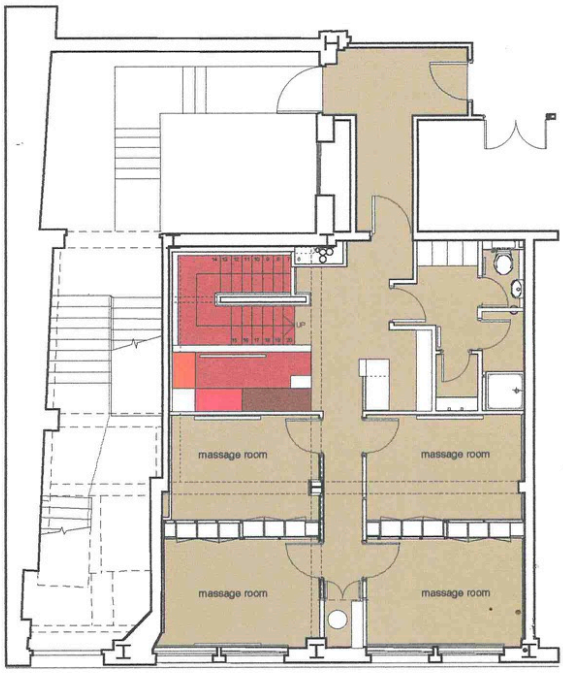
This palate of contrasting materials and textures created an appropriately tactile feel to the place. Material colour also played an important role. In contrast to the health related interiors that we designed for Boots, where white was emphatically emphasised, this interior was rich in colour and material contrast. Colour in the refreshment and massage areas was used to evoke a feeling of invigoration and revitalisation. Therefore orange and magenta finishes were chosen which were offset with a relaxing blue-green colour applied to the rear wall and product displays. The frame form of the central pavilion and the massage area. references a roof terrace pergola, on a house that I had visited in Los Angeles ten years previously. I was influenced by its lightweight spatial quality and its material presence in relation to framing a space, devoid of walls. I was drawn to the Japanese influence in this house (Fig.55), designed

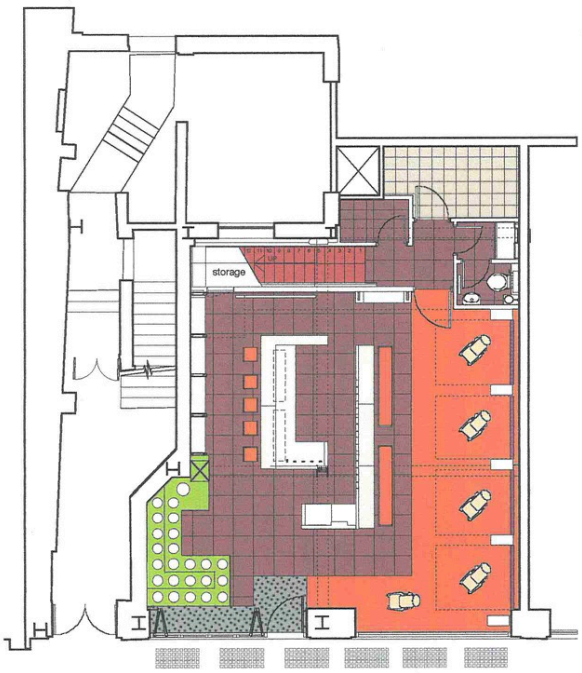
by Rudolf Schindler in 1922, that evoked, through the material and form of the wooden frame structure, a sense of tranquillity and order. Other than this detail, inspiration for the design, spatial organisation, materiality and colour was led predominantly by how we anticipated that people should experience and behave in the place. Although the façade on the busy street level was kept as open as possible to maximise daylight and the view in, it was important to instil a contrasting feeling of calmness inside (Fig.47,50). Therefore, the way that the atmosphere was articulated through subtle and contrasting lighting was fundamental to the design's success. Ceiling recessed spotlighting was used to light the products on display and produce a wash of light across the shop front, to help vision into the interior from the street. But most importantly the lighting that created the calm mood in the place was diffused, to produce both contrast and shadows. The hovering glow of orange light over the bar area instilled an essence of sunlight and refreshment, influenced by the emotive effect of James Turrell's wonderfully immersive light installations, in particular a room entitled Perfectly Clear, (Fig.54) where the notion of clarity was intensified.

The dialectic application of hard and soft finishes also had the effect of tempering any harsh sound produced within the place, that in alliance with the diffused lighting and slow movement of the massage action created a quiet ambiance. The lighting level could also be controlled in reaction to daylight levels at different times of the day. Sometimes ambient music would also be played through the integrated audio sound installation, in empathy with the mood created. As with the projects we implemented for Boots and D100, more was required from the design than a functional or stylised design solution. In particular, because of its function, this project required priority to be placed on human focused, sensory experience. This was achieved through the creation of a welcoming and reassuring environment instilled with the essence of the place's purpose - a place that offered a choice of actions and the ordinary was advanced. It was place of enhanced possibilities for the experiencer.

Testament to the success of Relax it operated successfully in the Brewer Street location for over ten years. It closed due to the landlord, Third Space, wishing to take the space into its own business offer. In 2004 we completed the implementation of a second site in White City London and the client went on to implement a third site in Covent Garden independently. At the time of concluding this context statement I have been approached by the client to consult on the imminent refurbishment of this third site.

