SPAN

Span the Boundary between Space and Graphics

The book features a variety of graphic elements and their application in different spaces. The visual elements do not only display the philosophy of spatial decoration, but also create a great interaction with audience; SPAN has insight into the visual relationship between graphics and space. The selected projects refer to installation, stand, interior graphics, exterior graphics and wallcovering. Graphics and Space-old topic, new attempt, SPAN brings you unique visual experience.

Preface

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What do we commonly mean by the expression Graphic Design?

Graphic design is the art of selecting and displaying on a given support visual elements – as like typographic texts, images, colours and symbols – aiming to communicate a message to an audience which is often previously ideally selected and singled out as the preferential addressee of the same message.

It may be considered, by just title, as a language made not only of fonts, photographs and drawings, but also of plays on words, hints, symbols, allusions, cultural references and perceptive deductions involving both our intelligence and sight, and "those who speak such language, graphic designers – as Adrian Shaughnessy says - usually are rather brilliant peoples or, at least, are peoples used to ask themselves questions, culturally conscious and gifted with quite perceptive minds, as for as signs are concerned". An important part of these peoples' task consists of combining verbal and visual elements with the aim of forming a tidy and efficaciously communicative whole. Graphic Design is actually a, so to say, collaborative discipline: writers write texts and headlines, illustrators and photographers create images, and graphic designers skilfully assemble their works together in order to create a complete visual communication. They normally don't consider themselves as artists, but usually are very much concerned with art.

What do we mean, on the other side, by Interior Design?

Should I reduce the definition of such discipline to lowest terms I would say that it is a practice which has to do with whatever can be part of an interior space – lights, doors, finishings, partitions, technical systems, furnitures – and even with its same wrapper, should it be masonry or anything else.

Spite of this descriptive simplification the interior designer's work is a rather complex practice, implying the knowledge of architecture, product design, technology of different materials, environmental psychology...; and, though the two expressions Interior Design and Interior Decoration are often used to indicate a same discipline, each of them is actually characterized by a different range of action: while the first one, in fact, implies the management and handling of spatial elements and factors, the second is rather oriented towards defining and organizing the movable and ornamental parts of the architectural interior space, as like furniture, finishings, accessories and proper decoration.

The product of Interior Design, as well as the one of Graphic Design, is something that – consciously or not - people deal with every day but, funny enough, they seldom spend their time considering the (positive or negative) impact it has on their lifestyle.

Now, can these two disciplines contaminate each other, or even be practiced on a same project?

They certainly can, and the present book supplies us with a vast inventory of what such contamination may produce. Graphic art may be applied to Interior Design in many different ways, starting from signs' systems to end up with scene and set designing, passing through a whole series of intermediate and

extremely various alternatives. Most peoples would tend to think that, when resorting to graphics in order to integrate an interior design project, graphic designers cannot help stopping on the threshold of mere decorativism, not being able to trespass it and so contribute, for example, to define the spatial factors of a private or public interior. This, although mostly deliberate, is often true; in such cases we face works where the two mentioned disciplines cohabit expressing themselves on parallel levels, superimposing somehow to each other, but never fully permeating one another.

Although such method, when consciously and skilfully practiced, may give results of great efficacy, there are other cases – and they are the ones I find more interesting – where graphic signs transmute into shape and space or even (like in the extraordinary Oki Stato/Nendo's project Alice's Tea Party, to which the cover of this book is devoted), thanks to artifices which are typical of scene design and drawing techniques, attains to visually alter physical dimensions of interiors. When visiting spaces treated this way our senses are somehow destabilized by the illusory distortions generated by such geometries, and this induces us to perceive the surrounding environment in a different way. Optical illusions conceived by designers leave then room to alternative interpretations, thus stimulating us to go deeper down into the space where we are and try to understand how it can influence our behaviours.

Some other projects, as like "Branch in Changchun" and, even more "Romanticism2 in Hangzhou", by Sako Architects, show us like, though moving away from pure graphics, yet resorting to a strong mark clearly derived from them, one can originate three-dimensional elements that may strongly characterize an interior – a commercial one, in these cases – giving it an outstanding personality.

