THEORY STUDIES: ARCHETYPICAL SHOWROOM PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY INTERIOR DESIGN

A Thesis

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by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on identifying, classifying and naming unnamed showroom archetypes in contemporary interiors that are derived from reiterative historical designs. The study is a component of the Intypes (Interior Archetypes) Research and Teaching Project established in 1997 at Cornell University. An Intype is an ideal example of a historically determined design strategy from which similar models are derived, emulated or reiterated.

The contemporary showroom develops in the early 20th century and has demonstrated significant design evolutions throughout its short history, spanning almost a century. While much research has been done on the design of retail environments, there exists almost no research on showrooms as a separate practice type from retail. Current studies of showrooms offer imagery, but little to no analysis of interior design and display strategies. As such, a comprehensive knowledge of showroom design strategy is rarely integrated into professional practice, nor is it integrated with design curriculums that focus on retail.

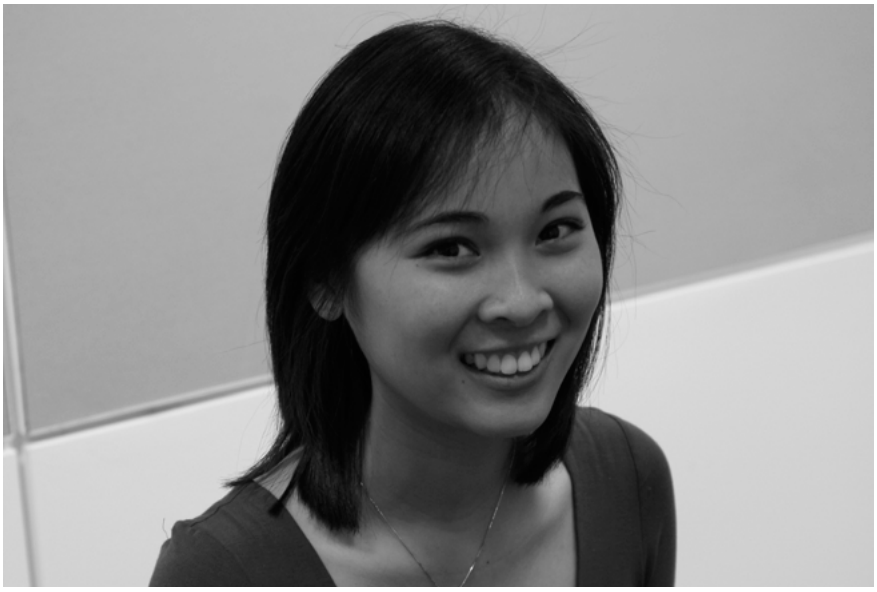
This study creates a typology of the professional design practices of showroom environments. The study identifies and documents showroom design strategies that are repeated through time. A vocabulary for teaching and comparative analysis is created through this study and offers practice-based research in the hopes of encouraging greater design discourse and criticism in academia as well as within

professional practice.

Eight showroom Intypes are discussed in this thesis. Four previously identified Intypes are reexamined and applied to the showroom setting – Marching Order, White Box, Black Out and Hotspot. Four new showroom-specific Intypes were identified and named – Plinth, Line-Up, Specimen, and Spectrum. Each typology was examined through a comprehensive survey of primary and secondary sources and describes a practice's characteristics and design strategies traced back historically. Most of the Intypes can be traced back to the mid-20th century when showroom installations began receiving significantly more attention in trade publications. All identified Intypes remain relevant in current showroom design practice.

The eight Intypes developed in this thesis encompass numerous aspects of the showroom environment including material, lighting, object, and spatial applications.

In addition to this thesis, Showroom Intypes will be disseminated through the free and open website – www.Intypes.Cornell.edu – a web-based research and teaching site that makes design history and contemporary practice accessible to academics, professional and students.



Biographical Sketch

Courtney Cheng originally hails from Newton, Massachusetts and attended the Dana Hall School in the neighboring town of Wellesley. In the fall of 2005, she matriculated at Cornell University's College of Engineering before transferring to the College of Human Ecology a year later. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Design and Environmental Analysis in 2010. Under the guidance of Professor Jan Jennings, she pursued her graduate studies in design history, theory and criticism, focusing on showroom design. Her broader interests include information design, sequential art, and German language and culture.

To the 7:00 pm studio dinners, the 9:30 pm coffee runs,
the 2:00 am cartwheels, and the 5:00 am print crises.
It was all worth it.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 The Study

The focus of this thesis research is the identification and development of showroom archetypes for the on-going Intypes (Interior Archetypes) Research and Teaching Project. Initiated in 1997 at Cornell University, this project creates a typology of contemporary interior design practices that are derived from reiterative historical designs that span time, style and cross-cultural boundaries. These Intypes identify contemporary design practices that have not been analyzed thereby providing designers with historical precedent and an interior, history, and contemporary design-specific vocabulary.

This thesis will examine the interior environments of showrooms by analyzing patterns, typologies, practices and/or strategies in contemporary design usage and provide a comprehensive argument about various precedents in showroom design. This research is an original study that draws mainly from primary source materials. The research protocol is systematic and comprehensive and explores primary source material from trade journals.

Chapter 1 Organization

This chapter includes (1.1) an introduction and premise of the study; (1.2) a history and/or brief overview of showroom design; (1.3) a description of the Intypes Research and Teaching Project; (1.4) methodological and theoretical approaches; (1.5) a general literature review; (1.6) analysis and summary of findings; (1.7) conclusion of the study.

1.1 Introduction and Definition of Showroom

The study of showrooms is often grouped together with that of traditional retail stores; therefore, showrooms have not been considered a separate practice type from retail. Nevertheless, showroom installations have been published regularly from 1959 to the present in design trade magazines. Studying showrooms as a separate category of design is necessary, because showrooms represent a different client base from retail. Current studies of showrooms offer imagery, but little to no analysis of interior design and display strategies.

A showroom is a place without a cash wrap; "goods are ordered instead of bought." Moreover, the products displayed in a showroom are not immediately available.[1] This means that storage of products is not important, as surplus stock is not necessary. What item stock the showroom offers is displayed on the floor. As such, careful thought and consideration is invested in how products are displayed in the showroom. For this reason, it is more accurate to say that a showroom is hybrid type of store and museum.

There are two main types of showrooms: 1) the manufacturer's showroom that features a single brand, and 2) the manufacturer's representative or distributor who represents several brands. Showrooms are generally perceived of as higher-end than traditional retail, although this perception has been changing recently with the sudden popularity of high-end retail projects. One recent development in showroom design is that only

[1] Daniel Herman, "High Architecture," in *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, ed. Chihua Judy Chung et al. (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), 394.

a select range of goods is displayed, rather than the whole collection. A well-informed representative is mandatory, because a customer and a representative are expected to engage each other for information and for ordering.[2]

At the present, many showrooms are open to the public. In the past, this has not been the case. Only trade professionals, or those they escorted could gain admittance. The exception to this is car showrooms, which as far as can be determined, have always been open because they sell directly to the public. Showrooms relating to the interior design profession began to open to the public in the decade of the 1960s. Interestingly, clothing showrooms, in the past open to those not in the design trades (usually to wealthy clientele), are now generally closed to the public and sell only in bulk to the fashion retail industry.

Parameters of the Study

This study is restricted to the examination of showroom installations from 1930 to the present, constituting the history of contemporary trade showrooms. Tradeshows and exhibition design were not included in the study. Traditional retail comprises its own practice type and its study was completed by Kristin Malyak in 2011. Research was based on published examples of showroom interiors in trade magazines as well as secondary sources. The research topic sought to extend beyond purely aesthetic or stylistic design interventions within showrooms and, instead, integrate the theory and effect of placing objects on display.

[2] Karl Kaspar, *Shops and Showrooms: an International Survey*, (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1967), 8.

1.2 A Brief History of Showrooms

The detailed history of showroom design is difficult to trace due to lack of written work on the subject. There are very few books on the matter, and the most detailed information can only be found in short articles written about showrooms in various trade journals of the mid-20th century. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the first appearance of the word "showroom" in 1616, when the word was in fact two separate words that were spelled "shew rowme". The first usage with spelling closest to today's was in 1839 in the novel *Nicholas Nickelby* by Charles Dickens, where the word was spelled "show-room." Both spellings of the word are defined as "A room used for the display of goods or merchandise."

Due to the lack of documentation and written work on showrooms, their full history is very difficult to trace. In some early iterations, it seems that the term shop and showroom could be used interchangeably without any real difference between the definitions of the two words. By the late 18th century in England, it seemed showrooms were being used to deliberately encourage buying among the masses by showing them new and exciting styles of clothing and other wares.[3]

The history of the wholesale showrooms familiar to people today begins in the mid-20th century. During the American Depression of the 1930s, many stores attempted to create a higher turn-over in sales by doing business in volume. Manufacturers of expensive, quality architectural and design goods found their sales lagging, because

[3] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England,* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press. 1982), 76.

goods of higher quality (and therefore price) did not sell as quickly or as easily as their lower-priced counterparts. To boost their sales and increase company exposure, these manufacturers established showrooms to exhibit all their products—"every piece and pattern of their entire line" — which was something that other stores could not afford the space to do. The manufacturers of these higher-end goods agreed to sell at wholesale to retailers, and other trade professionals. In particular, showrooms that sold furniture and other home goods worked to cultivate relationships with decorators, who would then recommend the furniture and accessories to their clients. [4]

After the end of the Depression and the Second World War, the amount of showrooms speedily increased. This could have been the result of the general economic boom in the United States that followed the end of the war. It could also be attributed to the fact that many retailers began to understand the "limitations of store space" and decided to open showrooms that would act as complements to their pre-existing retail stores. By the late 1950s, the growth and economic impact of the wholesale showroom in America was definitive enough to garner an article in the trade magazine *Interior Design* devoted to the subject, followed by a progress report in 1959.[5]

By 1960, the showroom business was booming. An article in the December 1960 issue of *Interior Design* states that "the growth of the wholesale showroom has by no means reached its peak. Each month new showrooms and branch outlets of existing showrooms are opening all over the country." The article credits the growth both to

[4] Marion Gough, "Where Do You Go To Find The Best?" *House Beautiful* 102, no. 10 (Oct. 1960), 190-191, 265-266).

[5] Anonymous, "Showroom Impact 1960," *Interior Design* 31, no. 12 (Dec. 1960), 138-139.

the post-war economic upswing, but also to the "higher taste level" of the American consumer, and to the interior design profession, which allegedly "set the pace that the wholesale showroom has followed."[6]

During this decade, there were three main types of furniture showrooms: 1) the manufacturer's showroom where "the whole spread of one maker's products is permanently displayed," 2) the individually owned showroom that "buys and sells manufacturer's merchandise just like a store, except that it does not sell directly to the consumer," and 3) the manufacturer's representative, "who may display the products of several manufacturers."[7] At the time, all of these showroom types sold only to dealers, decorators, and people in the design trade. It is important to note that this was only the case with showrooms related to the architecture and design profession; clothing showrooms, while they did sell items in bulk to department stores and the like, also allowed those not in the trade to buy items. Car showrooms, as always, sold directly to their customers.

By the mid 1960s, the attitude towards the "closed" showroom — meaning that the client would not be admitted unless accompanied by a trade professional — was beginning to change. As a November 1963 article in *Interior Design* chronicled, "The number of showrooms today who continue this policy is getting smaller all the time."[8] This trend toward open showrooms was particularly predominant in New York City, where some showrooms felt pressured to open their doors to regular consumers just

[6] Anonymous, "Showroom Impact," 138.

[7] Gough, "Where Do You Go," 190.

[8] Sherman Emry, "Closed Showroom or Open?" *Interior Design* 31, no. 12 (Dec. 1960), 138-139.

because their competition had. Interior designers in particular were not fond of open showrooms, ostensibly because they resented “having to contend with the crowds which sometimes gather in the street floor fabric houses.” It is more likely that the actual reason was that they felt they were “losing their special franchise, that the job for which they were specially trained [was] being partly usurped by the showroom salesman.” This debate about “open” versus “closed” showrooms would continue for about forty years, by which time the majority of showrooms (not including clothing showrooms) would be open to the public.

For the next decade, showroom installations remained a constant feature in *Interior Design* magazine, with particularly intriguing examples garnering a mention in *Architectural Record* as well. However, interest in showroom design remained limited within the design trade. Showrooms were often designed and built as one-off projects by architectural firms. Firms that specialized in showroom design didn’t really exist; if a firm had designed a string of showrooms, they were often for the same company, and done to maintain a sense of brand identity. In 1972, architectural firm SITE renovated a showroom for the Best Products Company, at the time one of the largest catalogue showroom merchandisers in the United States.[9] The public response was so great that SITE was commissioned to design another showroom, completed in 1975.[10] SITE would build four more showrooms for the company before the decade was out.

The Best projects drew attention from within the architecture and design community in

[9] Gerald Allen, “Bringing in the Business,” *Architectural Record* 261, no. 3 (Mar. 1977), 115-177.
[10] Herman, “High Architecture,” 397.

a way showroom installations hadn't done before. The unconventional and expressive structures created by SITE were unlike anything done previously in showroom design. Suddenly, architects began to realize that showroom design (and retail design in general) could be a more interesting practice type than was previously thought. As a direct result of this, showroom design became popular among high architects, sometimes referred to as "starchitects" (a portmanteau of star architects) during the 1980s. In 1980, Philip Johnson curated a show at MoMA, presenting "speculative designs for showrooms." He selected six well-known post-modernist architects— Michael Graves, Charles Moore, Robert Stern, Stanley Tigerman, Tony Lumsden and Allan Greenberg— to design their version of a Best showroom. The show proved a failure, most likely because the six architects lacked experience designing for the showroom or retail practice types.[11] Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s, various high-architects continued to try their hand at designing showrooms. Among the various high architects who would design showrooms during this decade were Robert Venturi, Michael Graves, Stanley Tigerman, Steven Holl, Frank Gehry, Ron Arad and Ettore Sottsass.

Perhaps because of this, the coverage of showrooms in trade magazines became much more frequent. Over 150 showroom projects were published in *Interior Design* during the 1980s, considerably more than the around 80 installations published during the previous decade of the 1970s. By the 1990s, the trend cooled down a bit, as the interest high architects had in the showroom practice type waned; during the 1990 decade, only around 120 showroom projects were published in *Interior Design*. By the

[11] Herman, "High Architecture," 397.

first decade of the 21st century, it had cooled once again to around 80 installations.

Currently, during the early years of the 2010 decade, interest in the showroom design practice type remains, on the whole, an afterthought within the design community. Although projects are still regularly published in *Interior Design* and *Architectural Record*, the focus given to them is much diminished from previous decades. Before, it was common for published installations to boast articles and photo spreads spanning four or more pages. Now, the bulk of articles on showrooms are limited to one or two pages. Rarely do they feature spaces with in-depth coverage; instead, most of the focus in the most recent decade seems to have shifted to high-end retail design. Despite this, the showroom practice type does not show signs of disappearing. On the contrary, while their coverage in trade magazines has diminished, site visits suggest that showrooms are still plentiful and necessary. Still, it will remain interesting to see whether this has any impact at all on how showrooms will be designed in the future.

1.3 Description of the Intypes Research & Teaching Project

The Intypes (Interior Archetypes) project began in 1997 at Cornell University. The project seeks to create a typology of contemporary interior design practices derived from reoccurring historical interior design methods and strategies that span time, style and culture. Through research, design traits are identified and named, generating a design specific vocabulary, and placing these practices in historical context. Intypes identify contemporary design practices that have not been named, thereby providing designers with an interior-specific history and contemporary design vocabulary. The

project also offers an innovative approach to further design criticism and design sustainability. The Intypes Project produces a new knowledge base for the creative dimension of design. It is the first project of its kind to assemble contemporary design theory in a searchable database using primary source imagery. The key deliverable is its website: www.intypes.cornell.edu.

The product of the Intypes Project is an open database of appropriately named interior archetypes, which are catalogued on an open website. The website presents each Intype with its own general definition, application definition, comprehensive definition (including important historical context) and photographic chronological sequence of published interiors. This links current interior design practices with their historical roots and offers some insight into how and why these design practices were propagated throughout the decades. The database is presented in three different organizational schemes: by practice type, by element, or alphabetically.

There are no research studies that examine how showroom interiors have been designed in terms of creating spatial experiences through color, display aesthetic, lighting, material, seating arrangement and spatial composition. There are also no analytical works or theoretical studies that have been written about interior design precedents for contemporary showroom design. Showroom as a topic of study will likely contribute Intypes related to retail and display strategy, as well as museum design.

1.4 Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

The Intypes Project's methodological structure produces the first typology of interior design—a grouping of design productions in which some inherent characteristics make them similar. Initially, the project derives types from the published work of designers. To discover that body of knowledge the graduate student researcher undertakes seven different staged approaches:

1) A content review and analysis of approximately 1,100 issues of trade magazines (primary sources) and secondary source materials. Research begins with tracing a series of design practices by conducting content surveys in primary sources, such as *Interior Design*, *Architectural Record* and *Interiors*.

2) Identifying composites of traits that typify (through time) a dominant characteristic that has been used repeatedly by designers as interior architecture or design;

3) Isolating these traits by naming and defining them and illustrating examples chronologically;

4) Preliminary development and proposal (draft stage) of specific Intypes;

5) On-site field studies to various cities to test the Intypes developed from photographs in trade magazines against built projects;

6) Revising the Intypes based on observational evidence;

7) Developing the Intypes in the web-based format.[12]

The methodological approach of the thesis is historical, theoretical, and critical. Thinking about design precedents as a continuum, or a series of replications, owes much to George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*. Kubler believes that every important work can be regarded both as historical event and as a hard-won solution to some problem.

[12] Jan Jennings, "A Case for a Typology of Design: The Interior Archetypes Project," *Journal of Interior Design* 32, no. 3 (2007): 53-55.

To him, every solution links to a problem to which there have been other solutions. As the solutions accumulate, a conception of a sequence forms. The boundaries of a sequence are marked by the linked solutions describing early and late stages of effort upon a problem. In the long run, a sequence may serve as scaffolding for new design.[13] Other theorists, such as Robert Maxwell approach design history similarly. According to Maxwell, the dialectic of the new and old is a complex one, "for within the new there is something of the old, which precisely renders the new recognizable; and within the old the new is already pregnant."[14]

The structure of Kubler and Maxwell's methodological approach proves useful for modeling interior design precedents. Some sequences of historical or theoretical solutions may come and go over time, but many become so powerful that they represent continuity. The Intypes become the basis for understanding the relationship between contemporary design and historic precedents in interior design.[15]

The purpose of the field studies is to collect information by visiting interior design installations first hand to compare the physical site to published images. Relying solely on published architectural photography is problematic, in that they are not the same as three-dimensional documentation. These photographs are taken by professional architectural photographers, who often light and stage the images in a way that is not comparable to the realities of the installations. Photos are often taken from unnatural

[13] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 31-82 in Jennings, "A Case for a Typology of Design," 49.

[14] Robert Maxwell, *Polemics. The Two Way Stretch: Modernism: Tradition and Innovation* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 12 in Jennings, "A Case for a Typology of Design," 48-68.

[15] Jan Jennings, "Dialectic of New and Old: Theory Investigations in Studio Design," *Interiors and Sources* (March 2003): 74-77.

vantage points (like on top of ladders) and represent a market ideal. Experiencing these spaces in person, preferably with the designer of the space or a representative of the project allows for a more in-depth analysis and criticism of the space.[16]

1.5 Literature Review

The literature review describes key and influential primary and secondary source research and offers critical observations about the usefulness and relevance of these sources to this thesis. The bibliographic essay is divided into two sections – primary and secondary sources. This summary of literature relates to the showroom practice type as a whole; each Intypes chapter has a specific chronological literature relevant to that particular archetype. Primary sources for research were trade magazines *Interior Design*, *Architectural Record*, and *Interiors* magazine. As most showroom installations only last one to three years, the photographs in these magazines provide longitudinal record of contract interior design work.

Secondary sources were comprised of books that covered a range of subject matter, including books written about retail, museum and exhibition design, branding, color theory, lighting and information design. The topics covered in these secondary sources provided additional evidence for the identification of Intypes. Typological studies of only showrooms are in short supply, with most secondary sources mentioning showrooms only as a facet of retail. Analyses of design strategies of the showroom as a practice type are almost non-existent. Tracing the history of the showroom is extremely difficult, and has been more successfully done with information in trade journals, rather than

[16] Jennings, "A Case for a Typology of Design," 56-57.

with that in secondary source material. For this reason, the secondary sources were more successful in researching the individual Intypes, than in researching the showroom practice type as a whole.

Primary Sources

With over 1000 issues stretching back to 1932, *Interior Design* is one of the most comprehensive resources for examining the evolution of showroom design and the interior design typologies associated with it. Older issues frequently have sections devoted specifically to showroom design with floor plans and large photographs of the installations. Additionally, articles in the earlier issues of the magazine examine the role of the showroom in the professional designer's life and track the changes in the business strategy of the showroom (particularly, whether they should remain closed to the casual consumer and continue to serve only trade professionals). In recent years, the coverage of showrooms published in *Interior Design* has dwindled, with the many high-end fashion retail installations taking their place. However, although showroom installations may not be as thoroughly detailed as their retail counterparts, the overall number of showroom installations published remains healthy. All issues from 1959 to 2010 were examined.

Architectural Record is the most comprehensive architectural trade journal, and provides some examples of showroom design in the contemporary era. As it was previously an architecture and engineering publication, interior design projects were rarely featured before the 1970s. More recently, *Architectural Record* has increased the

number of interior installations within its pages, and its sections on interior design are similar to that of *Interior Design* in terms of photography. The articles, however, contain more technical content than their *Interior Design* counterparts. What showrooms it publishes are grouped together with retail installations, and have often already been published in *Interior Design.* All issues from 1960 to 2010 were examined for evidence.

Interiors magazine acted as a supplementary primary source, when not enough evidence could be found in *Interior Design* or *Architectural Record* alone. Although most of the projects published could also be found in either of the other two trade journals used as primary sources, it did occasionally publish showroom installations that had appeared in neither. Because the range of available volumes only spanned from 1979 to 2001 (when the journal ceased publication), it was more useful for finding more recent installations. All issues from 1979 to 2001 were examined.

Secondary Sources

Shops and Showrooms: An International Survey (1967) by Karl Kaspar[17] describes how showrooms differ from the retail stores of the time, pointing out the care spent on brand image, the often generous budget, and the comparatively small amount of display and demonstration models. Kaspar argues that a showroom is mostly used to connect the product with the image of the business. He also asserts that service, among other strategies, is used to ensure that the customer can experience the space in a way they could not in a regular store.

[17] Karl Kaspar, *Shops and Showrooms: an International Survey* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1967).

The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England (1982) by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb[18] gives a detailed account of the origins of contemporary consumer society. Brewer and Plumb recount the various retail strategies (including the use of showrooms) that led to the commercialization of England in the 18th century. The book was particularly helpful in regards to outlining the function of showrooms before the 20th century, and how they might have been used to entice customers to buy more frequently then that had done in the past.

The *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* (2001) edited by Chuihua Judy Chung et al.[19] contained several helpful essays on topics related to showroom design. It provided the first explicit definition of the difference between contemporary retail and showroom design, which is something that had only previous been explained in 1960s articles of *Interior Design*. It also contained the initial reference to the Best showrooms by SITE, which were so influential to the field of showroom design in the late 1970 decade and the entire 1980 decade.

Architecture: Form, Space, and Order (2007) by Francis D.K. Ching[20] illustrates the fundamental elements of design. These design principles allowed for the dissection of interiors and interior strategies into basic forms and organizations. His discussion of various spatial organization strategies and floor plane strategies was instrumental in

[18] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press. 1982).

[19] Chihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* (Cologne: Taschen, 2001).

[20] Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture, Form, Space & Order* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).

understanding the spatial implications of many Intypes discussed in this thesis.

In Detail: Exhibitions and Displays (2009) edited by Christian Schittich[21] explains how avant-garde designers, architects and artists were sometimes hired to create a unified corporate identity that could be expressed in a showroom, and that corporate architecture became a method for differentiating between companies and brands. It is explained that spatial identity, once only considered for large showrooms and flagship stores has trickled down to small and medium-sized businesses as their owners recognize the value of architectural branding.

Brandscaping: Worlds of Experience in Interior Design (2009) edited by Otto Riewoldt[22] suggests that the branding of the showroom and retail store is evolving to a more experiential branding and lifestyle experience. The book explains that the branding of corporate architecture can be traced back to the 1920s, which is around the time that the modern trade showroom came into being. It is also suggested that soon showrooms and retail stores may not be enough in terms of branded environments, and that temporary theme worlds or theme parks may be the next step for branded environments.

What is Exhibition Design? (2010) by Jan Lorenc, Lee Skolnick and Craig Berger[23] explains that showrooms are designed to display a company's products. Because

[21] Christian Schittich, ed. *In Detail: Exhibitions and Displays: Museum design concepts, Brand presentation, Trade show design* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag AG, 2009).

[22] Otto Riewoldt, ed., *Brandscaping: Worlds of Experience in Retail Design (Erlebnisdesign für Einkaufswelten)* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag AG, 2002).

[23] Jan Lorenc, Lee Skolnick and Craig Berger, *What is Exhibition Design?* (Mies: RotoVision SA, 2010).

of this, showrooms are sometimes attached to corporate headquarters. It is also explained that because showrooms change their displays fairly often, flexibility is paramount in their design. It is suggested the lighting can be efficiently used to create zones in these spaces, removing the need for physical barrier.

Previous Intypes Theses by Intypes graduate student researchers at Cornell University were helpful in this study in understanding the existing Intypes, their origins and histories, and how they related to showroom design. Each thesis title and author is credited in the relevant Intypes chapters of this thesis.

1.6 Analysis and Summary of Findings

This thesis research resulted in the identification, naming, and development of eight showroom design practices. Four previously identified Intypes were found to be significant showroom strategies and their definitions were applied to the showroom practice type: Marching Order, White Box, Black Out, and Hotspot. Four new Intypes were also identified: Plinth, Line-Up, Specimen, and Spectrum.

The eight Intypes differ in the qualities and strategies they affect in a showroom. (**Table 1.1**) Because showrooms are so closely related to museums, many Intypes (six of the eight) are directly related to display, while those that aren't are still indirectly related. Marching Order, Hotspot and Plinth have more influence on the spatial quality of showrooms because they tend to be larger in scale. They are used most often to display product on the floor of the showroom, rather than peripherally along the walls.

White Box and Black Out are used to create backdrops for the product. While not directly related to how product is displayed in a showroom, they do influence how a product might be perceived. Line-Up, Specimen and Spectrum are straight display Intypes. Although certain iterations of the Intypes may vary, their focus is mainly on the product being displayed, rather than on the showroom space itself. For this reason, they are rarely influential in determining the spatial quality of the showroom.

Table 1.1 Showroom Intypes by Element

	marching order	white box	black out	hotspot	plinth	line-up	specimen	spectrum
spatial	●			●	●			
material		●	●					
lighting				●				
display	●			●	●	●	●	●
color		●	●					●

Most of the Intypes can be adapted to display products of differing types and scales. (**Table 1.2**) The most flexible is White Box, which has been found in showrooms

displaying items of smaller scale, like textiles, to items of larger scale, like cars. The second most flexible showroom Intypes are Black Out and Specimen, both of which have not yet been adapted for clothing showrooms. In the case of Black Out, this is most likely because an all black space may not display the product to best advantage. Specimen is likely to be unpopular because of how buyers like to be able to touch and examine clothing up close.

The next four Intypes are more specific regarding the scale of items they can and cannot display. Marching Order is limited to the clothing, furniture and fixture showrooms. The scale of textiles and carpeting is generally too small to work well with the Intype, and it is not generally used in car showrooms because there may only be one of each car/color on display. Hotspot and Plinth are both used to display larger, three dimensional objects. The two-dimensional nature of textiles and clothing is not well suited to being displayed with Hotspot or with Plinth, as they don't show those products to best advantage. Both Intypes are more popular with larger items such as furniture and cars, because they can highlight a product and divide up a space without the need for interior partitions. They are also among the most flexible display Intypes, allowing for the easy rearrangement of larger products. Line-Up is more popular with furniture and fixture showrooms, although it has been seen in textile showrooms. The way clothing tends to be displayed in clothing showrooms (on racks) makes Line-Up impractical, as it takes up much more space.

The least flexible of the showroom Intypes is Spectrum. Because it is dependent on the

displayed product coming in many different colors, it is not often used for items other than textiles. Interestingly, it has not been observed to occur in clothing showrooms, even though it would be logical for the Intype to occur in this showroom type. It may be because the colors of the displayed clothing vary greatly from season to season. It may also be that clothing showrooms find it impractical to organize their stock by color, rather than clothing type or collection.

Table 1.2 Showroom Intypes by Type of Product Displayed

	marching order	white box	black out	hotspot	plinth	line-up	specimen	spectrum
textiles & carpeting		●	●			●	●	●
clothing	●	●						
furniture & fixtures	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
cars		●	●	●	●		●	
other	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

Of the eight identified showroom Intypes, five have very clear origins in the museum practice type. (**Table 1.3**) White Box, Plinth and Specimen are direct appropriations

and underwent very little adaptation before being used for showroom design. Line-Up and Spectrum evolved from former museum display practices, and were adapted to suit the needs of the practice type. The three other Intypes that don't have clear roots in museum design have very different origins. Marching Order is a long-standing spatial ordering principle that seems to have emerged from the structure of buildings themselves. The showroom specific variation is likely to have originated in retail design. Black Out has unclear origins, as it seems to have appeared simultaneously in the luxury apartment practice type and the showroom practice type. Hotspot is an elemental Intype, and originated as an artificial lighting strategy. Thus, it is likely that it will span many different practice types.

Table 1.3 Showroom Intypes with Museum Origins

	marching order	white box	black out	hotspot	plinth	line-up	specimen	spectrum
origins in museums		●			●	●	●	●

Additionally, many of the showroom Intypes can also be found in retail design. (**Table 1.4**) Five of the eight have been found to have a definite presence in the retail practice type (Marching Order, White Box, Plinth, Specimen and Spectrum), with the other three (Black Out, Hotspot and Line-Up) likely to have appeared, even if they haven't occurred frequently enough to be officially recognized. Given the long history of retail design, it is likely that the showroom variation of the Intype originated in retail and was

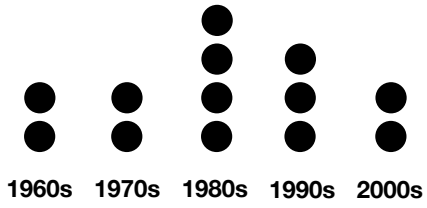
then appropriated. White Box is used frequently in retail design for the same reasons it is used in showrooms, though the similar White Out is becoming more popular in recent decades. Plinth appears in both, but is more frequently seen in showroom design, likely because the scale of the products is more appropriate for this display strategy. Specimen occurs in retail, especially in recent years, but shows up in more rigid expressions, as is discussed in Chapter 18 of this thesis. Spectrum in retail is used primarily to arrange display of clothing and other small items.

Table 1.4 Showroom Intypes also Found in Retail

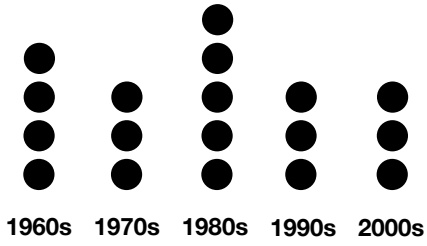
	marching order	white box	black out	hotspot	plinth	line-up	specimen	spectrum
found in retail	●	●			●		●	●

Several of the eight identified Intypes are also clearly linked to the trends of different decades, the number of relevant installations growing and dwindling according to the popularity of the Intype. (**Table 1.5**) The more versatile Intypes such as Marching Order, Plinth, White Box, Line-Up and Specimen show negligible fluctuations in their prevalence over time. This is explained by the fact that these Intypes are easily adaptable to most showroom layouts, and are not necessarily linked to any trends or technological advancements that influence the interior design of these spaces. Although all Intypes show a marked increase in the 1980s, this is due to the corresponding increase of published showroom installations in the trade magazines of

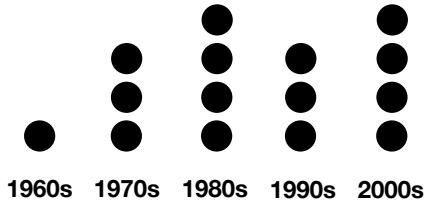
Table 1.5 Intypes by Prevalence



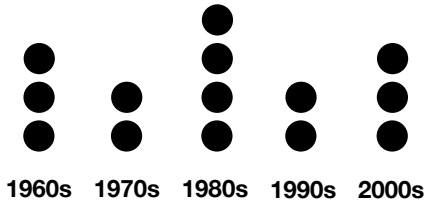
marching order



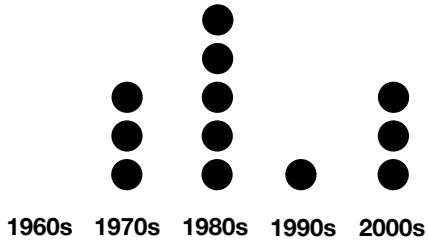
plinth



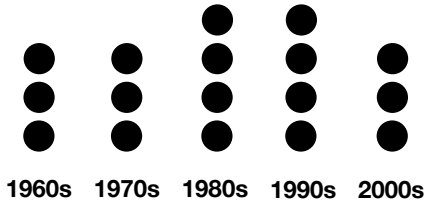
white box



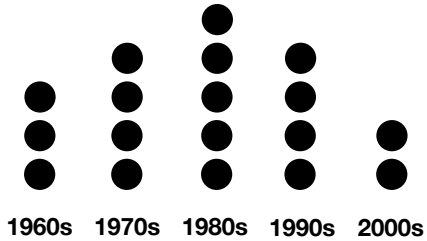
line-up



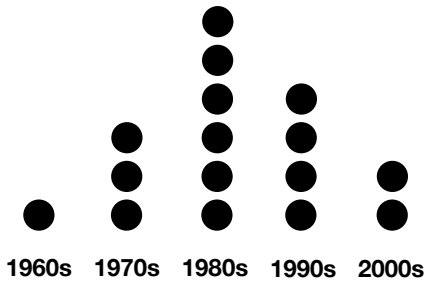
black out



specimen



hotspot



spectrum

that decade. By comparison, Intypes such as Black Out, Hotspot and Spectrum show more significant fluctuations in their prevalence over time. Black Out reached its peak in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, in which the use of darker, more saturated colors was particularly popular. By the 1990s, the trend had switched to favor the use of lighter, more neutral colors, and the Intype all but disappeared. As the use of bolder colors has gradually become popular once again in recent years, the Intype Black Out has begun to resurface, though not with the same frequency it enjoyed in previous decades. The amount of Spectrum installations also peaked in the 1980s due to the trend of using bold, striking colors during this decade. However, while it faced a drop-off in prevalence in the 1990s and 2000s, it was nowhere as drastic as the one faced by Black Out. Hotspot, while found with consistent frequency up until the 2000s, saw a sharp drop-off after 2000. This is likely due to the increasing popularity of fluorescent and LED lighting sources, which behave differently from the traditional incandescent sources. Given how flexible an Intype Hotspot is, it is likely that it will make a comeback as the technology behind fluorescents and LEDs improves to give a wider range of lighting capabilities.

Intypes Clusters describe popular groupings of Intypes found together. (**Table 1.6**) Though there weren't many clusters to be found, those that were discovered were frequently found together. The most popular Intype Cluster was White Box and Spectrum. This is logical, since the variation of color in a Spectrum display often makes it difficult to use against a backdrop that isn't an absolute value shade like white or black. For this reason, Spectrum is often paired with White Box or Black Out. White

Box is the more popular choice, most likely due to the perception of the color white as timeless.

Table 1.6 Showroom Intypes Clusters

	marching order	white box	black out	hotspot	plinth	line-up	specimen	spectrum
marching order								
white box								●
black out								●
hotspot								
plinth						●		
line-up					●			
specimen								●
spectrum		●	●				●	

Another frequent cluster was Specimen and Spectrum. This stems from the nature that Spectrum displays can easily be created as a type of Specimen display, color being

another quality of taxonomic arrangement. For this reason many Spectrum displays are also Specimen displays, and the two Intypes are frequently seen together as part of the same product arrangement.

Line-Up and Plinth are frequently seen together. Because Line-Up is such a simple Intype to execute, it is usually also placed on a Plinth to give it a little more presence within the showroom. The Plinth adds a bit of height to the display, nudging it closer to eye-level, while also delineating a certain amount of physical space for the arrangement. On the occasion that it appears without a Plinth, it is often given a larger proportion of space within the showroom so that it doesn't get lost among the other displays.