47 Relax façade – Interior clearly visible from across the street

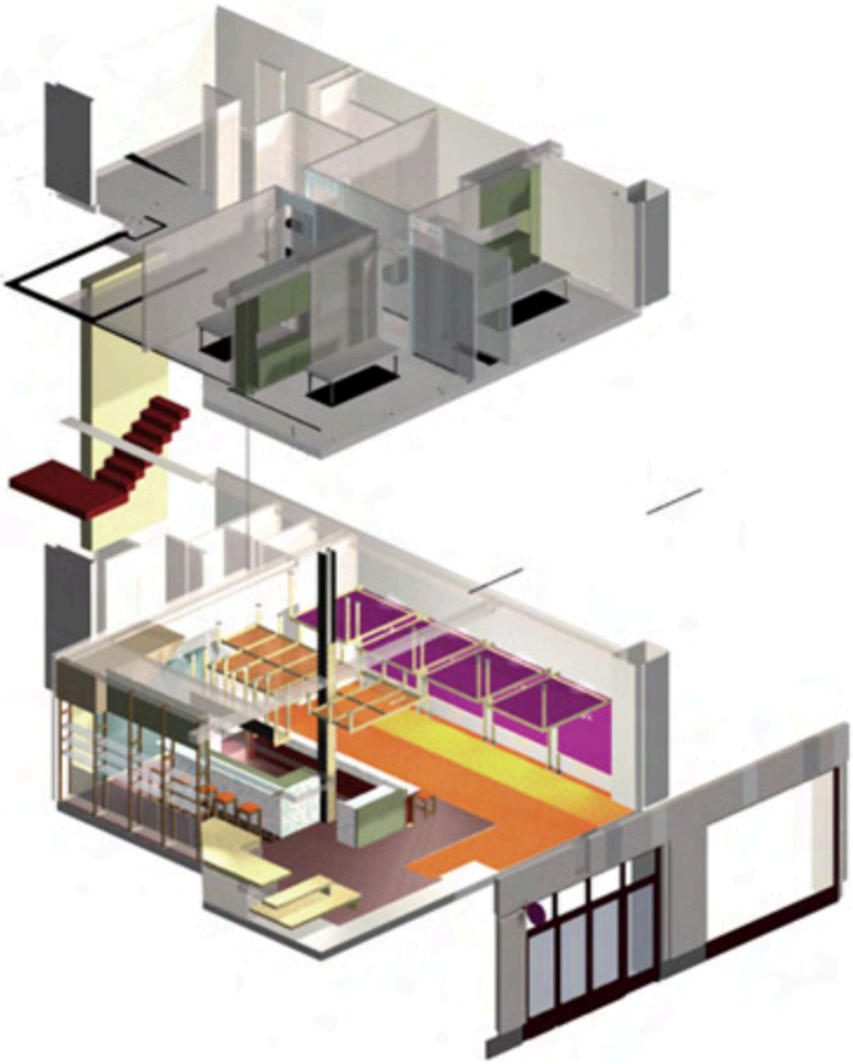




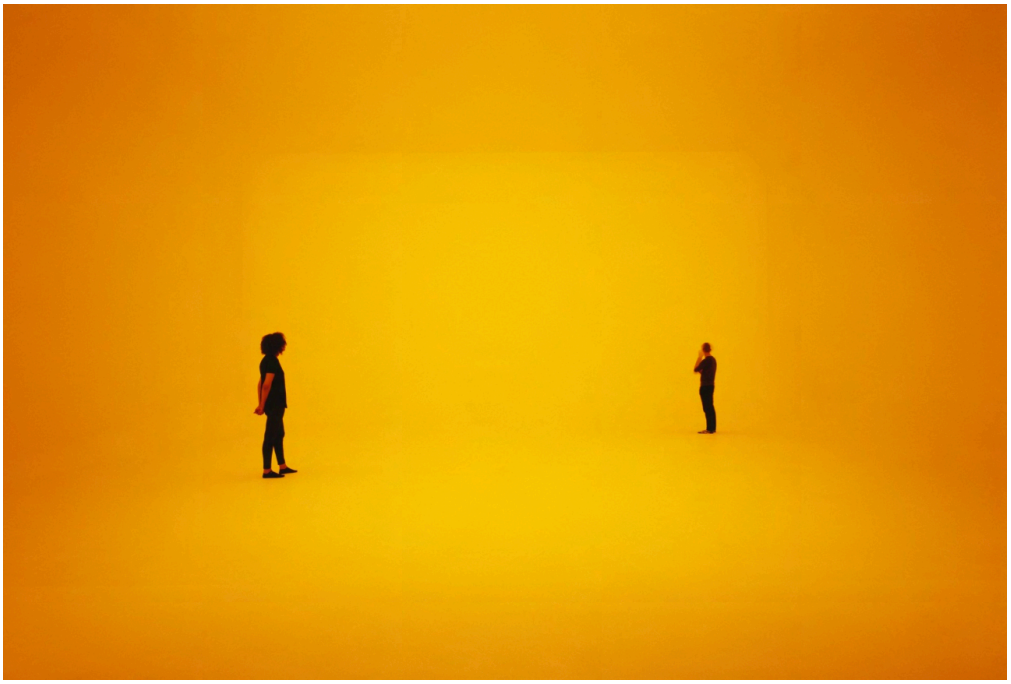
48 Relax - First floor plan
49 Relax - Ground floor plan

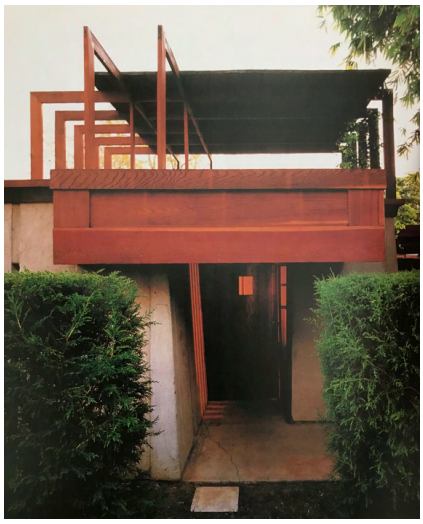
50 Relax façade – Showing entrance adjacent to flower display and view into the massage chairs and bar area

51 Relax - Ground floor interior
52 Relax - First floor waiting area and reception, with adjacent massage rooms



53 Relax - Axonometric drawing of interior over two floors





54 Perfectly Clear (Ganzfeld) light installation by James Turrell. 1991
Challenging everyday perceptions of spatial depth and emotional feeling

55 Schindler House, by Rudolph Schindler, Los Angeles, 1922.
The intertwining of inside and outside

56 Relax - View from massage chairs, across the bar
57 Relax - Bar and bespoke stool design detail

Notes

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2. Romesh Vaitiingam, *Recession Britain: Findings from Economic and Social Research*, ESRC Economic & Social Research Council , 2005
3. Guy Julier, *The Culture of Design* (London: Sage Publications 2000), 146.
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5. David Fern, "Designing Interiors Through Making" – *Making Issue 2 I.E. Studio Journal* (London: I.E., 2018)
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7. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 362, 369.
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16. B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (USA: Harvard Business Review Pres, 1999), 11.
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CONCLUSION

These public works and the context within which they were designed illustrate a design ethos concerned with an approach to both public and private interior environments that evolved from a rational, modernist foundation to be emotively, human focused and preoccupied more with an aesthetic of feeling than form. I believe that the need to endorse this approach is timely and becoming increasingly relevant in today's digital age. This context statement illustrates that the period during which these works were carried out, 1987-2012, saw a significant change in the perception of interior design as a subject of both study and practice. During those twenty five years interior design practice developed into a successful and lucrative business, and study into the subject has produced an influential body of academic research, independent from the architectural profession.

My focus on human centric experience of place increased in importance during this same period but, as this study illustrates, was not prioritised in my early practice. During my design education and the beginning of my career, the epistemology of rationalist Modernism overshadowed my appreciation of the more emotive qualities in the designs of major modernists such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. Throughout the 1980s, the economic, marketing and advertising forces that Peter Davey criticised and that led to the plethora of today's branded environments, did indeed have a tendency to compromise interior design quality and their relative atmosphere. Retailers in particular were more concerned with seduction and the sale than infusing a memorable experience. In retrospect, I understand that it was my frustration with this commerciality that led me to form my own practice in search of a different approach.

Through reflection on these public works I have evidenced how my design methodologies negotiated and countered these challenges by acknowledging and advancing the experience of typical engagement and actions pertaining to each place. This context statement argues that the resulting interiors represent a time-relevant body of work of integrity and authenticity that makes a contribution to knowledge in the subject. Modernism gave us structured principles, and commercial design gave us branding; the internet however has enhanced the power of the visual at the expense of the haptic and sensory which, I believe, is detrimentally proliferating the dominance of style over substance. These works offer evidence of the dialectic position I developed in bringing to the fore and acknowledging the importance of experiential substance. Predominantly situated, in influence, between architectural theory and commercial design needs, these public works illustrate a resistance to any superficial design disposition pressured by marketing dictates alone that may compromise a positive, sensory response to the places we inhabit.

My public works offer a reminder to designers of interiors today not to lose sight of the need to prioritise concern for the real experience of 'place', as we become ever more attached to dependence on the digital, virtual realm. We need to heighten awareness that all public space is, or is in danger of,

becoming brand related, which could ultimately result in a globally generic cityscape. These works offer a resistance to this possibility, by depicting how spaces become specific and distinct places through emphasising the particular characteristics inherent in each. As designers we have a responsibility to retain and endorse cultural identity and idiosyncrasy and celebrate its rich diversity. All of the public works that are examined here questioned client ethics and challenged the brief relative to user experience.

In highlighting, through these works, that human experience must be central to the design process I am not, of course, claiming my approach to be unique. I cite in this context statement many architects and academics who advocate such a philosophy towards the design of buildings, who have inspired my design thinking. I also acknowledge that it should be natural for interior designers to consider the experiencer as a fundamental factor in the design process. My concern though, as illustrated, is relative to the emphasis placed on experience and the possible ambiguity perceived between the terms experience and use. Further, through my research, I have found that this discourse has not been substantially contributed to before, academically, by an interior design practitioner. I believe that this is because the real experience of a place and its resulting atmosphere is often undermined, taken too much for granted or diluted in the design process due to a preoccupation with visual style or commercial need. I am therefore claiming and concluding that it is by placing real, emotive human experience at the heart of the design process that makes the interiors in these public works successful collectively as a body of work. I also advocate that this context statement is original in highlighting the importance of these works in prioritising the experiencer and the sensory experience of interiors, from the perspective of a practicing interior designer.

