

Traveling through the storefront space - toward a new immersive experience

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Abstract

In a world of constant change and dematerialization, we naturally explore elements within our proximity. By latching onto this premise, this article regards the storefront, an element of design which has immensely surpassed borders of simple product presentations by evolving into a new experience, one which is connected to the environment and based on social needs. Similar to how the architectural space projects senses onto us, providing a personal and spiritual journey with everything surrounding us, the storefront hooks itself onto this journey and becomes an extension which adds a captivating note to this manufactured universe.

Aligning with the key terms of the "Collaboration" and "Trust" conference, the vitrine is to be discovered, in this paper, as a meeting point between spatial experience and individual interpretations that can offer the surrounding world an unlimited source of inspiration and connection.

Through the presentation of case studies, we will observe together a complex landscape that increasingly contributes to the construction and shaping of our individual and collective identity.

Keywords: Storefront, Collaboration, Support, Experience, Perception

Introduction

This article explores the space of the storefront, significantly contributing to the understanding of new perspectives regarding the way experience can influence our perception of the environment.

In this paper, the showcase becomes a component element in the "spectacle of the world". The concept of "journey through the storefront space" refers to exploring the connections between space – environment – aesthetics as both an architectural and an existential research.

This journey involves an interactive participatory approach, in which decorators, architects and designers are welcome to discover what lies beneath the surface and are invited to engage in a much deeper experience.

From a phenomenological perspective, this study fosters an emotional connection that allows us to gain a clearer understanding of how people perceive and imagine space in relation to the environment, as well as how the human mind creates depictions and mental images.

Summarizing the intention presented in the title, "the space of the storefront", becomes a window for the world, one where reality and imagination merge, the decor earning a voice and a story of its own. This statement can be sustained by Demetresco's affirmation: *"The shop window makes promises and its construction elements allow the observer to "feel - rather than reason - what the assemblages say"* (Demetresco, 2001, p.16).

Literature Review

The study transcends the limit of a simple visual observation of the showcases, delving into an analysis of experience, of how sensations and the environment are interconnected and influence each other.

The article demonstrates the existence of a bidirectional relationship between sensations, the environment and the showcases, and experience, as Yakhlef (2015) argues in his study – is the result of this complex interaction.

Methodology

The purpose of this article is primarily educational. Its structure is guided by a strategic methodology that incorporates visual elements, represented by carefully selected images, intended to sustain the reader's attention.

The aim of the article is to show how expressive and captivating this field can be once we discover it, but also to highlight the positive attitude that a window display can offer us every day, if we pay more attention to it. Furthermore, the research also aims to enlist the support of architects and designers in informing public awareness about this field, showing how, through close collaboration, we can encourage the development of these spaces also in another cities, where they have not been given sufficient aesthetic importance until now.

Results

The results obtained open clear directions of applicability in several fields.

In architectural projects, the shop window can be included as a transitional space that strengthens the relationship between the interior and the urban space through the transparency of glass and sensory experience. In the urban context, the shop window can serve not only as an attractive visual element but also as a means to create a more engaging, positive, and ultimately participatory streetscape.

We also believe that the topics briefly addressed here stimulate imagination and curiosity for future research. Furthermore, these topics allow for the exploration of new ways to design and display shop windows in the digital dimension and in public spaces, as well as the analysis of their effects on user behavior.

Showcase: an architectural space that stands out aesthetically and visually

Often seen as a branch of architecture as a border between interior and exterior, the end of the public space and beginning of the private space, the storefront plays an essential role in the way we perceive the world, expanding new horizons to the aesthetic dimension, the innovative design and the understanding of the relationship between space and experience. It is a visual and spatial framework where aesthetics and functionality meet to create captivating presentations that inspire us.

The space where objects are placed has to transmit and be conceived in order to highlight beauty and facilitate the visual interaction between passers-by and the elements displayed on the storefront above all, therefore implementing a powerful and memorable impression upon viewers "*a visually meaningful message, information and strong emotion*" (Liu, Lahoda, 2022, p.281). We can see in (Fig. 1) how in the "transparency of space", decor slowly makes its appearance, becoming a form of visual communication which surpasses its purely decorative aspect, bringing new meanings and meaningful context. The presence of a dialogue between projection, thought, action and goal shows how designers and merchants alike focus on projecting what Simões (2022) underwrite in his article, "a spatial experience that generates a unique narrative and brings greater customer engagement to the store".

We notice that in the storefront projected by Window Stories by Malwa (Fig. 1), a firm which specializes in this domain, the dialogue between aesthetic and visual message which imprints itself in our mind in a latent but permanent process.

With the help of composition, the careful placement of shapes, lines, colors, textures and other elements results in an enjoyable and functional visual effect. This way, Window Stories by Malwa (2015), have changed storefronts which were previously underestimated or native for many buildings.



Fig. 1 "I love you Jack" it's a showcase designed by Window Stories by Malwa in 2017, "printed in a frozen rainforest" where the message of love makes its way. Using textures and shades of white, a subtle connection between indoor and outdoor space is outlined.