1.7 Conclusion of the Thesis

This thesis adds to many practice types already accumulated and analyzed in the Intypes Research and Teaching Project since its inception in 1997. The research of these showroom Intype chapters will be uploaded to the project's website—www.intypes.cornell.edu, and will be available to the public. It hoped that this research will help alleviate the lack of information and analysis on the showroom practice type. It is also hoped that the Intypes identified in this thesis will aid in the future analyses of the museum and retail practice types, and that the information regarding display strategies will benefit the research project in general.

Surprisingly, there was actually less overlap between Showroom and Retail Intypes

than was anticipated. Although five of the eight Showroom Intypes identified in this study have made appearances in retail installations, it is unknown with what frequency they do so. It should also be noted that of the nine identified Retail Intypes, Marching Order is the only Intype that makes a significant appearance in the showroom practice type as well. This finding confirms that showroom design is indeed different and distinct from retail design and validates it as a separate practice type.

Because Retail Intypes were being updated by a fellow researcher while I was completing Showroom Intypes, we were able to help each other in terms of resources. The two practice types are related, meaning we were able to point out sources useful to one another as well as bounce ideas off each other about our found Intypes and their origins. Though there were two other Intypes scholars completing work, they were researching completely different practice and element types (Bar & Nightclub and Spatial Graphic Design) and thus utilized mostly different resources. We were, however able to mark relevant articles and installations for each other that we found in the trade journals *Interior Design* and *Architectural Record*. This made the initial research process proceed much faster and it is suggested to future researchers to work together in this way.

A challenge encountered in the research of showroom Intypes was the lack of published work on showrooms and their design. There was a particular dearth of information prior to 1960 in primary source materials. Images that could be found came from books about well-known architects and were not plentiful enough to build

a solid picture of showroom design before the 1960 decade. Literature on retail in the beginning half of the 20th century focuses on traditional retail, with no reference to showroom design at all. Literature focused solely on showroom design is non-existent. Because of this, the true nature of showroom design between the 1930 decade and the 1960 decade remains unknown. References to showroom design did begin appearing in the late 1950s, but the showroom practice type lacks the same comprehensive sources and historical references that are so abundant in retail design. The history and possible origins of showrooms had to be pieced together from trade journals and the odd mention in a secondary source book.

The lack of photo documentation before 1960 made it especially difficult to identify any of the Intypes before then. The lack of abundant color photography before 1970 also made it difficult to identify Intypes that were color based, specifically White Box, Black Out and Spectrum. In the case of White Box, the black and white photographs in publications made it difficult to determine which colors had been used in the space. Often, a space was just described as neutral, which could mean anything from white to beige to pale versions of spectral colors. Additionally, earlier publications of trade magazines provided little text describing the space. When they did, the text was often focused on identifying the material and furnishings used in the space, rather than on any specific design strategy. This made it difficult to build an understanding of why a specific Intype might be used in a certain showroom.

Due to time and budgetary constraints, a trip to Chicago and visit to the large interior

design trade show Neo-Con was not possible. This would have provided an interesting insight into the intersection of trade shows and showroom design, since both are exhibited there. It might also have provided a greater understanding of the display strategies in showroom design, and of techniques that might have been borrowed from or adapted to trade shows.

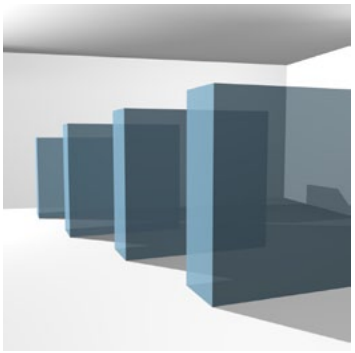
For future research, I would suggest looking more deeply into overlap between the eight identified Showroom Intypes and future Retail and Museum Intypes. Although I briefly collaborated with fellow researcher Kristin Malyak, who completed the latest study on Retail Intypes, to identify where Showroom and Retail Intypes might overlap, it was by no means a thorough survey. Additionally, both of us were more focused on finding Intypes the other was not researching in order to add to the breadth and variety of Intypes detailed on the Intypes website.

Conclusion

This research introduces a new understanding and vocabulary to the field of showroom design by identifying and naming showroom design strategies. Along with the rest of the Intypes research, this study creates the possibilities for design practice that is more strongly based in and informed by historical precedent. Showroom Intypes may be directly adapted into professional practice, where they can be used in retail design and other practice types. For students, this study will hopefully impart a greater understanding of retail and display strategy that can be used to design thoughtful and successful showroom and retail spaces. The historical design precedents outlined by

the Intypes project not only address how design practice has evolved through time, but why certain practices have evolved. They act as reminders to be mindful of how design practice and strategy should be applied.

As an under-studied field, showroom design could strongly benefit from an in-depth analysis of strategy and a well-established, comprehensive vocabulary. This research adds to both the understanding of showroom design practices and the showroom design vocabulary, encouraging criticism and discourse of the topic.



Chapter 2

Marching Order

Definition

Marching Order is a sequence of repeating forms organized consecutively, one after another. It establishes a measured spatial order.

Application Definition

In showrooms, Marching Order organizes the placement of products and interior furnishings such as furniture, partitions and display units. In some cases, architectural elements such as columns and walls may be utilized to enhance or regulate the spatial order of the products and furnishings.

Description

Marching Order is frequently implemented in large, open-plan showrooms, where it is used as a strategy to divide the vast space into smaller modules and to organize product within it, although how it is implemented is dependent on the type and scale of product being displayed. In clothing showrooms, it is common to see the Intype expressed as the partitioning of space for buyers' booths, while in furniture showrooms it is more common to see Marching Order used to organize the product itself. Its expression in showrooms is also often used as a way to direct circulation without the use of opaque, full-height partitions; the frequency with which showrooms are redesigned suggests that this is a more cost-effective and flexible strategy. Though similar to the Intype Line-Up,[1] Marching Order is a principle for the organization of space while Line-Up is used solely for the display and organization of objects.

[1] The Intype Line-Up describes a series of four or more items of the same type but different design that are arranged evenly spaced along the same floor plane against a continuous back surface. It will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Additionally, Marching Order requires a series of repeating forms, while Line-Up requires that the objects all be different, despite being of the same type.

History & Effect

The archetype Marching Order has its origins in the structure of buildings themselves. It was likely inspired by the columned temples of ancient Egypt, Persia, and Greece. In earlier civilizations, as well as in those without access to stone, room size was limited by building material. Sun-dried mud-brick, while more than sufficient for personal-dwelling-sized structures, was not ideal for anything grander, especially if high or arched ceilings were involved. As Sir Banister Fletcher explains in *A History of Architecture*, "Rooms had to be narrow in relation to their length, with massively thick walls,"[2] in order to accommodate these qualities. Thus, early temples and shrines of the ancient Near East (c6000-5000 BC), such as those at Catal Hüyük in modern day Turkey, were composed of many small rooms and enclosures, instead of the larger volumes of later Egyptian and Greek temples.[3]

The use of the stone structural column allowed buildings to become larger, both in perceived area, and in height. The previous requirement of structural walls on the interior of buildings meant that large structures needed to be partitioned into much smaller rooms or risk collapse. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks discovered that these structural walls could be replaced by structural columns. Because columns do not give the same sense of continuous enclosure as walls, they allowed the temples

[2] Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture, Nineteenth Edition*, ed. John Musgrove (London: Butterworths, 1987), 19.

[3] Fletcher, *A History of Architecture,* 29-31.

to be read as one or two large volumes, rather than the dozens of small rooms typical of earlier temples. At the same time, the verticality of the columns implied a division of the larger space into smaller partitions closer to human scale. As Francis D.K. Ching explained in *Architecture, Form, Space & Order*, "Vertical forms have a greater presence in our visual field than horizontal elements and are therefore more instrumental in defining a discrete volume of space and providing a sense of enclosure and privacy for those within it."[4]

These structural columns had another unexpected effect: "The orderly rows of columns also punctuat[ed] the spatial volume," establishing a "measurable rhythm"[5] for those who moved through the space. This rhythm was defined by the size and spacing of the columns; wider columns spaced far apart suggested a slower, more ceremonial rhythm, while narrow columns closely spaced suggested quicker procession. In some cases, columns interacted with other elements, such as light, to enhance this regimented rhythm. The ruins of the Great Hypostyle Hall of the Amun-Re Temple in Karnak, Egypt, although not originally intended to be open-air, currently demonstrate the rhythmic interaction of columns and light. When the sun's rays are parallel to the rows of columns, bands of light are created such that anyone moving in the right direction passes through evenly spaced, alternating bands of light and shadow, enhancing the rhythm of the columns.[6] (**Figure 2.1**)

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[4] Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture, Form, Space & Order, Second Edition,* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996), 120.

[5] Ching, *Architecture, Form,* 127.

[6] Precinct of Amun-Re, Karnak Temple Complex [c1391–1351 BC] Anonymous Architect; Karnak, Egypt; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 27 May 2009. PhotoCrd: Courtney Cheng, Intypes Project, 27 May 2009.

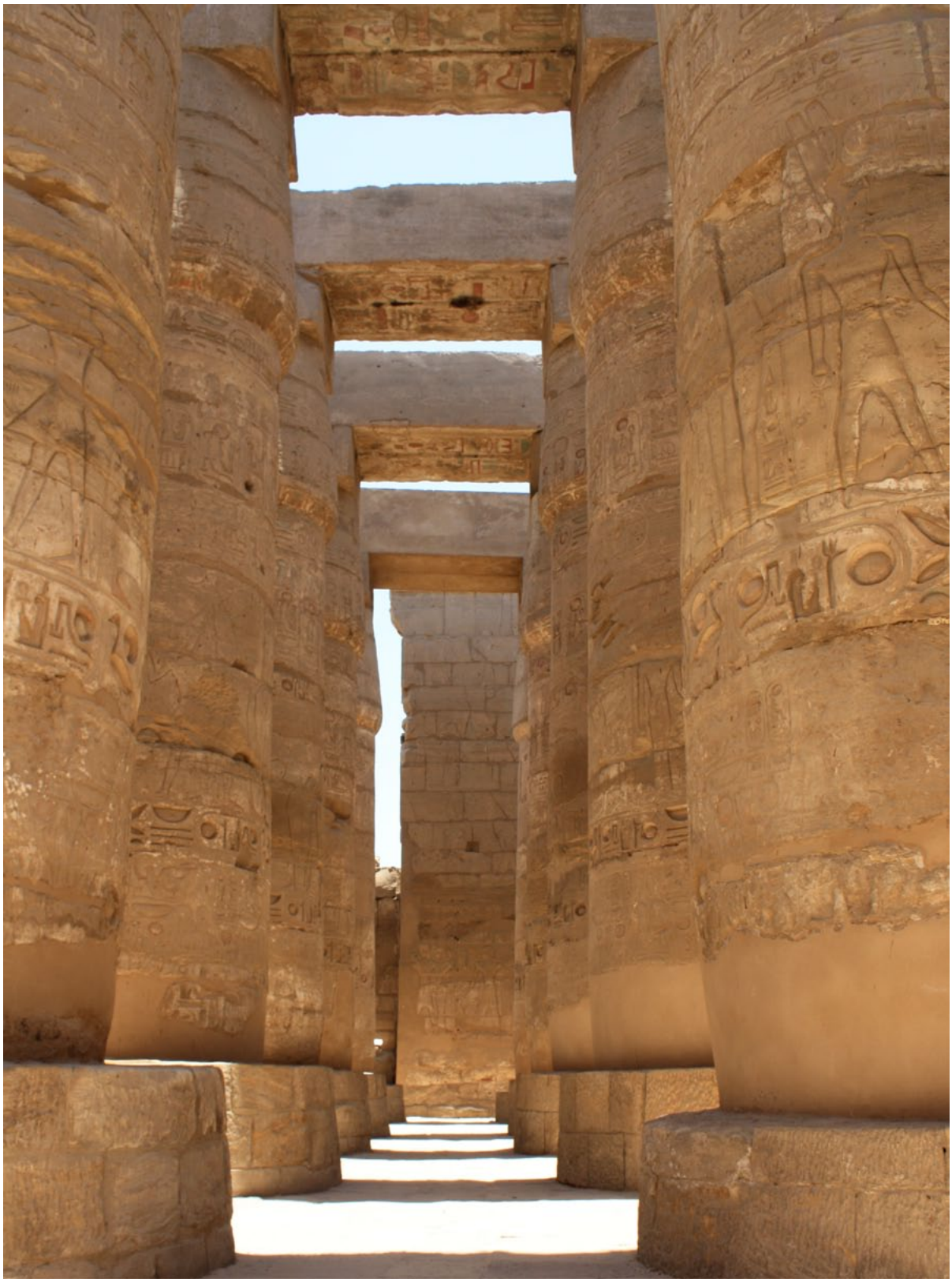


Figure 2.1. Precinct of Amun-Re, Karnak Temple Complex [c. 1391–1351 BC] Anonymous Architect; Karnak, Egypt; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 27 May 2009. PhotoCrd: Courtney Cheng, Intypes Project, 27 May 2009.

It is from this rhythmic repetition that Marching Order is derived. As Fletcher asserted, "The architecture of ancient Greece was the essential origin of European architecture."[7] In the case of Marching Order, the rigid and regular placement of structural columns often meant that non-structural walls or furnishings needed to be placed around the columns, or at least placed in consideration of the existing column placement. With advances in technology in the 20th century and the popularity of the open space plan, non-structural walls and furnishings could be placed anywhere in the space. However, spatial organization often defaulted to the rhythmic and regimented grid type. As John Pile put it, "geometric order is a basic human need desired in any planned situation,"[8] because "a desire for stability, repeatability and reliability, make it desirable to give these abstractions [of organization] more tangible forms."[9]

In effect, Marching Order as a spatial organization strategy can be expressed in two different ways. In many showroom installations, it is a manifestation of a linear organizational scheme; the repetitive element proceeds along one side of a long, narrow space, while a patron circulates along the opposite side, which has been left open. The vertical forms created by the repetitive elements serve to "separate one space from another and establish a common boundary,"[10] effectively partitioning the space into smaller, more human-scaled zones. Meanwhile, because they also spread out horizontally, "the impulse is to follow along beside" them, enticing the patron to venture further into the space like "a street that defines a space and as it stretches

[7] Fletcher, *A History of Architecture,* 3.

[8] John Pile, *Interiors: Second Book of Offices* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1969), 261.

[9] Pile, *Second Book of Offices*, 9.

[10] Ching, *Architecture, Form,* 120.

away before us and entices us to follow along with it."[11] If the vertical planes are thick enough, directional spaces are created and patrons are invited "to enter through the ends" of the space "as if seeking an entrance 'around the corner,' which where the interior will meet [them]."[12] Because the vertical elements that partition the space need to be of a certain height, this expression of Marching Order is inherently less flexible.

In other showroom installations, Marching Order is a manifestation of a grid organization. As Ching explains, "projected into the third dimension, the grid pattern is transformed into a set of repetitive, modular units of space." (**Figures 2.2 & 2.3**) In this set up, faux architectural elements or square display modules are often accordingly arranged in the center of the showroom space, where their placement "establishes a stable set or field of reference points and lines in space with which the spaces of a grid organization, although dissimilar in size, form, or function, can share a common relationship." [13] This strategy allows furnishings and products to be organized in such a way that true partition walls are not needed, as the positioning of the product itself divides the showroom into modular units of space. The advantages of this expression of Marching Order are two-fold. Firstly, the grid can be easily adapted to the requirements of the showroom; display elements can be added or subtracted and the scale of the grid can be changed to accommodate the amount of product the showroom needs to display. Secondly, the gridded expression of Marching Order allows visitor to circulate all the way around the displays, while encouraging them to

[11] Thomas Thiis-Evensen, *Archetypes in Architecture*, (Oxford: Norwegian University Press, 1987), 143.
[12] Thiis-Evensen, *Archetypes,* 143.
[13] Ching, *Architecture, Form,* 220-221.

create their own meandering circulation path.[14]

Figure 2.2. Hickory Business Furniture Showroom [1987] Vanderbyl Design, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Hickory Business Furniture," ***Interior Design*** 58, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 262; PhotoCrd: Sadin Photo Group, Ltd.

Figure 2.3. Artimide Showroom [1985] Vignelli Associates, architect; Dallas, TX in Edie Lee Cohen, "Artimide," *Interior Design* 56, no. 6 (Jun. 1985): 119; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol.

Marching Order has previously been identified in two other practice types: retail design, where it was first identified, and workplace design. In retail design it is used primarily as a strategy for organizing product and display,[15] while in workplace design it is used as a strategy to organize the placement of interior furnishings, such as desks.[16]

In showroom design, Marching Order is used primarily as a strategy for partitioning larger spaces into smaller exhibit displays or buyers booths. For this reason, it is most often found in large, open plan showrooms. On occasion, Marching Order can be used to organize the product on display (most commonly clothing or textiles). However, this

[14] Hickory Business Furniture Showroom [1987] Vanderbyl Design, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Hickory Business Furniture," *Interior Design* 58, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 262; PhotoCrd: Sadin Photo Group, Ltd.; Artimide Showroom [1985] Vignelli Associates, architect; Dallas, TX in Edie Lee Cohen, "Artimide," *Interior Design* 56, no. 6 (Jun. 1985): 119; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol.

[15] Leah Scolere, "Theory Studies: Contemporary Retail Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2004), 58-62.

[16] Shuqing Yin, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Workplace Practices in Contemporary Interior Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2011), 69-88.

is not widely practiced in showroom design, because of the need to display all available types of products. The variation of size and design among products of a certain scale (e.g. furniture) make it difficult to establish any sort of repetitive spatial rhythm using only the merchandise.

Chronological Sequence

Because Marching Order has such a long history as an ubiquitous spatial organization strategy, it is likely that it can be found throughout the history of showroom design. However, due to the lack of documentation of showrooms between the 1930 decade (when the modern trade showrooms began) and the 1960 decade (when Interior Design and Architectural Record began actively publishing showroom installations), Marching Order for the purposes of this thesis will only be traced back to the 1960 period.

The Kate Greenaway showroom designed by Gerhard E. Karplus in 1960 used Marching Order to organize its five sales booths against one wall of the space. (**Figure 2.4**) Each identical booth was separated by "floating dividers of walnut and white Formica with panels covered in alternating gray and white Victrex," from which different dresses can be displayed to customers. In each booth, three Saarinen tulip chairs "alternate French blue, gold, and red."[17] A rectangular light fixture was centered over each booth. The booths subdivided the showroom into smaller modules of a more intimate scale; buyers inside the booths were not meant to perceive other customers,

[17] Kate Greenaway Showrooms [1960] Gerhard E. Karplus, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 31, no. 10 (Oct. 1960): 225; PhotoCrd: Ben Schnall.

giving the impression that they, and they alone, were being served. Additionally, the placement of the booths in repetitive sequence against a wall created a rhythm along the length of the space, regulating the speed at which its patrons processed through it.

Figure 2.4. Kate Greenaway Showrooms [1960] Gerhard E. Karplus, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 32, no. 10 (Oct. 1960): 225; PhotoCrd: Ben Schnall.

The 1962 Jonathan Logan showroom in New York took an almost identical approach to its predecessor, using Marching Order to organize its buyer's booths along one side of the showroom. (**Figure 2.5**) Instead of using fully opaque screens, however, designer Mary Ponsart used metal dividers perforated with a lace-like pattern. The perforated dividers, despite being less visually solid, still divided the space in a regimented manner. While it was unclear whether the Marching Order of the 1960 Kate Greenaway showroom was a deliberate strategy or merely a convenient and easy design solution,

the Marching Order organization of the buying booths in the Jonathan Logan 1962 showroom was intentional. A neutral “pale putty” color was used on walls, floors and furniture: “a new concept in showroom design to display to the greatest advantage the colors and fashions of dress collections,” while the “uncluttered buyer’s booths and reception area” are arranged with “smart simplicity.”[18] In this instance, the entire showroom was kept clean and simple in color and organization to maximize the impact of the products for sale.

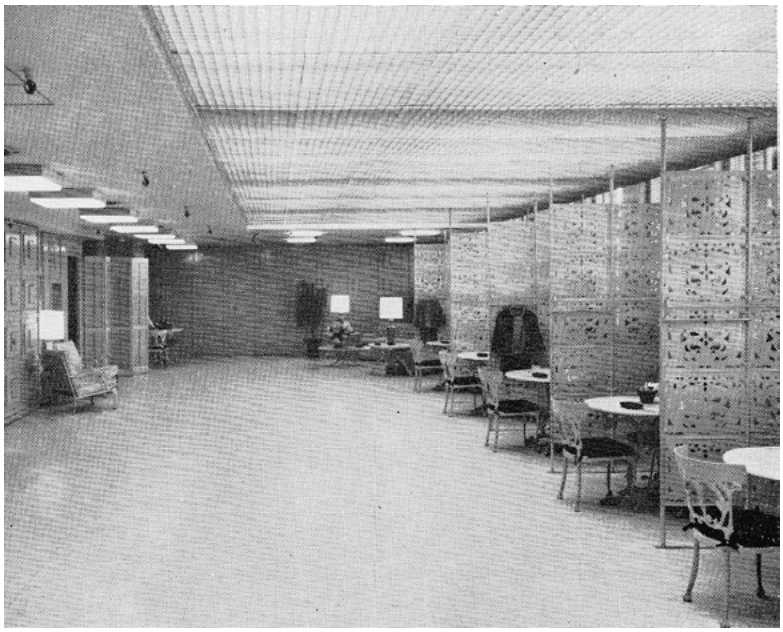


Figure 2.5. Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1962] Mary Ponsart, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Showrooms,” *Interior Design* 33, no. 10 (Oct. 1962): 216; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

By the 1970 decade showroom iterations of Marching Order had not really changed, being employed primarily as an organizational strategy for the buyer’s booths that were common of showrooms at that time. The 1971 showroom for Butte Knits by Frank Schwind was no different. Identical buyer’s booths lined one wall of the showroom.

[18] Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1962] Mary Ponsart, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Showrooms,” *Interior Design* 33, no. 10 (Oct. 1962): 216; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

(**Figure 2.6**) However, this time instead of having undecorated walls or doors on the plane opposite to the booths, the expression of Marching Order was mimicked through the placement of clothing display units that ran parallel to them. In the Jonathan Logan showroom next door, however, the clothing display case itself was used as the expression of Marching Order in the space. (**Figure 2.7**) Also designed by Frank Schwind as part of a trio of spaces for the company, the showroom featured series of display cases running down the middle of the showroom so as to be "accessible from both sides." The long cases were regularly partitioned by panels of "gray acrylic"[19] so that a regular rhythm infused the length of the narrow space.

Figure 2.6. Butte Knits Showroom [1971] Frank Schwind, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Design in Fashion," *Interior Design* 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 143; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Figure 2.7. Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1971] Frank Schwind, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Design in Fashion," *Interior Design* 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 142; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[19] Butte Knits Showroom & Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1971] Frank Schwind, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Design in Fashion," *Interior Design* 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 142-143; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

In the 1980 decade, expressions of Marching Order began to gain more variety. While the 1980 Rafael sport showroom by James D'Auria initially seemed identical to showrooms of previous decades with its buyer's booths aligned against one wall, the Marching Order of the booths was architecturally mimicked on the opposite wall. (**Figure 2.8**) The objective for the space was to "create a sense of privacy within each showing area without creating a series of enclosed cubicles" while "providing storage for the clothing samples out of buyer view in order to allow for the presentation of the line in an orderly sequence." The solution placed the sales offices along the showroom wall, projecting them diagonally into the space. This created "a series of alcoves that visually break up the long tunnel effect of the space."[20] The buyers' alcoves and clothing display screens were centered along these diagonal protrusions, enhancing the effect of Marching Order as the space narrowed and widened.

Figure 2.8. Rafael Sport Showroom [1980] James D'Auria, architect; Unknown Location in F.K., "Rafael Sport," *Interior Design* 51, no. 1 (Jan. 1980): 239; PhotoCrd: Tom Yee.

[20] Rafael Sport Showroom [1980] James D'Auria, architect; Unknown Location in F.K., "Rafael Sport," *Interior Design* 51, no. 1 (Jan. 1980): 238-39; PhotoCrd: Tom Yee.

By the late 1980s, it became evident to designers and architects that they could apply the principle of Marching order to showrooms in the same way that they had been doing in traditional retail design. Thus, Marching Order became a method not just for organizing space, but also for organizing products. The 1988 Allsteel showroom at the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles took a similar approach to the Rafael Sport showroom as glass panels protruded into the entry space in a ziggurat form. (**Figure 2.9**) At each corner of the glass that jutted into the space, was a single office chair, prominently displayed on a plinth. The visual and spatial rhythm set up as one entered the space culminated in the sight of "an intricately crafted desk" that served as the showroom's reception desk and as "its main focal point from the PDC corridor and an organic contrast to the larger space's inherently hard-edged sleekness."[21] In this installation, Marching Order created a sense of ceremonial procession heightening the drama of the space. The sparse placement of the product not only visually punctuated the spatial rhythm set up by the glass panels, but also offered a preview of the products in the main area of the showroom.

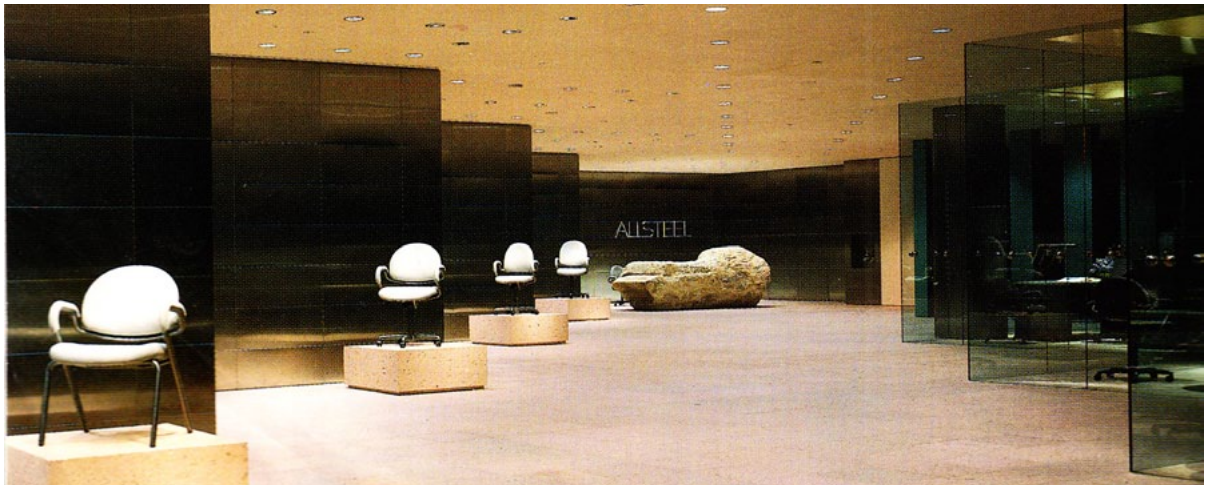


Figure 2.9. Allsteel Showroom [1988] Gensler, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Jerry Cooper, "Allsteel," *Interior Design* 59, no. 10 (Jul. 1988): 202; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi.

[21] Allsteel Showroom [1988] Gensler, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Jerry Cooper, "Allsteel," *Interior Design* 59, no. 10 (Jul. 1988): 202-206; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi.

Marching Order continued to be used as a strategy for organizing product into the 1990 decade, although in showrooms it was still primarily used as a spatial organization technique. The 1992 United Chair showroom by Thomas Gass at the Pacific Design Center used both approaches to great effect. (**Figures 2.10 & 2.11**) "Cord-strung curtains" were hung at regular intervals on both sides of the showroom, partitioning the long space into smaller areas more appropriate for the scale of the furniture. Inside each little exhibit booth, sat a solitary chair, illuminated by a spotlight suspended from the "skeletal rib cage" of lighting that ran through the center of the space. The space's symmetry and repetitive rhythm was a deliberate strategy to "instantly elicit understanding of the entire layout inside" while "marry[ing] the product with the space" to "draw visitors inward to view the product array."[22]

Figure 10 & Figure 11. United Chair Showroom [1992] Thomas Gass, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Monica Geran, "United Chair," *Interior Design* 63, no. 3 (Feb. 1992): 112, 113; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi.

For clothing showrooms, however, the old standby of Marching Order as buyer's booths remained popular, although some new techniques were employed. The 1997 Sigrid Olsen showroom by James D'Auria had a spatial organization very similar to that of clothing showrooms of the 1960 era, although "the prevailing approach to apparel

[22] United Chair Showroom [1992] Thomas Gass, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Monica Geran, "United Chair," *Interior Design* 63, no. 3 (Feb. 1992): 112-13; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi.

display has significantly changed." (**Figure 2.12**) While showroom design evolved from the 1960s to be part of "a portable merchandising package" required to "serve many multifaceted objectives," the need for buying areas remained the same. The solution was that the showroom contained many varied areas, such as a shop display area and a conference area instead of just one area for the viewing and purchasing of product. It was in the showroom proper that the familiar buying booths appeared. The panel system that defined the Marching Order for Sigrid Olsen consisted of "10-ft.-by-8-ft. metal frames with either open or glazed grids, and lined inside with cherry wood strips." Additionally, there were "independently operable casement fabrics just behind the gliding screens" that allowed the buyer's booths to be completely visually screened. The moveable dividers created a Marching Order in the showroom when pushed out, dividing the showroom into as many (or as few) different spaces as required to accommodate "two to 25 visiting buyers".[23]

Figure 2.12. Sigrid Olsen Showroom [1997] James D'Auria, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "The Portrait of a Lady," *Interior Design* 68, no. 5 (Apr. 1997): 190; PhotoCrd: Durston Saylor.

[23] Sigrid Olsen Showroom [1997] James D'Auria, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "The Portrait of a Lady," *Interior Design* 68, no. 5 (Apr. 1997): 188-191; PhotoCrd: Durston Saylor.

The 2006 Janus et Cie showroom in Houston, Texas used Marching Order to break up what was “a 5,500-square-foot drywall box, dead center in the atrium at the Decorative Center Houston.” (**Figure 2.13**) To partition the space, the design team created over-sized display shelves, which merged the product and the architecture of the space. The “11-foot-tall units… serve not only as perfect little stages for individual chairs, but also as dividers between vignettes” which “run down either side of a central aisle, an allée punctuated by faux topiaries.” The separation of vignettes de-cluttered the showroom. The use of Specimen (Intype)[24] to display the company’s array of chairs gave the showroom a museum gallery-like quality that allowed the product a permanent presence on the occasions founder and president Janice Feldman cleared away some of the vignettes to host “lavish 40-person dinners”[25] in the showroom. In this instance, Marching Order did not create a ceremonial procession through the space; rather it divided the showroom into smaller, evenly sized areas for the display of various furniture vignettes.

Figure 2.13. Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen, “Garden of Earthly Delights,” *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134; PhotoCrd: Jorge Castillo.

[24] The Intype Specimen describes a display strategy in which items are arranged in a taxonomic array. It is covered in-depth in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

[25] Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen, “Garden of Earthly Delights,” *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134; PhotoCrd: Jorge Castillo.

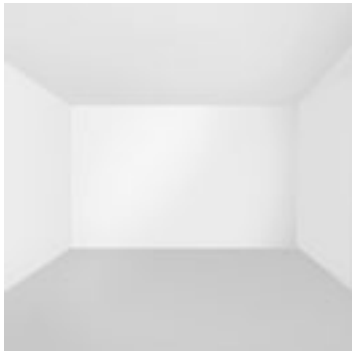
The S. Oliver showroom at Labels 2 in Berlin, Germany used a similar approach to organize its showroom space. S. Oliver is one of several fashion apparel showrooms within Labels 2. (**Figure 2.14**) The interior of the building facility, designed by HHF Architekten, was "intentionally antibourgeois," consisting of concrete punctuated by parabolic arches. Non-load-bearing partitions "angle across the floor plates to separate the showrooms." Designed for flexibility, the partitions were easily reconfigured as "tenants constantly reconsider their space needs." Businesses occupy the building as they would a loft, "making very few design gestures at additional cost."[26] Thus, interventions in the space were minimal and multi-functional. S. Oliver's solution created display racks that also acted as spatial dividers. The dividers, of equal size and materiality, were evenly spaced down the length of the showroom. To view the clothing, one entered the row of display units, circulating among and around them. This lengthened the amount of time patrons spent in the showroom, enticing them to zig-zag their way through the space rather than walking straight through to the other end.

Figure 2.14. S. Oliver Showroom in Labels 2 [2010] HHF Architekten, architect; Berlin, Germany in David Sokol, "Dress For Success," *Interior Design* 81, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 200; PhotoCrd: Christian Gahl.

[26] S. Oliver Showroom in Labels 2 [2010] HHF Architekten, architect; Berlin, Germany in David Sokol, "Dress For Success," *Interior Design* 81, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 197-203; PhotoCrd: Christian Gahl.

Despite its various iterations in showrooms over the years, Marching Order remained fundamentally constant in its expression through the 2010 decade.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Marching Order in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1960** Kate Greenaway Showrooms [1960] Gerhard E. Karplus, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Showrooms,” Interior Design 32, no. 10 (Oct. 1960): 225; PhotoCrd: Ben Schnall; Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1962] Mary Ponsart, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Showrooms,” Interior Design 33, no. 10 (Oct. 1962): 216; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1970** Butte Knit Showroom [1971] Frank Schwind, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Design in Fashion,” Interior Design 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 143; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Jonathan Logan, Inc. Showroom [1971] Frank Schwind, architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Design in Fashion,” Interior Design 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 142; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1980** Rafael Sport Showroom [1980] James D’Auria, architect; Anonymous Location in F.K., “Rafael Sport,” Interior Design 51, no. 1 (Jan. 1980): 239; PhotoCrd: Tom Yee; Artimide Showroom [1985] Vignelli Associates, architect; Dallas, TX in Edie Lee Cohen, “Artimide,” Interior Design 56, no. 6 (Jun. 1985): 119; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol; Hickory Business Furniture Showroom [1987] Vanderbyl Design, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, “Hickory Business Furniture,” Interior Design 58, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 262; PhotoCrd: Sadin Photo Group, Ltd; Allsteel Showroom [1988] Gensler, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Jerry Cooper, “Allsteel,” Interior Design 59, no. 10 (Jul. 1988): 202; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi; / **1990** United Chair Showroom [1992] Thomas Gass, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Monica Geran, “United Chair,” Interior Design 63, no. 3 (Feb. 1992): 112, 113; PhotoCrd: Toshi Yoshimi; Sigrid Olsen Showroom [1997] James D’Auria, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, “The Portrait of a Lady,” Interior Design 68, no. 5 (Apr. 1997): 190; PhotoCrd: Durston Saylor; / **2000** Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen, “Garden of Earthly Delights,” Interior Design 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134; PhotoCrd: Jorge Castillo; / **2010** S. Oliver Showroom in Labels 2 [2010] HHF Architekten, architect; Berlin, Germany in David Sokol, “Dress For Success,” Interior Design 81, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 200; PhotoCrd: Christian Gahl.



Chapter 3

White Box

Definition

White Box, an undecorated space with white walls, white ceiling and a continuous neutral floor, originated in 1927 as “clean envelope”, a bare white architecture. An influential 1930 MoMA exhibition secured it as a museum aesthetic.

Application Definition

In showrooms, white walls and ceiling planes and a continuous, neutral color floor, continue to define it. Additional display mechanisms such as plinths may also be white, or they may be a different neutral color. Most often, they take on the color of the plane to which they are parallel.

Description

In showrooms, White Box is often used to create a consistent background from which the product can stand out. A White Box space, like its opposite color counterpart Black Out, begins to lose spatial definition as the different planes blend into one homogeneous enclosure. White Box can be found across all showroom types, from those displaying large, three-dimensional objects, to those displaying smaller two-dimensional samples.

Effect

White has been considered both the sum of every color and the absence of any color. White light is a mixture of all wavelengths of light, while white pigment reflects all light and is therefore devoid of any other color. In scientific terms, it is more accurate to say

that white, like black is not a hue, or spectral color, but an achromatic value, for it exists without chroma or hue.

The white that we see is caused by all wavelengths of light being reflected from a surface. In most cases, such a surface must be clean or free of impurities to appear white. Because of this, it is often associated with cleanliness, purity and renewal. As color expert Frank Mahnke explains, "white means *clean.*"[1] White's unspoiled nature has led to its connotations of innocence. The English language is peppered with idioms using white to denote purity and integrity.[2] A white lie is an innocuous or trivial one; lily-white intentions are pure ones. White-collar workers are executives, or those who don't dirty their hands with manual labor, and to whitewash means to cover up faults or to absolve from blame.