The common ground that is considered in these public works is the sensory experience that each place creates for its experiencers. The perception of place that each design seeks, goes beyond the visual impression and the practical requirements of function and use. It is focused on emotional feeling and memory instilled in sensory perception, which I believe to be manifest in the Japanese term, kokoro. As interior designers, we have an obligation to embed and protect kokoro within our environments and take responsibility for seeking to instill in each place its essence., which in turn should enhance the well-being of the experiencer. I posit that human experience relating to time and space should be considered the fourth dimension of design and the success of any design cannot be truly evaluated without acknowledgement of this fourth dimension. It is only through the synthesis of the experiencer's embodiment with and movement through the interior in real time that the appropriate atmosphere or the essence of a place can be activated, embedded and recognized.

These public works aimed to enhance the quality of everyday life and impart agency in the experience of each place, whether through a shopping activity, waiting in a reception, visiting an exhibition or indulging in a well-being service. I illustrate in the selection of these interiors how my design approach prioritised how each interior should feel rather than look. The designs attest to my conjecture

that *form* should not follow *function* alone but, more crucially, it should follow *feeling*[1] and be pronounced through human action and agency. In this visually obsessed age it is more important than ever before that we strive to ensure our environments feel right, rather than merely look right. These works also offer contributory evidence in support of philosopher Gernot Böhme's call for *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres.* However, the appropriation of an interior's atmosphere is not solely reliant on the articulation of light and material. It is intrinsically related to the advancement of quality and perception of spatial form through a sensitive understanding of the experiencer's potential actions and behavior.

I therefore believe that the design quality of any interior environment should be assessed primarily on the quality of the atmosphere mediated through the phenomenological response of the place's experiencers. Success in this endeavor will bring to the fore the essence of the place, its kokoro, and direct the appropriate authentic form.

Note

1. Terrence M. Curry, *Form Follows Feeling* (Rotterdam: Sirene Ontwerpers, 2017). I have for a long time been preoccupied with the notion of 'Form follows Feeling' and I now see the same idea echoed in this recent text by Curry.

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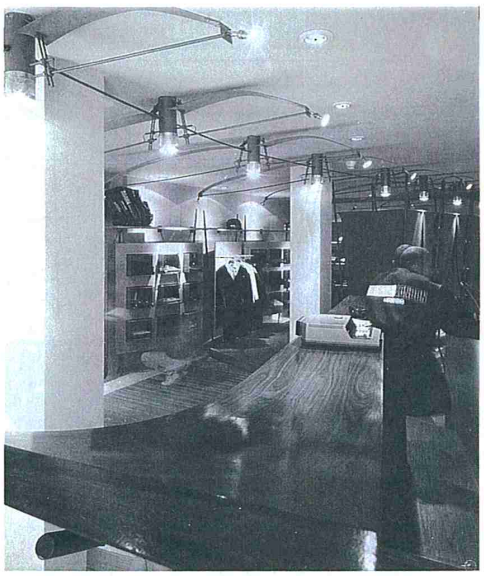
APPENDIX 1: Martin Pawley, "Zips, neoprene and Koshino's new shop," *Blueprint,* (April 1990)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS GASCOIGNE



Zips, neoprene and Koshino's new shop

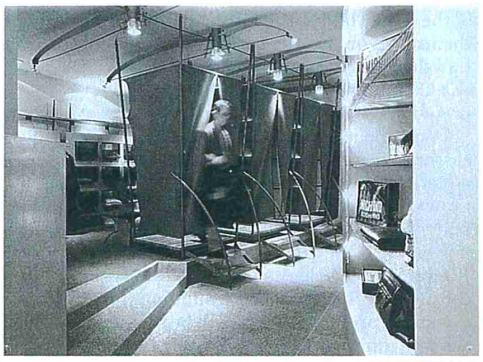
At first sight Michiko Koshino's brief for her new shop in Neal Street, Covent Garden, seemed fairly open. As discussion progressed, though, designer David Fern of Fern Green discovered the Japanese designer's views were more specific than they at first appeared.

Koshino didn't want the daunting minimalism Japanese fashion people so often favour. Her taste, after ten years in London, was for something altogether more English, though certainly not traditional. There should be timber and natural finishes, she said. The cash desk should be in the middle of the shop and raised like the platform position of a discotheque DJ. The interior should have a feeling of organic curvature.

Fern considered the idea of moulding the shell, but decided instead to introduce the requested curves through the fittings. The wooden door is on a concave track and a complex lighting system forms an aerial spine, drawing the visitor past the cash desk, which sweeps up to eye-level like a rearing surfboard. MDF panels supported by sand-blasted epoxy-coated steel rods ripple along the walls.

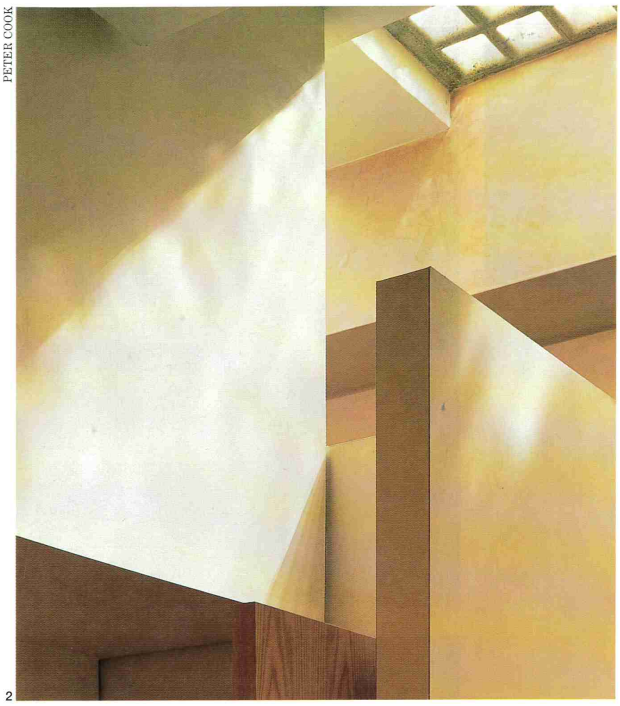
Where other Japanese fashion shops attempt to impress (and sometimes to repel) by their elegance and mystique, Michiko Koshino reflects the vitality, openness and good humour of the latest street fashions. How could a shop in which the changing cubicles are stretchy green neoprene zip-up tents (inspired by Koshino's early collections) possibly be thought intimidating?

Top, the sweeping curve of Michiko Koshino's cash desk. Below, the spine-like lighting and neoprene cubicles



APPENDIX 2: David Redhead, "Made to Measure," *Designers Journal,* (July/August 1990)

PETER COOK



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1 (facing page) No blemish disrupts the clarity of Stanton Williams' Issey Miyake shop. 2 Pink and white plaster walls are dappled with sunlight. 3 The entrance configuration refers to that of the Miyake mens' shop opposite.

3

MADE TO MEASURE

Retail fashion chains may no longer have much money spare to sharpen up their images, but one choice group of shopkeepers continues to commission new interiors as readily as ever. The top fashion houses are protected by the wealth of their jet-set customers and seem immune to the recession. The steady flow of new or refitted interiors in their London 'flagships' all share superficial similarities: precious materials, attention to detail and a generous sense of space. But aside from the essential luxury, designer-retailers often expect contrasting approaches from their interior designers. The new London shops of Michiko Koshino, Karl Lagerfeld and Issey Miyake reflect both the differing attitudes to image marketing of these top fashion designers and their contrasting aesthetics. The approach of the shops' architects to the challenge of getting inside another designer's skin is similarly diverse, discovers

David Redhead ▶

Most retailers strive for consistency in their shop interiors. Issey Miyake is an exception. The Japanese fashion designer is known instead for his patronage of architects he admires. Shiro Kuramata and David Chipperfield have both designed his stores. And architect Stanton Williams has just completed a new shop in London's Brompton Cross to house Miyake's women's collections across the road from the man's shop that the practice designed in 1987.

The commission marks a rare incursion into the retail field for a team best known for its sensitive and cool handling of gallery spaces such as the Design Museum. Partner Paul Williams makes it clear that Stanton Williams will only consider such work 'if the client is right': 'We want to produce the kind of spaces we can do in buildings,' he says. 'It gives us the opportunity to experiment.'