The superb project "Blue Frog Acoustic Lounge and Studios" by Series Architects – just to cut short a list that could be much longer – is a clear and excellent example of how one of the most typical and even trite grids of graphic design's repertory, when converted into a three-dimensional element, may rise to the quality of a space organizer element and even attain to define the interior architecture of our environments.
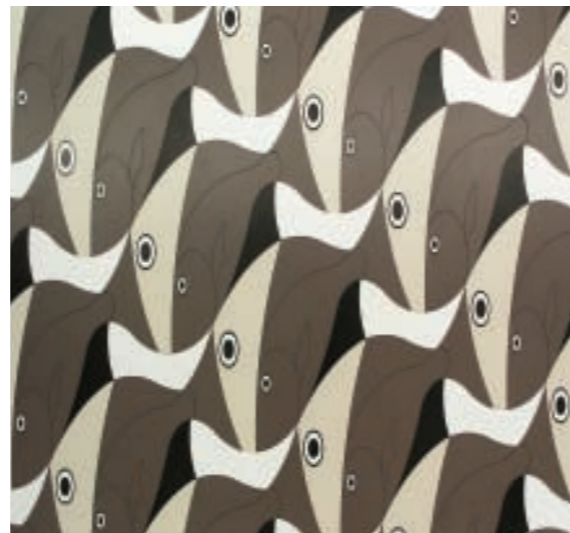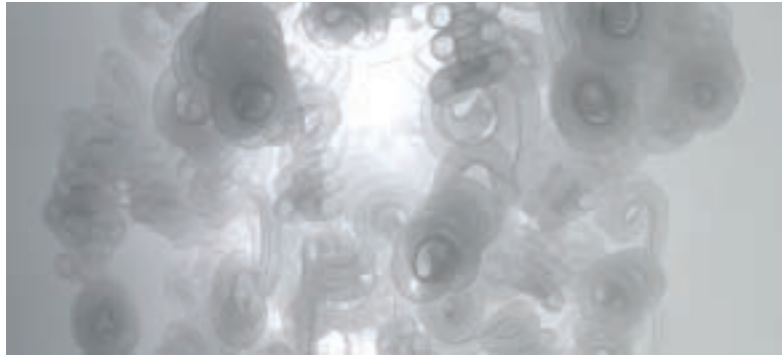
TITLE: Olivomare Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Olivomare restaurant is a restaurant serves seafood. Such peculiarity is highlighted by the language adopted here to focus on its specificity using more or less clear references to the sea world and environment. The most explicit among them undoubtedly is the wide wall characterizing the main dining room, entirely covered by a large cladding featuring a pattern inspired by the works of the visionary artiest Maurits Escher, in which each single portion of colour is laser cut out of a sheet of opaque laminated plastic and then juxtaposed on the vertical surface like huge jigsaw puzzle. A linear sequence of tubular luminescent "tentacles" evoking a stay shoal of jellyfishes or of sea anemones counterpoints it, dropping down from a recess of the fake ceiling, while someone could vaguely recognize the meshes of fishers' nets in the wide full height lozengy glazed partition dividing this room from the entrance lobby. Such partition (perfectly fire and smoke proof) visually widens the space and allows the best possible integration between these two areas. In the main dining room the upholstered white seat running along the wall is entirely suspended on invisible brackets. The whole floor is just a simple flow of industrial white opaque resin. In the small dining room at the rear the walls cladding is characterized by a wavy relief meant to evoke the sandy surface of the beach when moulded by the wind. In the cloakroom the intricate branches of a coral reef closed-in around visitors coming from the bright and open adjacent room. Such decorative pattern is obtained by engraving a double layer (white and red) of thick opaque laminated plastic glued onto either walls and ceiling, and its entanglement, when combined with the "hidden" doors giving access to the toilets, adds a sense of momentary disorientation to its aesthetical surprise. A sea of white colour has been used to enhance and link all these elements together, flooding all surrounding parts, from walls to ceiling, from the resin floor to the Corian made bar counter; a white sea working in this environment as an undifferentiated neutral background that intentionally disappoints any predictable expectation for blue colour.
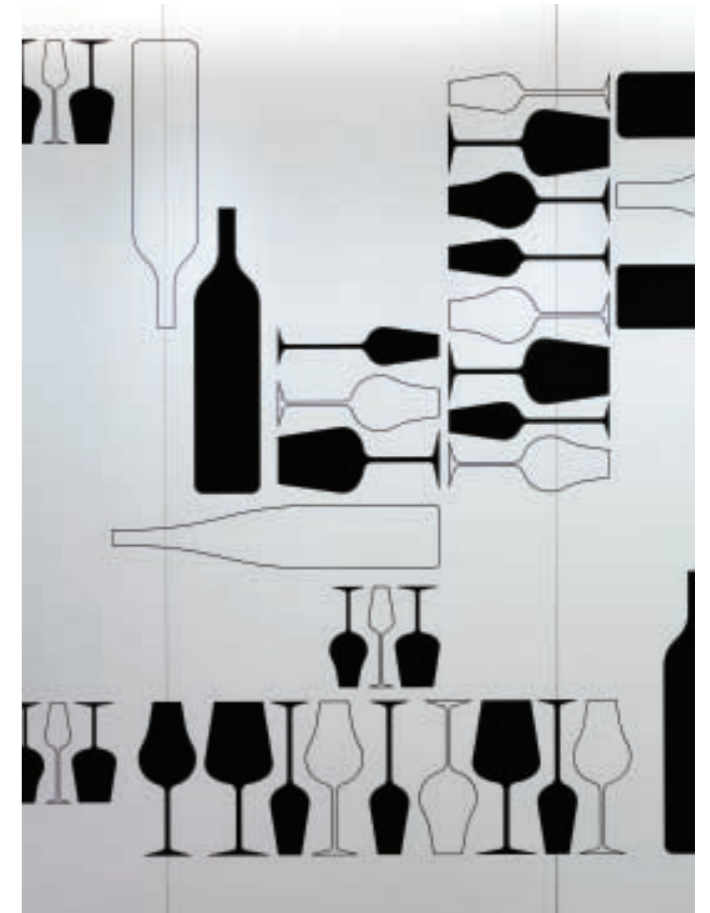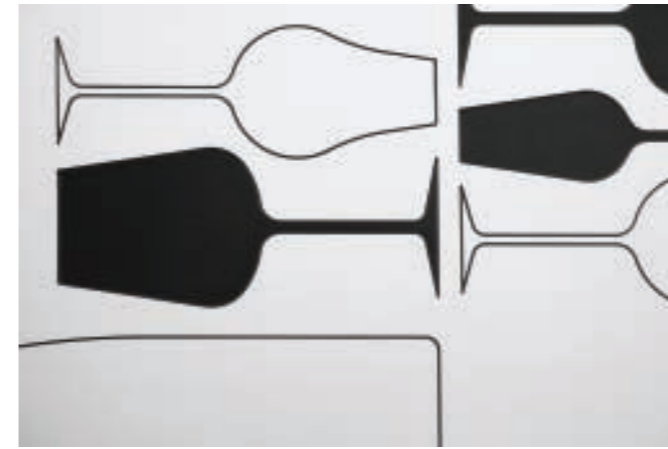
DESIGNED BY: Pierluigi Piu (Italy)