Because white is caused by, and associated with light, it is also associated with the celestial, the spiritual and the holy. In Asia, white is often used for funerals and mourning, because the belief in reincarnation means that death signifies "the beginning and not an absolute end to existence."[3] In Judeo-Christian religion, white represents chastity, innocence, purity and joy. It is therefore fittingly the color of "brides, first communicants, the pope, and priests of certain religious orders."[4]

The use of white in architecture has existed for centuries. In countries around the

[1] Frank H. Mahnke, *Color, Environment and Human Response* (New York: Nostrand Reinhold, 1996): 56-70.

[2] Patricia Sloane, *The Visual Nature of Color* (New York: Design Press, 1989): 190-91.

[3] Mahnke, *Color, Environment,* 56-70.

[4] Jean-Philippe Lenclos and Dominique Lenclos, *Colors of the World: A Geography of Color* (New York: Norton, 2004): 32.

Mediterranean Sea, white is seen as a symbol of cleanliness and hygiene. “Purifying and protecting” [5] whitewash is generally applied to the outer walls of the dwellings in these countries to make them appear clean and fresh, with the added benefit of reflecting most of the sun’s rays to keep the dwellings as cool as possible in the hot, dry climate.

In interior spaces, white can evoke feelings other than cleanliness and freshness. A white ceiling is empty with no design objections, but “helps to diffuse light sources and reduce shadows”. White walls feel “neutral to empty, sterile, without energy,” while a white floor inhibits, because it gives the impression that it is “not to be walked upon.” [6]

White, used in interiors, maximizes the amount of reflected light in spaces, making the space feel more open and airy. It can also be used as a neutral backdrop for interior furnishings and pieces of artwork. Although the use of white in interiors has existed for centuries, the exclusive use of it in spaces did not gain much popularity until the 1950s. This trend toward white wall and ceiling planes continued until 1975, dropping off in the 1980s, gently resurging in the 1990s.[7] In the most recent decade, White Box spaces maintain a healthy presence among interior installations, although some practice types, such as museums, are more likely to have a higher incidence of White Boxes than other types.

Opinion is divided on whether the effects of a white space are as neutral as architects

[5] Lenclos & Lenclos, *Colors of the World,* 32.

[6] Mahnke, *Color, Environment,* 56-70.

[7] Mahnke, *Color, Environment,* 80-81.

and designers think. In reality, the idea that white brightens interiors depends on the quality of light that is being reflected. As Mahnke points out, a White Box on gray, rainy days "is more depressing than if the space were painted with a color with its own luminosity." He states that the exclusive use of white in spaces may in fact have a detrimental effect on its inhabitants. He claims that, "white has no psychotherapeutic effect" because "on a psychological basis, white is sterile" and that it reminds one of "unemotional clinical practice rather than involved human caring." [8]

The practice of White Box as a design strategy began in art museums, and the use of this tactic in showroom spaces seems to derive from its use in gallery spaces. As Thomas McEvilly explains in his introduction to *Inside the White Cube,* gallery spaces are meant to reflect eternity, and because of this, "the outside must not come in." Thus, the use of white in museums was intended to make the impression of the displays and art timeless by removing any points of reference from the outside world: "unshadowed, white, clean, artificial—the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics."[9] However, according to Brian O'Doherty, the author of *Inside the White Cube*, it was the advent of postmodernism in which white museum spaces were no longer as neutral as they once were. Instead, they represented a "community with common ideas and assumptions". White cubes were "usually seen as an emblem of the estrangement of the artist from a society to which the gallery also provides access."[10]

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[8] Mahnke, *Color, Environment,* 80-81.

[9] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1996): 9-15.

[10] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* 79-80.

Chronological Sequence

White Box showrooms are difficult to trace before the 1960s because of the predominance of black and white photography in trade magazines, such as *Interior Design* and *Architectural Record*. Although the archetype was almost certainly present before the 1960s, it is difficult to know for certain as such spaces were often described as "neutral colored" by the articles in which they appeared. "Neutral" could have encompassed various off-whites, creams and beiges.

The first definitive use of White Box in showroom design begins in the 1960 decade. In 1968, architect Warren Platner opted for White Box when he designed the New York City showroom for Georg Jensen, the high-end seller of Scandinavian furniture and lighting, called the Georg Jensen Design Center. (**Figures 3.1 & 3.2**) With white brick walls, coffered ceiling and a gray floor made of Norwegian slate, Platner's intent was to create a restrained showroom that was "never insistent in its presence." To ensure that the product displays stood out in the space in high relief, Platner grouped related items on "rich and shimmery" plinths made of marble, granite, wood, plastic or glass.[11] The furniture displays vibrantly popped against the stark white planes of the space. Chairs were arranged on the plinths and were also suspended from the ceiling at various heights, as if they floated in space. This display technique made good use of White Box as an agent that blurred the edges among floor, wall and ceiling planes.

[11] Georg Jensen, Inc. Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Architecture Is Really Space," *Architectural Record* 144, no. 3 (Sep. 1968): 143-48.

Figure 3.1 & Figure 3.2. Georg Jensen, Inc. Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Architecture Is Really Space," *Architectural Record* 144, no. 3 (Sep. 1968): 143, 145; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller Associates.

Pace Furniture's 1975 New York City showroom, created by its own design staff, Leon and Irving Rosen and Janet Schwietzer, emerged as a warmer tone of off-white as opposed to the stark, almost institutional shade of bright white used in the Georg Jensen showroom. (**Figures 3.3 & 3.4**) The installation, which spanned two floors and 11,000 square feet made no differentiation between its contract and residential products. In this instance, off-white didn't "compete with the furniture". The space was kept as open as possible, with dividers positioned to provide maximum visibility of the products while subtly guiding traffic throughout the showroom. The combined effect of the lack of a color background and space planning resulted in a showroom in which customers could "see and select items in the easiest manner for them."[12]

[12] Pace Showroom [1975] Pace Design Staff, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Pace Expands Showrooms," *Interior Design* 46, no. 10 (Oct. 1975): 60, 61; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.


Figure 3.3 & Figure 3.4. Pace Showroom [1975] Pace Design Staff, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Pace Expands Showrooms," *Interior Design* 46, no. 10 (Oct. 1975): 60, 61; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

The 1977 Knoll showroom in Houston, added other design elements to make its interpretation of White Box more visually intriguing. (**Figure 3.5**) The walls and ceiling were painted white a bright, clean white, while the floor maintained a neutral (though darker than usual for White Box installations) color tone for its interpretation. Five groups of three white "sails" were stretched across the showroom to add a more "architectural" feel to the high-ceilinged space. In this showroom, the removal of color was done so as to help customers "visualize whatever schemes they are planning for specific jobs." As designer Sally Walsh explained, by creating an effectively blank shell of a space, the emphasis was placed on "changes in textures: leathers against canvas against hand-woven textiles." [13] Indeed, this strategy worked as the space itself was almost invisible beyond the displays of furniture and textiles. The fabric sails that spanned the atrium space of the showroom gave the only reminder of the showroom's architecture.

[13] Knoll Showroom [1976] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 180-181; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries.

Figure 3.5. Knoll Showroom [1976] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 181; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries.

Although White Box showrooms of the 1960 and 1970 decades often consisted of unadorned white walls and ceilings, architects and designers in the 1980 decade experimented with the structure of the spatial envelope. White Box showrooms became more architecturally expressive. The DesignTex showroom at the Chicago Merchandise Mart used White Box to attract visitors to its showroom. (**Figures 3.6 & 3.7**) Unlike other showroom spaces housed in communal buildings like the Merchandise Mart, The DesignTex showroom was completely open to one of the building's main corridors. This was done so that "designers were able to walk directly to swatch racks and make selections without registering at a desk. Because the showroom was painted a warm white, it stood out in stark relief from the dark corridor. The showroom itself was white so that the colorful textiles on display would be the first things designers would notice upon entering the space. The swatches were organized in two large Spectrum[14] displays on the walls, which showed the entire color range in "schemes" so that "a designer could look at a portion of the spectrum and see a group or coordinated fabrics." [15] Again, the White Box strategy was used to downplay the architecture of the space, ensuring that it acted as a neutral backdrop for the product. Because of the two-dimensional nature of the product, the effect of the White Box strategy was slightly different from previous examples of the Intype. With the fabric samples artfully arranged in large mural-like displays, this White Box space was very reminiscent of a museum gallery.

[14] The Intype Spectrum is a display technique in which items are arranged chromatically, exhibiting the full range of available colors as well as unifying the surfaces on which the items are arranged. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

[15] DesignTex Showroom [1981] Jeanne Hartnett & Associates, architect; Chicago, IL in R.P., "A Good Idea Gets Better," *Interior Design* 52, no. 3 (Mar. 1981): 236-239; PhotoCrd: Idaka.


Figures 3.6 & Fig. 3.7. DesignTex Showroom [1981] Jeanne Hartnett & Associates, architect; Chicago, IL in R.P., "A Good Idea Gets Better," *Interior Design* 52, no. 3 (Mar. 1981): 236, 237; PhotoCrd: Idaka.

The 1985 NEOCON showroom for Armstrong World industries was much more architecturally expressive than previous White Box showrooms. The space, designed by Gilbert D. Benson, was composed of "square platforms of decreasing dimensions [that] were rotated at 45 degree angles… and piled on top one another to create architectural interest."[16] (**Figure 3.8**) Extending from the ceiling as well as from the floor, the rotated platforms were used to display resilient flooring, carpeting and ceiling finishes on the obvious surfaces. The remaining surfaces not covered with flooring or ceiling panels were painted white, downplaying the architecturally active space. The result was a White Box showroom that didn't feel at all sterile.

[16] Armstrong World Industries Showroom [1985] Gilbert D. Benson, architect; Chicago, IL in Andrea Loukin, "Armstrong," *Interior Design* 56, no. 12 (Oct. 1985): 122-23; PhotoCrd: Alan Holm.

Figure 3.8. Armstrong World Industries Showroom [1985] Gilbert D. Benson, architect; Chicago, IL in Andrea Loukin, "Armstrong," *Interior Design* 56, no. 12 (Oct. 1985): 123; PhotoCrd: Alan Holm.

The 1998 Dakota Jackson showroom by Peter Eisenman in Los Angeles similarly relied on architectural intervention to add visual interest to an otherwise simple White Box space. (**Figure 3.9**) A large, zig-zag ceiling element cut through the center of the 100-foot long showroom "in an effort to ease perception of its depth."[17] Eisenman created a single origami-like element to destroy the box. The flexibility inherent in the single shape suggested "a series of frames" for the showroom's furniture, allowing the space to be transformed for different types of exhibitions. Additionally, the white envelope of the space was given a pearlescent finish to enhance an ambient glow from the ceiling element. The use of white allowed the architecture to be more prominent in the space without becoming too visually intrusive. The space was able to be visually intriguing, and to clearly display the company's wares.

Figure 3.9. Dakota Jackson Showroom [1998] Peter Eisenman, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Jagged Edge," *Interior Design* 69, no. 11 (Sep. 1998): 119; PhotoCrd: John Edward Linden.

[17] Dakota Jackson Showroom [1998] Peter Eisenman, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Jagged Edge," *Interior Design* 69, no. 11 (Sep. 1998): 118-20; PhotoCrd: John Edward Linden.

At the turn of the 21st century, iterations of White Box became more rigid in execution. Instead of the various off-white and cream tones that marked installations from earlier decades, contemporary White Box showrooms began to use a starker, brighter whites. White flooring also became more popular, blurring the line between White Box showrooms and the less numerous White Out showrooms.[18] Often, the only things keeping these White Boxes from becoming White Out spaces were furniture and display units, which were retained as defiantly non-white. The design firm FTL Happold chose a pure, bright white for the 1999 Joe Boxer showroom in Manhattan. (**Figure 3.10**) Adding visual interest to the starkly white space were "manipulated mirrors that distort the human visage" and the black Joe Boxer logo "running up and down sign posts, coiling around curves, marching across the floor, and crossing desk tops."[19] The result would have been too sterile if not for the addition of the boldly colored merchandise. Instead, the envelope of the space became a blank canvas against which bold graphics and brightly colored merchandise were offset.

Figure 3.10. Joe Boxer Showroom [1999] FTL Happold, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "That's Entertainment," *Interior Design* 70, no. 5 (Apr. 1999): 222; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman.

[18] The Intype White Out is a space in which all planar surfaces (wall, ceiling, floor), as well as furnishings and furniture are a bleached, bright white.

[19] Joe Boxer Showroom [1999] FTL Happold, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "That's Entertainment," *Interior Design* 70, no. 5 (Apr. 1999): 220-223; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman.

The Dune showroom (2001) was slightly less severe in execution than the Joe Boxer showroom of two years prior. Like the previous White Box showroom, the walls, ceiling and structural columns were painted a stark white. (**Figures 3.11 & 3.12**) However, in this the effect was lessened by the use of a sand and resin based flooring material that added a warm, beige color to the showroom. Although the tops of the Plinths in the showroom were colored the same bright white, the edges of the platforms were laminated with a light wood veneer similar in color to that of the floor. This design decision, as well as the rounded edges on the Plinths, added to the softer quality of this White Box space. Additionally, the pale neutrality of the space was broken up by the placement of the furniture on display, all upholstered in bold, bright colors. On one wall, two Spectrum displays of fabric samples added a colorful, graphic touch to the white walls.[20] The result was a showroom that read as clean, warm, fresh, and slightly playful.

Figure 3.11 & Figure 3.12. Dune Showroom [2001] Richard Shemtov and Nick Dine, architects; New York City in Linas Alsena, "Civil Heights," *Interior Design* 72, no. 12 (Oct. 2001): 92, 93; PhotoCrd: Formula Z/S.

[20] Dune Showroom [2001] Richard Shemtov and Nick Dine, architects; New York City in Linas Alsena, "Civil Heights," *Interior Design* 72, no. 12 (Oct. 2001): 92-94; PhotoCrd: Formula Z/S.

The 2006 Interface showroom in New York took a similar approach. (**Figure 3.13**) The brilliantly white walls and ceiling, somewhat softened by a pale taupe epoxy floor, "hardly [made] a splash compared to the modular floor coverings on display." Russ Ramage, the creative director of Interface responsible for the design of the space, explained that the showroom's color acted as a "blank canvas … to give a neutral backdrop to decidedly un-neutral merchandise," because the product on display changed constantly.[21] The dark patches of carpet tiles visually popped against the light colored floor, ensuring that all eyes remained on the product instead of on the space.

Figure 3.13. Interface Showroom [2006] Russ Ramage, architect; New York City in Eva Hagberg, "Watch Your Step," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 150; PhotoCrd: Michael Moran.

In 2010, Philip Johnson Alan Ritchie Architects designed the Manhattan DDC (Domus Design Collection) showroom as a White Box. (**Figure 3.14**) Non-structural columns and the floor were tiled with a glass composite that created a museum-like effect.[22]

[21] Interface Showroom [2006] Russ Ramage, architect; New York City in Eva Hagberg, "Watch Your Step," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 148-50; PhotoCrd: Michael Moran.

[22] DDC Domus Design Collection Showroom [2010] Philip Johnson Ritchie Alan Architects, architect; New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 85-87; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

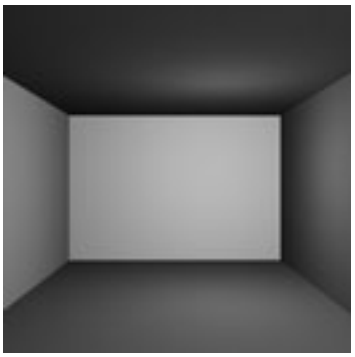
Additionally low display platforms encouraged patrons to interact with the products on display. The design of a stark white interior, however, entailed more than the choice of bright white as a neutral backdrop for display. The architects chose white for the DDC showroom to differentiate and contrast it from the smaller Minotti showroom next door, which was black.

Figure 3.14. DDC Domus Design Collection Showroom [2010] Philip Johnson Ritchie Alan Architects, architect; New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 86; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

White Box's association with art museum and gallery display was easily adapted for showrooms, particularly those that featured colorful products, such as furnishings. Because of white's associations with freshness and purity, it is unlikely that this particular Intype will fall ever become unpopular among architects and designers.

However, it will be interesting to see how White Box might be reinterpreted or used in the coming decades.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of White Box in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1960** Georg Jensen, Inc. Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Architecture is Really Space," *Architectural Record* 14, no. 3 (Sep. 1968): 143-45; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller Associates, Inc.; / **1970** Pace Showroom [1975] Pace Design Staff, architect; New York City in Anonymous Author, "Pace Expands Showrooms," *Interior Design* 46, no. 10 (Oct. 1975): 60, 61; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 181; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries; / **1980** DesignTex Showroom [1981] Jeanne Hartnett & Associates, architect; Chicago, IL in R.P., "A Good Idea Gets Better," *Interior Design* 52, no. 3 (Mar. 1981): 236, 237; PhotoCrd: Idaka; Armstrong World Industries Showroom [1985] Gilbert D. Benson, architect; Chicago, IL in Andrea Loukin, "Armstrong," *Interior Design* 56, no. 12 (Oct. 1985): 123; PhotoCrd: Alan Holm; / **1990** Dakota Jackson Showroom [1998] Peter Eisenman, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Jagged Edge," *Interior Design* 69, no. 11 (Sep. 1998): 119; PhotoCrd: John Edward Linden; Joe Boxer Showroom [1999] FTL Happold, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "That's Entertainment," *Interior Design* 70, no. 5 (Apr. 1999): 222; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman; / **2000** Dune Showroom [2001] Richard Shemtov and Nick Dine, architects; New York City in Linas Alsena, "Civil Heights," *Interior Design* 72, no. 12 (Oct. 2001): 92, 93; PhotoCrd: Formula Z/S; Interface Showroom [2006] Russ Ramage, architect; New York City in Eva Hagberg, "Watch Your Step," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 150; PhotoCrd: Michael Moran; / **2010** DDC (Domus Design Collection) Showroom [2010] Philip Johnson Ritchie Alan Architects, architect; New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 86; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.



Chapter 4

Black Out

Definition

Black Out is an interior space or room entirely consisting of black shades for walls, floors, ceilings and furnishings.

Application Definition

In showrooms Black Out refers to the black color of walls, floors, ceilings and display mechanisms, such as Plinths,[1] but not to the color of the product for sale. In some showrooms, the floor or display elements may not be pure black, but a very dark gray.

Description

Black Out creates a consistent backdrop against which the product can be highlighted. Characterized by black walls, floor and ceiling planes, a Black Out space, like its opposite hue counterpart White Box,[2] loses spatial definition as the different planes blend into one homogeneous enclosure.

Black Out can be found across a broad range of showroom types, from those displaying large, three-dimensional objects, to those displaying smaller two-dimensional samples. The technique is often used to create a consistent background from which the product can stand out. Though similar in concept to the use of White Box in showrooms, the darkness of the black makes for a more dramatic space, due to the symbolic associations and effects of the color.

[1] The Intype Plinth is a museum and gallery display technique that raises a three-dimensional object slightly off the floor (usually one low step). The device isolates and calls attention to the object on display. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

[2] The Intype White Box describes an undecorated space with white walls, white ceiling and a continuous neutral floor, originated in 1927 as clean envelope, a bare white architecture. An influential 1930 MoMA exhibition secured it as a museum aesthetic. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

In recent years, Black Out has become an increasingly popular Intype for museums. Although it had been used rarely in exhibition design in the past, the 2000 decade has seen the number of Black Out museum exhibitions increase. Unlike most other showroom Intypes, which were taken from museum strategies, this one seems to have jumped from showrooms to museums. In 2002, Jean Nouvel designed an exhibit for the *Brazil: Body and Soul* exhibit at the Guggenheim, painting the entire interior of the structure black.[3] (**Figure 4.1**) In 2011, The Metropolitan Museum of Art designed a Black Out space and Specimen[4] display as a part of the Costume Collection's exhibition *Savage Beauty: Alexander McQueen*. (**Figure 4.2**) In both of these examples, the black is used primarily for dramatic effect, acting as a background for the visually elaborate items on display. Its usage in the exhibitions gives the items displayed in the space an air of luxury, decadence and sin.

Figure 4.2. Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Savage Beauty: Alexander McQueen*) [2011] Sam Gainsbury and Joseph Bennett, exhibition designers; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 3 Jul. 2011; PhotoCrd: The Photo Studio (The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

[3] Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (*Brazil: Body and Soul*) [2002] Frank Lloyd Wright, architect; Jean Nouvel, exhibition designer; New York City in David Dernie, *Exhibition Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2006): 142-145; PhotoCrd: David Heald (The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York).

[4] The Intype Specimen describes a display strategy in which items are arranged in a taxonomic array. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

Figure 4.1. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (*Brazil: Body and Soul*) [2002] Frank Lloyd Wright, architect; Jean Nouvel, exhibition designer; New York City in David Dernie, *Exhibition Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2006): 143; PhotoCrd: David Heald (The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York).

Symbolic Association & Effect

In scientific terms, black is not a color. This argument is based on the deduction that light waves cause color but do not cause black.[5] However, this argument fails to take into consideration the multitude of other colors that are not caused by light, such as pink, brown, or silver. It is more accurate to say that black (like white) is not a hue, or spectral color, but an achromatic value, for it exists without chroma or hue.

True black is caused by the absence of light, which has led to its associations with darkness, nothingness and void. These correlations have led to black's many negative connotations in Western culture. It symbolizes darkness and nothingness, as well as fear of the unknown, grief and death. To see evidence of these negative associations, one needs only to look at the English language: blackguard, black humor, blackmail, black market and black sheep are all words in which black connotes negative meaning.[6] Moreover, this phenomenon is not limited to English; the German word for black (*schwarz*) is utilized in the phrases *schwarz gebrannt* (bootleg), *schwarz fahren* (to fare-dodge), and *schwarz sehen* (to be pessimistic), while the French word (*noir*) is used in *être noir* (to be in mourning), *bête noir* (something that is particularly disliked or avoided), and *roman noir* (a crime novel).

While the associations of darkness stem from black's scientific definition, the idea of black as a portent of bad things stems from its allegorical pairing with white. In Western culture, the pairing of the two colors often becomes an allegory for the struggle

[5] Patricia Sloane, *The Visual Nature of Color* (New York: Design Press, 1989), 88-89.

[6] Frank H. Mahnke, *Color, Environment and Human Response* (New York: Nostrand Reinhold, 1996), 56-70.

between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. If white represents light and goodness, then black stands for evil and sin. These associations have led to suggestions about sensuality and sexual provocativeness. Prostitutes are often referred to as “ladies of the night;” Baudelaire himself compared the prostitutes of Paris to black cats. Black lingerie, too, carries the connotation of sensuality and provocativeness that its white counterpart does not.[7] Perhaps because of its connotations of sin and sensuality, black can also imply luxury and decadence when paired with gold, although it is possible that this is a “learned response” to the use of black in more recent decades.[8]

Black has not always been associated with darkness, and evil. Beginning in 14th century Italy, for example, Christian religious orders, such as Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and some Protestants, adopted black as the color of vestments (liturgical garments) as well as clerical garb following the implementation of laws banning the use for more expensive colorants.[9] From this, black also became a color of asceticism and austerity as clergy wore it “as a sign of self-denial.”[3] [10]As the Protestant Reformation took hold of Europe in the 16th century, the idea of black as a color of self-denial became more ingrained in Western culture as protestant sects declared bright, warm colors immoral. Today, it is not uncommon to find houses painted black in Protestant countries, but it is uncommon to find such houses in Catholic ones.[4]

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[7] Sloane, *The Visual Nature of Color*, 120.

[8] Mahnke, *Color, Environment*, 16.

[9] Jean-Philippe Lenclos and Dominique Lenclos, *Colors of the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), 33.

[10] Mahnke, *Color, Environment*, 56-70.

Black often makes a space feel smaller and more enclosed than it really is, because black is so dark. A black ceiling feels “hollow” and “oppressive”, black walls feel “ominous and dungeon-like”, while black floors seem “odd and abstract”.[11] When used on all the planes of a space, black absorbs the other colors present, effectively framing the different hues and constraining its physical presence. The space feels compressed, smaller, as if the value is holding the contents of the space in.[12] Similarly, black objects are perceived as heavier than lighter colored ones, even if the objects are identical in weight and size.[13] Because black is also an absolute shade, when it is used in a space, it heightens bright colors, making them appear more “luminous.”[14]

Chronological Sequence

The appearance of Black Out in showrooms begins in the 1970 decade. In luxury apartments, there is little evidence of Black Out prior to 1980.[15] Due to the dominance of black and white photography in pre-1970 trade magazines, such as *Interior Design* and *Architectural Record*, it is not improbable that Black Out spaces existed, but were simply not documented because they photographed poorly.

In his Philadelphia showroom for Knoll in 1975, interior designer Robin Jacobsen “opted for a more ‘severe’ museum/gallery type of display” that was meant to “adopt a completely different approach” than was used while designing any of Knoll’s previous

[11] Mahnke, *Color, Environment*, 56-70.

[12] Steven Bleicher, *Contemporary Color: Theory & Use* (Clifton Park: Thomson/Delmar Learning, 2005), 70.

[13] Bleicher, *Contemporary Color*, 38.

[14] Mahnke, *Color, Environment*, 56-70.

[15] Najung Kim, “Theory Studies: Archetypical Practices of Contemporary Luxury Apartment Design” (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2009), 26-33.

showrooms. The result was a Black Out space with black walls, floors, plinths and a polished aluminum ceiling to reflect it all.[16] (**Figure 4.3**) The furniture on display, too, was black where it could be, and the neutral color of wood, glass or metal, where it could not be. The only color intrusion was the fabric center, where the bright colors of textiles arranged in chromatic order, popped out against black lacquered walls. Jacobsen stated, "By concentrating the color in the fabric center, we created a much stronger impact in the furniture displays where we used all natural finishes and materials." [17] While black created a dramatic feeling of enclosure, the use of gallery-type plinths to display the product added to the Knoll showroom's level of severity.

In 1976 designer Marcel Bretos created a Black Out showroom for Brinton's Carpet, partially because "we wanted to feature the carpets, not the space".[18] (**Figure 4.4**) The other reason black was chosen was to entice visitors into the showroom. To achieve this, the floor and all the walls were covered with black carpet. From the entryway, a colorful, carefully ordered display of yarns was the only visual cue to what lay around the corner in the main showroom. The bright colors popped against the dark walls, ensuring the patrons would see it. In the showroom itself, the carpets were carefully laid out in several groupings arranged around the perimeter of the room. The Black Out space created contrast with the intensely colored carpets, each display illuminated by its own recessed spotlight— the only lighting in that display area— creating a dramatic view of the products. The effect was that the shell of the space was almost

[16] Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1980): 102-105.

[17] "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," 102-105.

[18] Brintons Carpet [1976] Marcel Bretos, interior design; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Brintons," *Interior Design* 47, no. 4 (Apr. 1976): 150-53; PhotoCrd: Leland Lee.

Figure 4.3. Knoll International Showroom [1975] Robin Jacobsen, interior design; Philadelphia, PA in Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 104; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

unnoticeable. Instead, all focus was on the carpets, exactly as Bretos had intended. Interestingly, all-black space appears to be an Intype that Bretos would return to several years after the Brintons showroom was designed; he would later design of a luxury apartment in Manhattan, which also utilized the Black Out Intype.[19]

Figure 4.4. Brintons Carpet Showroom [1976] Marcel Bretos, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Brintons," *Interior Design* 47, no. 4 (Apr. 1976): 151; PhotoCrd: Leland Lee.

[19] Private Apartment [1980] Marcel Bretos; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, "View from Fifth Avenues," *Interior Design* 51, no. 7 (July 1980): 202-05; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

The 1980 decade saw the highest number of Black Out spaces. While in earlier and later decades it was common to see several examples of Black Out showrooms in a 10-year span, the 1980 decade saw the number of published Black Out showrooms jump to several per year. It is unclear why this Intype enjoyed such popularity during this decade, but it is clear that the use of Black Out in showrooms adopted a more nuanced expression during this time period. In the 1970s the textures and tones of materials were often the same as the space, but in the 1980 era, Black Out spaces became more varied.

The 1980 Brueton showroom in New York's D&D Building used light to play off the black surfaces. (**Figure 4.5**) The dark color was chosen to make the showroom stand out "as a beacon of visual distinction." Specifically, this was achieved by contrasting the Black Out space with artificial lighting to create a "limelight" effect. The black walls, floor and ceiling erased the "institutional bareness" of the space, while drama was created through the use of mirrors and blue lighting. Designer Stanley Jay Friedman employed the strips of blue neon lights to visually unite the long entry way and the showroom proper. A halo of incandescent and fluorescent lights made the central plinth seem to float in the center of the room, while the blue glow created a "magic mood."[20] In this installation, the use of the Black Out Intype and theatrical lighting created a dramatic atmosphere, which was intended to pair with the luxurious feel of Brueton's furniture pieces, displaying them as if they were setting on a stage. Additionally, the neutral background of the black allows the various furniture pieces (all comprised

[20] Brueton Showroom [1980] Stanley Jay Friedman, interior design; New York City in Anonymous, "Black Magic," *Interior Design* 51, no. 2 (Feb. 1980): 251; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

of rich materials in an array of different colors) to coexist without becoming visually overwhelming in the space.

Figure 4.5. Brueton Showroom [1980] Stanley Jay Friedman, interior design; New York City in Anonymous, "Black Magic," *Interior Design* 51, no. 2 (Feb. 1980): 251; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

In their 1988 Chicago showroom for Bernhardt, Vanderbyl Design added new materials to offset the Black Out space they created. (**Figures 4.6 & 4.7**) In creating an all black space, Vanderbyl aimed to achieve two things: first, they wanted to create a more theatrical image for this particular showroom. Second, they wanted to create a neutral background, against which the company's "rather eclectic" line of seating and casegoods could be displayed. To further enhance the drama of the showroom, tall obelisks finished with a veneer of the exotic hardwood anigre punctuated the space.

The obelisks, arranged in an allée that drew the eye to the company's logo on the rear wall, emphasized the woodworking and finishing capabilities of the manufacturer.[21] Both the pieces of furniture and the wooden obelisks stood out in stark relief against the black background. The effect was exaggerated by the use of Hotspots[22] to spotlight the furniture in the darkened showroom. In this instance, Black Out set the dramatic mood, while the visually dominating obelisks provided a fantastical element.

Figure 4.6. Bernhardt Showroom [1988] Vanderbyl Design; Chicago, IL in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 190; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman.

[21] Bernhardt Showroom [1988] Vanderbyl Design; Chicago, IL in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 188-191; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman.

[22] The Intype Hotspot is an isolated pool of bright downlight that operates in contrast to its surroundings. Hotspot encourages a pause in movement and collection around or within it. It is achieved with a single spot light or a single fixture on a light track. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Figure 4.7. Bernhardt Showroom [1988] Vanderbyl Design; Chicago, IL in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 191; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman.

The 1990 decade saw a sharp decline in the number of Black Out showrooms. Whether designers simply got bored of the Intype, or if the trade magazines decided they'd published more than enough black spaces is unknown. However, the decline of Black Out showrooms is almost certainly a reaction to the popularity the Intype enjoyed during the 1970 and 1980 decades. When Black Out did surface in showrooms, it did so in a manner that hadn't been seen before. The sole use of Black Out all but disappeared in favor of pairing Black Out with White Box or White Out. The 1990 Manhattan showroom for bathroom fixture manufacturer American Standard was one of the first to introduce the pairing of Black Out and White Box. (**Figure 4.8**) In

designing the large 5000-square foot space, Tigerman McCurry Architects were asked to display the “entire 145-strong product array from six major diverse buying groups” and “to do so in a manner appealing to diverse buying groups”.[23] Their solution divided the space into a series of twenty-four smaller ten-foot by ten-foot “exhibit cubes”, each one alternating between Black Out and White Box. In the White Box spaces, the product was displayed in traditional bathroom vignettes, while in the Black Out cubes the product was mounted to the wall. In this installation, the use of black signaled the untraditional and unusual.

Figure 4.8. American Standard [1990] Tigerman McCurry Architects; New York City in Monica Geran, “American Standard,” *Interior Design* 61, no. 12 (Sep. 1990): 240; PhotoCrd: Timothy Hursley.

[23] American Standard [1990] Tigerman McCurry Architects; New York City in Monica Geran, “American Standard,” *Interior Design* 61, no. 12 (Sep. 1990): 240; PhotoCrd: Timothy Hursley.

After a dearth of Black Out showrooms in the 1990 decade, designers slowly began to utilize the Intype once more. For the 2000 Paris World Car show, German architects Kauffman Theilig & Partner created a Black Out showroom for the famous automobile manufacturer Mercedes Benz. (**Figure 4.9**) The display of cars was centered on a large Plinth in the middle of the showroom, with spotlights highlighting the automobiles against the dark background. The main focus of the showroom, however, was the large spiraling ramp surrounded by the sculpted metal shell near the middle of the Plinth. On it, silver colored versions of the newest models were placed.[24] The drama of the display ensured that all visitors noticed these newest models before the other, less prominently displayed cars, which were shown in colors other than silver. In this installation, the use of black neutralized the other architectural elements in the space, making the spiral ramp stand out as much as possible. The creation of such a neutral background also ensured that the more chaotic cage element of the ramp display did not visually overwhelm the space. Instead, just enough focus was created, so that visitors would be drawn to the exhibit of new automobiles.

Figure 4.9. Mondial De L'Automobile (Mercedes Benz) [2000] Kauffmann Theilig & Partner, architect; Paris, France in Antonello Boschi, *Showroom* (Milan: Frederico Motta Editore SpA, 2001): 212 & 213; PhotoCrd: Andreas Keller.

[24] Mondial De L'Automobile (Mercedes Benz) [2000] Kauffmann Theilig & Partner, architect; Paris, France in Antonello Boschi, *Showroom* (Milan: Frederico Motta Editore SpA, 2001): 210-217; PhotoCrd: Andreas Keller.

The SoHo showroom of Italian kitchen and bath manufacturer Boffi revisited the idea explored in the 1990 American Standard showroom— namely the strategy of pairing a Black Out space with another color-based Intype. In this case, the Black White[25] Intype was used. (**Figures 4.10 & 4.11**) The showroom, originally designed in 2000 by Piero Lissoni, was divided into two levels. As of a site visit in March 2011, the ground-floor level was a Black Out space, with all the walls, ceiling, floor and some millwork painted the same shade of matte black. A few products such a refrigerator units, shelves and chairs were displayed in white so that they stood out against the darkness. On the lower level of the showroom, however, the use of black was not so complete. Though the ceiling and structural columns had been painted the same shade of black as the floor above, the walls were a pale concrete and the floor was painted bright white, lightening the space. Here too, were a wider array of white colored products— bathroom fixtures mostly, contrasting with the kitchen-themed upper floor.[26] Upstairs, the dark shade was used to emphasize the minimalist and streamlined design of the wares, as they blended seamlessly into the space. Downstairs however, that same strategy wouldn't have worked. Most of the items on display were only available in white or a lighter color, and were composed of more fluid, organic shapes. In this particular area, the white played the same role the black did on the upper floor: it emphasized the simplicity of the objects on display.

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[25] The Black White Intype describes an interior space that is limited to a black white palette for the floor, wall, ceiling planes and for furnishings. Rachel Goldfarb, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Practices of Contemporary Resort and Spa Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2008), 45-51.

[26] Boffi Showroom [2000] Piero Lissoni, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 25 Mar. 2011; PhotoCrd: Miho Aikawa.

Figure 4.10 & Figure 4.11. Boffi Showroom [2000] Piero Lissoni, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 25 Mar. 2011; PhotoCrd: Miho Aikawa.

In 2010, the Minotti showroom interpreted its Black Out space similarly to the American Standard showroom in 1990. In this case, the black Minotti showroom was paired with the white DDC Domus Design Collection to which it was connected. (**Figure 4.12**) Although the two showrooms shared physical space and had the same owner, they were designed by different people. Rodolfo Dordoni, a Minotti furnishings designer, made the decision to make the Minotti showroom black. In this case, Black Out was chosen to create a "distinct identity" from the DDC showroom next door. "We've been calling them yin and yang," explained DDC partner Babak Hakakian.[27] Because of this the moods of the two showrooms differed greatly. While the DDC showroom was open, airy and almost museum-like in aesthetic, the black Minotti showroom was more mysteriously striking and kinetic. The use of high-gloss black paint in the space caught slivers of movement from patrons, reflecting them like a dark mirror. The effect was a showroom that felt bolder and more theatrical than its more traditional next-door neighbor.