Maureen Docherty, who commissioned both Chipperfield and Stanton Williams on Miyake's behalf, seems unconcerned by the seeming absence of hard-nosed commercialism: 'Issey doesn't have a formula,' she claims. Rather, Docherty emphasises the Japanese designer's keenness to involve everyone in the design process: 'Issey says "Please play",' she says. 'If there is a brief, it is to hand over the clothes and say "Now it's yours".'

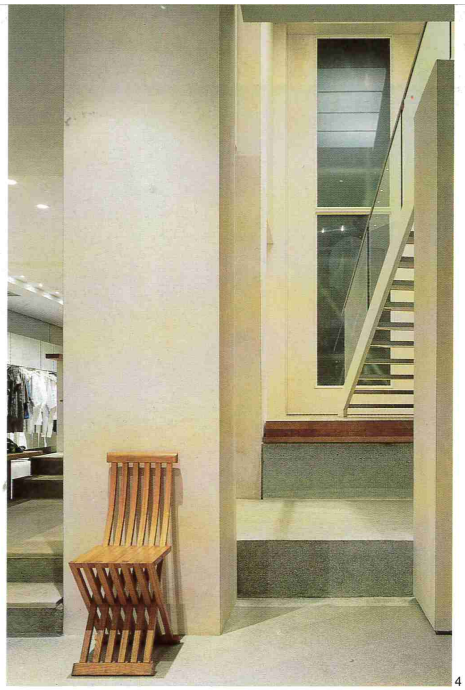
In Stanton Williams, Docherty clearly feels she has found designers whose own humility equips them to add something extra to the effect of Miyake's clothes: 'Many artists like to leave their footprint in what they produce,' she explains. 'Stanton Williams are without ego. They put the project first.'

Certainly the 275 sq m space does anything but overpower its merchandise. As with its predecessor across the road, the architect has demolished much of the ground floor to create a grand stairwell with a vaulted soffit that coaxes customers to the high ceilinged white space below, in which the clothes are displayed along one wall. It is a cool, restrained interior, but Stanton Williams is at pains to emphasise the softer aspects of its character.

The mix of materials – canvas blinds, pinky white wall plaster, oiled and whitened oak and a grey granolithic floor – is intended to provide a more feminine feel befitting the wares.

Despite this and the natural light that streams in from the courtyard at the rear, the atmosphere seems cool, almost austere. Perhaps the extra warmth will come from what Paul Williams calls the architect's 'trump card': the extra greenness that will come from the eventual planting of the central lightwell in phase two of the design.

4 Sparse furnishings include Paolo Uccello's Tomasa chair. 5 Both Issey Miyake's clothes and those prepared to try them on form the cherished artworks of the spacious downstairs gallery space.



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6 (facing page) The changing rooms that Fern Green designed for Michiko Koshino's Neal Street shop look like elegant bathing tents. The green wetsuit material refers to the Neoprene collection which made Koshino's name.

The overall impression is of a generously proportioned and finely tuned gallery. But Williams sees it more as a studio: 'It's a space which can change and develop,' he says, 'where people can simply enjoy wearing Issey's clothes.'

The elegant serenity of the new shop will undoubtedly add extra cachet for those able to afford the Issey Miyake label, but for Maureen Docherty the success of the interior is not judged by its effectiveness as a marketing tool.

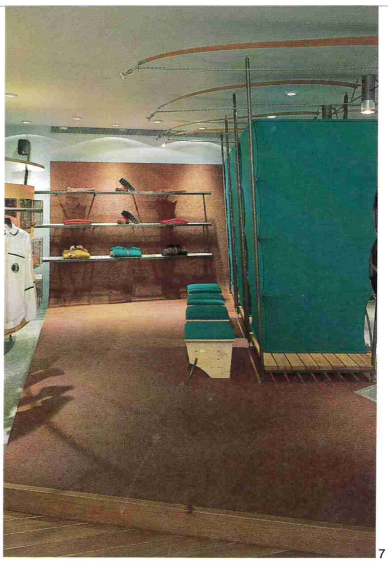
Instead she prefers to stress 'the air, space and freedom to change' that the shop has given to Miyake's clothes: 'The first shop was like a rooted tree. This is more of a changing flower.'

Michiko Koshino's name alone might suggest a designer-retailer in the Issey Miyake or Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons mould – based in Japan with numerous outlets dotted around the world's fashion cities. But paradoxically, though she was born into one of Japan's leading retail dynasties, Koshino declines to view herself as a Japanese designer.

Now in her late 30s, Koshino is a former professional tennis player and only began working as a designer when she moved to London some 10 years ago. Since then she has made her mark with collections which mix familiar items ▶

ALAN WILLIAMS


ICHIKO



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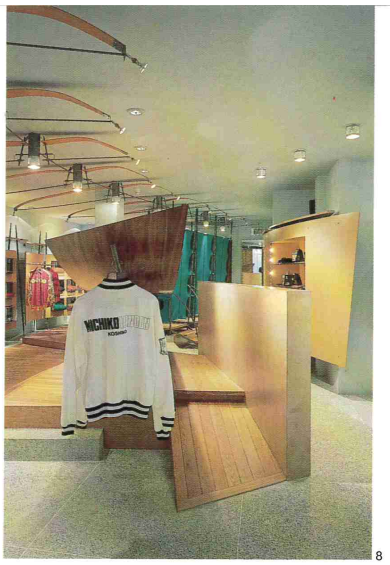
7 At the back of the shop, brown carpet is used both as floor and wall covering. Shelves were designed for a shoe collection which has yet to appear.
8 Curving upward, the walnut counter of the cash desk becomes a hanging display area.



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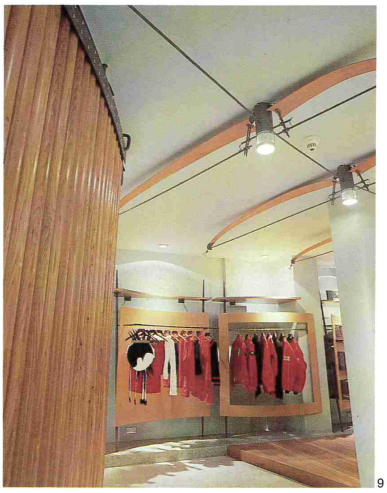

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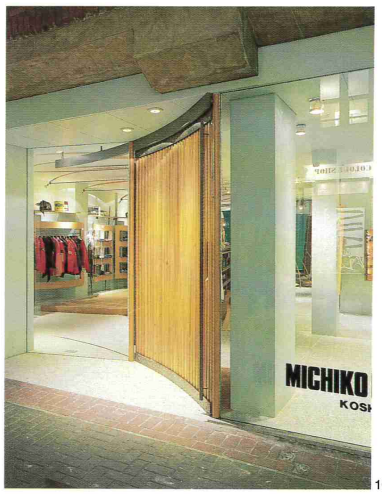
9 Vertebrae of light fixtures cut through the shop. At the centre of each bow-like light is a car headlamp. 10 A full-height curving door made of half-rounds of oak slides smoothly across the handsome shopfront of Michiko Koshino.



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of clothing, such as the biker's jacket and the Pac-a-mac, with odd materials such as Neoprene, the luminous wet-suit material. The blend of eccentricity and functionalism has produced unusual clothes, such as inflatable plastic coats, that have found favour with a young, club-minded public. Their willingness to sport clothing often emblazoned with the Michiko logo emphasises the designer's oriental cachet.

Oddly, to the Japanese who have followed Michiko's progress in their own voracious media, the corollary applies: 'The Japanese still see London as a prime fashion and style centre,' says David Fern of interior design practice Fern Green, 'so Michiko's Britishness sells well over there.' As a result, Fern Green's brief for a new London shop that was intended as a worldwide corporate model called not for pseudo-Japanese minimalism but for an English contemporary look that would keep Michiko's image honed to streetwise sharpness on both sides of the fashion-conscious world.