Photographer: Maria Miklaszewska

*Source:
<https://www.windowstories.com.pl/witryna-sklepowa-galilu-zima-2018>*

Showcase - a narrative discipline that visually educates passers-by

People still offer credibility to stories. The details, the materials and the action projected behind a sheet of glass (Fig. 2) create an increasingly obvious link between local architecture and creative freedom.

In a small scale world, as is the case with showcases, the context of presentation becomes the *interface*, becomes the narrative, while the public context becomes the main subject told in the story.

Fig. 2 "Fundamenty" is a showcase made by de Window Stories by Malwa in 2021. Designers argue that the heart of a property lies not within it, but in the foundation on which it is built—that physical and contextual foundation that determines its stability, value, and harmonious relationship with its surroundings.
Photographer: Cichosz
Source: <https://www.windowstories.com.pl/witryna-sklepowa-noho-investment-krakow>



All compositional elements, from color, light, form, materials, theme, are directed towards the same common goal of creating emotional connections and unique experiences. This way, immersive become attractive and then participative, making the experience much more personal and captivating. This bond between interactivity and narration within the space of the storefront contribute to creating an memorable environment for users.

The showcases encourage the passer-by to actively engage in the interaction with the outside world, concomitantly providing the opportunity of being integrated in interconnected virtual and material universes, along with communicating with surrounding activities (Vinárčiková, Vozárová, 2020, p.13).

Discussion

Our mind constantly craves to touch, to feel, to hear and to experiment (Gaspar, 2020). A study done by professor Gaspar shows us that in a world which is becoming more and more digitalized, people have the tendency to interact more with things because *"there can be no exchange without meeting"* (

In the case of shop windows, the idea of digitization is conveyed through visual elements, in particular through decorations designed to stimulate the viewer's imagination for a few seconds. This visual artifice allows the vitrine to generate static experiences that can be perceived and reinterpreted as digital sequences. Constantly supported by the designers' vision through aesthetic and conceptual choices and the use of three-dimensionality, the shop window strengthens its presence as an expressive element in the urban space.

Generally, the immersive experience in the spaces we go through is about captivation and interaction. The immersive experience is born and raised along with the unfolding of a story (Zhanc, 2020, p.90879). It is an authentic instrument whose process or mediated illusion of technology or reality strives for the understanding of the human cognition, emotions and other multiple neuro-psychological processes (Zhanc, 2020, p.90880). Regarding the design of the storefront, this instrument becomes a high quality visual performance which raises the traffic flux and the consumers' interest.

The concept of an immersive experience should be understood as an interactive art that by its aesthetic, visual nature is concerned with the experience of those who view it.

In our urban context, on a ground floor level, we assist to the appearance of a reflective surface more often, a surface which not only brings in onlookers but also embraces modern technologies. In the future, we will witness a new and intelligent side of town, what we call an *interactive storefront* which will provide creative ways of displaying products and of generating authentic experiences for users while simultaneously providing an artistic accent of the urban landscape which will contribute to the activation and enrichment of the urban experience (Vinárčiková, Vozárová, 2020, p.11-13).

Conclusion

This study did not limit itself to a mere visual observation of the shop windows, but contributed to building and strengthening a sensory connection between the space and the viewer. It also emphasizes and reminds us, at every opportunity, of the importance of collaboration between designers, architects and retailers in the process of window-shopping, something about which we unfortunately know too little.

Having surpassed the purpose of simply displaying merchandise, being constantly compelled by the palpable space and the virtual environment. It has been reported that the storefront between virtuality and embodiment offers the ambiance a dynamic and captivating entity, a completing act encountered in different shapes.

Through showcase concepts created by Window Stories by Malwa, it has been discovered that the sense of the space is just as important as its appearance (Pallasmaa, 2015, p.18). With the help of illustrations, we've discovered the type of experience which solidifies and structures itself between décor and glance, interaction and perception. A space placed between interior-exterior, real-virtual, static-interactive which does not neglect profoundly humane and emotional needs, but rather tries to respond to these factors.

Consequently, this journey in the space of the storefront encourages designers to embrace experimental and emotional impact during projection. It's an invitation to experimentation and to the emotional participation of the onlooker during an interactive relation with surrounding elements.

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Călătorind prin spațiul vitrinei - spre o nouă experiență imersivă

(rezumat)

Într-o lume a schimbărilor constante și a dematerializării, explorăm în mod natural elementele din proximitatea noastră. Pornind de la această premisă, acest articol privește vitrina, un element de design care a depășit cu mult granițele simplelor prezentări de produse, evoluând într-o nouă experiență, conectată la mediu și bazată pe nevoile sociale. Asemănător modului în care spațiul arhitectural proiectează simțuri asupra noastră, oferind o călătorie personală și spirituală cu tot ceea ce ne înconjoară, vitrina se agață de această călătorie și devine o extensie care adaugă o notă captivantă acestui univers fabricat. Aliniindu-se cu termenii cheie ai conferinței „Colaborare” și „Încredere”, vitrina este descoperită, în acest articol, ca un punct de întâlnire între experiența spațială și interpretările individuale, care poate oferi lumii înconjurătoare o sursă nelimitată de inspirație și conexiune. Prin prezentarea studiilor de caz, vom observa împreună un peisaj complex care contribuie din ce în ce mai mult la construirea și modelarea identității noastre individuale și colective.