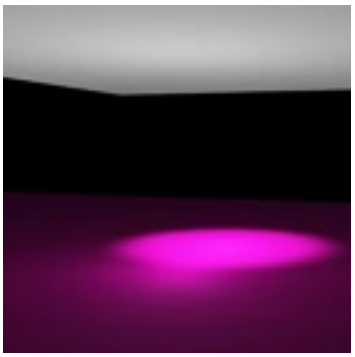
Although Black Out showrooms seem to be making a comeback, it is unlikely that they will ever regain the popularity they had in during the 1980 decade. It will also be interesting to note whether the trend of pairing all-black spaces with White Out or White Box spaces continues, or if they return to the purer incarnations of the Intype as in the 1970 and 1980 decades. It is likely, however that Black Out will remain a staple Intype among those who design showrooms.

[27] Minotti Showroom [2010] Dordoni Architetti, architect, New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 88; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Figure 4.12. Minotti Showroom [2010] Dordoni Architetti, architect, New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 88; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Black Out in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1970** Knoll International [1975] Robin Jacobsen, interior design; Philadelphia, PA in Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 104; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce; / Brintons Carpet [1976] Marcel Bretos, interior design; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Brintons," *Interior Design* 47, no. 4 (Apr. 1976): 151; PhotoCrd: Leland Lee; / **1980** Brueton Showroom [1980] Stanley Jay Friedman, interior design; New York City in Anonymous, "Black Magic," *Interior Design* 51, no. 2 (Feb. 1980): 251; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige; / Bernhardt Showroom [1988] Vanderbyl Design; Chicago, IL in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 190, 191; PhotoCrd: Elliott Kaufman; / **1990** American Standard [1990] Tigerman McCurry Architects; New York City in Monica Geran, "American Standard," *Interior Design* 61, no. 12 (Sep. 1990): 240; PhotoCrd: Timothy Hursley; / **2000** Mondial De L'Automobile (Mercedes Benz) [2000] Kauffmann Theilig & Partner, architect; Paris, France in

Antonello Boschi, *Showroom* (Milan: Frederico Motta Editore SpA, 2001): 212 & 213; PhotoCrd: Andreas Keller; Boffi Showroom [2000] Piero Lissoni, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 25 Mar. 2011; PhotoCrd: Gianluca Fellini; / **2010** Minotti Showroom [2010] Dordoni Architetti, architect, New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Vision," *Interior Design* 81, no. 11 (Sep. 2010): 88; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.



Chapter 5

Hotspot

Definition

Hotspot is an isolated pool of bright downlight that operates in contrast to its surroundings. Hotspot encourages a pause in movement and collection around or within it. It is achieved with a single spot light or a single fixture on a light track.

Application Definition

In furniture, furnishings and automobile showrooms Hotspot appears in multiples as a spatial, lighting and display strategy. Hotspot is usually used in lieu of any other display unit or mechanism, and is frequently implemented in large, open plan showrooms that have little or no spatial partitioning of the interior.

Description

In showrooms, Hotspot creates three spatial, lighting, and display effects. The first is a macro effect in which multiple pools of light organize space by creating several foci of displayed merchandise. This effect pulls together diverse elements and facilitates seeing the whole spatial scheme. In the second effect, the emphasis is on multiple objects in space. Multiple objects stand out in contrast to their surroundings. This effect separates important objects, the merchandise, from the unimportant. The third is a micro effect in which Hotspot isolates an individual object as a zone of light that implies a Vitrine,[1] suggesting that the object contained within is of great worth, as if it were an art object.

[1] The Intype Vitrine describes a glass showcase for the display of significant or ordinary objects. Kristin Malyak, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Retail Practices in Contemporary Interior Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2011), 232-295.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Hotspot in the showroom practice type was developed from site visits to the Boston Design Center and various New York City showrooms in March 2011, and car showrooms in Munich and Stuttgart in may 2011, as well as from published trade sources, including *Interior Design*, *Architectural Record*, and *Interiors* magazine.

Hotspot can be used instead of the display practices Plinth[2] or Vitrine to draw attention to and elevate the status of products on display. It can also be used instead of interior partitions as a means of separating different vignettes from one another. In some installations, the pools of light are more accurately described as an expression of Follow Me[3], directing the flow of circulation around the showroom floor.[4] In these instances, products may still be highlighted, but these will be incidental to the circulation path defined by the pools of light.[5] (**Figures 5.1, 5.2 & 5.3**)

Effect

The precursor to the Hotspot archetype is the campfire, the most basic embodiment of artificial light. It was created out of a necessity to "illuminate our world after dark,"[6] both

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[2] The Intype Plinth describes a platform (usually one step) that elevates an object slightly off the floor. It will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter of this thesis.

[3] The Intype Follow Me describes sequenced pools of light on the floor that are in contrast with the surrounding space, defining a circulation path. Joanne Kwan, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Artificial Lighting Practices in Contemporary Interior Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2009), 52-66.

[4] Ward Bennett Showroom [1959] Charles F. Murray, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 10 (Oct. 1959): 219; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Haworth Showroom [1986] Wyatt Stapper Architects, architect; Seattle, WA in Monica Geran, "Haworth, Seattle," *Interior Design* 57, no. 7 (Jul. 1986): 230-33; PhotoCrd: Robert Pisano.

[5] United Chair Showroom [1993] Tom Gass, architect; Washington, D.C. in Monica Geran, "Tom Gass," *Interior Design* 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 142-45; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

[6] Mark Major, Jonathan Speirs, and Anthon Tischhauser, *Made of Light: The Art of Light and Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2004), 13.

Figure 5.1. Samuel Winton Showroom [1959] Charles F. Murray, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 10 (Oct. 1959): 219; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Figure 5.2. Haworth Showroom [1986] Wyatt Stapper Architects, architect; Seattle, WA in Monica Geran, "Haworth, Seattle," *Interior Design* 57, no. 7 (Jul. 1986): 231; PhotoCrd: Robert Pisano.

Figure 5.3. United Chair Showroom [1993] Tom Gass, architect; Washington, D.C. in Monica Geran, "Tom Gass," *Interior Design* 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 142; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

to continue working and also to be able to see any hidden dangers in the nighttime void. The single source of light that stands out from the darkness has strong cultural associations for all humans. It is historically not only a source of light, but also of warmth, "security, power and ritual."[7]

Humans are instinctively attracted to light. It is an evolutionary instinct stemming from a time when sunlight or fire meant warmth and safety above all else. Being attracted to a point of light in the darkness meant that primitive humans could find a clearing in a dark forest, or a campfire in the dark. The latter often meant safety and security, as a campfire could also imply food and other people to help fight off any nighttime predators. This primal attraction to light is so powerful that, as Marietta S. Millet explains, light alone is often enough to "beckon us down a path, through the woods

[7] Major, *Made of Light*, 18.

to open fields, to the end of a tunnel,"[8] although we have no idea what might lie there. Our primal instincts urge us on because of an innate belief that light is better than what hides in the dark. The contrast of light and dark implies an inside and an outside — a zone of safety and a zone of danger.

As humans evolved, light began to be used in conjunction with architecture. At first, there was no real strategy involved; in most cultures, the earliest buildings were created solely as a means of shelter. Because most people spent their time outdoors during daylight hours, there was no real need to light interior spaces. Any openings in the envelope of the structure were made primarily for access or ventilation, rather than for the penetration of daylight— not to mention the fact that most openings would also have the unwanted side effect of letting in the weather.[9]

The earliest manipulations of lighting within a structure often occurred in religious or sacred spaces. Ancient cultures "employed celestial bodies as a source for layout and design," and the atmosphere created by the light was meant to be symbolic of their religious or cultural values.[10] Although these effects were largely created with natural daylight, they were preserved when artificial lighting became the dominant method for lighting interior architecture.

In terms of artificial lighting strategy, Hotspot is the embodiment of what Richard Kelly defines as "focal glow," "the campfire of all time," and the "follow spot on the

[8] Marietta S. Millet, *Light Revealing Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996), 118.

[9] Major, Speirs and Tischhauser, *Made of Light*, 25.

[10] Major, Speirs and Tischhauser, *Made of Light*, 25.

modern stage." It "draws attention, pulls together diverse parts, sells merchandise, separates the important from the unimportant, helps people see." Focal glow plays upon humans' intrinsic attraction to light to attract the eye to move from one area to another. If multiple foci occur, then the lighting composition becomes more complex as a pattern of light and dark draws the eye from one area to another. Too many areas of focal glow, however, can become ambient luminescence — or a graded wash of light, which emphasizes nothing.[11] Hotspot also contributes to the overall lighting effect. Because the source of the light pool necessarily comes from above eye-level, a formal atmosphere is created. However, since the pools of light occur on the ground plane, the light pools fall below eye-level, creating a "feeling of individual importance."[12]

As a display strategy, Hotspot draws attention to the product or products placed within it. By bathing the object in a pool of light, an object stands out from its comparatively darker surroundings. This highlight effect bestows importance upon the object, subtly indicating to the viewer that the object is worthy of attention. Because the object is effectively "inside" a pool of light, the Hotspot also implies a separate volume of space reminiscent of a Vitrine. The more clearly defined the edge of the Hotspot is, the stronger the boundary is implied. Objects within sharp-edged Hotspots seem more important and intangible than those within washes of light. This boundary is only implied, however, and patrons are in fact free to touch and interact with the object.

Hotspot also visually breaks up large, open spaces. Because "light can define distinctly

[11] Richard Kelly, "Lighting as an Integral Part of Architecture," *College Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (Autumn, 1952): 24-30.
[12] Kelly, "Lighting as an Integral Part," 24-30.

different places within a large area,"[13] the pools of light created by Hotspots are perceived as distinct, but separate areas. This allows large, open plan showrooms to use only light as a means of partitioning the space, enabling visitors to quickly see all merchandise on display. The showroom is perceived as having many, smaller areas within it, but the entire space remains as visually accessible as possible.

Hotspot adds a sense of drama to displays, creating an atmosphere that is otherwise lacking in showrooms lit only with ambient light. In *Exhibition Techniques*, James H. Carmel states that "A dark room with individually lighted objects enhances the dramatic appeal"[14] of an exhibit. The dramatic atmosphere may be a vestige of our primal attraction to light, or it may be a more recent callback to the limelight spots used to highlight performers on stage. Either way, the tension created by the contrast of light and dark within the space is often enough to subtly suggest to patrons that the merchandise is important and exciting.

The patterns created by Hotspots on the showroom floor can be separated into two different spatial organization categories. In its pure form, Hotspot creates a single pool of light on the showroom floor. Placed against the contrasting visual field of the rest of the showroom, this disc of light acts as a single point in space and is therefore "static, centralized, and directionless." If the Hotspot occurs in the center of the showroom, it acts as a point of stability, "dominating its field." Circulation paths and secondary displays are organized around it, making it the strongest focal point in the entire space.

[13] Millet, *Light Revealing*, 110.

[14] James H. Carmel, *Exhibition Techniques, Travelling and Temporary* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962), 119.

If the single pool of light is noticeably off-center, “its field becomes aggressive and begins to compete for visual supremacy,”[15] because tension is created between the point of light and the comparatively darker showroom floor. This particular manifestation of Hotspot is not popular in the showroom practice type because it draws attention to only one object or display of objects on the showroom floor.

The most popular form of Hotspot creates multiple pools of light, which stand out against the rest of the showroom. These Hotspots are most commonly found in a clustered organization, which according to architect Francis D.K. Ching, “relies on physical proximity to relate its spaces to one another.” This means that the repetitive, cell-like spaces can “accept within [their] composition spaces that are dissimilar in size, form, and function.” This strategy allows maximum flexibility for showroom displays because the pools of light and the objects contained within them can vary in size, shape and color and yet still seem related to the other Hotspots around the showroom. It also allows for products to be easily moved or rearranged, as the clustered organization doesn’t adhere to any rigid geometrical ordering principles and thus “can accept growth and change readily” without affecting the character of the showroom. The clustered organization also solves the problem of hierarchy by creating a single point Hotspot strategy. By having multiple Hotspots of differing sizes scattered around the showroom floor, “there is no inherent place of importance”[16] within the pattern of displays. Instead, any intended hierarchy within the pattern of Hotspots must be intentionally made through size, form, or placement within the showroom.

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[15] Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space & Order,* 2nd Ed, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996), 4-5.
[16] Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space & Order,* 214.

Chronological Sequence

Although many contemporary showrooms emulate the aesthetics and sensibilities of empty, reverent White Box museum and gallery spaces, in the 1950 decade the model was decidedly residential. Architect James C. Morse designed the 1959 Tomlinson Showroom in High Point, North Carolina (**Figure 5.4**) to display a single collection of the furniture manufacturer—the new Pavane line. Morse set the collection in a residential installation to demonstrate how the various pieces could be arranged into various groupings that felt integrated "but without the usual 'one manufacturer' look."[17] The only non-residential variant was lighting. Although various table lamps added to the showroom's overall homelike quality, Hotspots distinguished various pieces of the collection, making it clear that these pieces were on display.

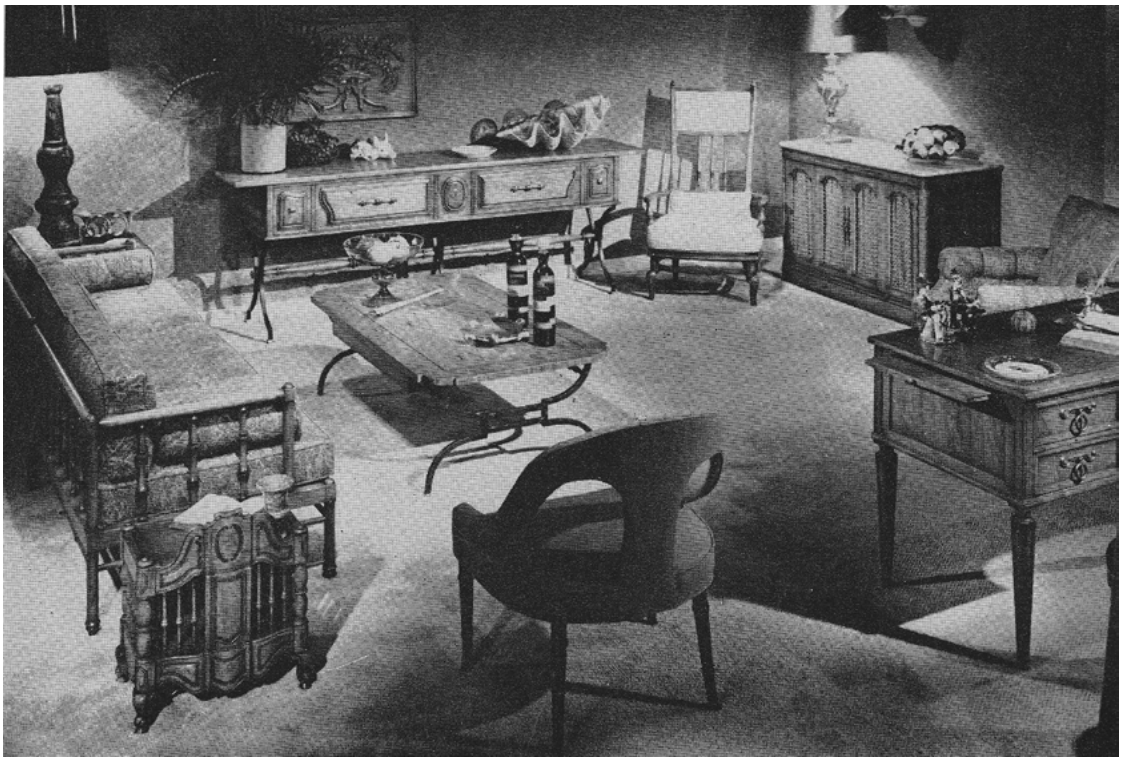

Figure 5.4. Tomlinson Showroom [1959] James C. Morse, architect; High Point, NC in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 10 (Oct. 1959): 217; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[17] Tomlinson Showroom [1959] James C. Morse, architect; High Point, NC in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 10 (Oct. 1959): 217; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

By the 1960 decade, showrooms had started to adopt the museum-like characteristics that contemporary showrooms embody today. Designed in 1965 by Brickel-Eppinger Inc., the Ward Bennett showroom was far different than the Tomlinson showroom of six years earlier. (**Figure 5.5**) For one thing, the showroom had that empty openness that is so reminiscent of gallery spaces; furniture pieces floated free in space. Partitions within the showroom were not full height, and the ceiling was painted black to hide exposed pipes and structural beams. The furniture was not arranged in homey vignettes, but rather in displays, which were housed in niches. Additionally, a "changing exhibit of art" was displayed among the furniture, blurring the line between showroom and gallery. To add further drama to the space, "Edison Price spots with special lens and early theatrical fixtures,"[18] were used to light each of the displays in the space. The effect was that each display was isolated not only in its own niche, but also within its own Hotspot, reverently highlighting it within the darkened showroom.

Figure 5.5. Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, Inc., architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 129; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar.

[18] Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, Inc., architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 128-29; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar.

The 1966 Jack Larsen showroom took a similar approach. (**Figure 5.6**) Jointly designed by Larsen and Charles Forberg, the showroom was intended to be original and slightly dramatic. To achieve this effect, structural fabric shaped into "kite-shaped panels" was stretched across the ceiling to hide pipes while "creating an intriguing pattern." In between the panels, a variety of spotlights "highlight[ed] displays of fabrics and arts and crafts." Indeed, the spotlights created a wall-wash effect on textiles hung on the vertical surfaces, as well as pools of light around furniture and objects arranged on the showroom floor. The space itself was windowless; artificial lighting produced the only light in the showroom. The effect was meant to be "soft and pleasing to the eye" by creating a "somewhat romantic mood." It remained, however, "eminently practical"[19] as the Hotspots succeeded in drawing attention to the merchandise for sale.

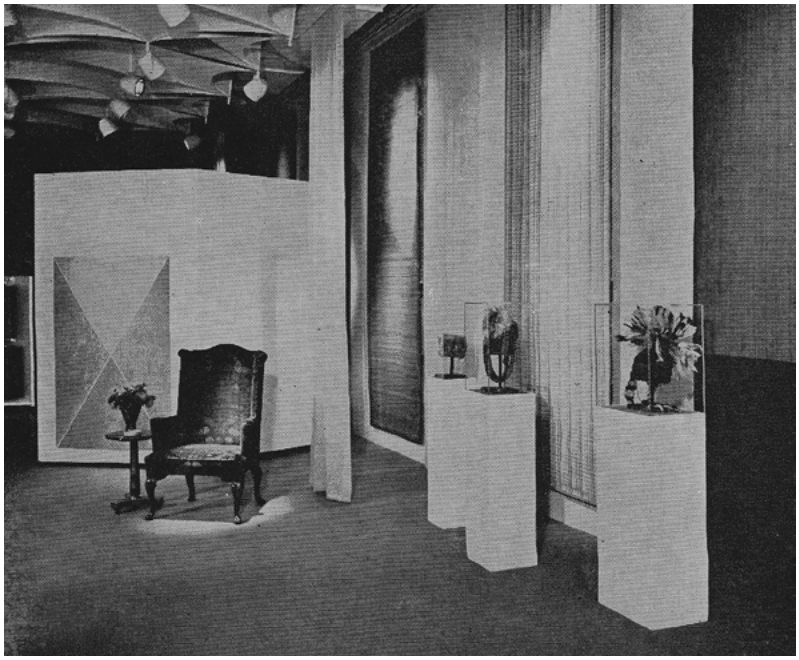

Figure 5.6. Jack Larsen Showroom [1966] Charles Forberg, architect; Jack Lenor Larsen, designer; New York City in Anonymous, "High, Wide and Handsome," *Interior Design* 37, no. 9 (Sep. 1966): 190; PhotoCrd: James Vincent.

[19] Jack Larsen Showroom [1966] Charles Forberg, architect; Jack Larsen, designer; New York City in Anonymous, "High, Wide and Handsome," *Interior Design* 37, no. 9 (Sep. 1966): 188-91; PhotoCrd: James Vincent.

By the 1970 decade, Hotspot had become a common design strategy in the showroom repertoire; it varied little in execution. The 1976 Knoll showroom at the Pacific Design Center provides a quintessential example of how Hotspot is generally implemented in showrooms. (**Figures 5.7 & 5.8**) The showroom space itself was expansive, windowless and wide-open. Designer Cini Boeri preserved these qualities by foregoing vertical partitions to divide the space. Instead, she designed a terraced floor with each level carpeted in "variations of a single color"— pink, in this case. To give some presence to the furniture groupings in the partition-less space, pieces were spotlighted, so that each little display was anchored in a pool of light. The showroom was subtle and simple— appropriate, since Boeri was instructed to "build a background" rather than a "masterpiece."[20] Fittingly, the showroom acted as no more than a stage for the various furniture pieces on display. Although the terraced floor broke the space into smaller, more human-scaled areas, the Hotspots drew attention to the merchandise, effectively making the pieces the focal points of the space.


Figure 5.7. & Figure 5.8. Knoll Showroom [1976] Cini Boeri, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Knoll in the Pacific Design Center," *Interior Design* 47, no. 7 (Jul. 1976): 79; PhotoCrd: Darwin Davidson.

[20] Knoll Showroom [1976] Cini Boeri, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Knoll in the Pacific Design Center," *Interior Design* 47, no. 7 (Jul. 1976): 78-79; PhotoCrd: Darwin Davidson.

The 1980 Knoll Showroom by Robert Venturi is a slightly more florid take on its 1976 cousin. (**Figure 5.9**) It is a product of the two schools of thought that were polarizing showroom design at the time: “One treats the space as a stage where dramatic exhibits often rival products for focus of attention. The other favors a pristine background where little upstages the products for sale.” More often than not, Hotspot is used in the latter school of thought as a way of drawing attention to the merchandise in the least invasive manner possible. Venturi combined both approaches in the Knoll space. On the side of outlandish displays, he created a dramatic “waterfall of fabrics, mostly velvets in deep tones” that spanned the void from the first floor to the second floor. He also created a colorful “*trompe l’oeil* fabric display wall” that mimicked a real one further back in the showroom. On the side of simplicity, the showroom itself was devoid of partitions, containing only fat structural columns and furniture. The color, too, was subdued; a light beige adorned the walls, while taupe carpeting subtly delineated the floor plane. Furniture was arranged into small groupings suggesting how one might use the pieces. Hotspots drew attention to the groupings, creating “organized clutter.” The aim of the space was to encourage visitors to “sit in, walk around and move individual pieces without fear of disturbing a structured display.”[21] However, the pools of light also suggested the display zones, encouraging visitors to put the pieces back when they were done.

[21] Knoll Showroom [1980] Robert Venturi, architect; New York City in E.C., “Complexity and Contradiction,” *Interior Design* 51, no. 3 (Mar. 1980): 226-30; PhotoCrd: Tom Crane.

Figure 5.9. Knoll Showroom [1980] Robert Venturi, architect; New York City in E.C., "Complexity and Contradiction," *Interior Design* 51, no. 3 (Mar. 1980): 228; PhotoCrd: Tom Crane.

By the late 1980 decade, designers had become more creative with their implementation of Hotspot. While previous showrooms had employed the Intype in almost identical ways, showroom designers of the late 1980s and early 1990s did not hesitate in experimenting with the effects of Hotspot's 'focal glow'. The 1987 showroom for the Metropolitan Furniture Corporation used Hotspot in conjunction with the space's architectural features. (**Figure 5.10**) Designer Mark Kapka created a colonnade in the entry[22] of structural columns that could not be altered. A chair and a spotlight were aligned with each column to produce Marching Order.[23] Hotspots

[22] Metropolitan Furniture Corporation Showroom [1987] Mark Kapka, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Metropolitan Furniture Corp.," *Interior Design* 58, no. 15 (Dec. 1987): 190-93; PhotoCrd: Steven Blutter.

[23] The Intype Marching Order describes a sequence of repeating forms organized consecutively, one after another. It establishes a measured spatial order. Marching Order constitutes a chapter of this thesis, because it is a strategic practice of showroom design.

enhanced the visual rhythm and regulated the speed of movement into the space. As the Hotspots drew attention to the individual chairs on display, the repetitive sequence of the light pools suggested a line, beckoning a visitor down the path.[24] In this instance, Hotspots also constituted the circulation and lighting Intype Follow Me—sequenced pools of light on the floor that are in contrast with the surrounding space, defining a circulation path.

Figure 5.10. Metropolitan Furniture Corporation Showroom [1987] Mark Kapka, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Metropolitan Furniture Corp.," *Interior Design* 58, no. 15 (Dec. 1987): 191; PhotoCrd: Steven Blutter.

The 1989 Lackawanna Leather showroom was similarly creative with the implementation of Hotspot. (**Figure 5.11**) Designers Andrew Belschner and Joseph Vincent wanted the showroom to "put on a theatrical performance," dramatizing the "many uses of leather" and encouraging the visitors to touch the product. In the largest

[24] Joanne Pui Yuk Kwan, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Artificial Lighting Practices in Contemporary Interior Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2010), 52-66.

area in the showroom, the display of leather was reminiscent of a group of ballet dancers. Strips of leather different colored leather were cut to three lengths and hung from metal rods. The rods were attached to individual motors that let the fabric “sway and swirl” to “other-worldly electronic music” as if “stirred by a gentle breeze.” Over each piece of fabric was a small spotlight, highlighting the colorful strips in their own individual Hotspots. On the floor, galvanized metal plates sparkled as the moving fabric interacted with the spotlights.[25] Interestingly, the close proximity of the spotlights to one another also gave the effect of one, giant Hotspot on the showroom floor, exaggerating the effect of “focal glow”.

Figure 5.11. Lackawanna Leather Showroom [1989] Andrew Belschner & Joseph Vincent, architects; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, “Lackawanna Leather,” *Interior Design* 60, no. 16 (Dec. 1989): 133; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

[25] Lackawanna Leather Showroom [1989] Andrew Belschner & Joseph Vincent, architects; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, “Lackawanna Leather,” *Interior Design* 60, no. 16 (Dec. 1989): 132-35; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

Previous showroom installations adopted Hotspot as a product-emphasizing technique within a spacious, open-plan showroom, but in the Los Angeles showroom of Bernhardt (1990), such an open space-plan was not an option. (**Figures 5.12 & 5.13**) Neither was it an option to arrange the furniture into the little vignettes typical of showrooms, because the space was long and narrow, measuring only 71-feet 4-inches deep and 19-feet 6 inches wide. Instead, Vanderbyl Design split the long corridor-like space into a "series of anterooms" that ran the length of the space.[26] Pieces of furniture were casually arranged in each of these anterooms, although not close enough to each other to constitute a vignette. Spotlights were then focused on each piece of furniture. The effect drew attention to the pieces, which also made their arrangement seem less haphazard. The practice of Hotspot worked to ground the displays, making them seem purposeful within the small space.

Figure 5.12 & Figure 5.13. Bernhardt Showroom [1990] Vanderbyl, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt, Los Angeles," *Interior Design* 61, no. 2 (Feb. 1990): 230, 231; PhotoCrd: Sharon Risedorph.

[26] Bernhardt Showroom [1990] Vanderbyl Design, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt, Los Angeles," *Interior Design* 61, no. 2 (Feb. 1990): 230-33; PhotoCrd: Sharon Risedorph.

Designer Tom Gass reinterpreted Hotspot by abstracting it for the United Chair showroom (1991) in Chicago. (**Figure 5.14**) Gass intended to draw visitors inside with a black and white carpet on the main showroom floor. Once inside the entrance, a carpet inset reminiscent of a zebra crossing was designed to draw visitors to the other end of the showroom. The main focus of the showroom, however, was a chair display on the left of the patrons as they moved through the space. Six tidy groupings, composed of four red chairs arranged about a small, round table, created the main exhibit of chairs. Above each chair and table was a spotlight; under each chair, the black carpet was punctuated with a 3-foot diameter circular insert of a cream-colored carpet.[27] The Hotspot effect emphasized the chairs, creating an obvious lighter circle where the effect might have been diluted in the black carpeting. The cream colored circles, created by Hotspot, provided a point of focus, drawing attention to the chairs through their contrast to the surrounding environment. At the same time, Hotspot acted as an organizational mechanism, discouraging patrons from moving the chairs from their designated cells.

By the 2000 decade, the philosophical argument between designers who thought showrooms should consist of dramatic exhibits and those who believed in simple, clean backgrounds had largely extinguished, as designers and architects on the whole began to prefer cleaner, simpler design solutions. The Wilson Sporting Goods showroom (2007) by Gensler resembled a museum gallery; there was nothing at all to

[27] United Chair Showroom [1991] Tom Gass, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "United Chair," *Interior Design* 62, no. 14 (Oct. 1991): 172-75; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

Figure 5.14. United Chair Showroom [1991] Tom Gass, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "United Chair," *Interior Design* 62, no. 14 (Oct. 1991): 175; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

distract one's attention from the objects on display.[28] (**Figure 5.15**) A separate sports item was displayed on a Plinth and lit with a Hotspot, as if denoting an *objet d'art*.[29] Like a gallery setting, this composition encouraged visitors to look at and to circulate around the displays, but not to touch.

Figure 5.15. Wilson Sporting Goods Showroom [2007] Gensler, architect; Chicago, IL in Deborah Wilk, "Best of Year: Showroom," *Interior Design* 78, no. 15 (Dec. 2007): 84; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

The Tesla Motors showroom (2009) in Los Angeles reiterated the showroom-as-gallery concept. (**Figure 5.16**) This design strategy is popular with car showrooms, primarily because the size of an automobile disallows it to be displayed in a vignette. Tesla's gallery of one car with a large space around it was an intentional contrast to typical car showrooms, which crowded cars on the floor. Designer Cass Calder Smith reasoned that the electric car did not "need a lot of stuff around to sell it," so the flagship space

[28] Wilson Sporting Goods Showroom [2007] Gensler, architect; Chicago, IL in Deborah Wilk, "Best of Year: Showroom," *Interior Design* 78, no. 15 (Dec. 2007): 84; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing.

[29] The Intype Plinth is a strategy of showroom design. It describes a platform (usually one step) that elevates an object slightly off the floor. Plinth is discussed in-depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

was kept empty and aesthetically raw with concrete floors, exposed ceiling trusses (Pompidou) and white walls (White Box).[30] Each car was bathed in a Hotspot, neatly highlighting it within the darkened interior. However, in this case, the artificial light had the added side-effect of making the pristine surfaces of the cars sparkle and gleam. The lighting not only evoked reverence from patrons, but also romanticized the car, subtly encouraging visitors to make a purchase.

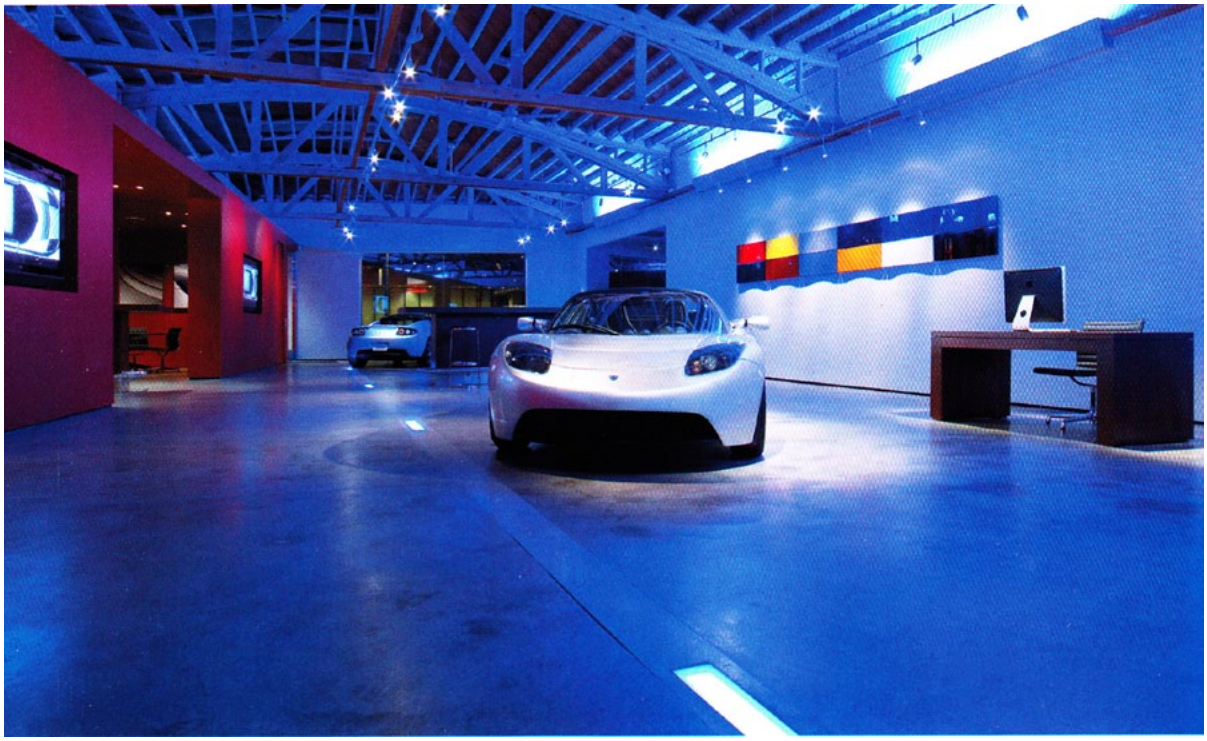

Figure 5.16. Tesla Motors Showroom [2009] Cass Calder Smith, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Hot Rods, Cool Digs," *Interior Design* 80, no. 3 (Oct. 2009): 64; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Although Hotspot is one the oldest showroom interior archetypes, it is also one of the most consistent, because lighting and organizational strategies disallow much room for abstraction or re-interpretation. It shows no sign of abatement as a showroom strategy.

[30] Tesla Motors Showroom [2009] Cass Calder Smith, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Hot Rods, Cool Digs," *Interior Design* 80, no. 3 (Mar. 2009): 63-64, 66; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

In terms of energy conservation, the only variation in Hotspot's future may be the type of lamp used.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Hotspot in the showroom practice type was developed from site visits to the Boston Design Center and various New York City showrooms in March 2011, and car showrooms in Munich and Stuttgart in May 2011, as well as from the following print sources: **1950** Tomlinson Showroom [1959] James C. Morse, architect; High Point, NC in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 10 (Oct. 1959): 217; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1960** Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, Inc., architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 128-129; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar; Jack Larsen Showroom [1966] Charles Forberg & Jack Larsen, architects; New York City in Anonymous, "High, Wide and Handsome," *Interior Design* 37, no. 9 (Sep. 1966): 188-191; PhotoCrd: James Vincent; / **1970** Knoll Showroom [1976] Cini Boeri, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Knoll in the Pacific Design Center," *Interior Design* 47, no. 7 (Jul. 1976): 78-79; PhotoCrd: Darwin Davidson; / **1980** Knoll Showroom [1980] Robert Venturi, architect; New York City in E.C., "Complexity and Contradiction," *Interior Design* 51, no. 3 (Mar. 1980): 226-230; PhotoCrd: Tom Crane; Metropolitan Furniture Corporation Showroom [1987] Mark Kapka, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Metropolitan Furniture Corp.," *Interior Design* 58, no. 12? (Dec. 1987): 190-193; PhotoCrd: Steven Blutter; Lackawanna Leather Showroom [1989] Andrew Belschner & Joseph Vincent, architects; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "Lackawanna Leather," *Interior Design* 60, no. 12? (Dec. 1989): 132-135; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing; / **1990** Bernhardt Showroom [1990] Vanderbyl Design, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Judith Nasatir, "Bernhardt, Los Angeles," *Interior Design* 61, no. 2 (Feb. 1990): 230-233; PhotoCrd: Sharon Risedorph; United Chair Showroom [1991] Tom Gass, architect; Chicago, IL in Monica Geran, "United Chair," *Interior Design* 62, no. 10? (Oct. 1991): 172-175; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing; / **2000** Wilson Sporting Goods Showroom [2007] Gensler, architect; Chicago, IL in Deborah Wilk, "Best of Year: Showroom," *Interior Design* 78, no. 15 (Dec. 2007): 84; PhotoCrd: Hedrich-Blessing; Tesla Motors Showroom [2009] Cass Calder Smith, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Cohen, "Hot Rods, Cool Digs," *Interior Design* 80, no. 3? (Mar. 2009): 63-64, 66; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Chapter 6

Plinth

Definition

A Plinth is a museum and gallery display technique that raises a three-dimensional object slightly off the floor (usually one low step). The device isolates and calls attention to the object on display.

Application Definition

In showrooms a Plinth creates a “museum effect,” calling attention to the object as special or significant. Plinths in the showroom context are arranged so that clientele can circulate around an object to view and analyze it from all angles.

Description

Most often in showrooms, the Plinth takes a rectangular shape, but some examples can be cylindrical or irregular in form. Plinths are commonly painted white or another neutral color, so as not to upstage the products they are displaying. Plinths made out of a different material than the rest of the space can add visual interest to an installation. In some showrooms, the Plinth takes on the same materiality of the floor, creating the illusion of one continuous surface that rises and sinks.