The shop seems to reflect Michiko's own combination of simplicity and peculiarity. Its rectangular shell has been left untouched but for a coat of peppermint green paint. The personality comes from furniture and fittings. Most arresting is the cash desk which divides the space in half. Raised above the interior, this greets customers with its upturned walnut top looking like some curious disco console in the open space. Above it, a fishbone-shaped lighting structure mirrors the curving form and casts a central swathe of light through the interior by means of adapted car headlamps.

Along the walls, semicircular merchandisers in lacquered MDF create an undulating rhythm that draws customers from the terrazzo floor finishes at the front, through a raised wooden platform, to the softness of carpet in the shoe section at the rear. Here Fern Green has made its own use of Michiko's favourite material: the zip-up beach hut changing rooms are made of green Neoprene stretched across a metal frame.

The transworld club tone is reinforced by the boom of house music and the disconcerting uniform of the sales assistants who, with their crew cuts and zip-laden clothing, look like high-fashion mercenaries.

APPENDIX 3: Claire Haggard, "Still crazy after all these years," *The Independent*, (25 August 1990)

Claire Haggard meets desinger Michiko Koshino and predicts that her Japanese reputation will soon be matched in London

Still crazy after all these years

DESIGN

MICHIKO KOSHINO is the great unknown of London fashion. The Japanese designer holds all her catwalk shows in the city and has made her home in Notting Hill Gate – but her biggest following is in Japan. Now all that is changing. The new Koshino store in Covent Garden's Neal Street is abuzz with customers. Michiko Koshino's time has come.

You need to visit Tokyo to get some idea of the size of her following in the Far East. Her name is everywhere. You can buy Michiko luggage and Michiko lingerie, Michiko stationery and Michiko interiors. She also has a substantial business in the US, with sales which are the envy of many a British designer.

The London shop gives away few hints of her Japanese empire. This is London street fashion through and through, although the prices are very much designer-level. On a Saturday morning, the shop is full of loud music and a young club crowd. Koshino's streamlined sportswear in bold graphics and patterns lines the walls.

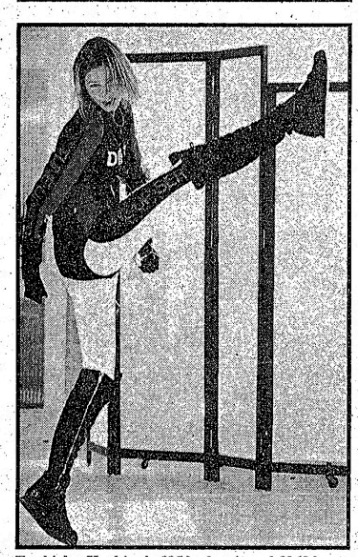
Her favourite fabrics are neoprene rubber, nylon, rayon and jersey. The neoprene jackets and tops, with which she first made her name, are still best sellers. From next week, the rails will fill up with motocross and biker-influenced sportswear, the core of her autumn collection.

Designed by Fern Green Partnership, the shop features a central cash desk soaring like the tracks of a Scalextric. Zip-up changing cubicles in bright jade neoprene echo the clothes.

She is very pleased with the way the shop has turned out. "The architects got it just right," she says. "We get the right sort of people into the shop: young and trendy, 18 to 25 – the club set." As an inveterate clubber and ardent follower of the music scene, she should know.

'We get the right people in the shop: young and trendy, 18 to 25 – the club set'

Her forte is witty hi-tech fashion with unisex appeal. Many designers have dabbled in sportswear in recent seasons, but Michiko Koshino has been designing sportswear-based collections throughout her career. "It just came naturally for me," she says. "Sportswear is easy to wear, so comfortable. I did not foresee the boom. Everybody is crazy about sportswear now, but to me it's always been important for everyday-wear."



For kicks: Koshino's £95 bodysuit and £260 boots

She has always preferred to cover her own compact form in clothes that stretch, breathe and offer an above-average performance. She likes to shock a bit, too. In the early days, she experimented with noxious-smelling rubber swimsuits. When Katharine Hamnett stirred up controversy at a gathering of designers and industry notables at Downing Street by wearing her anti-Cruise missile T-shirt, Michiko was equally flamboyant in one of her inflatable jackets. She had blown it up to maximum capacity, which prevented her sitting in any of the chairs.

Michiko is the youngest of a famous and hugely talented Japanese family of which she was the rebel. Her fashion designer sisters, Hiroko and Junko, have boutiques in most of the world's fashion capitals. But Michiko was reluctant to follow her sisters into the industry and devoted her attentions to tennis, carving out a reputation for herself on the Japanese tennis courts.

At 21, she tired of the sporting life and began to cast around for an alternative occupation. "My whole family is in the fashion business," she says. "My sisters come to Paris to do fashion shows every season. They are totally right for Paris – avant garde and classic. I was never interested in going to Paris. More important to me is what is happening at street level."

She ended up, with some reluctance, working in the family business. "My sisters didn't treat me very seriously. I was just a convenient girl to have around. They made me really fed up, so I decided to come to London."

She has lived in London since the late Seventies. Her first job was with a fashion company called the Quorum group. "I just knocked on the door, with no file or anything. I said: 'You want to try me, you don't have to pay me for one month'."

That first collection was small but innovative – a series of simple colour-blocked shapes with wrap details. It was an instant success, and convinced her that she could produce her own label. With the help of her English husband, she was running her own business within a matter of months.

There was a special buzz at her last catwalk show in March, where the music and fashion crowds happily merged. Now her British wholesale operation, which is not geared to supplying more than a handful of shops, is expected to grow.

The new man behind Michiko Koshino is impresario Johnny Rokka, who has been floating around the London music and fashion world for several seasons. Two years ago, he had a club dance hit, *Jibaro*, with his band Electra. Now he is determined to see Michiko make her name in her adopted city, encouraging her to design for a wider, more mainstream audience – more of the hip sportswear, fewer of the bizarre inflatable jackets.

'My sisters didn't treat me seriously. They made me fed up, so I came to London'

"Johnny tells me I don't have to do crazy things any more," says Michiko. But the sparkle in her eyes suggests she hasn't finished being crazy just yet.

APPENDIX 4: Lucy Bullivant, *International Interiors 3* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991)

3.3

Michiko Koshino

FERN GREEN PARTNERSHIP
London, UK

The Japanese fashion designer Michiko Koshino has lived in London for a decade. In recent years she has enjoyed cult status for her neoprene jackets, suits and sportswear with their highly conspicuous logos. She is an established name in Japan, but as a specifically British-related fashion phenomenon, a designer who draws her inspiration from UK club and street culture. Koshino is well aware of the internationalism of her appeal, and was adamant about steering clear of a design solution for her new Neal Street shop that displayed any obviously Japanese references. Instead, she aimed for 'a total environment', a concept that her followers could identify with, but which at the same time would satisfy her backers in Tokyo that she could make the grade commercially.

For this high-profile space in one of Covent Garden's pedestrianized streets, her brief to Fern Green stipulated a centrally positioned cash desk, to provide a focus of interest for the customers. Its raised end thrusts diagonally upwards towards the window, adding a touch of wit. A concave frontage, angled inwards, incorporates a three-metre-high curved, sliding door faced in wide oak strips. The design gives a clear view of the interior with no distracting elements. 'The shop is the display,' explained Koshino: in fact, the only item ever put in the window is a record console, wheeled out on occasion, with a live DJ playing records.

