Zoom In

ALL EYES ON SÃO PAULO'S DESIGN SOUL, PAULA HAYES' MINI BOTANIC GARDENS, AND NEW BRANDED RETAIL IN PARIS, ZÜRICH AND BARCELONA
Shaping Space in Seoul

For ‘lifestyle destination’ My Boon in Seoul, Jaklitsch / Gardner Architects crafted a space that interacts with the merchandise.

Words Tim Groen
Photos Nacása & Partners
A new addition to Seoul’s Cheongdam-dong ward is My Boon, a concept store designed by New York City firm Jaklitsch / Gardner Architects (JGA). Bordering a narrow residential street and a major thoroughfare, the ‘lifestyle destination’ features a selection of fashions, cosmetics and other merchandise carefully curated by creative director Milan Vukmirovic. Shoppers who need a break will also find a juice bar-cum-café on the premises.

The client envisioned an austere black-and-white interior as the backdrop for a subdued display of merchandise. JGA envisioned the minimalist concept by using end-grain timber flooring with different finishes to indicate the store’s three zones – dubbed ‘style’, ‘body’ and ‘soul’ – and by merging these areas beneath a continuous louvered ceiling of natural wood. "We see the space almost as an interior garden," says architect Stephen Jaklitsch, explaining that the ‘key infrastructural elements’ which shape the interior were designed to provide ‘a great deal of flexibility and variation over time’.

The only element that breaks the continuity of the ceiling is the store’s café. Concerns about the constant whirring of blenders and juicers led to a proposal for an enclosed, soundproof chamber. ‘Like an updated version of the Cone of Silence from Get Smart,’ jokes Jaklitsch. Unwilling to sacrifice the overall sense of open space, the architects moved the kitchen, with its inevitable noise, out of sight. Only simple food preparations are carried out at the white-marble counter. Overhead, a large glass lighting element demarcates the bar area.

"It creates an ambiguous sense of interior and exterior within the café itself," says architect Mark Gardner. "It stratifies the space." In the original plans for My Boon, the only fashion items were T-shirts and shoes. The architects revised that idea, however, when they came up with displays that allow for a larger collection of clothes. Blackened-steel boxes that can be raised, lowered and pivoted line windows in the fashion area, and an entire wall is devoted to footwear. The scheme treats each product on display as a work of art, no matter where it appears in the store. Seemingly less mobile, but also designed with flexibility in mind, is a large installation of concrete planks, currently used as a ...
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...stepped substructure for the exhibit of mannequins, furniture and other eye-catching objects.

"We had just completed the Tokyo building for Marc Jacobs," says Jaklitsch, "where we used concrete planking on the exterior. I had a sample at the office to help explain the finish I wanted for My Boon. The more we thought about it, the more we realized what a powerful statement it would be to use these planks as an interior stage."

"Larger components are visually cleaner," says Gardner, "and we love the contrast between the weight of the material and the refinement of its finish."

Don't be surprised, though, if you visit the store and discover a car where you had expected to find a concrete platform. It's this kind of flexibility that the architects had in mind when attempting to accommodate both Valakovic's fluid approach to merchandising and the seasonal ebb and flow of My Boon's collections.

The building's glazed exterior had to be left untouched, a problem that JDA solved by inserting an interior facade. The result of LED strip lighting combined with brightly colored bands of floor-to-ceiling powder-coated steel (think vertical blinds) is a constantly changing art installation. "Instead of an opaque LED screen, we wanted to maintain interaction with the street," says Jaklitsch, who points out varying distances between the steel bands, a design device that offers wider views in certain spots and more privacy in others, while partially shielding the café.

Gardner is struck by the fact that the Boon brand has a reputation for one-off stores, like Man on the Boon and Boon the Shop, both in Seoul. "It becomes a destination," he says. "It's singular, and rather than your average roll-out, they transform it into another concept." For the multifaceted My Boon, his partner emphasizes that their design was "a matter of interacting with the merchandise."