Architecturally, a plinth is a base or pedestal upon which a column, statue, monument, or structure rests. On the smaller end of the scale, a plinth acts as a display platform for an object, while on a larger scale it acts as a mechanism to ground a building within a landscape. Architect and art critic Gottfried Semper argued in an essay, “The Four Elements of Architecture,” that this larger form of plinth, along with the hearth, the wall

and the roof, was one of the four elements that composed all of architectural theory.[1]

In classical architecture, a plinth refers to the lowest square member of the base of a column.[2] It is likely that the contemporary display Plinth evolved from this usage, but a more direct ancestor can be found in the Plinths traditionally used to display sculpture, as in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. (**Figure 6.1**) Such display bases have been in use since at least the 15th century, and have a variety of different terms. Generally, the term *socle* describes a base much smaller than the object it supports; *pedestal* is a vertical support; and *plinth* is a horizontal one. The evolution of this particular form of Plinth has roots in the process used to create sculpture. As sculptors created scale models in clay, wax or plaster, their work was often anchored to a wooden board that served as a working base, allowing the artist to more easily handle the delicate models. Although this board was often removed when the models were made of clay or wax, it often became an integral feature of plaster models because of the armature affixed to it. In some cases, this support board may have been retained in the final design, creating an integrated Plinth on which the sculpture could rest. However, sculptures with integrated Plinths of this kind were rare up until the early 20th century, when the "direct carving" method came into popular use with artists. This method encouraged the sculptor to carve the finished piece without the use of scale models, instead working from memory or direct observation. In this instance, the Plinth was kept as a way of indicating the original block from which the piece had been sculpted.[3]

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[1] Gottfried Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture," in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 74-129.

[2] Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, 19th Ed., ed. John Musgrove (London: Butterworths, 1987), 1538.

[3] Nicholas Penny, "The Evolution of the Plinth, Pedestal, and Socle," in *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nicholas Penny and Eike D. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 461-62.

Figure 6.1. Musée d'Orsay [1986] ACT Architecture, architects; Paris, France, in Emma Barker, ed., *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 58; PhotoCrd: R.M.N. / Michèle Bellot.

Effect

In showrooms, the use of Plinths adds to the "museum effect"—imposing an authority on the viewer, by controlling how an object is seen.[4] The simplest way Plinths contribute to the museum effect is by displaying objects. As Emma Barker explained in *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, "the condition of being on display is fundamental to the construction of the category 'art' in the modern western world."[5] Objects are often placed on Plinths singly, rather than in groups. This isolation removes the object from any sort of external context and suggests that the object is being displayed for "aesthetic contemplation."

Functionally, Plinths contribute to the museum effect by elevating objects off the floor, allowing people to see them more easily, sometimes at eye-level. As exhibition designer James H. Carmel explains, if people gather around a display such that a deep enough crowd is created, the object "should not be placed lower than shoulder height."[6] This elevation of the object also varies the landscape of the floor, avoiding "the tyranny of the rectangular room,"[7] that occurs when exhibition spaces create monotonous arrangements of objects using only the four walls of a space.

Spatially, Plinth is an elevation of a portion of the base plane or floor; it defines an area within a larger spatial context. The boundaries of a Plinth's space are defined by the

[4] Valerie Casey, "The Museum Effect: Gazing from Object to Performance in the Contemporary Cultural-History Museum," (Paper presented at the annual International Cultural Heritage Meeting, Paris, France, September 8-12, 2003), 2.

[5] Emma Barker, ed., *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 13-15.

[6] James H. Carmel, *Exhibition Techniques, Travelling and Temporary* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962), 29.

[7] Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Function of Museums* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 180-81.

level change that occurs at its edge. If the Plinth is made of the same material as the base plane, then the Plinth will appear to be “very much a part of the surrounding space.” Depending on its height, the Plinth may read as a continuous articulation of the floor, creating the illusion of one coherent surface that rises and sinks. However, if the Plinth is a different color or texture than the base plane, then the spatial field it creates will “become a plateau that is separate and distinct from its surroundings.”[8] This serves to highlight objects on display, because the different materials visually punctuate their locations.

The surface area of the Plinth will influence how it interacts with the space. A Plinth that takes up a relatively large amount of floor space in a room will more likely be perceived as an extension of the base plane. However, a Plinth that takes up a very small amount of floor space will more likely be seen as a type of display pedestal. If there are multiple Plinths of this type within one space, this effect is exaggerated. Of course, the size of the Plinth in relation to the object being displayed is also significant. If the surface area of the display surface is comparable in size to the object being displayed, the Plinth tends to read more as a display pedestal for that particular object. However, if the display surface is remarkably larger than is necessary for the object or vignette[9] of objects, it may seem more like another floor plane rather than a display surface.

The height of a Plinth will also affect how it interacts with a space. A low Plinth maintains the visual and spatial continuity of the larger space; people can easily see

[8] Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space and Order* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996), 102-109.

[9] In the showroom context, a vignette describes a display technique in which items are staged in scenes to suggest how customers might use them.

over it, and are not physically hindered from climbing up on to its surface.[10] However, if the Plinth is higher than the average height of a stair riser (seven to nine inches), people may be subconsciously discouraged from attempting to step onto the platform. Taller Plinths may still maintain the visual continuity of the space if the object being displayed does not significantly block the view. Taller Plinths also begin to interrupt the spatial continuity of the space, as their edges—and sometimes the product being displayed—start being perceived as vertical elements that define a space.

All these factors affect how people perceive and interact with Plinths in showroom spaces. Because a Plinth is the traditional base for a Vitrine, its edges often act as an implied barrier around the object being displayed. However, this effect is dependent on the Plinth's height and display area. In general, people are more likely to respect the boundaries of a taller Plinth whose display area is similar in size to that of the object it is displaying. In this instance, the Plinth reads as a base for a fitted display case, and visitors to the showroom are subtly discouraged from interacting with the object even if they are allowed to do so. But if a Plinth is lower (no higher than one step) and the display surface is significantly larger than is warranted for the object on display, showroom patrons may ignore the implied boundaries of the Plinth in order to get a better look at the merchandise. This stems not only from the effect of the differently sized Plinths, but also from the practice type.

The associations of the museum effect keep Plinths from being used exclusively as a design strategy in showrooms. To do so would be detrimental to the business of a

[10] Ching, *Architecture*, 102-109.

company. Showrooms are places where buyers come to examine and try out different products; a room full of objects on Plinths, while attractive, does not provide the visitor with an opportunity to test the merchandise. For this reason, Plinths are most often used in combination with floor-level vignettes. This mixing of strategies allows the product to be elevated as a design piece, while still allowing the patron to interact with it.

Chronological Sequence

Plinth was not a particularly popular display strategy in early showrooms, because it required that a finite amount of floor space be left clear for circulation. Thus, the strategy could only be accommodated in larger showrooms, which were relatively infrequent up until the late 1960s. Furniture manufacturer Herman Miller was one of the few companies to acquire a large showroom early on. (**Figure 6.2**) Their 1959 San Francisco showroom was designed in a colorful 1907-era building. To mediate the stylistic differences between the vibrantly colored building and the contemporary furniture and fabrics on display, the "original structure concepts" and details like "original plaster frieze work" were incorporated into the final design of the space. The color scheme was developed "according to the mood of the existing building," and included purple, red, orange, blue and gold. To distinguish between the furniture groupings, each display emphasized one of the colors. Meanwhile, at the center of the showroom, a Plinth designed to resemble a "fantasy carousel" was the main "stage-like display unit."[11] Unlike the other displays, which were set up as vignettes at floor level,

[11] Herman Miller Showroom [1959] Alexander Girard, architect; San Francisco, CA in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 4 (Apr. 1959): 184-185; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

the carousel-like Plinth elevated the product above the floor, dramatizing the display, and drawing the visitors' eyes to it.

Figure 6.2. Herman Miller Showroom [1959] Alexander Girard, architect; San Francisco, CA in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 4 (Apr. 1959): 185; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

The Thonet showroom (1960) designed by Felix Augenfeld was similarly large. (**Figure 6.3**) The showroom itself was broken up into three distinct areas: a reception area, a central gallery (for the display of current models), and a special display section that functioned as a "small historical museum." The historical models of the Thonet chairs originating from the century between 1830 to 1930 were arranged on two Plinths covered in yellow vinyl against a white background. A Billboard[12] (Intype) consisting of a blowup of "an old Thonet catalog page" marked one end of the small museum space, designed to catch the attention of visitors and to encourage them to walk through the

[12] The Intype Billboard describes a treatment for an entire planar surface as a blank canvas for art, text, graffiti or photography. In some cases Billboard encompasses more than one plane. Jasmin Cho, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Practices of Contemporary Restaurant Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2009), 136-151.

small display area. Here, the Plinths acted as a mechanism for elevating the product, not only literally, but also figuratively. The displays of current furniture pieces were arranged in floor-level vignettes separated by translucent draperies or wood partitions,[13] thus allowing patrons to walk around and interact with all sides of the furniture pieces. This method allowed and encouraged visitors to test out the furniture for themselves. The Plinths in the historical exhibit area, however, were arranged against the wall, meaning that visitors could only experience these pieces from certain pre-defined angles. Additionally, the level change discouraged visitors from attempting to sit in the historical pieces, clearly marking the chairs as objects of display only.

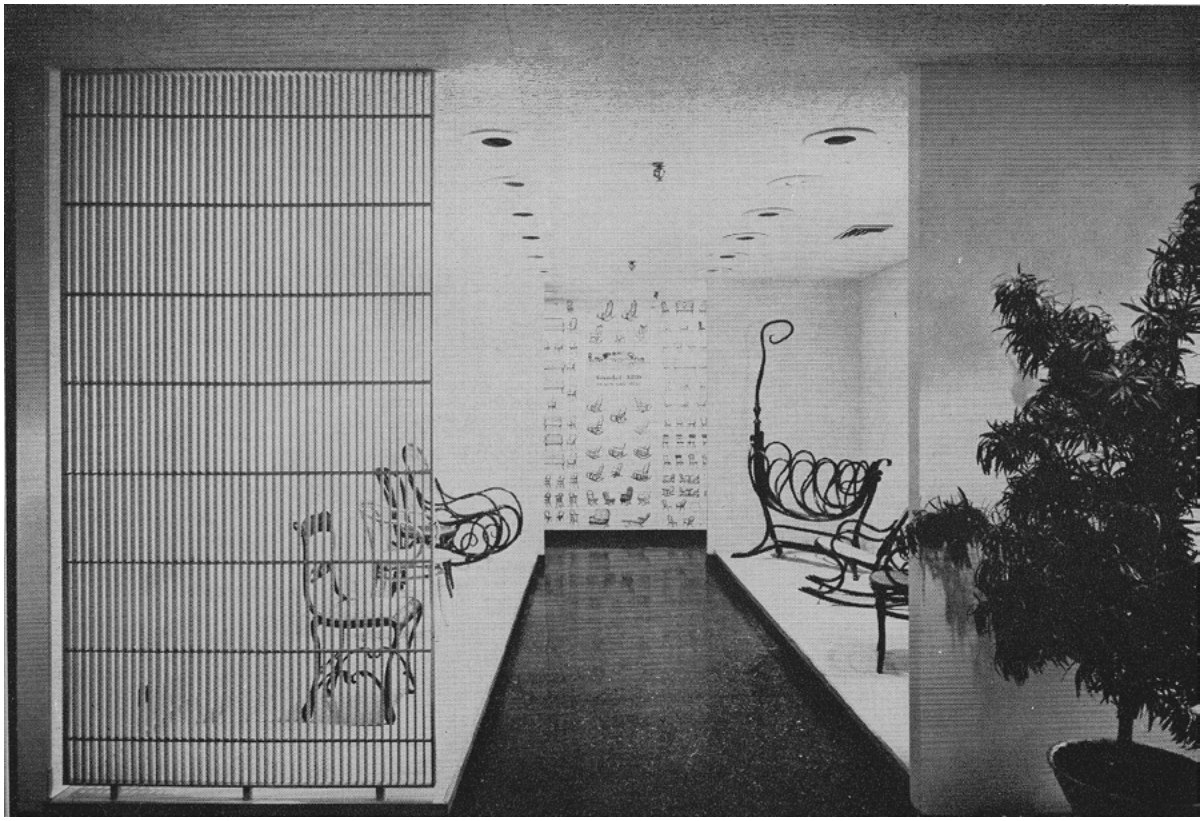

Fig. 6.3. Thonet Showroom [1960] Felix Augenfeld, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 31, no. 2 (Feb. 1960): 52; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[13] Thonet Showroom [1960] Felix Augenfeld, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 31, no. 2 (Feb. 1960): 52; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Architect Warren Platner used similar reasoning in 1968 when he designed the Georg Jensen Showroom in New York City. (**Figures 6.4 & 6.5**) Platner conceived the space as a museum-like White Box[14] to remove all external distractions from the showroom. Select furniture pieces were exhibited on Plinths of different materials "for eye-level viewing." Each exhibit featured the work of a different designer, and the material of the Plinth changed accordingly; the schemes included Portuguese marble, Plexiglas, white oak and Canadian granite. Each display was also arranged differently; chairs by Borge Mogensen were set "against a background mural of a Danish forest," while Poul Kjærholm's Triennale's lounge chair featured a lambskin rug and the branches of a tree. However, because the installation was a showroom and not a museum, these exhibits were complimented by rooms off to the side of the central gallery, which showed the furniture pieces in the contexts of rooms.[15] Although the central museum-like gallery was the focus of the space, customers came to showrooms to test and experience the product.

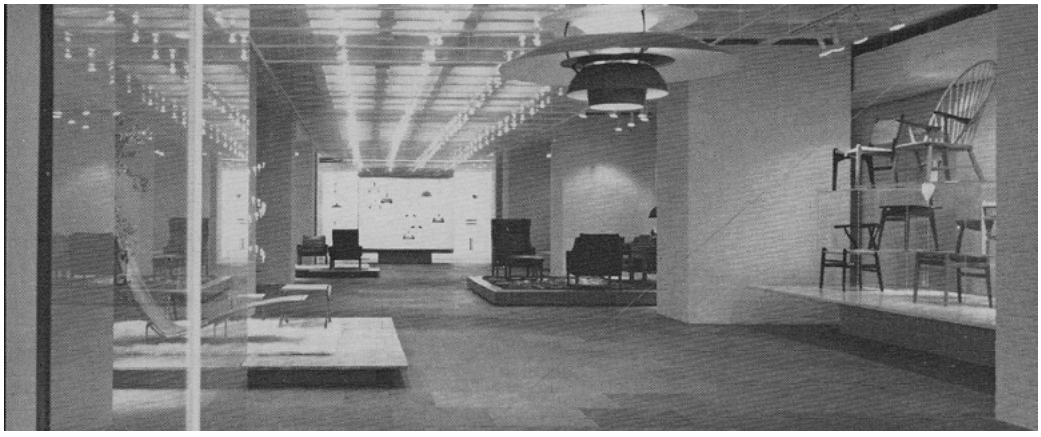

Figure 6.4. Georg Jensen Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showcase for Showrooms," *Interior Design* 39, no. 7 (Jul. 1968):75; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller.

[14] The White Box Intype describes an undecorated space with white walls, white ceiling and a continuous neutral floor. An influential 1930 MoMA exhibition secured it as a museum aesthetic. White Box is a showroom design strategy; see Chapter 3 of this thesis for a more in-depth discussion of this Intype.

[15] Georg Jensen Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showcase for Showrooms," *Interior Design* 39, no. 7 (Jul. 1968): 74-77; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller.

Figure 6.5. Georg Jensen, Inc. Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Architecture Is Really Space," *Architectural Record* 144, no. 3 (Sep. 1968): 143; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller Associates.

In 1970, Warren Platner designed another showroom, for Steelcase this time, and he utilized many of the same design principles he had used two years earlier for the Georg Jensen showroom. (**Figures 6.6 & 6.7**) Like the Jensen showroom, Platner created a space primarily for exhibition, asserting, "How products are seen is of importance."

He did not want to “suggest interiors where these objects might be used,” instead opting to create “simple, clearly understandable space which would display furniture as individual objects.” To achieve this, desks and tables were arranged to “float” on twenty-two glass Plinths dispersed around the showroom. Chairs were encased in glass cubes, embodying a very pure expression of Vitrine.[16] Platner’s effort to demonstrate how Steelcase’s products were “manufactured and marketed” resulted in a presentation room in which a temporary display was set up on a semi-circular Plinth, showing a sample office chair and its underside.[17] In this installation the Plinths (with the exception of the one in the presentation room) were all glass, elevating the product to eye-level with the least amount of visual intrusion possible.

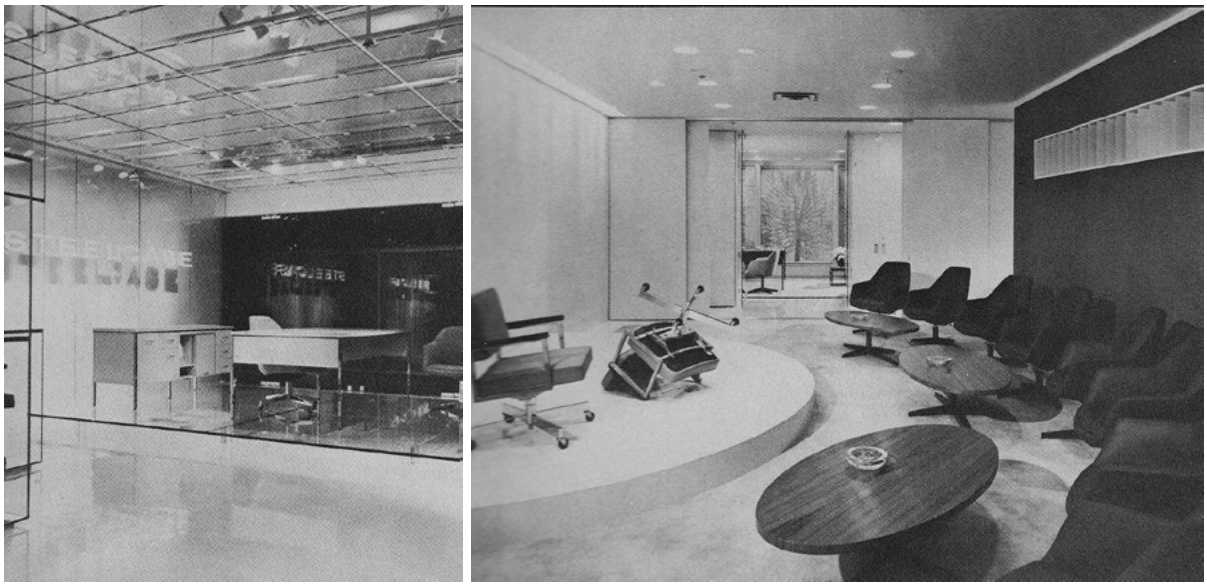

Figure 6.6. & Figure 6.7. Steelcase Showroom [1970] Warren Platner, architect; Chicago, IL in Anonymous, “Through a Looking Glass,” *Interior Design* 41, no. 5 (May. 1970): 112; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[16] The Intype Vitrine describes a glass showcase for the display of significant or ordinary objects. Kristin Malyak, “Theory Studies: Archetypical Retail Practices in Contemporary Interior Design” (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2011), 232-295.

[17] Steelcase Showroom [1970] Warren Platner, architect; Chicago, IL in Anonymous, “Through a Looking Glass,” *Interior Design* 41, no. 5 (May. 1970): 110-113; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Plinth was used again as a display strategy in the 1975 Knoll showroom. (**Figures 6.8 & 6.9**) In previous showrooms, the company had opted for the "vignette technique with settings accented by bright splashes of color." However, designer Robin Jacobsen decided to forgo that strategy in favor of a "more 'severe' museum/gallery type of display." To achieve this, a Black Out[18] space was designed, creating a dramatic space where all attention was drawn to the product on display. Instead of furniture vignettes, individual pieces were put on either "display cubes" or Plinths of differing heights in the center of the showroom. This particular method of display was chosen not only because it reinforced the gallery-like feeling Jacobsen wanted to create, but also because of the flexibility the set up offered. As Jacobsen explained, "Furniture can be taken out on consignment without disrupting an entire setting; all we have to do is remove the display cube or replace the piece with something else."[19] When the furniture was arranged in vignettes, it is much more obvious when something is missing; pieces cannot necessarily be replaced because whatever is on hand might not necessarily fit into the vignette. Additionally, when changing displays, the entire vignette would need to be swapped out and changed, not just one piece. The multiple Plinths and gallery-style display allowed products to be swapped in and out individually, as a curator might do in a museum.

[18] The Intype Black Out describes an interior space or room entirely consisting of black shades for walls, floors, ceilings and furnishings. See Chapter 4 of this thesis for an in-depth description of this Intype.

[19] Knoll Showroom [1975] Robin Jacobsen, architect; Philadelphia, PA in Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 102-105; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

Figure 6.8 & Figure 6.9. Knoll Showroom [1975] Robin Jacobsen, architect; Philadelphia, PA in Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 102, 104; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

By the 1980 decade, designers began to experiment with the expression of Plinth in showrooms. Although tradition had them fading into the background as they were painted the same color as the floor, or an otherwise neutral color, Plinths were now contributing to the spatial manipulation of the space, and appearing in a variety of colors and shapes. The Seymour Mirrow showroom in 1980 did not experiment so much with the Plinth itself, but instead experimented with the space. (**Figure 6.10**) Plinth was typically found in museum-like exhibition spaces. This often meant that these spaces were very restrained in design, and were often painted one neutral color. In these spaces, Plinths matched either the floor or the walls, making them effectively fade into the background. The Seymour Mirrow showroom, however, was not designed to evoke a museum or art gallery. Designer Sally Walsh divided the rectangular space

into a “grid of nine ‘rooms’ defined by red yachting rope strung between the ceiling and the floor.” The square spaces were tiled in opposite colors—“one space black, one space white”— creating a giant checkerboard effect.[20] Most displays were arranged in vignettes on the floor, but the smaller items were positioned on white Plinths, whose edges were aligned with the edges of the “rooms”. Here, the Plinths defined the edges of the implied spaces, while at the same time, displaying smaller products closer to eye-level. However, because the small products were too small to be at eye-level, a somewhat informal display was created, inviting patrons to pick up and examine the objects.

Figure 6.10. Seymour Mirrow Showroom [1980] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in R.P., “Seymour Mirrow & Company,” *Interior Design* 51, no. 6 (Jun. 1980): 223; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

[20] Seymour Mirrow Showroom [1980] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in R.P., “Seymour Mirrow & Company,” *Interior Design* 51, no. 6 (Jun. 1980): 222-223; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

Similarly, the Krueger Showroom (1985) departed from the museum-like showroom spaces of previous decades. (**Figure 6.11**) This particular installation was a redesign of a previous Krueger showroom, and the aim this time around was to "gain the maximum amount of change for the minimum amount of money". To do this, designer Eric Bartelt used only minimal architectural alterations, preferring to create changes using "mainly display techniques." The showroom was segmented with panels of "black Fiberglas scrim" that could be rolled up when not needed. A green "sports carpet" was laid down; its zig-zag edge led one deeper into the showroom, where pink office carpeting took over. On top of the green turf was a red plastic laminate-covered Plinth called the "splash" because of its freeform shape.[21] This was placed right at the front of the showroom in the display windows, and was used to showcase new products. The complementary coloring of the green carpet and the red Plinth worked together to create the maximum amount of visual contrast. Additionally, the freeform shape of the Plinth was unlike the traditional rectangular Plinths used in most installations, suggesting a more informal type of exhibit with its curvy, unpredictable shape.

The large Plinth in the 1991 Brayton showroom created a "fixed focal point" and a "distinct circulation path that moved one around rather than through the space." (**Figures 6.12 & 6.13**) The old showroom was "bright, white, open and rather directionless." Designers Larry Berger and Michael Rait remedied that with the redesign in which a large wooden Plinth occupied most of the showroom's central area. This Plinth was "intersected by a pyramid of stainless steel" and further divided by "plywood

[21] Krueger Showroom [1985] Eric Bartelt, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Andrea Loukin, "Krueger, LA," *Interior Design* 56, no. 10 (Oct. 1985): 48-49; PhotoCrd: Fritz Taggart.

Figure 6.11. Krueger Showroom [1985] Eric Bartelt, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Andrea Loukin, "Krueger, LA," *Interior Design* 56, no. 10 (Oct. 1985): 48-49; PhotoCrd: Fritz Taggart.

backdrops" that partitioned the Plinth into quadrants. This created smaller sections on the Plinth, so that vignettes of furniture could be displayed on it. To direct circulation, the platform was rotated slightly, so that is was aligned neither with the front entrance, nor any of the interior walls.[22] This directed circulation gently around the room in a counter-clockwise direction. However, the large Plinth and the shapes intersecting it did not encourage patrons to interact with the furniture displayed. To do so, visitors would be required to climb up on the Plinth. Moreover, to visit another vignette, they would need to climb down and then climb back up again, as the steel pyramid and plywood

[22] Brayton Showroom [1991] Larry Berger & Michael Rait, architects; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, "Brayton," *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 118-21; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

partitions did not allow immediate access to other vignettes. The feeling of being on display themselves discouraged clients from interacting with the furniture on the Plinth, which may explain why single pieces of furniture were scattered haphazardly around the showroom.

Figure 6.12 & Figure 6.13. Brayton Showroom [1991] Larry Berger & Michael Rait, architects; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, "Brayton," *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 118,121; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

In 1999 the Geiger Brickel showroom, located within the company's case-goods manufacturing plant, was designed to be flexible. (**Figure 6.14**) Concrete walls and the steel-beamed ceiling were exposed to focus on the product, rather than on the architecture of the space. To partition the space, "translucent mesh panels" were hung from the ceiling. Vignettes featuring "different office scenarios"[23] were housed within these exhibit areas, which allowed visitors to interact with the product and to see how different pieces might come together. In the center of the showroom, a long, narrow, wooden Plinth featured an alternating line of end tables and chairs. The Plinth's long,

[23] Geiger Brickel Showroom [1999] Thom Williams, architect; Atlanta, GA in Julia Lewis, "Industrial Chic," *Interior Design* 70, no. 7 (Apr. 1999): 86; PhotoCrd: Ryan Rizzo.

narrow shape drew visitors along the length of the space. In this installation, the Plinth was clearly not the focal display in the showroom; instead it provided a method of subtly influencing circulation.

Figure 6.14. Geiger Brickel Showroom [1999] Thom Williams, architect; Atlanta, GA in Julia Lewis, "Industrial Chic," *Interior Design* 70, no. 7 (Apr. 1999): 86; PhotoCrd: Ryan Rizzo.

In 2003 the London B&B Italia showroom took a more informal approach in its use of Plinths. (**Figure 6.15**) The building, designed by architect John Pawson had to meet the demands of an awkwardly shaped site, resulting in a long and thin, but very tall space that featured split-levels and a curved ceiling that made exhibition design complicated. It required interior designer Antonio Citterio to create an installation that adapted to awkward sizes and placements. The solution was to keep it simple, allowing materials, such as limestone, slate, varnished oak and white

painted plasterwork, to provide subtle backdrops. The furniture was arranged into "atmospheres," or vignettes, based on living areas. There were displays of sleeping areas, living areas, dining areas, and kitchen/breakfast areas. On the main floor, these vignettes were placed on low Plinths made of dark stained oak.[24] These highlighted the areas on display, visually separating them from other, smaller displays without Plinths. However, unlike in previous installations, these Plinths were low enough that customers did not feel discouraged from interacting with the vignette on display. In this case, the Plinths read almost as area rugs instead of display pedestals.

Figure 6.15. B&B Italia Showroom [2003] John Pawson & Antonio Citterio, architects; London, England in Hugh Pearman, "B&B Italia," *Architectural Record* 191, no. 3 (Mar. 2003): 209-12; PhotoCrd: Collage Studio/CR&S B&B Italia.

[24] B&B Italia Showroom [2003] John Pawson & Antonio Citterio, architects; London, England in Hugh Pearman, "B&B Italia," *Architectural Record* 191, no. 3 (Mar. 2003): 209-212; PhotoCrd: Collage Studio/CR&S B&B Italia.

The Steelcase Work Life Center (2008) took a similarly informal view about Plinths. (**Figures 6.16 & 6.17**) The space, designed by the Shimoda Design Group, required the accommodation of its subsidiary brands—Turnstone, Nurture and Details. The design team aimed to "unify *and* celebrate the diversity in each company, but still allow the emergence of a holistic physical appearance." The different areas shared a wall of "sinuous glass, a dozen columns of glass fiber-reinforces columns, and the "Body," a glass fiber-reinforced cast sculpture of interconnected diamond shapes."[25] Each brand has its own area within the showroom floor, and from the main entryway, these areas appeared as if they were arranged on Plinths, slightly elevated above the showroom floor. The Plinths, however, took up so much floor space, that if one entered the display area, one would not truly feel as if one were on a Plinth. When one entered the space, this tactic elevated the displays to eye-level, and encouraged visitors to explore and interact with the displays up-close.

Figure 6.16. Steelcase Work Life Center [2008] Shimoda Design Group, architect; Chicago, IL in Nicholas Tamarin, "Best of Year Showroom," *Interior Design* 79, no. 15 (Dec. 2008): 156; PhotoCrd: Benny Chan (Fotoworks).

[25] Steelcase Work Life Center [2008] Shimoda Design Group, architect; Chicago, IL in Nicholas Tamarin, "Best of Year Showroom," *Interior Design* 79, no. 15 (Dec. 2008): 156; PhotoCrd: Benny Chan (Fotoworks).

Figure 6.17. Steelcase Work Life Center [2008] Shimoda Design Group, architect; Chicago, IL in Nicholas Tamarin, "Best of Year Showroom," *Interior Design* 79, no. 15 (Dec. 2008): 156; PhotoCrd: Benny Chan (Fotoworks).

Due to its inherent flexibility, it is likely that Plinth will continue to be a staple of showroom display strategy for decades to come.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Plinth in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1950** Herman Miller Showroom [1959] Alexander Girard, architect; San Francisco, CA in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 30, no. 4 (Apr. 1959): 184-185; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1960** Thonet Showroom [1960] Felix Augenfeld, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 31, no. 2 (Feb. 1960): 52; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Georg Jensen Showroom [1968] Warren Platner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showcase for Showrooms," *Interior Design* 39, no. 7 (Jul. 1968): 74-77; PhotoCrd: Ezra Stoller; / **1970** Steelcase Showroom [1970] Warren Platner, architect; Chicago, IL in Anonymous, "Through a Looking Glass," *Interior Design* 41, no. 5 (May. 1970): 110-113; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Knoll Showroom [1975] Robin Jacobsen, architect; Philadelphia, PA in Anonymous, "Knoll's Philadelphia Showroom," *Interior Design* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 102-105; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce; / **1980** Seymour Mirrow Showroom [1980] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in R.P., "Seymour Mirrow & Company," *Interior Design* 51, no. 6 (Jun. 1980): 222-223;

PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce; Krueger Showroom [1985] Eric Bartelt, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Andrea Loukin, “Krueger, LA,” *Interior Design* 56, no. 10 (Oct. 1985): 48-49; PhotoCrd: Fritz Taggart; / **1990** Brayton Showroom [1991] Larry Berger & Michael Rait, architects; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, “Brayton,” *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 118-121; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross; Geiger Brickel Showroom [1999] Thom Williams, architect; Atlanta, GA in Julia Lewis, “Industrial Chic,” *Interior Design* 70, no. 7 (Apr. 1999): 86; PhotoCrd: Ryan Rizzo; / **2000** B&B Italia Showroom [2003] John Pawson & Antonio Citterio, architects; London, England in Hugh Pearman, “B&B Italia,” *Architectural Record* 191, no. 3 (Mar. 2003): 209-212; PhotoCrd: Collage Studio/CR&S B&B Italia; Steelcase Work Life Center [2008] Shimoda Design Group, architect; Chicago, IL in Nicholas Tamarin, “Best of Year Showroom,” *Interior Design* 79, no. 15 (Dec. 2008): 156; PhotoCrd: Benny Chan (Fotoworks).

Chapter 7

Line-Up

Application Definition

In showroom design Line-Up is the display practice of arranging a series of four or more items of the same type, such as chairs, but of different designs, so that they are evenly spaced against a continuous background surface, allowing the differences between the displayed objects to be more easily discerned by the customer.

Description

Line-Up is used as a display strategy to organize merchandise in an aesthetically pleasing way. Although it may be used in conjunction with other display Intypes such as Plinth[1] or Hotspot[2], all items remain on the same base plane.

A Line-Up display puts all attention on the product. The proximity of the different items allows the differences between them on display to be more easily recognized by showroom patrons, as they can compare items without having to recall what something looked like or how big it was. The organization of the objects, coupled with their condition of being on display effectively 'museum-izes' the Line-Up, lending it an air of formality.

In furniture showrooms, Line-Up is most commonly used to display chairs, where their size and variation makes them ideal objects to display. Its versatility makes it popular

[1] The Intype Plinth describes a platform (usually one step) that elevates an object slightly off the floor. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

[2] The Intype Hotspot is an isolated pool of bright downlight that operates in contrast to its surroundings. Hotspot encourages a pause in movement and collection around or within it. It is achieved with a single spot light or a single fixture on a light track. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Joanne Pui-Yuk Kwan, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Artificial Lighting Practices in Contemporary Interior Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2009), 40-51.

in showrooms, which like to keep their displays as flexible as possible due to the inevitable rearranging of vignettes when new products are to be featured.[3] A Line-Up can be used merely to create an aesthetically pleasing display, or as a subtle way of informing circulation as customers subconsciously circulate down the line alongside the display.

Although similar to the Inypes Marching Order[4] and Specimen[5], Line-Up differs significantly from both. Marching Order is a principle for the organization of space, while Line-Up is used solely for the display and organization of objects. Additionally, Marching Order requires a series of repeating forms, while Line-Up most often features objects that are all be different, despite being of the same type. Specimen, on the other hand requires a larger array of objects, and displays them on an entire plane, rather than just in a line. Often times, items are displayed in their own cell-like enclosures, effectively isolating them from one another.

Similar But Different

The Intype Down the Line[6] is the practice of arranging a long line of identical pieces of furniture in a single row. Though aesthetically similar to Line-Up, the Intypes differ quite significantly in regards to functionality. Down the Line evolved mainly for the health and privacy considerations, as well as for the easy organization of a lot of people.

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[3] A vignette is a museum practice in which a themed interior scene developed from objects in a collection.

[4] The Intype Marching Order is a sequence of repeating forms organized consecutively, one after another. It establishes a measured spatial order. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[5] The Intype Specimen describes a display strategy in which items are arranged in a taxonomic array. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

[6] Rachel Goldfarb, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Practices of Contemporary Resort and Spa Design" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2008), 83-91.

Line-Up, as used in showrooms, is specifically a display aesthetic. Objects are organized this way because it makes it easier for people to process the information given to them. Unlike Down the Line, privacy and the organization of people are not considerations when displays like this are created.

History

Line-Up as a display strategy may have evolved as an opposing reaction to *Wunderkammer,* a display aesthetic that was used by art and natural history museums of the 16th-18th centuries. In *Wunderkammer* (German for "wonder-room") entire walls and sometimes ceilings were covered with artifacts. In early iterations, these objects were not necessarily grouped according to any particular ordering principle. This "cabinet of curiosities" approach meant that early exhibition spaces had an "apparent lack of rational classification," giving them a "bizarre sense of accumulation and juxtaposition."[7] This concept was aesthetically appealing, if not particularly educational.

By the mid-18th century, the *Wunderkammer* underwent scrutiny by curators and historians. Although most museums still used the "dense multi-tiered hanging display scheme," it was no longer universally thought to be the best strategy for displaying artifacts. It had been assumed that visitors perceived one picture at a time as they processed through rooms. By the 1830s it was understood that the lack of hierarchical arrangement in *Wunderkammer* caused problems for visitors who had trouble focusing or distinguishing individual works of art. Moreover, patrons overlooked paintings

[7] James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 8.

displayed outside of the normal visual field, too high or too low on the wall.[8]

In 1847, art critic John Ruskin demanded that London's National Gallery adopt a new arrangement for its works of art. Specifically, he called for "the abandonment of the crowded hang in favor of displaying all pictures at eye-level."[9] In effect, he wanted the pictures to be hung side-by-side in one line. Architect Charles Eastlake shared Ruskin's opinion, adding that the paintings be given "sufficient surrounding space." He believed that this less dense hanging scheme would allow the color of the walls to play a more noticeable role in how the paintings (and especially the colors of those paintings) were perceived. By the early 20th century, the *Wunderkammer* display aesthetic had fallen away, replaced by the single row of evenly spaced paintings hung at eye-level.