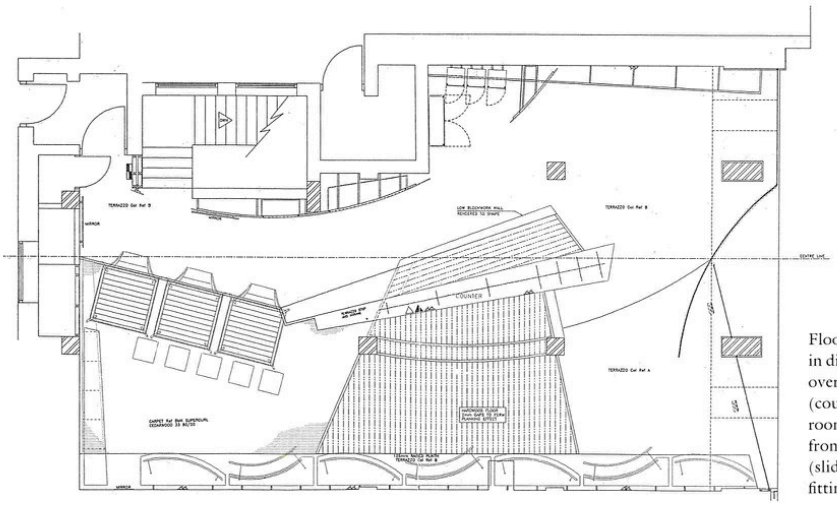
The walls and ceiling of the interior 'shell' have been created as one single colour backdrop in neutral, earthy tones which support seasonal changes in the colour of the clothes. Dramatic, custom-designed lighting helps to give the space its individuality. On the ceiling, a curved metal 'spine' connecting the light fittings creates a swirl of movement, with a series of plywood panels held in tension by metal rods. The designers used adapted car headlights, with smaller lights on each end of the plywood 'fins', to focus on the merchandise. Materials combine sportiness with natural organic forms, but avoid too raw a finish. The cash desk, raised on an oak platform, has a sandblasted mild steel frame clad with natural MDF panels and a walnut top. The changing rooms, reached by neat wooden stairs, evoke beach-hut cubicles.

The main display units are curved MDF panels. Suspended on sandblasted epoxy-coated mild steel uprights which form spikes at the top to support curved shelves for accessories, they disguise the rectilinearity of the wall surfaces.

The layered floor finishes add interest to the small (100-square-metre) space which is sensitively 'zoned'. Once past the terrazzo floor and the raised wooden platform, the visitor is greeted by a raised section of carpet running under the changing rooms and up the rear wall for about two metres – a visual pun which adds another dynamic element to the ingredients. This is a popular, accessible, inviting and stylish interior, achieved on a budget of £120,000.

The curved oak front door on a concave runner, flanked by clear glazing through which the inner life of the shop can be viewed.

Taut, tent-like structures provide modest, mirrorless changing-room space, but within Koshino's zip-up neoprene 'cubicles', stretched to fit over metal frames, you could be squeezing yourself into a garment in the durable fabric she greatly favours.



Floor plan: zoned areas in different materials, overlaid with angles (counter, changing rooms and glazed frontage) and curves (sliding door and wall fittings).

APPENDIX 5: David Fern, "For Love of Shadows"
Design Review, (October 1993)

My Bible David Fern

For love of shadows

Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* is more than a poetic essay on aesthetics. It is a reminder that humanity must play its part in design

I have long been drawn to the spaciousness of Chinese painting and the minimal understated qualities of formal Japanese gardens. But when I discovered *In Praise of Shadows*, I found a book that came closest to linking my aesthetic interest in Oriental culture and philosophy with a broader appreciation, experienced and expressed through all of the senses.

Totally un-Bible-like in volume, this small book is an essay on aesthetics, written in 1933 by Jun 'Ichiro Tanizaki, who is venerated as one of Japan's greatest novelists. Tanizaki was born in Tokyo in 1886 and lived there until the earthquake of 1923. He died in 1965.

His poetically descriptive passages present a response to a culture very different from our own. Of particular importance to me is the profound spirit of humanity contained in the text as the topics under analysis range from the observation of the tinged cloudiness of the Japanese complexion to the feeling of mild warmth experienced when holding a lacquer soup bowl.

This book could easily be misinterpreted as paying homage to the traditional Japanese lifestyle and viewed as a memorial to the loss of that tradition as a result of the influence of western discoveries. But to accuse Tanizaki of producing nothing more than a grudging indictment of the progressive effect of technology on his native culture would be totally missing the point.

The difficulties he has coming to terms with modern technology are indeed expressed: how is it possible to make electric wires, water pipes, stoves and lamps harmonise with the austerity of Japanese rooms? He also discusses the merits of the traditional Japanese toilet – "truly a place of repose" – over and above the clinically clean, but spiritually dead, pure white porcelain western equivalent. The traditional Japanese toilet stands away from the main building "at the end of a corridor in a grove fragrant with leaves and moss. No words can describe the sensation as one sits in the dim light, basking in the faint glow reflected from the Shoji, lost in meditation or gazing out at the garden...."

Tanizaki does not object to the conveniences of modern living, but wonders why they could not be designed with a bit more consideration for the users' habits and tastes. By giving us examples of some of the joyful experiences of Japanese life, he warns not of the loss of tradition but of the loss of the "experience" and of sensitivity.

Recurring throughout the text are references to light and shade and contrast. Tanizaki believed that we have become insensitive to the evils of excessive lighting. He refers to the contribution made by darkness towards the beauty of lacquerware: "Sometimes superb pieces of black lacquerware, decorated perhaps with flecks of silver and gold, will seem unsettlingly garish and altogether vulgar. But render pitch black the void in which they stand and light them not with rays of the sun or electricity, but rather a single lantern or candle: suddenly those garish objects turn sombre, refined and dignified." We later learn how the Japanese came to discover beauty in shadows as a result of the design of the house adapting to the demands of climate; growing from the realities of life. Contrast in the form of positive and negative is also related to the sense of hearing. Traditional Japanese music above all has a disposition towards silence. The pauses or silences enhance the quality of the sound.

There are many messages to be revered in Tanizaki's writing. He warns that in our race for a higher standard of "material" living, we are in danger of overlooking or losing some of life's magical experiences. His views endorse a fact, often easily forgotten, that design is not merely about aesthetics or indeed function. It is affected by and affects our day-to-day activity and we respond to it with all of our senses.

In this electronic age, when there is so much talk of isms, styles and trends, it is refreshing and reassuring to read a sincere essay on aesthetics that provokes us to journey inside ourselves and meditate on human nature; and encourages us not to overlook, in the words of Herman Hesse, "those little joys". In his concluding remarks Tanizaki says he is grateful for the benefits of the age, but in his writing he has called back "at least for literature this world of shadows we are losing".

In understanding the value of these words, we can embrace new developments in technology and proceed with a human response to the needs of our society that should never be devoid of "shadows".

In Praise of Shadows is published by Jonathan Cape at £4.99.

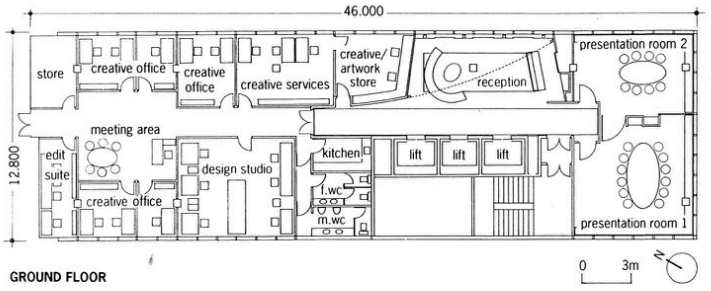
APPENDIX 6: Marcus Field, "Ad agency's revamped reception with a view" *Architects Journal* (27 July 1994)

Ad agency's revamped reception with a view

Fern Green's reception area for LSDC Ayer opens up a space from service core to outside wall, giving spectacular views

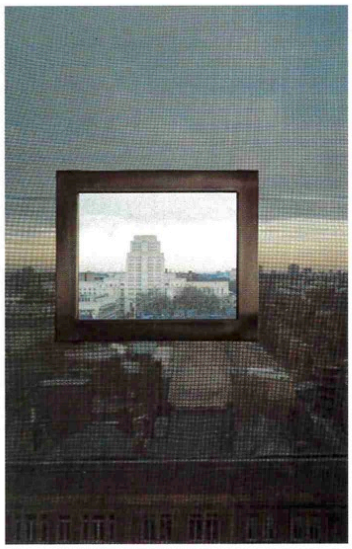
BY MARCUS FIELD

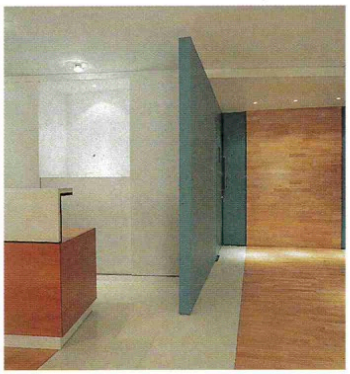
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN WILLIAMS



GROUND FLOOR

Above: 10th-floor plan. Left: punctured steel mesh covers the windows. Below and bottom: the slick new reception area





A prerequisite of any self-respecting advertising agency is a striking reception area to impress potential clients. So when LSDC amalgamated with Ayer International last year and acquired a new London office to cement the join, it commissioned Fern Green to design a suitable reception, presentation rooms and office space for its 50 staff.