TITLE: OLIVINO Delicatessen Shop

DESCRIPTION: OLIVINO is a delicatessen shop complementary to the newly open restaurant OLIVOMARE, with which it shares the appealing aubergine coloured shopfront as well as a graphic taste for its interiors design. Of rather small proportions – if one only considers the part of it accessible to customers – this shop is limited within an about 40sqm room facing the public way. On its left side, as to the entrance, a staircase protected by a full height frameless glazed partition leads to the storage in the basement and is adjacent to a parametrical wall entirely covered by a cladding finished with a double layer (white and black) of thick opaque laminated plastic on which has been engraved a decorative pattern of variously orientated bottles and glasses, which highlights the predominantly sold product in this shop, i.e. wine. On the opposite side a system of overhanging shelves – laid out on the wall surface according to a labyrinth geometrical scheme – allows, thanks to their recessed linear lights too, to set off the pre-packed goods dsplayed on them, while not long lasting food needing to be sold in portions is shown in a custom made refrigerated counter which features a lower section covered with white Corian, an upper glazed showcase equipped with sliding trays and a working top made out of a thick solid "afrormosia" wood board, three sides of which have been squared, while the fourth one has been left as rough as the edge of the tree was. This last element, while alluding to the traditional cheesemonger shop because of its "chopping board" look, with its natural appearance also counterbalances the algid uprightness of all other surrounding materials. An heavy-duty stainless stell made back counter with back lit glazing and shelves, as well as a light purple resin floor, complement all the above describe features.

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