Effect

The Oxford English Dictionary dates the first usage of the term "line-up" to 1889. Originally it referred to a list of players in a game or sports club. By 1915 the term described a police line-up, or the assembling of a number of persons in a line for inspection or identification. In this usage, people fitting a similar physical description are made to stand in a line before a witness, in the hopes that the witness will be able to identify the perpetrator of a crime. The side-by-side arrangement facilitated comparisons of the various attributes of the people in the line-up.

[8] Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 28-29.

[9] Klonk, *Spaces of Experience,* 28-29.

Line-Up as a showroom display aesthetic operates on a similar principle. Objects fitting a certain categorical description, such as chairs, textiles, lamps, are arranged in a line, allowing customers to more easily see the differences between one piece of merchandise and another. In this sense, a Line-Up is as a visual display of information, in which each object becomes a "small multiple." In this type of visual display, the same design structure is kept for repeating visual elements, allowing for an "economy of perception" as the relevant information (and nothing else) changes. Statistician and information designer Edward R. Tufte explains that "as our eyes move from one image to the next, this constancy of design allows viewers to focus on changes in information, rather than changes in graphical composition." The repetition of elements next to each other "enforces local comparison within our eye-span" by allowing "an active eye"[10] to select the differences and understand the contrasts. Having all variations of something right next to each other means that viewers no longer have to rely on memory to compare objects. All comparisons can be made with a single glance for "uninterrupted visual reasoning."[11] Small multiples allow customers to "see, distinguish, choose."[12]

In showrooms, the display is constant for all items in the Line-Up; customers focus on the differences between one product or another, or among all elements on display. The display element, such as a common background, becomes effectively invisible, ensuring that the focus is on the merchandise. In some installations, the differences between products may be small — the same object in multiple color variations, for example. In others, the differences between objects in a Line-Up may be greater;

[10] Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1990), 28-33.

[11] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 67-68.

[12] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 33.

there may be differences of form, color, material or size. However, showrooms use a common grouping for the objects on display, whether it is something as general as “chairs,” or something more specific, such as “the Series 7 chair in shades of blue.”

Line-Up is a display aesthetic used without a particular display mechanism. It does not require the use of a Plinth, Hotspot or shelf, although it may be used in conjunction with one in order to further add to the “museum effect” of the display. This is, however, unnecessary, as the condition of being on display is fundamental to the understanding of an object as art in the western world.[13] The act of removing an object from its intended context, such as an office vignette, isolates it “for the purposes of aesthetic contemplation.”[14] Additionally, the grouping of objects that fit one particular description mimics the taxonomic groupings popular in natural history museums. Thus, the very nature of Line-Up suggests a museum display, adding to the formal atmosphere of the showroom.

Spatially, Line-Up is a manifestation of a linear organization. Because linear organizations define a length, they also express a direction and thus signify “movement, extension, and growth.” Thus, Line-Up can be used to subtly influence circulation within a showroom. Placing a Line-Up parallel to the intended path of travel may encourage showroom clientele to the showroom to subconsciously follow the directionality of the display. Likewise, placing a Line-Up perpendicular to a circulation path may cause visitors to stop and consider the display (if it is a termination point) or

[13] Emma Barker, ed., *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 13.
[14] Barker, *Contemporary Cultures*,15.

switch their path of travel as they begin to circulate in the direction suggested by the display. Line-Up, as an organizational device, is flexible; it is easily adaptable to the various needs of the showroom. If the Line-Up display is too short, another item can be added. Similarly, if it is too long, an item can be removed with no detrimental effect on the display.[15]

Chronological Sequence

Based on trade publications, such as *Interior Design*, the history of Line-Up as a display strategy in showroom design can be traced back six decades; creating a Line-Up of merchandise was as simple as arranging it on a table. The 1959 Lange & Williams showroom did just that. (**Figures 7.1 & 7.2**) This simple showroom featured a long line of shallow tables arranged next to walls. The table bases were concealed with pleated skirts so that one's attention focused on the three-dimensional objects (lamps) lined up side-by-side on the tables. Behind the lamps various wall decorations were arranged in a cluttered fashion.[16] The Line-Up display allowed comparisons on the part of the clientele. The advantage to the brand, Lange and Williams, was one of storage,

Figure 7.1. Lange & Williams Showroom [1959] Anonymous, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 30, no. 9 (Sep. 1959): 86; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[15] Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space and Order* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996), 198-99.

[16] Lange & Williams Showroom [1959] Anonymous, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 30, no. 9 (Sep. 1959): 86; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Figure 7.2. Lange & Williams Showroom [1959] Anonymous, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 30, no. 9 (Sep. 1959): 86; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

displaying the full range of its products out in the open.

The Associated Showrooms (1964) featured the combined products of three different companies, including the furniture importer Stendig, Design Technics which specialized in ceramic furnishings, including lamps, and Rowan Inc., which specialized in upholstery and drapery fabrics. (**Figure 7.3**) Designer David Haid separated the wares of the different companies by assigning the merchandise to various display units within the larger space; although Haid designed various types of units, Line-Up was included in all. One type of display unit floated freely in space; each unit included a plinth and a wall plane as backdrop to the items displayed. In one such setting for Stendig, a line of five chairs was aligned on a dark plinth, set against a light backdrop. The back of Stendig's partition served as the wall for Design Technic's display. Sofas were also arranged as a Line-Up along the perimeter of the space.[17]

[17] Associated Showrooms [1964] David Haid, architect; Chicago. IL in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 35, no. 7 (Jul. 1964): 102-103; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Figure 7.3. Associated Showrooms [1964] David Haid, architect; Chicago, IL, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 35, no. 7 (Jul. 1964): 102; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

The design intent of the 1965 Ward Bennett furniture showroom took a more museum-like direction. The firm of Brickel-Eppinger intended the space to be "a perfect backdrop" for the furniture on display. (**Figure 7.4**) To add to the formal air of the showroom, a "changing exhibit of art" was planned to be an integral part of the installation. As such, the walls of the showroom were painted a neutral sand color, while the floor and ceiling were kept dark to blot out any distinguishing features that could distract from the displays. Hotspots trained on certain pieces added to the dramatic air of the showroom, while two Line-Ups of chairs along the window and along an interior wall of the showroom were reminiscent of museum displays. The Line-Up in front of the window rested on a Plinth and was intended to "create a striking" effect against panes of glass.[18] The chairs comprising that display were of the same design, differing only in color. By contrast, the Line-Up along the adjacent wall varied. Each of the five chairs was of a noticeably different color and design; a high-

[18] Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 128-129; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar.

backed armchair centered the display, with the lower profile chairs flanking it. The rigid organization of these displays evoked paintings hung at even intervals on the walls of art museums, or the taxonomic classification of samples found in natural history museums—fitting for the museum-like atmosphere the designer aimed to create.

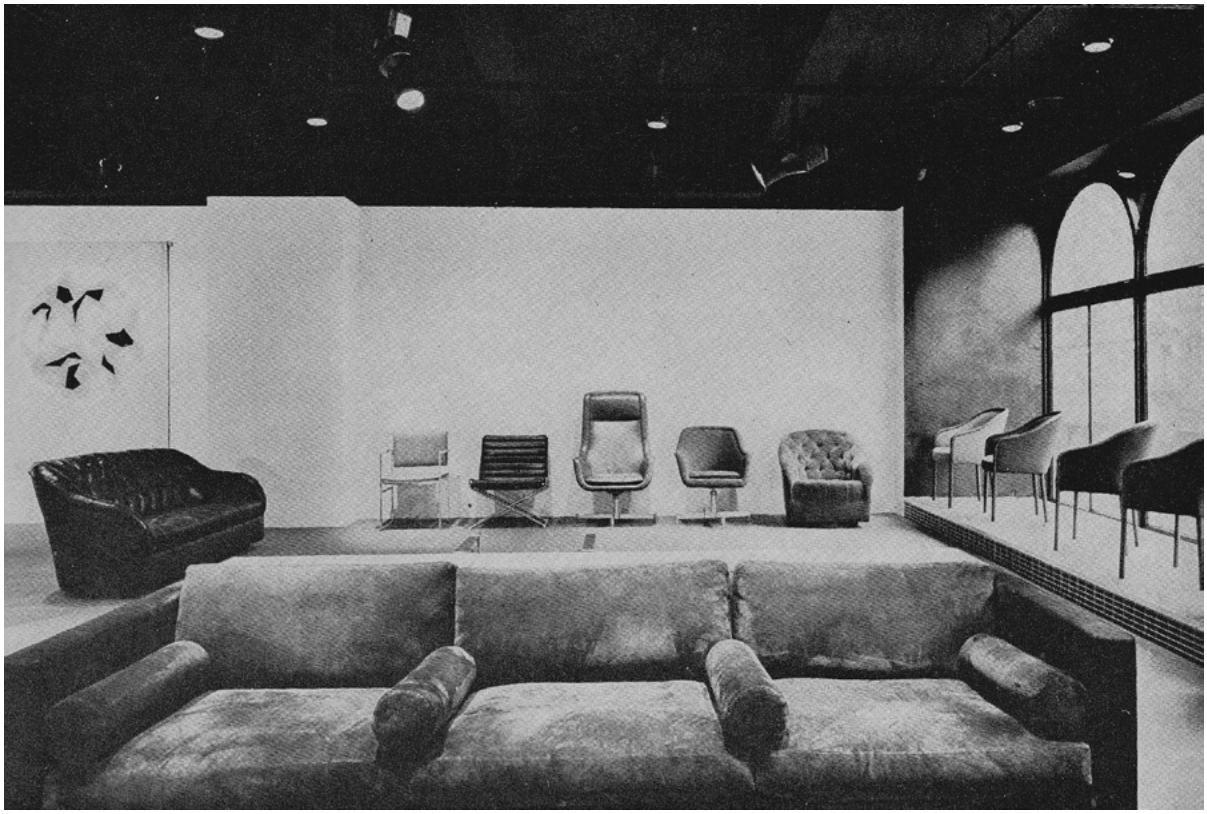

Figure 7.4. Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 129; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar.

The Brickel Associates showroom (1972) was part of a joint installation within the Chicago Merchandise Mart. (**Figure 7.5**) The entire tenth floor of the building was reserved for contract showrooms, and the seven leading contract manufacturers of the time occupied them. The area designed for Brickel Associates by Ward Bennett was simple. The walls of the long space were painted a light neutral color, with the carpeting and ceiling kept a darker color. Furniture vignettes were arranged along the length

of the space, enticing the visitor to enter and try out the furniture as they processed through the showroom. Along one wall of the showroom, a Line-Up of chairs faced into the showroom. The chairs were of a similar form, though not of a similar color. Resting on a Plinth, their backs were raised just a bit closer to eye level.[19] Though this display was primarily intended to showcase the different chairs the company had on offer, it served a secondary function. The line created by the chairs, especially the contrast where their backs meet the wall, drew the eye into the back of the showroom in a way the staggered vignettes cannot. In this way, visitors were enticed to circulate through the entire space of the showroom, ensuring they saw everything on display.

Figure 7.5. Brickel Associates Showroom [1972] Ward Bennett, architect; Chicago, IL, in Anonymous, "Chicago Merchandise Mart's New Contract Showrooms," *Interior Design* 43, no. 5 (May. 1972): 119; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[19] Brickel Associates Showroom [1972] Ward Bennett, architect; Chicago, IL, in Anonymous, "Chicago Merchandise Mart's New Contract Showrooms," *Interior Design* 43, no. 5 (May. 1972): 119; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

The Line-Up display in the 1974 Thonet showroom garnered more attention. (**Figure 7.6**) Designers Joan Burgasser and Frank Mingis intentionally refrained from using "extraneous embellishments" that would detract from the chairs and other pieces of furniture on display. Instead, the walls of the showroom were painted white, the carpet a dark charcoal. The vignettes grouped "chronologically related furniture." There were also displays "illustrating Thonet's innovative handling of wood" that gave the showroom an instructive tone. However, the entrance of the showroom was the most eye-catching. The front wall was covered in the same charcoal gray carpeting as the floor, making the two surfaces seem like one continuous plane. Affixed to the wall was the Thonet logo rendered in polished steel letters. Below it, five of the of the manufacturer's iconic chairs in tones of beige and brown were aligned side-by-side.[20] In this case, a Line-Up at the entrance of the showroom offered a preview of what the showroom represented, and also spoke to the quality of furniture produced. In a space that did not have a street-level window, the display acted as a mechanism to attract potential buyers who might otherwise pass the space by.

Some of the early iterations of Line-Up suggested an ad hoc assembly, as if they were not permanent installations. By the 1980 decade, however, Line-Up had become entrenched as a display strategy for showrooms, and designers put more thought into integrating the practice with the architectural space. In the Helikon showroom (1988), all of the displays and vignettes were rigid. (**Figure 7.7**) The showroom was designed to allow visitors to "stand back and see, in their minds' eye, any product

[20] Thonet Showroom [1974] Joan Burgasser & Frank Mingis, architects; New York City, in Anonymous, "Thonet Moves to East 63rd Street," *Interior Design* 45, no. 1 (Jan. 1974): 82; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

Figure 7.6. Thonet Showroom [1974] Joan Burgasser & Frank Mingis, architects; New York City, in Anonymous, "Thonet Moves to East 63rd Street," *Interior Design* 45, no. 1 (Jan. 1974): 82; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

group in its proper perspective" — that of an executive office. To achieve this, Chicago designer Eva Maddox partitioned the showroom into thirteen 20-by-20-foot bays, each containing "freestanding furniture prominently displayed within simple settings." One specific area in the center of the showroom was devoted to Helikon's new furniture pieces. To demarcate this area while keeping it visually accessible, sycamore panels were hung vertically. On two opposing sides of this central space, chairs were placed in between the panels in a Line-Up configuration. White fabric panels hung behind the chairs as a backdrop.[21] In this installation, the wooden panels maintained the even spacing between the chairs while isolating them from each other. Because each chair was contained within its own area, it forced the viewer to considered it in isolation, as

[21] Helikon Showroom [1988] Eva Maddox Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "Helikon," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 196-201; PhotoCrd: Nick Merrick (Hedrich-Blessing).

well as in comparison to the three other chairs nearby. The wooden panels also added presence and weight to the Line-Up display, anchoring it in the space like a Plinth. However, unlike a Line-Up on a Plinth, the display extended from the ceiling to the floor making it seem more architecturally permanent.

Figure 7.7. Helikon Showroom [1988] Eva Maddox Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "Helikon," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 199; PhotoCrd: Nick Merrick (Hedrich-Blessing).

The B&B Italia showroom (1989) also demonstrated the architecturally integrated Line-Up. (**Figure 7.8**) The products on display were intended to "prevail," while making the "basic character of the space evident." The design firm Gregotti Associati kept the envelope of the space "clean and bright," as "pure form," allowing the upholstery of

the furniture to add bright pops of color throughout the space. Instead of displaying furniture in a series of settings or vignettes, the design team created a grid based on the space's structural columns; the grid dictated the placement of furniture and other elements, including a Line-Up of chairs along the wall facing the entry. The six chairs were placed on rectangular, white pedestals that elevated them to eye-level—above the height of all other furniture pieces in the showroom.[22] This made the Line-Up the most visible display in the space, as if the chairs were art. The pedestals integrated the chairs as architectural features in the space, mimicking the forms of the columns. At the same time, the neat line of chairs acted as a feature wall behind the other furniture pieces, creating an aesthetically pleasing backdrop in an otherwise plain space.

Figure 7.8. B&B Italia Showroom [1989] Gregotti Associati, architect; New York City, in Edie Lee Cohen, "B&B Italia," *Interior Design* 60, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 208; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

[22] B&B Italia Showroom [1989] Gregotti Associati, architect; New York City, in Edie Lee Cohen, "B&B Italia," *Interior Design* 60, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 208-211; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

The formal Line-Up displays of the 1980 era discouraged visitors from trying out the merchandise, or in the case of the B&B Italia showroom, actually made it impossible for people to do so. In the 1990 decade showrooms returned to a less formal iteration of Line-Up, most likely because the more informal nature of the Intype was more inviting to visitors, contrasting the more formal museum-like displays of the 1980 decade. The 1993 Geiger International showroom was more complex than the B&B Italia showroom of the previous decade, but the Line-Up display was much simpler in execution. (**Figure 7.9**) The showroom, designed by VOA, was based on the concept of a "theatre-in-the-round." Thus, the main feature of the showroom was a curved wall that acted as a backdrop for the company's educational center, as well as several office furniture vignettes. At first glance, the Line-Up of wooden chairs in the reception area appear as chairs intended for waiting clientele. A more careful examination, however, indicates that they were designed as display. Each chair is placed under a window, but not centered there. Each chair sits on a colored tile floor and is lit by a Hotspot.[23] The ambiguity to visitors about whether the Line-Up was meant as a formal hands-off display or informal seating may have worked to the showrooms' advantage; it probably evoked questions and conversation, ultimately ending in sitting, trying out one chair after another.

Although many showroom examples of Line-Up featured chairs, the flexibility of the interior archetype made it ideal for products of all types and sizes. The Vitra and Unifor showroom (1997) featured two Line-Ups of miniature chairs. (**Figure 7.10**) Design

[23] Geiger International Showroom [1993] VOA Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "VOA," *Interior Design* 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 136-141; PhotoCrd: Steve Hall (Hedrich-Blessing).

Figure 7.9. Geiger International Showroom [1993] VOA Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "VOA," *Interior Design* 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 136; PhotoCrd: Steve Hall (Hedrich-Blessing).

studio Citterio/Dawn created a simple, unified space that did not distinguish between the two manufacturers. The showroom's finished concrete floor, white ceiling and exposed ductwork (Pompidou Intype) were tempered by gray area rugs in a similar concrete color; the rugs subtly established vignettes. The Line-Up display appeared in the wall plane. On the Vitra side, two horizontal niches with small down-lights contained a Line-Up of Vitra's 1:6 scale replicas of iconic designer chairs.[24] A light-box effect worthy of a museum drew visitors' attention into the display.

[24] Vitra & Unifor Showroom [1997] Studio Citerrio/Dwan, architects; New York City, in Abby Bussel, "Manhattan Calling," *Interior Design* 68, no. 7 (May. 1997): 38-40, 42; PhotoCrd: Mario Carrieri.

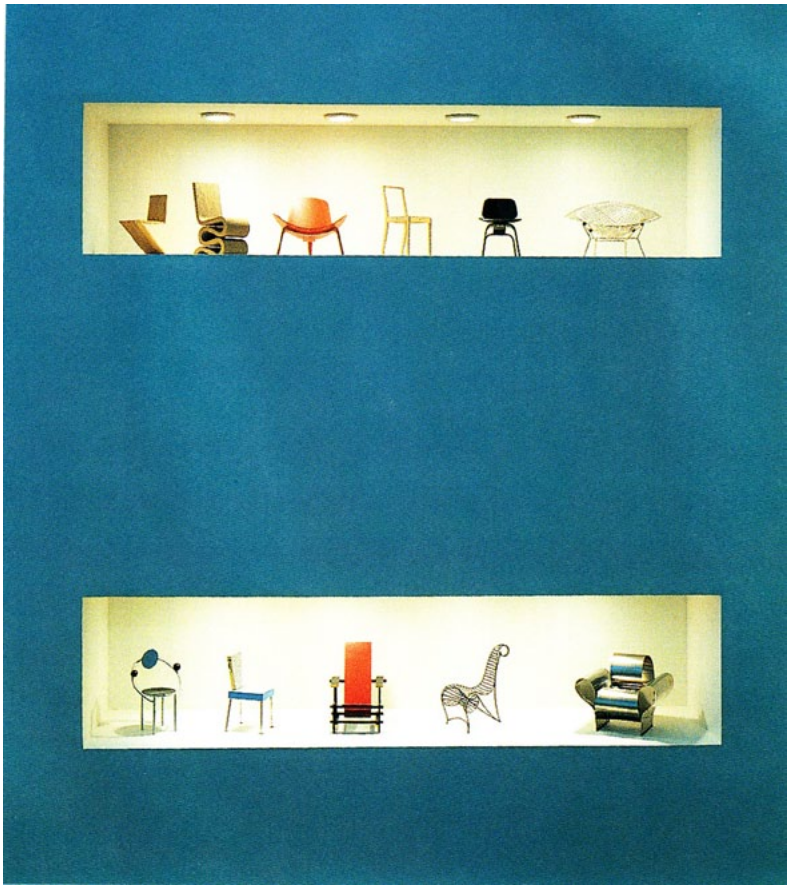

Figure 7.10. Vitra & Unifor Showroom [1997] Studio Citerrio/Dwan, architects; New York City in Abby Bussel, "Manhattan Calling," *Interior Design* 68, no. 7 (May. 1997): 38; PhotoCrd: Mario Carrieri.

The Mosaik showroom (2000) in Istanbul (**Figure 7.11**) designed by Susan McMurran Erturan was envisioned as a "neutral backdrop that would enhance but not compete with the strong silhouettes of the furniture for sale." The design solution was a "calculated blend" of "industrial elements and refined architectural details"—polished concrete blended with Pompidou, slate and carpet tiles. The high ceilings allowed for the vertical display of furniture, and McMurran Erturan inserted "drywall niches" throughout the showroom for this purpose. In one of these alcoves, a Line-Up of differently colored Series 7 chairs was displayed.[25] In other niches, only one chair was

[25] Mosaik Showroom [2000] Susan McMurran Erturan, architect; Istanbul, Turkey, in Julia Lewis, "International Style," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 54-56; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol.

featured, evoking a similar aesthetic to a Specimen display. The lighting illuminating these pieces made a shadow box that glowed and accentuated the silhouette of the chairs. The Line-Up consisted of all white iconic chairs arranged against a backlit acrylic panel. The backlighting made the forms of the chairs significant, while the chairs were positioned to the side to reveal their most recognizable profile. The effect was a display with a museum-like reverence.

Figure 7.11. Mosaik Showroom [2000] Susan McMurran Erturan, architect; Istanbul, Turkey, in Julia Lewis, "International Style," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 55; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol.

The 2006 Maharam showroom demonstrated the flexibility of Line-Up as a display strategy for textiles. (**Figure 7.12**) Unlike the other showroom examples examined here, the Maharam showroom was located in its own detached building instead of within a larger complex, such as the Chicago Merchandise Mart or the Pacific Design Center. Thus, it boasted large front display windows suitable for window-shopping. However,

because Maharam sells only to the trade, it was deemed inappropriate for the large windows to employ traditional retail merchandising. Instead the windows displayed the showroom interior, complete with offices and buyers tables. The windows were not completely devoid of textiles, but they were displayed on a double bar of stainless steel perpendicular to the window wall. The location of the display, out of the window, and on an adjacent wall, signaled the textiles unavailability as a retail items.[26] The Line-Up of textiles were arranged as large samples of complimentary patterns and solid fabrics.

Figure 7.12. Maharam Showroom [2006] Fernlund + Logan, architect; Los Angeles, CA, in Edie Cohen, "Cut From the Same Cloth," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 131; PhotoCrd: Art Gray.

[26] Maharam Showroom [2006] Fernlund +Logan, architects; Los Angeles, CA, in Edie Cohen, "Cut From the Same Cloth," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 130-131; PhotoCrd: Art Gray.

The same restraint was evident in the displays of the Davis & Warchow showroom (2007) designed by architect Ronette Riley. (**Figure 7.13**) The tendency of kitchen-and-bath showrooms to display the largest number of merchandise was avoided by making a showroom that "welcomed customers instead of overwhelming them." One technique was to direct customers through the showroom with a "crimson rubber resin." Clients stopped at the reception desk so that they could to be paired with a salesperson who could "select goods tailored to customer needs." The other technique was to avoid visual clutter. To this end, merchandise was displayed in "36 modular walnut cabinets fitted with drawers and pull-out shelves." Elements that did not fit within these modules were displayed along the walls in a Line-Up arrangement. [27] Faucets mounted on countertops also appeared as a Line-Up allowing customers to easily distinguish the differences in size and form between the fittings.

Figure 7.13. Davis & Warshow Showroom [2007] Ronnette Riley Architect, architect; New York City, in Mario López-Cordero, "The Art of Bathing," *Interior Design* 78, no. 10 (Oct. 2007): 166; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

[27] Davis & Warshow Showroom [2007] Ronnette Riley Architect, architect; New York City, in Mario López-Cordero, "The Art of Bathing," *Interior Design* 78, no. 10 (Oct. 2007): 162-166; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Overall, the flexibility of Line-Up as a showroom display strategy, as well as its versatility and adaptability point to its continued use within the showroom practice type.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Line-Up in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1950** Lange & Williams Showroom [1959] Anonymous, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight," *Interior Design* 30, no. 9 (Sep. 1959): 86; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1960** Associated Showrooms [1964] David Haid, architect; Chicago, IL, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 35, no. 7 (Jul. 1964): 102; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Ward Bennett Showroom [1965] Brickel-Eppinger, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms: Brickel-Eppinger," *Interior Design* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1965): 129; PhotoCrd: Jon Naar; / **1970** Brickel Associates Showroom [1972] Ward Bennett, architect; Chicago, IL, in Anonymous, "Chicago Merchandise Mart's New Contract Showrooms," *Interior Design* 43, no. 5 (May. 1972): 119; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; Thonet Showroom [1974] Joan Burgasser & Frank Mingis, architects; New York City, in Anonymous, "Thonet Moves to East 63rd Street," *Interior Design* 45, no. 1 (Jan. 1974): 82; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1980** Helikon Showroom [1988] Eva Maddox Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "Helikon," *Interior Design* 59, no. 16 (Dec. 1988): 199; PhotoCrd: Nick Merrick (Hedrich-Blessing); B&B Italia Showroom [1989] Gregotti Associati, architect; New York City, in Edie Lee Cohen, "B&B Italia," *Interior Design* 60, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 208; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige; / **1990** Geiger International Showroom [1993] VOA Associates, architect; Chicago, IL, in Monica Geran, "VOA," *Interior Design* 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 136; PhotoCrd: Steve Hall (Hedrich-Blessing); Vitra & Unifor Showroom [1997] Studio Citerrio/Dwan, architects; New York City, in Abby Bussel, "Manhattan Calling," *Interior Design* 68, no. 7 (May. 1997): 38; PhotoCrd: Mario Carrieri; / **2000** Mosaik Showroom [2000] Susan McMurran Erturan, architect; Istanbul, Turkey, in Julia Lewis, "International Style," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 54-56; PhotoCrd: Paul Warchol; Maharam Showroom [2006] Fernlund + Logan, architect; Los Angeles, CA, in Edie Cohen, "Cut From the Same Cloth," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 131; PhotoCrd: Art Gray; Davis & Warshow Showroom [2007] Ronnette Riley Architect, architect; New York City, in Mario López-Cordero, "The Art of Bathing," *Interior Design* 78, no. 10 (Oct. 2007): 166; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

Chapter 8

Specimen

Definition

Specimen describes a display strategy in which items are arranged in a taxonomic array, often in a grid with products separated in niches or cells.

Application Definition

In showrooms, Specimen organizes displays of products at any scale, from textile samples to automobiles. It is a strategy by which customers can see and compare the full array of options available for a particular item.

Description

If a Specimen display also features the chromatic arrangement of the items it is displaying, it may also be considered a Spectrum[1] display. There are two main expressions of the Specimen Intype in showrooms. The first is the specimen box approach, in which the items are displayed isolated in cell-like enclosures. Although it is most common for all of the cells to be of the same size, it is not a necessity. The effect of the many items creates a striking display, although the physical isolation of the objects adds a clinical, scientific feel to the exhibition.

The second expression of Specimen is the taxonomic array, which discards the idea of individual containers in favor of carefully organizing related items on the same surface to make an aesthetically pleasing display. Although the items may be of the same form and size, it is less likely that they will be so in this type of arrangement. Both types of

[1] The Spectrum Intype describes a display technique in which items are arranged chromatically. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

Specimen displays may or may not be displayed behind glass. In showrooms, it is common practice *not* to place these displays behind glass so that customers can still interact with the product if they wish.

The primary effect of Specimen in a showroom is to create a visually appealing arrangement that also displays a large amount of merchandise. The organized display draws attention to the surface on which it is displayed. Since Specimen is most commonly mounted on wall surfaces in showrooms (although they may also be mounted on free-standing vertical partitions), this has the effect of rendering the product not fully accessible to the customer, working to distance the viewers from the products. The product now seems untouchable, making it seem precious and more important.[2]

In recent years Specimen has also become an increasingly popular strategy in retail design, where the specimen box approach seems to be the most popular. (**Figures 8.1 & 8.2**) The retail installations tend to be more rigid in their adaptation of the Specimen Intype, in that all products and display framework are the same size. In 2011 the Pavé bicycle shop in Barcelona, Spain used white specimen boxes to display its wares,[3] while the Australian shoe retailer Sneakerology displayed its stock in staggered wooden specimen boxes complete with numbers to help customers find the shoe they wanted.[4]

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[2] James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 36.

[3] Pavé [2011] Joan Sandoval, architect; Barcelona, Spain in Lydia Parafianowicz, "Pavé by Joan Sandoval," *Frame*, June 2, 2011, http://www.framemag.com/news/2173 (accessed Jul. 1, 2011); PhotoCrd: Joan Sandoval.

[4] Sneakerology [2011] Facet Studio, architect; Sydney, Australia in John Pavlus, "Sneakerology, A Sneaker Store Where Kicks Get Museum Treatment," *Fast Co. Design* (13 Jul. 2011): http://www.fastcodesign.com/1664464/sneakerology-a-sneaker-store-where-kicks-get-museum-treatment?partner=co_newsletter#3 (accessed Jul. 1, 2011); PhotoCrd: Katherine Lu.

Figure 8.1. Pavé [2011] Joan Sandoval, architect; Barcelona, Spain, in Lydia Parafianowicz, "Pavé by Joan Sandoval," *Frame* (June 2, 2011): http://www.framemag.com/news/2173 (accessed Jul. 14, 2011); PhotoCrd: Joan Sandoval.

Figure 8.2. Sneakerology [2011] Facet Studio, architect; Sydney, Australia, in John Pavlus, "Sneakerology, A Sneaker Store Where Kicks Get Museum Treatment," *Fast Co. Design* (13 Jul. 2011): http://www.fastcodesign.com/1664464/ sneakerology-a-sneaker-store-where-kicks-get-museum-treatment?partner=co_newsletter#3 (accessed Jul. 14, 2011); PhotoCrd: Katherine Lu.

Specimen evolved from *Wunderkammer* (German for "wonder-room"), a 19th century display strategy in which entire walls, and sometimes ceilings, were covered with artifacts. In early iterations, artifacts were not necessarily grouped according to any particular ordering principle; as the museum practice type evolved, it became standard practice to arrange objects by taxonomy. This approach meant that early exhibition spaces had an "apparent lack of rational classification," giving them a "bizarre sense of accumulation and juxtaposition." [5] This concept was aesthetically appealing, if not particularly educational.

These early proto-museums were called "cabinets of curiosities" and predated art and natural history museums. The spaces were essentially the private collections of the wealthy; during medieval times and the Renaissance, collectors were fond of accumulating "natural curiosities thought to have magical powers related to healing, longevity, fertility, and sexual virility."[6] As these collections evolved, so too did their functions. By the 16th and 17th centuries, the collections "showed signs of becoming research centers" as scientists began to realize the resources offered by these collections. Because of this, a shift occurred in the way objects were displayed. Although often still densely packed into rooms, the displays took on a more methodical organization. Such collections could be arranged aesthetically or according to technical classification. This often meant that items were arranged taxonomically in the case of biological specimens, chronologically in historical ones, and stylistically in the case of artwork. As these collections were intended for "the aesthete, the scholar, the collector

[5] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 8.

[6] Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Function of Museums* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 41.

and the craftsman," these displays lacked detailed labeling or background information typical of contemporary museum exhibits.[7]

Biological items in particular were often displayed in multi-compartmented Vitrines,[8] or in glass jars filled with liquid, due to a need to keep specimens in a "still viewable, arrested state of being." (**Figure 8.3**) In the case of natural history museums, this meant that taxidermy, pickling, and dehydration were employed with the Vitrines so that the carefully collected samples of flora and fauna did not decompose. Specimen jars and Vitrines act not only as a means of protecting items from the elements and from visitors, but also as a distancing mechanism. The glass is a boundary, keeping the viewer at a "comfortable, voyeuristic distance,"[9] avoiding direct contact with artifacts that may be distasteful or gruesome but morbidly fascinating. This contributes to the museum effect by controlling how the contained object is seen.[10] In fact, the state of being displayed in this manner may give an object "an aura of importance and authenticity, endowing whatever is presented with a sense of importance" even if is not displayed in a museum. This form of display also conveys the impression that the items exhibited have been carefully researched and evaluated.[11]

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[7] Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 9-10.

[8] The Intype Vitrine describes a glass showcase for the display of significant or ordinary objects. Kristin Malyak, "Theory Studies: Archetypical Retail Practices in Contemporary Interior Design," (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 2011), 232-295.

[9] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 14-16.

[10] Valerie Casey, "The Museum Effect: Gazing from Object to Performance in the Contemporary Cultural-History Museum," (paper presented at the annual International Cultural Heritage Meeting, Paris, France, September 8-12, 2003), 2.

[11] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 34-37.

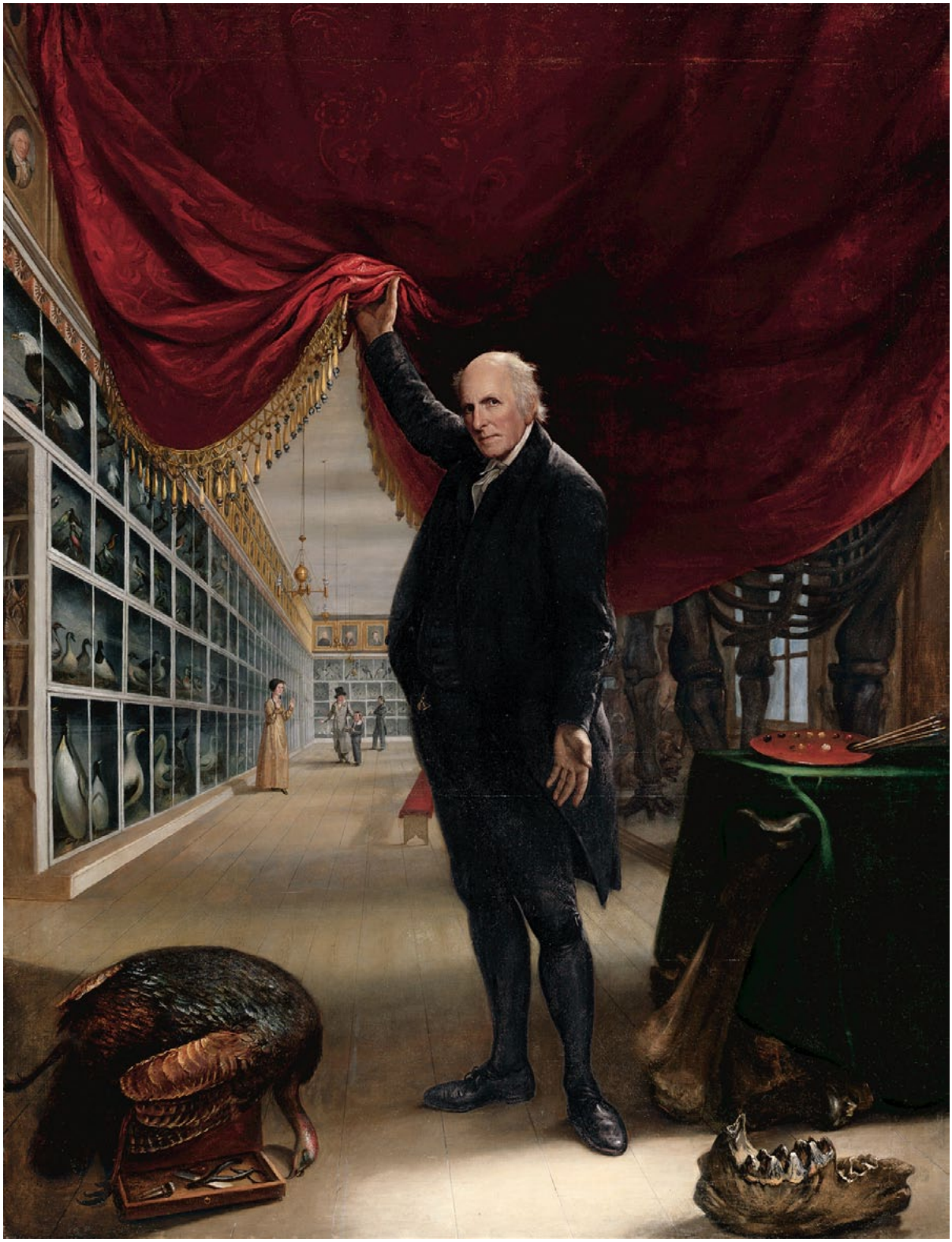

Figure 8.3. *The Artist in His Museum* [1822] Charles Wilson Peale, artist; oil on canvas; Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

Over time, this particular display strategy evolved to a less rigid expression. As institutions other than natural history museums began to adopt Specimen as a display strategy, reiterations began to change and adapt based on the needs of the exhibition. Because the traditional *Wunderkammer* was visually overwhelming to patrons, items in Specimen displays began to be more generously spaced, and the display would comprise a single wall, rather than all four. Additionally, when the objects displayed were not biological in origin, it was no longer necessary to place them in specimen jars or vitrines to stave off decomposition. If the exhibition was at eye-level, the glass would often be retained anyway to keep the artifacts safe from the hands of curious patrons. However, in other cases, it was often enough to organize items in cells reminiscent of traditional specimen boxes, or in a taxonomic array. (**Figure 8.4**)

Figure 8.4. Pinothek der Moderne [2002] Stephan Braunfels, architect; Munich, Germany; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 22 May 2011; PhotoCrd.: Courtney Cheng, Intypes Project, 22 May 2011.