Previously, the lifts of the 1960s office building opened into a narrow corridor lined with cellular offices. Fern Green has opened up this 10th-floor space to make a reception area which now extends from service core to outside wall, making the most of spectacular views across the city. To the left of the lifts, a new curved and angled wall, finished in pigmented render, guides visitors to the creative studios, and screens storage areas. A brightly painted, boxed-out frame, set at the same angle as the wall, contains the reception area and challenges the rigidity of the building's grid. To accentuate the view and shade the interior, the windows are covered by a steel mesh which is punctured at regular intervals either with framed views or small monitors. This engaging but seemingly extravagant device is rigged up to show film of a suitably urban theme.

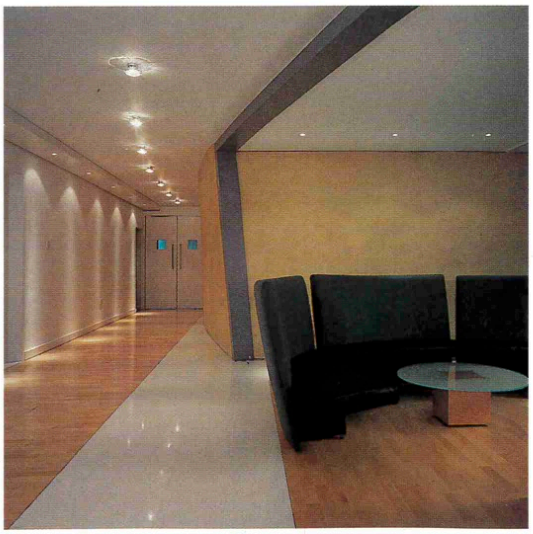
The problem of a shallow floor-to-ceiling height is countered by fixing the beech floor and terrazzo tiles directly to the slab and reordering the services behind the new plasterboard ceiling. While small downlighters are inset, SKK's larger fittings are surface-mounted. Doors in public areas are painted sky blue and fitted with cleanlined Modric ironmongery from Allgood.

Elsewhere on LSDC Ayer's two floors, Fern Green has planned office layouts and divided the space with a simple plasterboard partitioning system. These are very much workaday spaces, and not for public view. In contrast, bespoke elements within the public areas – including the reception desk and visitors' table, presentation-room tables and the felt- and leather-upholstered sofa which is angled towards the view – are all designed with panache by Fern Green. □

CREDITS

OFFICE FIT OUT, LONDON W1

CLIENT Leagas Shaffron Davis Chick Ayer
INTERIOR DESIGNER Fern Green Partnership
MAIN CONTRACTOR John Russell Architectural Carpentry and Joinery Company
CONTRACT VALUE £125,000
FLOOR AREA 900m²
SUBCONTRACTORS/ SUPPLIERS
timber floors Kahrs, *stone floors* TI Tiles, *carpets* Brintons, *lighting* Shiu Kay Kan (Reader Enquiry No 401), *bespoke furniture* John Russell Architectural Carpentry and Joinery Company, *fabric* Kvadrat, *A/V installation* Metrovideo monitors JVC, *ironmongery* G&S Allgood (Reader Enquiry No 402)



APPENDIX 7: Marcus Field, "A matter of taste"
Architects Journal (27 October 1994)

A matter of taste

Fern Green's wine shop design uses a range of finishes and textures to create a sensory environment for tasting

BY MARCUS FIELD.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN WILLIAMS

Fern Green has designed a wine merchants in the City of London which challenges the traditional perception of this type of retail outlet as a cluttered, bin-end booze shop. In contrast, Uncorked is a clean-cut, minimalist environment where the passing trade of city slickers can pop in for a tasting and order a crate or two.

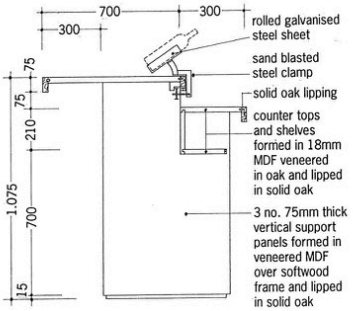
Starting from scratch with a 100m² spec unit in the Broadgate Centre, Fern Green has divided the space skilfully with a series of interventions and finishes to provide a central retail space, storage area, kitchen and WC facilities, and an office for the manager.

In an attempt to create a 'sensory' environment for wine tasting, the designer has worked hard to source a stimulating range of finishes and textures. Dominating the public wine-tasting area is a 6m-long table finished in oak; the material, chosen for its association with wine making, was also used as a ceiling and floor finish. The tasting area is floored in self-faced York stone slabs, and a pebble-filled trough runs the length of the shop as a display area for opened crates.

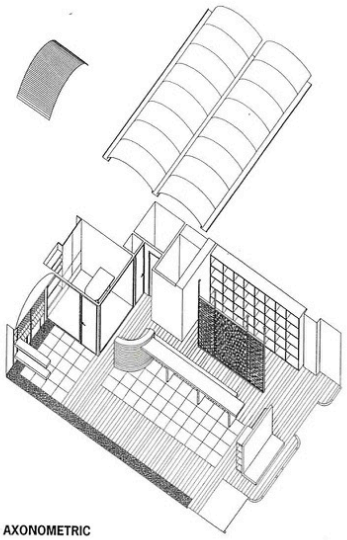
Behind the tasting table, a waxed mild-steel frame is bolted to the floor and ceiling to contain a woven willow screen which conceals the storage area. At the rear of the shop, an identical metal frame secures long flats of galvanised steel which have been rolled into undulating racks for storing bottles.

With a reference to the traditional wine cellar, Fern Green has barrel-vaulted the ceiling with oak-veneered panels. Two types of light source have been used for the shop: fluorescent in the galvanised troughs suspended from the slab and low-voltage directional sources set in to the suspended ceiling. A bulkhead has been inserted to contain the air-conditioning necessary to maintain a constant temperature.

A small office at the rear of the shop is partitioned off with screens etched with names of wine grapes; a feature which forms part of a slick graphic identity created for the company by Karen Wilks. Inside the office, Fern Green has specified Hans Wegner's Wishbone Chair to accompany the oak desk which was specially designed and made for the job. □

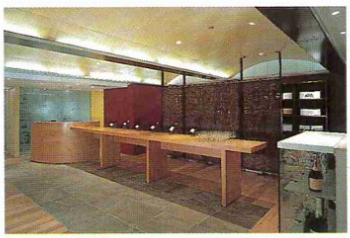


SECTION THROUGH TASTING TABLE



AXONOMETRIC

Below: a 6m-long, oak-finished table dominates the public wine-tasting area. Bottom: the storage area behind the table is concealed by a steel frame containing a woven willow screen



CREDITS

UNCORKED WINE MERCHANTS, LONDON EC2

DESIGNER
Fern Green Partnership
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Karen Wilks
SHOPFITTER
ISM Design
COST
£60,000

FLOOR AREA
100m²
SUPPLIERS
willow screen The English Basket and Hurdle Centre
oak floor Fine Wood Floors
York stone George Farrar
lighting iGuzzini *etched glass* Hundred Percent Glass