Effect

Specimen as a showroom display aesthetic operates on the same principles as its museum counterparts. Objects can either be individually contained within cell-like enclosures, or they can be arranged together in an aesthetic display reminiscent of the taxonomic displays in old natural history museums. The former option is a descendent of the specimen boxes and jars used to display and preserve biological samples. The isolation of the objects from each other makes it easier to consider each item on its own, as well as with the rest of the display in mind. Specimen most often takes on a grid organization, a simple way to arrange the "cells" and still have the display appear rationally organized. This arrangement does not usually feature any sort of glass barrier, as the cell-like containers are often enough to imply full enclosure, making patrons hesitant to touch the objects even if they are allowed to do so. In showrooms, this type of display tends to be more popular when displaying furniture and other larger items.

The taxonomic array discards the idea of individual containers. Instead, related items are carefully organized to make an aesthetically pleasing display. If the objects displayed have roughly the same form, they are often arranged in a strict grid organization. If the items vary in size and shape, this grid will often be adapted to accommodate the differing forms, or will be ignored in favor of another ordering principle that allows for the neat arrangement of the items. Unlike in the above-mentioned Specimen type, the items are not individually isolated, and as such form what is known as a "mass display," in which a large amount of product is used to create an aesthetically pleasing arrangement.[12] In showrooms, Specimen tends to be

[12] William R. Green, *The Retail Store: Design and Construction* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company Inc., 1986), 38-39.

more popular when displaying objects smaller in scale than furniture because of the amount of product required to create the necessary effect.

Visually, Specimen is another example of a visual display of information in "small multiples" as explained by statistician and information designer Edward R. Tufte. In this case, the item displayed is held constant, while the change in form or color is the change of information. This allows for an "economy of perception" as the relevant information changes. As Tufte explains, "As our eyes move from one image to the next, this constancy of design allows viewer to focus on changes in information rather that changes in graphical composition." The repetition of elements next to each other "enforces local comparison within our eye-span"[13] by allowing customers to see differences and understand contrasts. Having all variations of something right next to each other means that viewers no longer have to rely on memory. All comparisons can be made with a single glance for "uninterrupted visual reasoning."[14] Small multiples allow customers to "see, distinguish, choose."[15] In the particular case of Specimen, similar forms are placed adjacent to one another, emphasizing the differences between them. Additionally, having the full array of a particular product immediately allows the customer to understand what variations are, and are not, available.

Chronological Sequence

Specimen is one of the oldest Intypes used in showroom design. This is most likely because it is a direct appropriation from natural history museums, which had been

[13] Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1990), 28-33.

[14] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 67-68.

[15] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 33.

using the display strategy for centuries. However, Specimen is difficult to trace, due both to lack of showroom documentation, and to architectural photography that may depict a Specimen display from an unflattering angle.

One of the oldest showroom examples comes from well-known architect Morris Lapidus. Although he favored hotel and resort design in his later years, his early career was spent designing retail stores and showrooms. One of these was the private showroom for Seagram Distillers, who opened offices on two floors of the Chrysler Building after the end of Prohibition in 1933. (**Figure 8.5**) Although Lapidus designed the offices of the company in an "Elizabethan style," the showroom was "completely modern". It also had a bar. The end wall was made of "black ebonized wood" with a Specimen display of liquor bottles. The wood was punctured by round display openings organized in a grid configuration and lit so that they glowed brightly in stark contrast to the dark wood. In each "cheese hole," as they would later be called, was placed a single bottle of liquor.[16] Although not actually behind glass, the organization and detail of the display made it clear that the bottles were not to be touched. This particular display was for aesthetic purposes only—any actual samples of liquor were procured at the bar.

The 1961 Alfred Dunhill Showroom took a more taxonomic approach to Specimen. (**Figure 8.6**) In order to evoke the long history of the company, designer Patricia Harvey evoked an "old-world charm" through the use of elements that were reminiscent of

[16] Seagram Distillers Showroom [1933] Morris Lapidus, architect; New York City in Deborah Desilets, *Morris Lapidus: The Architecture of Joy* (New York: Rizolli, 2010), 114; PhotoCrd: Morris Lapidus Archives.

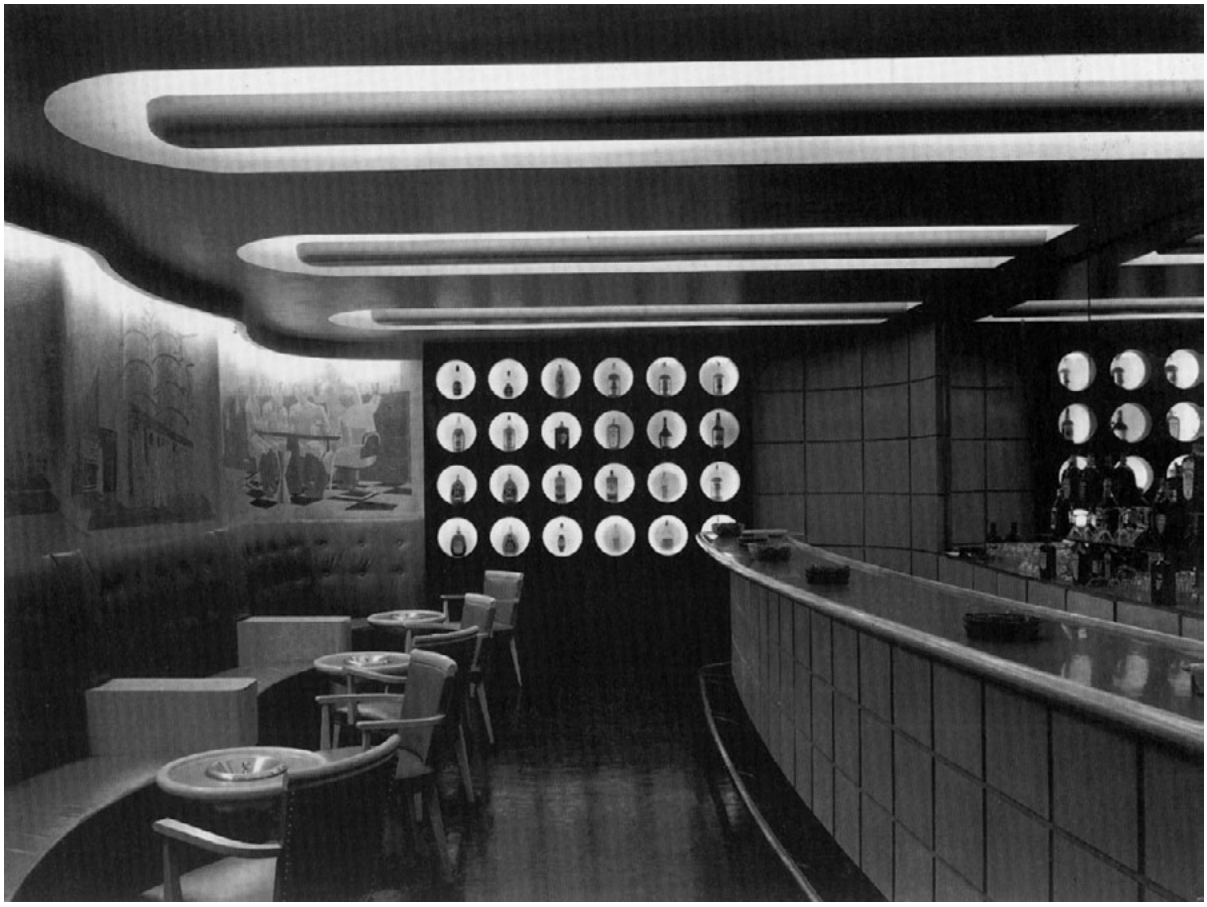

Figure 8.5. Seagram Distillers Showroom [1933] Morris Lapidus, architect; New York City in Deborah Desilets, *Morris Lapidus: The Architecture of Joy* (New York: Rizolli, 2010), 120; PhotoCrd: Morris Lapidus Archives.

the 19th century. All the cabinets in the showroom were made of a darker wood, and the brown-toned color palette was maintained in the sandalwood carpeting and beige vinyl walls. Along one wall, was a large cabinet with a Specimen of the company's pipe collection.[17] The pipes were arranged evenly spaced in ordered columns. The direction in which the pipes were displayed alternated every two rows so that the slanted lines of the pipes drew the eye of the viewer to the center of each of the four display windows. This usage of Specimen illustrated the array of pipes sold by the company, as this configuration let customers see and compare many different pipes side by side. A Specimen of a different sort could be found in the office of the president and chairman

[17] Alfred Dunhill of London Showroom [1961] Patricia Harvey, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 32, no. 4 (Apr. 1961): 176-78; PhotoCrd: Hans Van Nes.

of the board. (**Figure 8.7**) Behind the desk, was a framed display of antique pipes, carefully arranged, labeled and mounted on the wall. This Specimen was meant for display only, to be seen and appreciated.

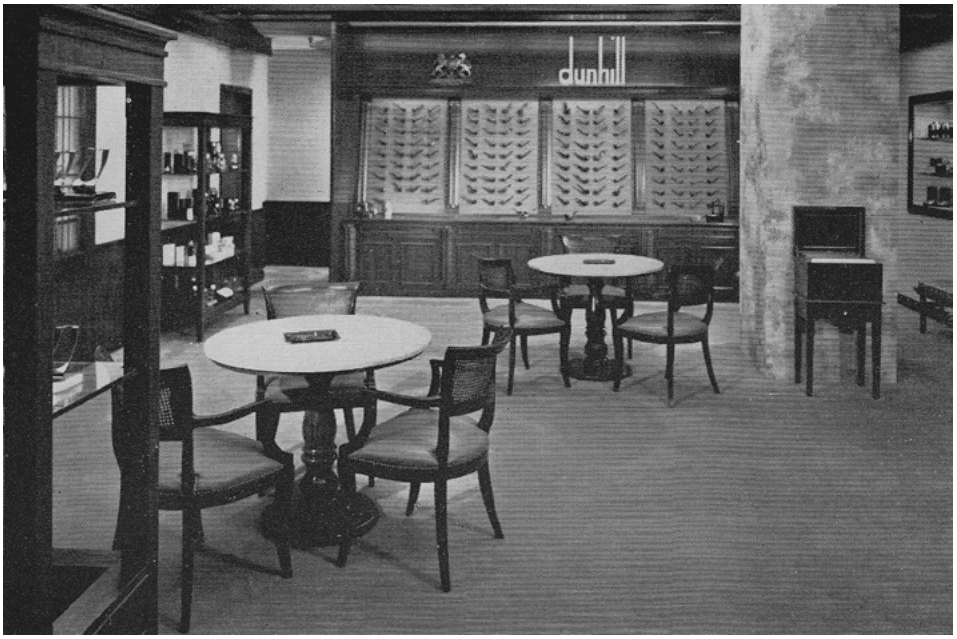

Figure 8.6. Alfred Dunhill of London Showroom [1961] Patricia Harvey, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 32, no. 4 (Apr. 1961): 176; PhotoCrd: Hans Van Nes.

Figure 8.7. Alfred Dunhill of London Showroom [1961] Patricia Harvey, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 32, no. 4 (Apr. 1961): 177; PhotoCrd: Hans Van Nes.

The Specimen in the 1966 Ernest Treganowan carpet showroom was not so derivative of natural history museum displays. (**Figure 8.8**) The display was designed only to show the "fine carpeting" of the company. To this end, designer Otto Ganttner created a space that was kept largely open so that larger rugs could be "shown full length." The floor of the showroom was also carefully considered; each different area of the showroom had a different texture so that each group of rugs could be displayed to the "best advantage." However, most interesting was the display of broadloom carpet samples. The squares of carpet were attached to specially constructed rollers, so they could be pulled out easily to show customers. When not in use, they could be pushed out of site into square shelving units, where only the front square of carpet was visible.[18] This organization strategy resulted in a Specimen of carpet samples, as each square was contained within its own wooden cell. The multitudes of broadloom samples were hidden, revealing only a select few; the grid of the display unit imposed a rigid order, while allowing the mechanism of the rollers to be concealed. In this instance, an aesthetically pleasing display was secondary to the functional needs of the showroom.

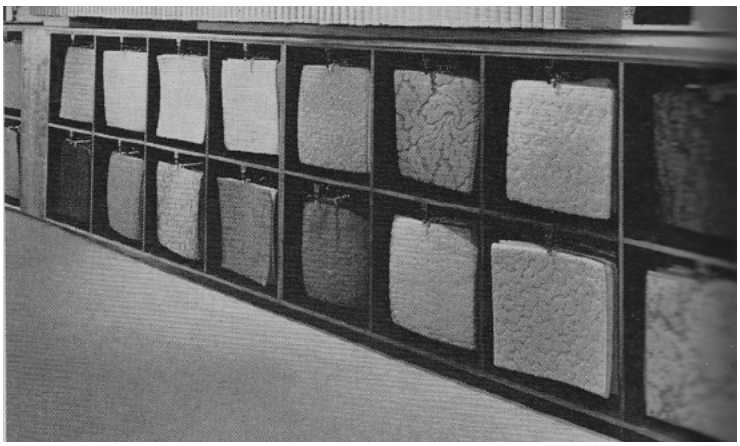

Figure 8.8. Ernest Treganowan Showroom [1966] Otto Ganttner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 37, no. 4 (Apr. 1966): 214; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[18] Ernest Treganowan Showroom [1966] Otto Ganttner, architect; New York City in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 37, no. 4 (Apr. 1966): 214; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

The “specimen box” approach became a popular method of displaying objects in showrooms. Because the gridded display unit imposed order on the objects displayed, designers found that they could group objects of dissimilar forms, although the type of object being displayed remained constant. In this way, designers extended Line-Up displays, stacking multiple arrangements on top of one another until whole walls were filled. This is how Specimen was conceived in the 1970 Fritz Hansen showroom. (**Figure 8.9**) The floor was divided into six display areas by a “modular system of pre-fabricated divider panels” with openings at eye-height. These areas housed vignettes of furniture in deliberately “room-like” settings. Along a wall a “series of wall compartments” comprised the showroom’s Specimen display. These compartments housed all of the stackable furniture made by the company.[19] In some compartments, stacking was demonstrated as multiple pieces, which sat snugly on top of another. The use of Specimen here organized the products, while also drawing attention to them; they would not be as noticeable if they had merely been placed around the perimeter of the room. Instead, the isolation of individual products within cell-like display units drew attention to their discrete forms, and by proxy, their stacking functions.

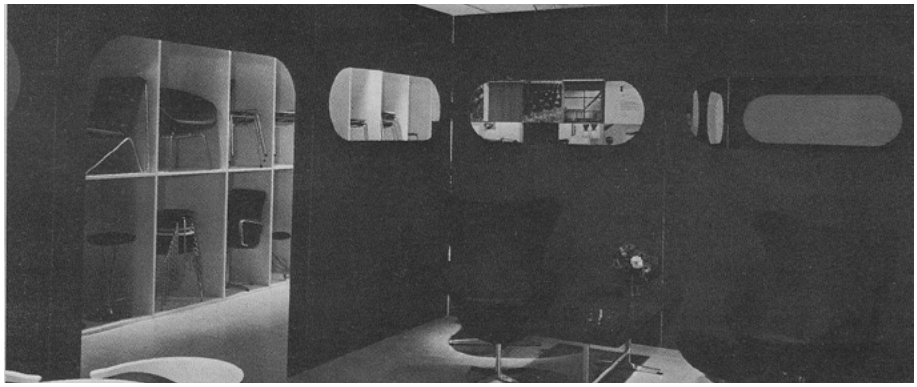

Figure 8.9. Fritz Hansen Showroom [1970] Fritz Hansen Inc., architect; New York City in Anonymous, “Market Spotlight: The Classic Look of Modern,” *Interior Design* 41, no. 1 (Jan. 1970): 38; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

[19] Fritz Hansen Showroom [1970] Fritz Hansen Inc., architect; New York City, in Anonymous, “Market Spotlight: The Classic Look of Modern,” *Interior Design* 41, no. 1 (Jan. 1970): 38; PhotoCrd: Anonymous.

During the 1970 and 1980 decades, Specimen waned in popularity, but it never fully disappeared as a strategy. For the Beylerian showroom (1981) designer Wendy Moors aligned displays vertically with the ceiling grid to enlarge the amount of open floor space. (**Figure 8.10**) To create a "focal emphasis," she placed furniture groupings "singled out for priority promotion" immediately within customers' line of sight upon entering the showroom. One of these displays was a series of chairs in a Specimen configuration arranged on clear acrylic shelves suspended from the ceiling.[20] Although not contained within the clear material, this particular display was subtly reminiscent of the old specimen jars and Vitrines used to keep biological samples in natural history museums. The verticality of this particular display opened up floor space within the showroom, and also thrust the product into the customer's line of vision, ensuring that the display could not be ignored.

Figure 8.10. Beylerian Showroom [1981] Wendy Moore, architect; New York City in M.G., "Redefining the Focus," *Interior Design* 52, no. 4 (Apr. 1981): 292; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

[20] Beylerian Showroom [1981] Wendy Moore, architect; New York City in M.G., "Redefining the Focus," *Interior Design* 52, no. 4 (Apr. 1981); 292-93; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

The Shelby Williams/Madison Furniture showroom had to function as two showrooms in one space. (**Figures 8.11 & 8.12**) To avoid creating a disjointed space, designer Richard M. Glick decided to keep the showroom as open and neutral as possible. Thus, the walls were painted a dusty salmon, and the ceiling was sand colored. The only permanent walls were for the conference room, which also functioned as a display of conference furniture. In an attempt to make the showroom "aesthetically pleasing," Glick designed a series of "plastic display cubes" that each held one chair. These were aligned against the walls of the showroom—one for each of the companies. The Specimen for the Shelby Williams area was placed against a mirrored wall, and the chairs were all upholstered in a neutral, "dusty pastel" colored material. In the Madison Furniture area of the showroom, the chairs were arranged against a salmon colored wall and upholstered in a burgundy color, like the rest of the Madison products.[21] The resulting displays unified the showroom while highlighting the differences between the two manufacturers.

Figure 8.11. Shelby Williams/Madison Furniture Showroom [1981] Richard M. Glick, architect; New York City in R.P., "Light and Lively," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 252; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath.

[21] Shelby Williams/Madison Furniture Showroom [1981] Richard M. Glick, architect; New York City in R.P., "Light and Lively," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 252, 253; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath.

Figure 8.12. Shelby Williams/Madison Furniture Showroom [1981] Richard M. Glick, architect; New York City in R.P., "Light and Lively," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 253; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath.

By the 1990s designers experimented with Specimen iterations without the grid-like display unit that had been so popular in previous decades. The Brayton International Showroom (1991) is a good example. (**Figure 8.13**) Although the majority of the space within the showroom was taken up with a large Plinth for displaying furniture, one wall was dedicated to a Specimen display. The company had a collection of "half-scale model chairs used as sales tools and thought they might somehow fit into the showroom's new scheme." Designers Larry Berger and Michael Rait mounted the model chairs in a wall in a three-by-five grid, displaying fifteen models in all. The shelves were made of one-quarter inch steel supported by cables, for a minimally invasive display mechanism. The result was a Specimen array of chairs that allowed customers to "see at a glance not only a healthy selection of chair styles, but also a range of the leathers that compose part of the textile offering."[22] The display also had the added

[22] Brayton Showroom [1991] Berger Rait, architect; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, "Brayton," *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 118-21; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

benefit of creating a visually appealing focal point on the wall, ensuring that not all of the customers' attention was drawn to the central Plinth.

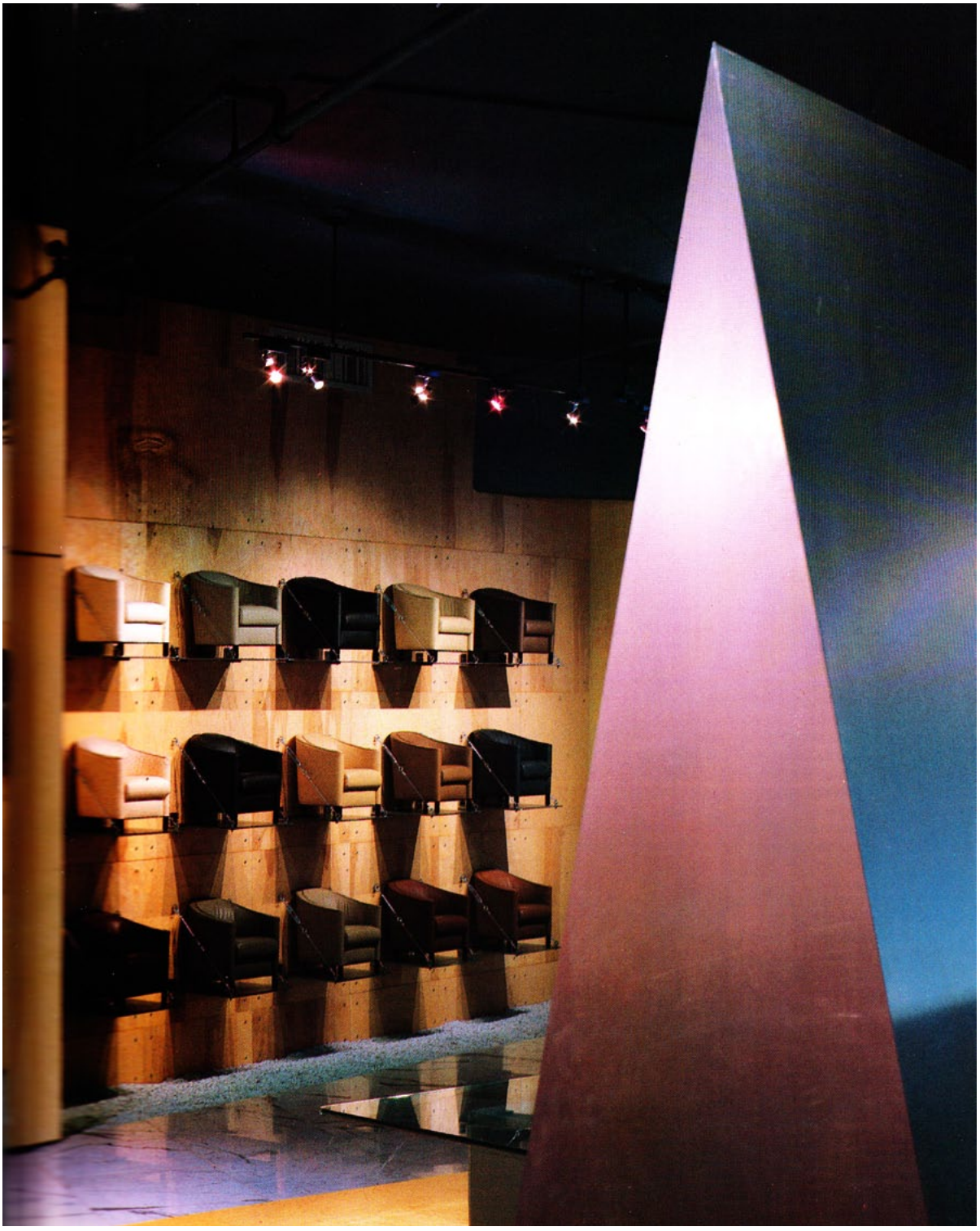

Figure 8.13. Brayton Showroom [1991] Berger Rait, architect; New York City in Edie Lee Cohen, "Brayton," *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 119; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross.

The Benetton Sportsystem Showroom (1994) took an approach that was even more reminiscent of the old taxonomic displays. (**Figures 8.14 & 8.15**) The challenge in designing this particular showroom was that it needed to house sporting goods from eleven different firms in one "relatively small" space. To do this, The Phillips Janson Group devised a single display system that would unite all the exhibitions of the products. They collaborated with graphic design firm Mobius Inc. to create a system "endowed with the utmost flexibility." The solution was a "freestanding backdrop of sandblasted glass" with "pegboard-like perforations" in a twelve-by-twelve inch grid that worked in conjunction with various mechanisms to hold items in place. This arrangement allowed "mutable assemblage, quick rearrangement and forms fit for items ranging from ski boots and rollerblades to tennis balls/racquets and sunglasses."[23] The use of Specimen unified the displays of the different sporting goods manufacturers; the space planning of the showroom allowed customers to differentiate between the brands. Thus, the showroom came across as on coherent space, rather than a shell hosting eleven different companies. The careful arrangement of items also elevated the status of the products, creating a more formal atmosphere for the space.

The idea of the specimen box was reinterpreted in 2000 for the Danilo Dolci Showroom in New York City. Designer Stephan Jaklitsch planned to incorporate the practical and aesthetic needs of the showroom into a small space. (**Figures 8.16 & 8.17**) Because his solution divided the space into "individual sales sectors" with an area for executive offices, he needed a way to unite the space. He accomplished this by

[23] Benetton Sportsystem Showroom [1994] Phillips Janson Group, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "Phillips Janson Group," *Interior Design* 65, no. 5 (May. 1994): 206-211; PhotoCrd: Whitney Cox.


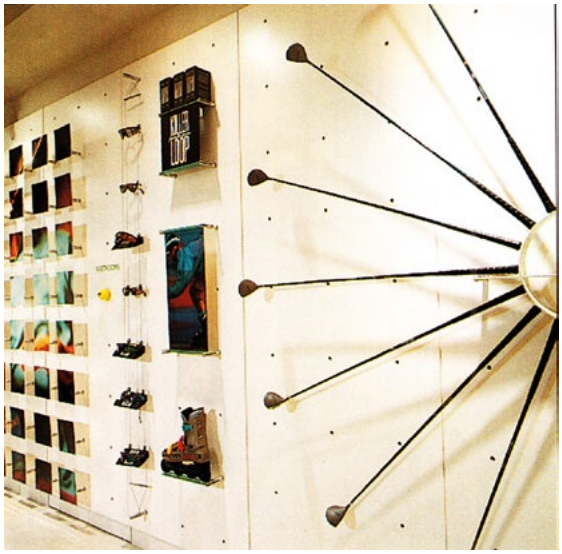

Figure 8.14. & Figure 8.15. Benetton Sportsystem Showroom [1994] Phillips Janson Group, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "Phillips Janson Group," *Interior Design* 65, no. 5 (May. 1994): 210; PhotoCrd: Whitney Cox.

creating a "perimetric wraparound skin" made of frosted acrylic panels. The element was "scored vertically and horizontally with metal grids" into which the showroom's Specimen display was built. Square display cabinets were aligned along the longest wall. Every other inset cube held a single black handbag, creating a pattern of dark points within the soft glow of the cabinet wall.[24] This particular display of Specimen isolated the products by not filling every available cube with a bag. The restraint in the amount of product on display was a strategy to demonstrate the high-end nature of the establishment, because it is generally understood in retail design that the less product on the shop floor, the more upmarket the product. The choice of black added visual uniformity to the display, allowing the shape of the handbags to vary wildly without ruining the effect of the contrasting black and white.

[24] Danilo Dolci USA Showroom [2000] Stephan Jaklitsch, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "Wrapping Caper," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 242-44; PhotoCrd: Catherine Bogert.

Figure 8.16 & Figure 8.17. Danilo Dolci Showroom [2000] Stephan Jaklitsch, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "Wrapping Caper," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 242, 244; PhotoCrd: Catherine Bogert.

The largest scale example of Specimen occurred in the 2003 Munich Mercedes Benz Center—or more accurately, outside of it. (**Figures 8.18 & 8.19**) LAI Lanz Architekten und Generalplaner used Specimen, not for the showroom, but rather for "car drivers going past the building on arterial and ring roads." The exterior of the building itself acted as "one big showcase" for new cars; the main façades were constructed to act as "glass shelves" to exhibit automobiles so they could be seen from the exterior of the building.[25] Silver cars were grouped for display through the transparent façade; each visually isolated in their own window. Although not actually contained within individual cells, the display was coordinated with the lines of the architecture to give this effect. And although people who drove by might not have the time to carefully consider each car, the message sent by the company was clear: the cars are things of glamour, like a museum artifact, to be admired and coveted.

[25] Mercedes Benz Center [2003] LAI Lanz Architekten und Generalplaner, architect; Munich, Germany in Christian Marqhart, *Mercedes Benz Brand Places: Architecture and Interior Design* (Ludwigsburg: AVedition, 2004): 96-135; PhotoCrd: Hans-Georg Esch.

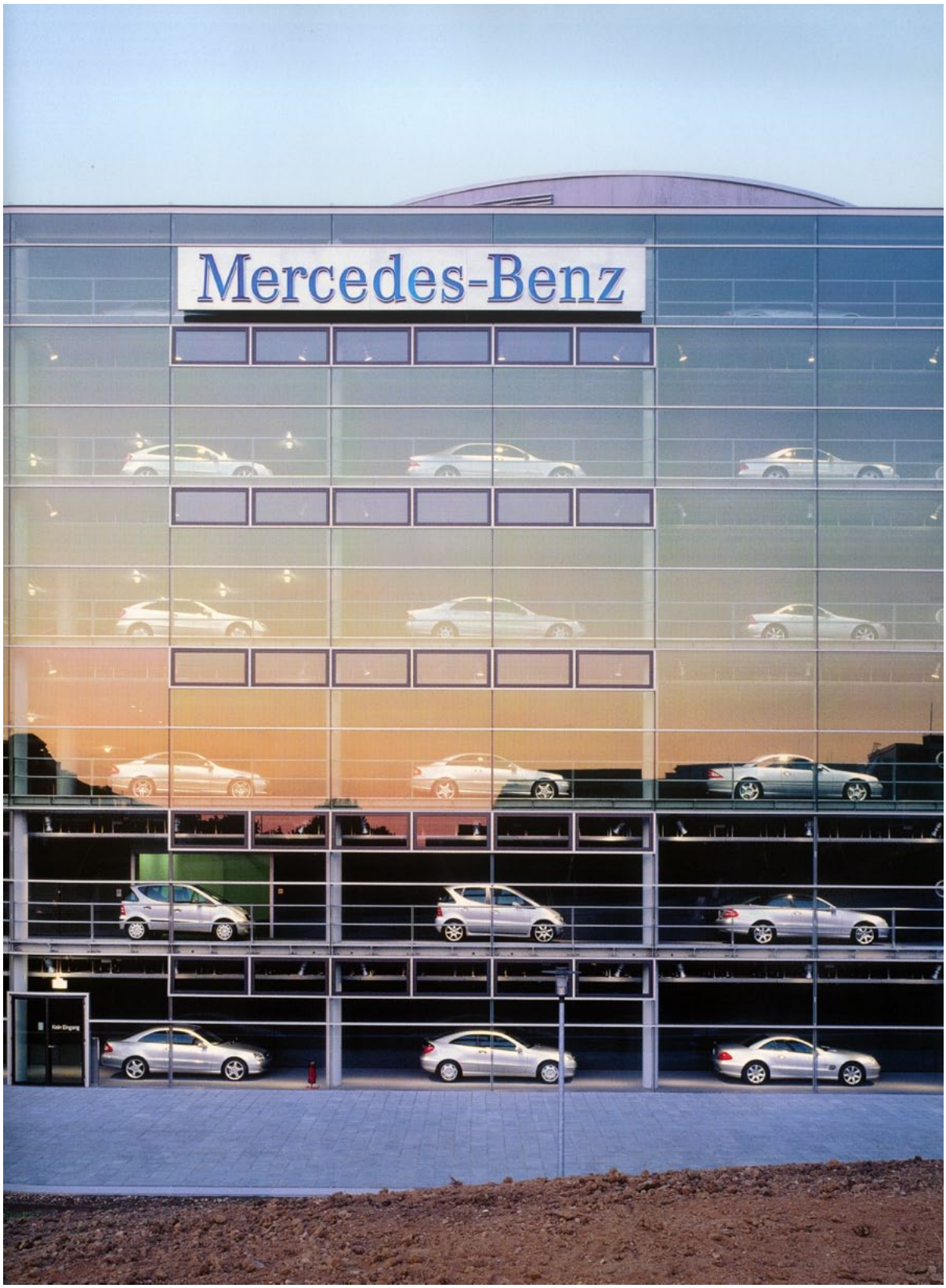

Figure 8.18. Mercedes Benz Center [2003] LAI Lanz Architekten und Generalplaner, architect; Munich, Germany, in Christian Marqhart, *Mercedes Benz Brand Places: Architecture and Interior Design* (Ludwigsburg: AVedition, 2004): 119; PhotoCrd: Hans-Georg Esch.

Figure 8.19. Mercedes Benz Center [2003] LAI Lanz Architekten und Generalplaner, architect; Munich, Germany, in Christian Marqhart, *Mercedes Benz Brand Places: Architecture and Interior Design* (Ludwigsburg: AVedition, 2004): 104; PhotoCrd: Hans-Georg Esch.

The 2006 Janus et Cie showroom in Houston, Texas by Peter Jay Zweig Architects used Specimen as the display system for the company's array of chairs. (**Figures 8.20 & 8.21**) To partition the space, the design team created over-sized display shelves, which merged the product and the architecture of the space. The "eleven-foot-tall units" acted as dividers between the showroom's vignettes, and also served as "perfect little stages for individual chairs." The large units were inserted with square

shelves, twelve per unit, each containing a single chair lit from above, so that the individual cells glowed warmly in comparison to the rest of the space. In this case, the use of Specimen gave the showroom a museum gallery-like quality that allowed the product a permanent presence on the occasions that founder and president Janice Feldman cleared away some of the vignettes to host "lavish 40-person dinners"[26] in the showroom. Specimen was an efficient way to display the large array of chairs manufactured by the company, without having to dedicate a large amount of floor space to them.

Figure 8.20 & Figure 8.21. Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen, "Garden of Earthly Delights," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134; PhotoCrd: Jorge Castillo.

In showroom design from the 1930 to 2010 decades Specimen was one of the most rigidly interpreted archetypical practices, with very little variation seen in the chronological sequence. While there is little doubt that it will continue to be employed in showroom design, it will be interesting to see whether designers will take more liberties with how they interpret such a sturdy and robust Intype.

[26] Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen "Garden of Earthly Delights," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Specimen in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1930** Seagram Distillers Showroom [1933] Morris Lapidus, architect; New York City, in Deborah Desilets, *Morris Lapidus: The Architecture of Joy* (New York: Rizolli, 2010): 120; PhotoCrd: Morris Lapidus Archives; / **1960** Alfred Dunhill of London Showroom [1961] Patricia Harvey, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "Showrooms," *Interior Design* 32, no. 4 (Apr. 1961): 176, 177; PhotoCrd: Hans Van Nes; Ernest Treganowan Showroom [1966] Otto Ganttner, architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "New Showrooms," *Interior Design* 37, no. 4 (Apr. 1961): 214; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1970** Fritz Hansen Showroom [1970] Fritz Hansen Inc., architect; New York City, in Anonymous, "Market Spotlight: The Classic Look of Modern," *Interior Design* 41, no. 1 (Jan. 1970): 38; PhotoCrd: Anonymous; / **1980** Beylerian Showroom [1981] Wendy Moore, architect; New York City, in M.G., "Redefining the Focus," *Interior Design* 52, no. 4 (Apr. 1981); 292; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross; Shelby Williams/Madison Furniture Showroom [1981] Richard M. Glick, architect; New York City, in R.P., "Light and Lively," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981); 252, 253; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath; / **1990** Brayton Showroom [1991] Berger Rait, architect; New York City, in Edie Lee Cohen, "Brayton," *Interior Design* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 119; PhotoCrd: Mark Ross; Benetton Sportsystem Showroom [1994] Phillips Janson Group, architect; New York City, in Monica Geran, "Phillips Janson Group," *Interior Design* 65, no. 5 (May. 1994): 210; PhotoCrd: Whitney Cox; / **2000** Danilo Dolci Showroom [2000] Stephan Jaklitsch, architect; New York City, in Monica Geran, "Wrapping Caper," *Interior Design* 71, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 242, 244; PhotoCrd: Catherine Bogert; Mercedes Benz Center [2003] LAI Lanz Architekten und Generalplaner, architect; Munich, Germany, in Christian Marqhart, *Mercedes Benz Brand Places: Architecture and Interior Design* (Ludwigsburg: AVedition, 2004): 104, 119; PhotoCrd: Hans-Georg Esch; Janus et Cie Showroom [2006] Peter Jay Zweig Architects, architect; Houston, TX in Edie Cohen, "Garden of Earthly Delights," *Interior Design* 77, no. 3 (Mar. 2006): 134; PhotoCrd: Jorge Castillo.

Chapter 9

Spectrum

Definition

Spectrum is a display technique in which items are arranged chromatically, exhibiting the full range of available colors as well as unifying the surfaces on which the items are arranged.

Application Definition

In showrooms, Spectrum organizes displays of products, visually uniting them and creating a focal point within the space. In showrooms Spectra became an archetypical practice because customers could view a complete array of colors, as well as make comparisons and draw distinctions between one color and another.

Similar But Different

The Intype Specimen is a display strategy in which items are arranged in a taxonomic array, often in a grid with products separated in niches or cells. If a Specimen display is arranged by chromatic order, it may also be considered a Spectrum display.

Description

In showroom design, Spectrum is most frequently used to display textile or carpet samples. There are two main reasons for this. The most common reason is that textiles and carpets usually come in the widest and brightest variety of hues among showroom products. The second reason is that textile or carpet samples are smaller scale items and are easier to use in displays that require a larger number of objects. Although the same textiles may be eventually used to upholster furniture, displaying only the textile

sample takes up much less space than trying to show the same array of color applied to furniture or other large items.

The effects of a Spectrum display in a showroom are many. Primarily, it creates a visually pleasing display that acts as a focal point within the space. The gradation of color unites the display surface, giving visual continuity to the items displayed. A sense of progression and movement through the space is also implied as the colors morph from one to another. Functionally, the chromatic arrangement of items not only allows customers to more easily find the hue they want, but also to more easily see the difference between tints and shades of the same hue. This makes the process of pinpointing an exact color from a choice of hundreds much more convenient and efficient.

Although the Intype is called Spectrum, the colors of the displayed objects do not necessarily have to be in the strict order of the visible light spectrum of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet. While the relationship of adjacent colors must be maintained, a chromatic arrangement may start with yellow or purple and still be considered a Spectrum display. Additionally, non-spectral colors like brown or pink and achromatic values such as black and white may also be integrated into the display. It is also not necessary that the colors be solid (although that is more common), as long as a predominant color is discernible from the pattern.

Spectrum is similar to the Specimen display practice, especially if the displayed

objects have been arranged with an obvious grid in mind. The effect, however, is slightly different. Although the strategy of both displays is often to allow the viewer to contemplate one object in the context of many similar but different objects, Specimen displays rarely create the same sense of movement or progression typical of Spectrum displays, because the field of objects is uniform. Additionally, the objects in Specimen displays may be more generously spaced than the items in a Spectrum display, as the effect of one continuous object field is not necessarily desired. Generally speaking, Spectrum is about color, while Specimen is about form. It is also possible, though less common, to see Spectrum displays in a Line-Up[1] configuration. In short, while Spectrum displays are often seen in a Specimen configuration, it is by no means a defining feature of the Intype.

Effect

Spectrum is derived from the spectral ordering of the colors produced by visible light. When white light is passed through a prism (or any other medium in which light travels slower than air), it changes speed, causing it to bend, or refract. The degree to which the light is bent is dependent on two things: the medium through which it is travelling, and the wavelength of the light. Because white light is made up of many different wavelengths of light, it separates out into its constituent spectrum of colors. The correlation between perceived color and wavelength is roughly this: red (627-780 nm), orange (589-627 nm), yellow (566-589 nm), green (495-566 nm), blue (436-495 nm),

[1] The Intype Line-Up describes the practice of arranging a line of evenly spaced objects or pieces of furniture in a single row. It is discussed in-depth in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

and violet (380-436 nm).[2] Of course, this range only covers the wavelengths visible to humans; the entire electromagnetic spectrum is in fact much larger. Wavelengths larger than 780 nanometers become infrared, microwaves, radio & television, and then long-waves. Wavelengths smaller than 380 nanometers become ultraviolet, x-rays, and then gamma-rays.

The perception of color is a very subjective thing. Although there are theoretically an infinite number of colors along the visible spectrum, the number of colors is in practice limited by human perception. Just as some people are able to hear more acutely than others, some people may be more finely tuned to color perception than others. The number of perceived hues is also inextricably tied to linguistics. After all, if there are only a fixed number of color terms, the ability to distinguish different hues is going to be similarly limited. This phenomenon was explored by anthropologist Brent Berlin and linguist Paul Kay in *Basic Color Terms: Their Theory and Evolution*. The authors explain: "if a language encodes fewer than eleven basic color categories, then there are strict limitations on which categories it may encode." At the most basic level, all languages have terms for black (dark, cool colors) and white (light, warm colors). After that, color terms may then be added to the vocabulary in the following order: red, green or yellow (but not both), green and yellow, blue, brown, and then finally purple, pink, orange, grey or some combination of them.[3] It is not difficult to imagine that the spectral ordering of colors may be more difficult or non-existent in cultures with only three color terms, than in those with more.

[2] Frank H. Mahnke, *Color, Environment and Human Response* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996), 6-7.

[3] Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Theory and Evolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 2-3.

Although humans have been studying "all manner of spectra, including those formed by prisms" since antiquity, the spectral arrangement of colors, with which most people today are familiar, has not always been intuitive or obvious. Before the 17th century, no one was sure where color came from. Aristotle believed that color was caused by a mixture of light and darkness, while Plato suggested that colors were caused by corpuscles emitted by the body. During the European Renaissance Leonardo da Vinci advised the "seeker of spectra" to examine radish roots that had been kept for a long time in stagnant water.[4] No connection was made between the color ordering of rainbows and a unified theory of color, until the 17th century when the significance of optical spectra was discovered.

It was not until Isaac Newton completed his own experiments with prisms that spectra, "whether seen around radish roots or through prisms," were seen as the key to any theory of color. Not only did he realize that white light dispersed into the colors of the visible spectrum, he also realized that "among natural light phenomena, the rainbow and related forms of the solar spectrum are unique in presenting colors in an invariant order."[5] Nowadays, children are taught to remember the sequence of color names as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, sometimes indigo, and violet or purple. These names identify the main hues of the visible spectrum and the "major varieties of color other than black and white." As Patricia Sloane theorizes in *The Visual Nature of Color*, this is not because there is some value to knowing the order of the colors in the spectrum, but because this act "reflects the belief that the hues are found in their purest or most

[4] Patricia Sloane, *The Visual Nature of Color* (New York: Design Press, 1989), 62-63.
[5] Sloane, *The Visual Nature,* 62-63.

typical form in the spectrum."[6]

Displaying items in chromatic order is a common "mass display" strategy in retail and showroom design, because a certain number of products are required to achieve the desired effect of the arrangement. Spectrum displays are used for three reasons: first, they "create a strong mass of single colors," which is generally aesthetically pleasing to customers and creates a focal point within the showroom. Second, Spectrum helps customers find a specific color, as color distinction is easier when similar colors are placed next to one another. Another third advantage is that such a display "offers more visual impact"[7] than if the products were displayed in isolation.

Because of the amount of product needed to make a coherent arrangement, mass displays are most often used with smaller items, which often "require the visual impact of the massing."[8] In showrooms, this often means textile samples, as the vast color array and small size make them perfect for a Spectrum organization. In retail design, it could be used on anything, from handbags to clothing, as long as the item came in enough different colors. Japanese clothing retailer UNIQLO used a virtual version of this strategy on a website anticipating the opening of a flagship store in Taipei, Taiwan.[9] (**Figure 9.1**) In retail specifically, massing displays are also commonly used with inexpensive or moderately priced items. In showroom design, this is less applicable,

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[6] Sloane, *The Visual Nature,* 187.

[7] William R. Green, *The Retail Store: Design and Construction* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company Inc., 1986), 38.

[8] Green, *The Retail Store*, 39.

[9] Poe, "UNIQLO Taipei – Dedicated Website Opens," *Freshness* (August 24, 2010): http://www.freshnessmag.com/2010/08/24/uniqlo-taiwan-dedicated-website-opens/ (accessed Jul. 1, 2011).

because the items comprising a Spectrum display are not usually for individual sale. In some cases, Spectrum may be used to organize larger, more expensive items like furniture if the colors are varied enough to accommodate it.

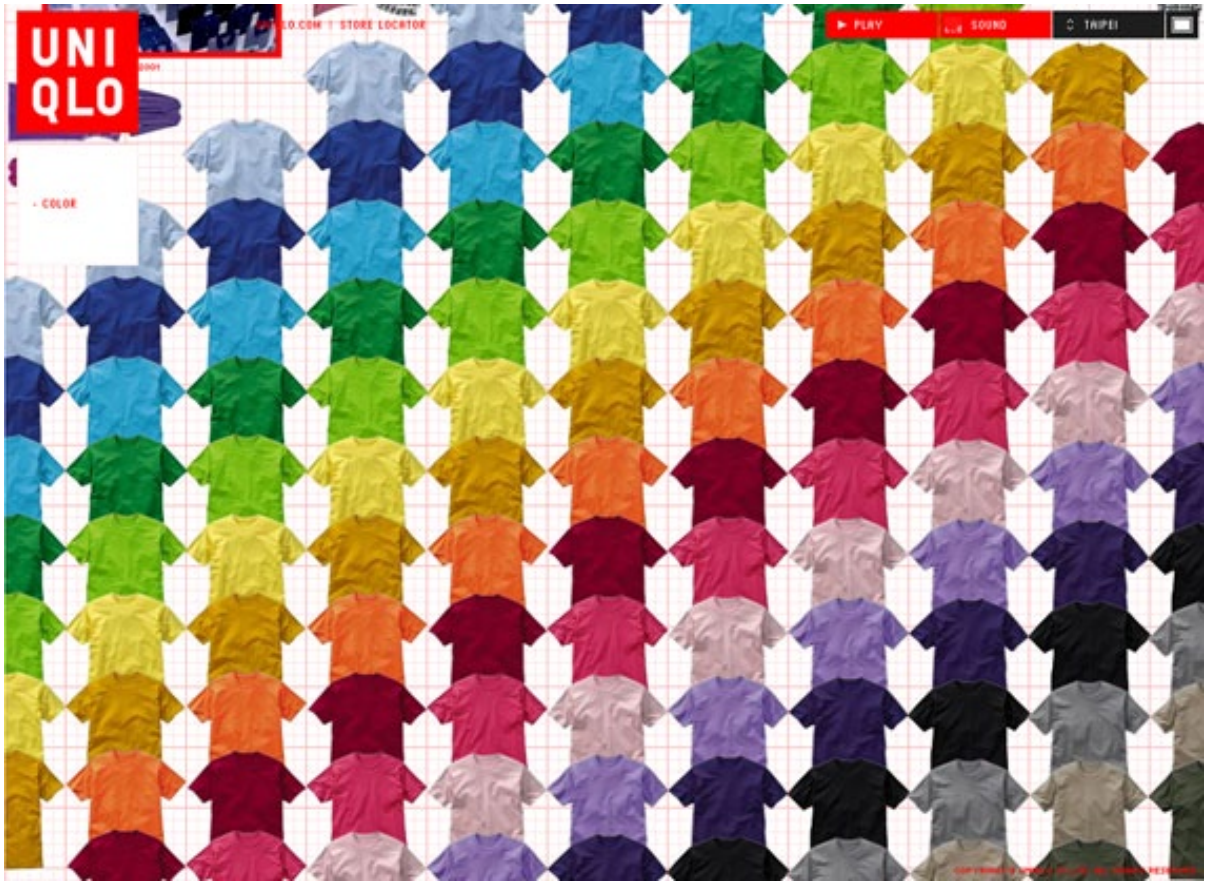

Figure 9.1. UNIQLO Taipei Website "uniqlo-taiwan-dedicated-website-opens-03.jpg" in Poe, "UNIQLO Taipei – Dedicated Website Opens," *Freshness* (August 24, 2010): http://www.freshnessmag.com/2010/08/24/uniqlo-taiwan-dedicated-website-opens/(accessed Jul. 1, 2011).

Strategically, Spectrum, like Specimen and Line-Up, is another example of a visual display of information in small multiples. In Spectrum, the item displayed is held constant, while the change in color is the change of information. This allows for an "economy of perception" as the relevant information (in this case, an item's color and nothing else) changes. Statistician and information designer Edward R. Tufte explains, "As our eyes move from one image to the next, this constancy of design allows viewer

to focus on changes in information rather that changes in graphical composition." The repetition of elements next to each other "enforces local comparison within our eye-span"[10] by allowing customers to select the differences and understand the contrasts. Having all variations of something right next to another means that viewers no longer have to rely on memory to compare objects. All comparisons can be made with a single glance for "uninterrupted visual reasoning."[11] Small multiples allow customers to "see, distinguish, choose."[12] The Spectral arrangement into loose hue groupings also gives an indication of whether a specific color may lean a bit toward one hue or another.

Chronological Sequence

It is likely that Spectrum existed as a display strategy before the 1960 decade, but the lack of color photography in trade magazines, such as *Interior Design* and *Architectural Record,* before 1970, makes it challenging to establish a longer timeline.

However, one of the earliest uses is the 1967 Edward Fields carpet showroom. (**Figure 9.2**) The designer, William Raiser, dedicated a "color room" at one end of the main display area. Here, "more than 10,000" different colors of wool were displayed chromatically on a table holding small tufts of wools, as well as on a wall display holding much larger spools of yarn.[13] Although the photo published in *Interior Design* was black and white, the accompanying article text confirms that this was in fact

[10] Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1990), 28-33.

[11] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 67-68.

[12] Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, 33.

[13] Edward Fields Showroom [1967] William Raiser, architect; Los Angeles, CA, in Anonymous, "Edward Fields: Carpet Entrepreneur," *Interior Design* 38, no. 9 (Sep. 1967): 102; PhotoCrd: Louis Reens.

Spectrum.

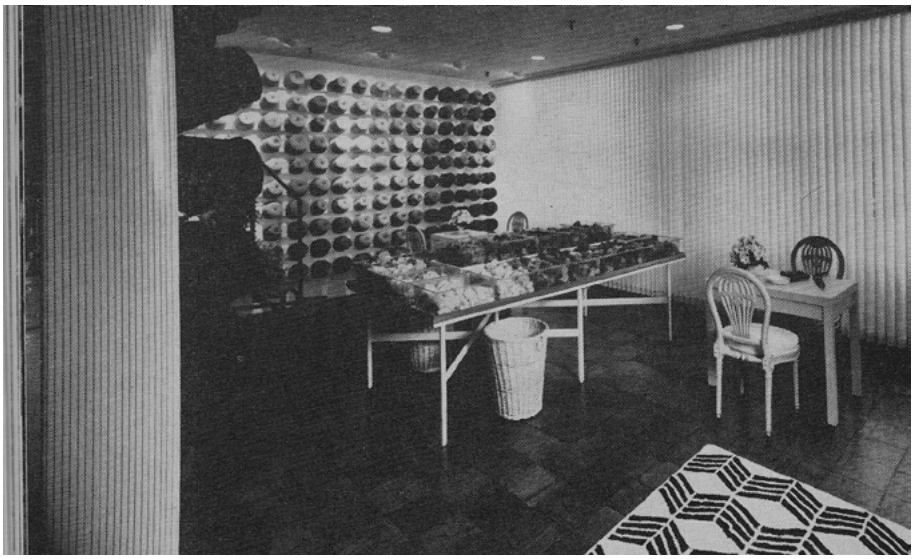

Figure 9.2. Edward Fields Showroom [1967] William Raiser, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Anonymous, "Edward Fields: Carpet Entrepreneur," *Interior Design* 38, no. 9 (Sep. 1967): 102; PhotoCrd: Louis Reens.

The display strategy became more frequent in the 1970 decade—whether this was because designers were using Spectrum more frequently, or because the magazines were photographing its use more frequently due to color photography is unknown. In 1977 designer Sally Walsh designed the Knoll showroom as a White Box Intype.[14] The space was deliberately kept in neutral colors, because "a pronounced color would have been distracting to customers making product selections." Knoll's neutral envelope strategy allowed customers to "visualize whatever schemes they [were] planning for specific jobs." The emphasis was on "changes in textures: leathers against canvas against hand-woven textiles." A large Spectrum display along one of that space's main walls became a focal point. (**Figure 9.3**) "Pigeon-hole storage units"[15] held

[14] The Intype White Box describes an undecorated space with white walls, white ceiling and a continuous neutral floor, originated in 1927 as clean envelope, a bare white architecture. An influential 1930 MoMA exhibition secured it as a museum aesthetic. Its use in showroom design is discussed in-depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[15] Knoll Showroom [1977] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 180-181; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries.

memo samples of fabric arranged in color order, starting with yellow on the right and transitioning to the achromatic neutrals on the far left. The height of the unit (eight-feet-6-inches) accommodated color gradation from the top to the bottom. The lack of competing colors in the Knoll showroom ensured that the Spectrum of fabric samples stood out and also unified the entire wall.

Figure 9.3. Knoll Showroom [1977] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 180; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries.

In the Atlanta Edward Fields Showroom (1978), a Spectrum yarn-wall made a reappearance.[16] (**Figure 9.4**) This time, however, the photography of the space was in color. Along one small wall of the space, all the different colors of yarn available for carpet customization were mounted on individual spools. The different hues of the yarn changed gradually from left to right, while the tints and shades of those hues changed from top to bottom, with the lighter versions of the colors on the top, and the darker versions on the bottom. On the floor and adjacent wall, different carpets were placed—

[16] Edward Fields Showroom [1978] Anonymous, architect; Atlanta, GA in Anonymous, "A Photographic Tour of ADAC Showrooms," *Interior Design* 49, no. 2 (Feb. 1978): 164-65; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

perhaps to give buyers an idea of how different colors could be utilized to create a more aesthetically pleasing carpet. As in the Los Angeles Edward Fields installation ten years earlier, the yarn wall may have been intended to serve a practical purpose, rather than a purely aesthetic one. During the 1970 to 1979 era, it was common to see the colorful Spectrum used against an otherwise neutral background, and often in a White Box.

Figure 9.4. Edward Fields Showroom [1978] Anonymous, architect; Atlanta, GA, in Anonymous, "A Photographic Tour of ADAC Showrooms," *Interior Design* 49, no. 2 (Feb. 1978): 165; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce.

In the 1980 to 1989 period, however, Spectrum was arranged against a black background—perhaps not entirely surprising, because the number of spaces utilizing the Black Out Intype[17] reached its peak during this decade. The 1981 GF Business Equipment showroom made dramatic use of walls covered with "glossy black plastic laminates" that allowed the many systems furniture displays to stand out against this "non-distinctive background color."[18] (**Figure 9.5**) A Spectrum of upholstery choices were arranged in several wide and narrow niches, similar to shadow boxes. The hues displayed varied by the columns in which they were arranged, but there was little tone variation within the columns of fabric. Because the display was limited to particularly bright hues, Spectrum visually pops against the black wall, drawing attention to what would otherwise be an ordinary surface.

Figure 9.5. GF Business Equipment Showroom [1981] Carol Groh, architect; New York City, in M.G., "GF by GN," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 250; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath.

[17] The Intype Black Out is an interior space or room entirely consisting of black shades for walls, floors, ceilings and furnishings. It was described in-depth in a previous chapter of this thesis.

[18] GF Business Equipment Showroom [1981] Carol Groh, architect; New York City in M.G., "GF by GN," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 250-50; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath.

The MDC showroom (1983) took it one step further by establishing Spectrum in a completely black space. (**Figure 9.6**) Designer Eva Maddox conceived a "clean, architectural image" for the company's first showroom in the Chicago Merchandise Mart. She turned to traditional Japanese design's grid that permeated the resulting space completely, giving the space "discipline and crispness" in a "gentle, subtle, way." This was a deliberate strategy to play up the "sharpness and brilliance" of the colorful textiles and wall coverings on display in the showroom. The largest display was one of wall coverings arranged in a Spectrum in twelve-by-twelve-inch panels, creating a "dazzling mosaic of warm-to-cool colors." Because these displays were the only sources of color in the showroom, there was "an almost electric intensity"[19] to the displays. The contrast of the dark space and exuberantly bright colors worked to draw customers into the showroom.

Figure 9.6. MDC Showroom [1983] Eva Maddox, architect; Chicago, IL, in J.G.T., "Grid Works," *Interior Design* 54, no. 12 (Dec. 1983): 194; PhotoCrd: Orlando Cabanban.

[19] MDC Showroom [1983] Eva Maddox, architect; Chicago, IL, in J.G.T., "Grid Works," *Interior Design* 54, no. 12 (Dec. 1983): 194-195; PhotoCrd: Orlando Cabanban.

The 1986 Maharam showroom took a similar approach to the display of its textiles, although this particular design did not rely so heavily on the expression of the grid. (**Figure 9.7**) Instead, the space was defined by "a series of freestanding geometric volumes" that defined circulation within the space and acted as display elements for all the textiles. These split forms — two cubes and a cylinder — allowed the numerous swatches and samples of textiles to be exhibited on their internal and external faces. On the surfaces of these forms, small samples of textiles were arranged in color order, creating a tight grid of swatches. Because the swatches were so small in size, the effect of the Spectrum was exaggerated; the colors seemingly blended together to create one large swatch whose color transitioned seamlessly from one to another. Once again, a Black Out space provided the greatest contrast to the product, and to emphasize it further "only the fabric displays [were] spotlighted,"[20] leaving the rest of the showroom in darkness.

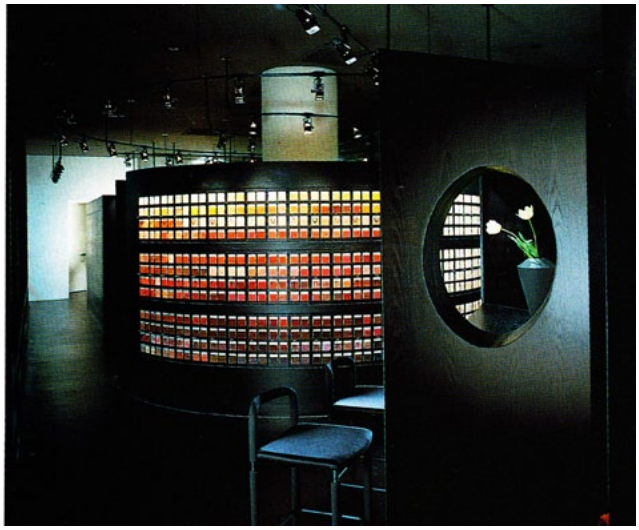

Figure 9.7. Maharam Showroom [1986] Kaneko Ford Design, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Lee Cohen, "Maharam, LA," *Interior Design* 57, no. 7 (Dec. 1986): 224; PhotoCrd: Roland Bishop.

[20] Maharam Showroom [1986] Kaneko Ford Design, architect; Los Angeles, CA in Edie Lee Cohen, "Maharam, LA," *Interior Design* 57, no. 7 (Dec. 1986): 222-25; PhotoCrd: Roland Bishop.

By the late 1980 decade, and the early 1990 decade, designers began to realize that Spectrum did not necessary need to be arranged in a rigid scheme. The 1993 Edelman Leathers showroom is a good example of an organization that was more informal than the arrangements of previous decades. (**Figure 9.8**) This was a deliberate move by the design firm HTI/Space Design International, who created the showroom. They wanted to "cast full focus" on displayed leathers, almost "to the exclusion of the carefully crafted surround." The leathers were draped softly over rolling steel racks, creating a contrast between materials that emphasized the "softness and warmth"[21] of the product. Unlike other examples of Spectrum, this one was placed on a movable framework, allowing and encouraging customers to interact with the product. The draping of the leather over a frame, rather than mounting it on a wall, or placing it among a densely packed shelf, encouraged the customer to touch the material and to take it off the rack and examine it.

Figure 9.8. Edelman Leathers Showroom [1993] HTI/Space Design International, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "HTI/SDI," *Interior Design* 64, no. 9 (Sep. 1993): 218; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

[21] Edelman Leathers Showroom [1993] HTI/Space Design International, architect; New York City in Monica Geran, "HTI/SDI," *Interior Design* 64, no. 9 (Sep. 1993): 218-19; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige.

The Robert Allen showroom (1993) also kept the focus on the product rather than on the architecture of the space. (**Figure 9.9**) A renovation of a previous showroom, the design left most of the original architectural features intact—"sleek lines, dramatically curved shapes and deep rich tones". Interior architect Teresa Galiani created new product displays to capture customer interest and subtly influence the traffic flow of the space. One wall was "filled with chairs seeming to burst through at different angles." A spiraling, black, sample card wall was located in the center of the space; it was comprised of numerous tiny material samples arranged chromatically.[22] Instead of being mounted in a grid configuration, each of the cards (attached at its corner) created a field of colored diamond-like shapes. Like the 1988 Maharam showroom, the size of the sample cards influenced how Spectrum was perceived. The field of cards as a whole resembled colorful scales that slowly changed color from one end of the display wall to the other. The arrangement encouraged visitors to circulate along the full length of the display.

The 2005 Tai Ping carpet showroom returned to the rigid expression of earlier Spectrum reiterations. (**Figure 9.10**) The showroom, designed by Matthew Baird Design, was meant to show the company's "ancient Chinese roots and its fresh ideas." The design was said to evoke the feeling of "traditional Beijing courtyard houses," especially the slow, ceremonial entryways. The colors of the space and the displays of carpets and materials brought contemporary elements into the space. On the walls, behind clear glass cases, various brightly colored carpets were displayed. One wall

[22] Robert Allen Showroom [1993] Teresa Galiani, architect; Chicago, IL in Andrea Loukin, "Robert Allen," *Interior Design* 64, no. 10 (Oct. 1993): 150-51; PhotoCrd: Bruce Van Inwegen.

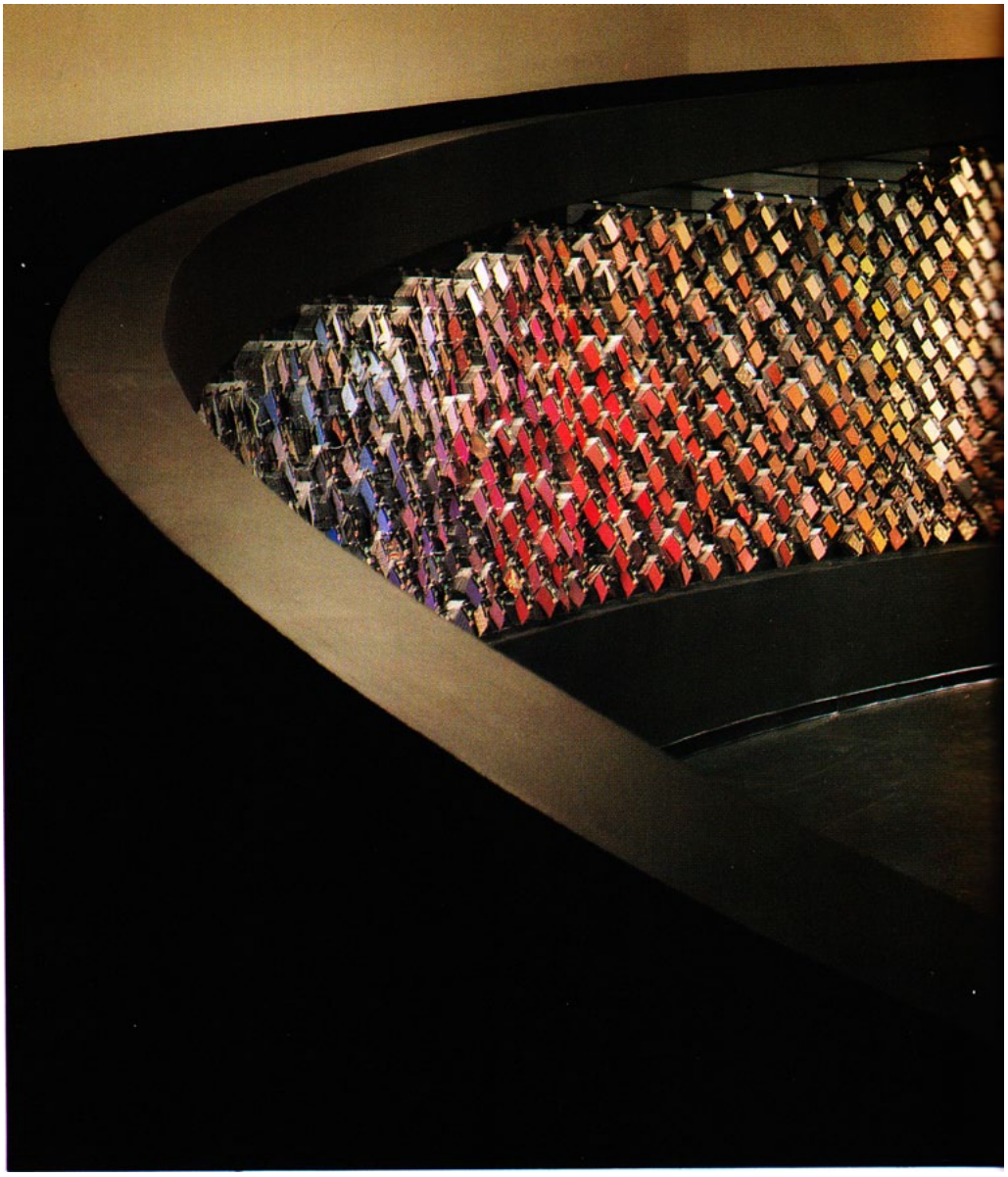

Figure 9.9. Robert Allen Showroom [1993] Teresa Galiani, architect; Chicago, IL in Andrea Loukin, "Robert Allen," *Interior Design* 64, no. 10 (Oct. 1993): 150; PhotoCrd: Bruce Van Inwegen.

featured a Spectrum of "350 spools of colorful wool yarn" encased in a Vitrine.[23] Unlike the Edward Fields carpet showrooms of the 1960s, the Tai Ping showroom was not really meant for the customers. For them, smaller Spectrum boxes held all the available yarn colors. These allowed the representatives to show the samples to customers at

[23] Tai Ping Showroom [2005] Matthew Baird Design, architect; New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Happiness," *Interior Design* 76, no. 9 (Jul. 2005): 156-61; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

designated tables, or even on visits to client firms. The function of the yarn display was to create an aesthetically pleasing focal point within the space.

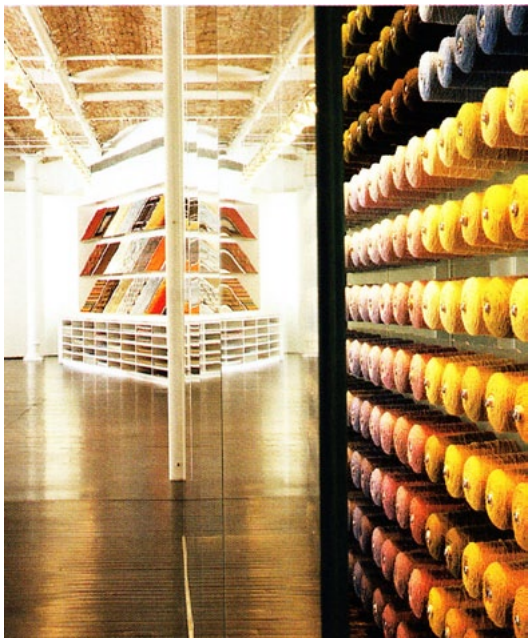

Figure 9.10. Tai Ping Showroom [2005] Matthew Baird Design, architect; New York City in Craig Kellogg, "Double Happiness," *Interior Design* 76, no. 9 (Jul. 2005): 158; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel.

The Kartell showroom (1999) in New York City is a rare example of Spectrum using furniture. The open floor space of the SoHo showroom was not large enough to display the wide array of candy-colored plastic furniture the company manufactures. However, the space possessed rather high ceilings, resulting in a large amount of wall-space. In order to fully utilize the verticality of the space, glass shelves supported by steel cables were suspended from the ceiling. Various examples of the company's plastic furniture were then placed on these shelves in a Spectrum arrangement. Although the showroom was initially designed in 1999, as of July 2011, the initial Spectrum had expanded from one wall to two and on parallel walls, morphing from green to white on

one side and from red to blue on the other.[24] (**Figures 9.11 & 9.12**) Kartell's Spectrum system proved to be particularly flexible, as there is photographic documentation that Spectrum has been displayed on only one wall of the showroom in the past.[25] (**Figure 9.13**) Kartell's Spectrum using large objects demonstrated a wider variety of product than would be able to fit on the floor of the showroom, while also creating a spectacle.

Figure 9.13. Kartell Showroom [1999] Ferruccio Laviani, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Beth Dickstein, 17 Apr. 2010; PhotoCrd.: Beth Dickstein, 17 Apr. 2010.

The display of color samples is an enduring archetype in showrooms, a practice that is unlikely to be discarded. Although Spectrum has been almost exclusively implemented for the display of textiles and carpets, Kartell's Spectrum in its SoHo showroom offers a distinct departure in terms of the type and size of objects to be displayed. Whether or not this is indicative of a larger trend in Spectrum arrangements remains to be seen.

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[24] Kartell Showroom [1999] Ferruccio Laviani, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 2 Jul. 2011.

[25] Beth Dickstein, "Your Mom Likes Design," *A Modern Eye* (April 23, 2010): http://amoderneye.blogspot.com/2010/04/transplanted-denverite-living-in-new.html (accessed Jul. 1, 2011).

Figure 9.11 & Figure 9.12. Kartell Showroom [1999] Ferruccio Laviani, architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 2 Jul. 2011; PhotoCrd.: Courtney Cheng, Intypes Project, 2 Jul. 2011.

Evidence for the archetypical use and the chronological sequence of Spectrum in the showroom practice type was developed from the following sources: **1960** Edward Fields Showroom [1967] William Raiser, architect; Los Angeles, CA, in Anonymous, "Edward Fields: Carpet Entrepreneur," *Interior Design* 38, no. 9 (Sep. 1967): 102; PhotoCrd: Louis Reens; / **1970** Knoll Showroom [1977] Sally Walsh, architect; Houston, TX, in Anonymous, "The Knoll Showroom in Houston," *Interior Design* 48, no. 3 (Mar. 1977): 180; PhotoCrd: Stan Ries; Edward Fields Showroom [1978] Anonymous, architect; Atlanta, GA, in Anonymous, "A Photographic Tour of ADAC Showrooms," *Interior Design* 49, no. 2 (Feb. 1978): 165; PhotoCrd: Jaime Ardiles-Arce; / **1980** GF Business Equipment Showroom [1981] Carol Groh, architect; New York City, in M.G., "GF by GN," *Interior Design* 52, no. 8 (Aug. 1981): 250; PhotoCrd: Norman McGrath; MDC Showroom [1983] Eva Maddox, architect; Chicago, IL, in J.G.T., "Grid Works," *Interior Design* 54, no. 12 (Dec. 1983): 194; PhotoCrd: Orlando Cabanban; Maharam Showroom [1986] Kaneko Ford design, architect; Los Angeles, CA, in Edie Lee Cohen, "Maharam, LA," *Interior Design* 57, no. 7 (Dec. 1986): 224; PhotoCrd: Roland Bishop; / **1990** Edelman Leathers Showroom [1993] HTI/Space Design International, architect; New York City, in Monica Geran, "HTI/SDI," *Interior Design* 64, no. 9 (Sep. 1993): 218; PhotoCrd: Peter Paige; Robert Allen Showroom [1993] Teresa Galiani, architect; Chicago, IL, in Andrea Loukin, "Robert Allen," *Interior Design* 64, no. 10 (Oct. 1993): 150; PhotoCrd: Bruce Van Inwegen; / **2000** Tai Ping Showroom [2005] Matthew Baird Design, architect; New York City, in Craig Kellogg, "Double Happiness," *Interior Design* 76, no. 9 (Jul. 2005): 158; PhotoCrd: Eric Laignel; / **2010** Kartell Showroom [1999] Ferruccio Laviani architect; New York City; Site Visit, Courtney Cheng, 2 Jul. 2011; PhotoCrd.: Courtney Cheng, Intypes Project, 2 Jul. 2011.

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