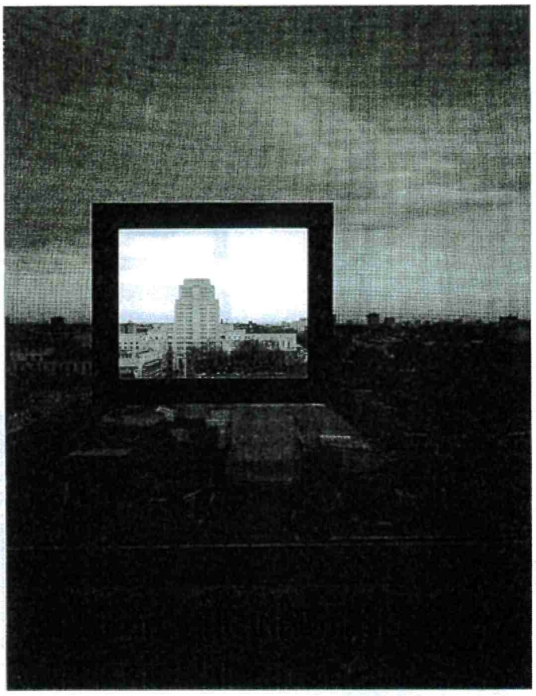
APPENDIX 8: Michelle Ogundehin, "Material Worlds"
Blueprint, (December/January 1995)

Material worlds

FERN GREEN HAVE BROUGHT THE CITY INTO FINE FOCUS AT A CENTRAL LONDON AD AGENCY

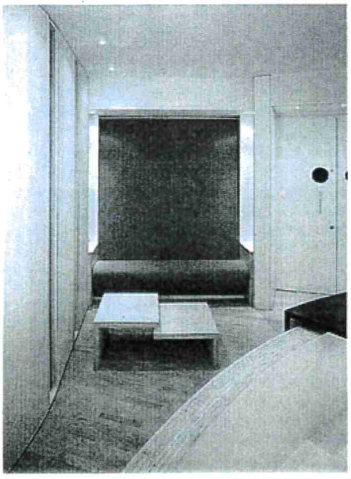
The Fern Green partnership is only five years old and yet it already has an impressive client list. The combined skills of partners David Fern, who studied furniture design at Buckinghamshire College, and interior designer Nigel Green, a graduate of Middlesex Polytechnic, secured early projects including the refitting of a number of boutiques in Covent Garden, a wine-merchant's based on the principle of tasting before purchase (see *Blueprint* issue 110), a recording studio for the Cocteau Twins and new premises for graphics house Cartlidge Levene.

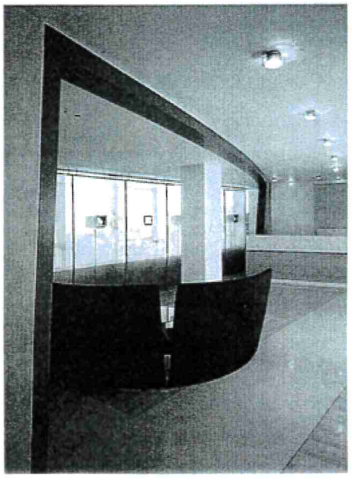
More recently, the advertising agency Leagas Shafron Davis Ayer wanted its 900 square metres of office space on the ninth and tenth floors of a 1960s central London tower block totally refitted to coincide with the growth of the company. The scheme revolves around a spacious reception; as you approach directly from the lifts, a pale ochre, rough-render wall tilts towards a seating area, inviting you in. The sculptural nature of the slate blue felt and black leather-upholstered seating is inspired by Richard Serra's piece *Inclined rolled steel* and enables the curved banquette to be read from all angles as it sweeps around a circular, etched glass-topped table. A skewed frame, painted a bruised violet shade, contains the reception and emphasises a bird's-eye view across central London; the scene is, however, deliberately obscured by a fine-gauge, steel-mesh screen, into which compact, rectangular viewing holes are set, alternating with mini video units. The peep-holes bring into focus fragments of the cityscape as the monitors silently play Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi*; alternatively, corporate videos are available for waiting clients. At night, the recorded imagery outlasts reality as the mesh becomes increasingly opaque. Down lighters by Shiu Kay Kan look like encased car headlamps and cast rippling patterns on the ceiling as they lead, in a slow curve, from the reception desk to the creative suites. A route from the work spaces to the presentation rooms is traced in beech-wood flooring and turns through 90 degrees before running up the end wall of the vista; secondary routes are picked out in terrazzo. Grey-blue doors on either side indicate a choice of meeting room; inside, the decor is simpler – white paint and Venetian blinds – concentrating on a custom-made oval pearwood table.



The brief at the Helium showrooms in Osnaburgh Street, London NW1, was very similar. Helium is a wholesale fashion design and manufacturing company, selling to Miss Selfridge and Dorothy Perkins, who wanted their new offices to look young, sophisticated and professional. Emerging through double doors off a main stairwell, the visitor is confronted by a gently curved reception desk in birch ply. The laminated-sheet construction is exposed and the natural finish balanced by a richly stained counter which floats over the top. The combination of light and dark is repeated in the closets behind. A rounded meeting room opposite has a plain rendered finish punctuated by narrow, full-height windows.

Although enclosed, the reception area benefits from diffused daylight filtering through the surrounding showrooms via etched glass, a full expanse of which backs the main presentation room allowing a glimpse of suspended rails of clothing. The flooring varies from cherry to maple, demarcating different zones and defining paths in much the same manner as at LSDA. A 10mm shadow gap around all apertures is a finical detail that continues into the creative areas, although here the finish is lemon and the glass clear.





The sophistication evident in Fern Green's work comes from a considered refinement of ideas and the controlled use of a particular set of materials to define and mould space. So far, however, their work has enough unexpected twists to keep them from being simply repetitive.

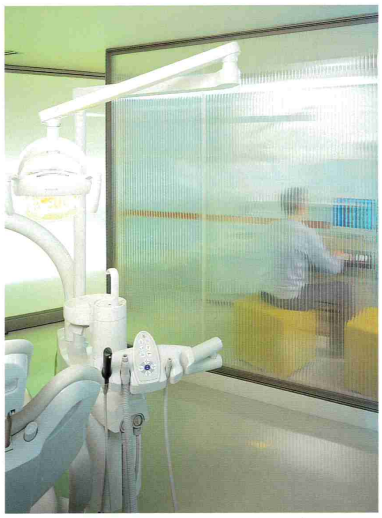
Michelle Ogundehin

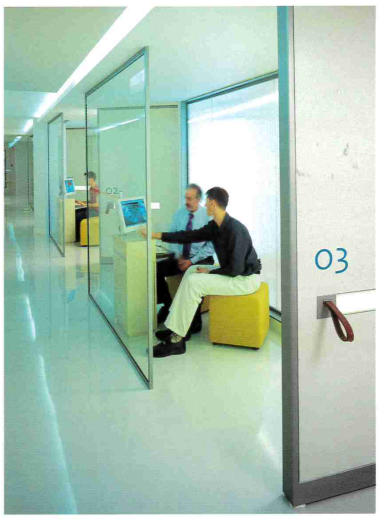
A steel mesh screen with viewing squares, top, fragments the view of the city from LSDA's reception, left. Far left: the foyer of the Helium showroom

APPENDIX 9: Daniela Mecozzi, "Plastic Surgery" *Frame,* (March 2002))

details

Plastic Surgery





A dark, narrow basement doesn't sound like the ideal location for a dental practice. Yet Dentistry 100 in London offers an interesting example of how design can generate a calming and friendly environment conducive to patient care. Designed by Fern Green, this practice reflects the client's desire for a contemporary, high-tech, paperless environment. Lit by recessed lighting troughs, the long, narrow space accommodates a row of surgeries, which open onto a corridor. Green widened the space by placing an open-plan consultation area in front of each treatment room. Provided with computer screens and seating, these areas can be regarded as a manifesto of Dentistry 100's code of conduct. Seated side by side, doctor and patient discuss problems and solutions. The practitioner's authority is replaced by simple competence, while 'patient power' is enhanced by access to surgeries with large, pivoting, illuminated walls – usually open – which give patients a soothing focal point. Green has used the low scale and narrow plan to create a welcoming and informal environment that conveys a sense of accessibility. The result is minimal without being clinical.

DANIELA MECOZZI

Reality is not what we see but what we discover

Quotation from exhibition titled *Luis Barragan: The Quiet Revolution*, Design Museum, London, 2001