



# GRAPHICS AND SPACE

*Monochromatic interiors are a thing of the past, with today's groundbreaking designers using graphic elements of architectural design to transform spaces into visually immersive experiences.*

*Large-scale embellishment of unexpected surfaces has benefitted from new technology enabling printing on everything from wood, vinyl, fabric, and glass to metal. Graphic design, illustrated characters, fantasy worlds, hand-drawn murals, and custom wallpaper work together in dynamic and often collaborative spaces that capture the imagination, bridge the corporate and artistic worlds, and function as unique venues for artistic expression and experimentation.*





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Sebastien Agneessens is the creative director & president of Formavision, a New York-based creative agency that collaborates with artists and designers to develop and produce innovative artistic projects that capture the imagination, reinforce the brand vision and resonate on an emotional level. Formavision is uniquely positioned to understand the dynamics of both the corporate and the artistic spheres, fostering synergies between business strategies and artistic visions. All Formavision projects invoke creativity, authenticity and self-expression, creating a cultural infrastructure within which people experience the brand's identity and aspirations.



# Preface

The wake of the new millennium will be remembered in large part for the rising power of corporations, for the monumental scale of international architectural projects, the boom of the global art market, and the acceptance of design as the common language of consumerism and good taste in post-industrial societies. Facing increasingly educated, sophisticated and aware markets, brands are challenged to push their boundaries and integrate the vocabulary of design in all of their expressions, including retail. The nomenclature "retail design" is gradually being replaced by "experiential design," a subtle switch in the practice that infuses the retail experience with flavors of music, art, lifestyle, illustration and design, reflecting a certain sense of involvement in culture and entertainment.

While lifestyle brands march into this promising retail territory, designers and creative directors are encouraged to experiment in the way they approach their work by broadening the array of their practices. I am personally part of this generation of creatives who have been commissioned to develop retail projects even though I was never trained as an architect or an interior designer. What I had instead was a growing following of my studio's work coupled with a desire to expand my playground into the various arenas of what has now become experiential design: sound, smell, graphic design, illustration, industrial design, craft. I use myself as an example because several of the creatives featured in this book share a similar background, fueled by a desire to express themselves through all media and expand the realm of their practice. This inter-disciplinary approach, a sort of twenty-first century renaissance, if you will, is what brands are looking for today in order to maximize the impact of any of their retail projects.

It is important to comprehend this trend not only through the filter of pure design, but also through a wider cultural lens. The approach of design for the sake of mere design is indeed a superficial and short-lived argument, and brands need to delve into cultural, sociological or artistic references in order to resonate in the minds of their target audiences. Since brands have for better or for worse become natural extensions of people's expressions and identities, they need to align themselves culturally with their stakeholders in all of their communication efforts, and in particular through their retail applications like the ones featured in this book. Oddly enough, even non-brands such as Maison Martin Margiela need to signify their opposition to the fundamentals of branding in order to be accepted by their anti-branding peers.

In the same way that brands have been fine-tuning their identities, designers have also been able to assemble their own languages by creating a vocabulary of illustrations, objects, spaces, colors, shapes and tones. Some renowned designers like Jaime Hayon, Marcel Wanders or Karim Rashid have even become their own brands, and are hired by corporate clients not only because of their styles, but also because of their following, their press value and perceived personalities. This phenomenon is similar to co-branding in a certain sense, as the importance of the designer is as valuable as the prestige of the brand, and the projects are about *mélange* of both worlds in the quest for freshness, fun, newness and good design.

In the search for self-expression, audience engagement, press and street attention, retailers have pushed the graphic elements of architectural design to new heights, as visual information is applied to every surface possible in order to maximize visual impact. Now that we can print on most substrates, from wood, vinyl, fabric, and glass to metal, printed presence can be increased to the maximum. The ubiquity of graphic art is not only enabled by technology, but also by the cultural phenomenon of Street Art, which though initially marginalized has now become widely popular and accepted by both the establishment and the art world, making desirable the complete covering of surfaces with illustrations. What was once a symbol of rebellion and vandalism is now an artistic gesture.

Let's remember that the act of drawing goes back to the roots of our humanity, constituting a trace of our ephemeral existence and symbolizing our passage on earth. With the drawings of the Lascaux caves in mind, or the Mayan or Egyptian hieroglyphs, the frescoes of Pompeii, the Buddhist murals of Pagan, the marble floor of the Sienna cathedral and the adorned ceilings of the New York Deco hallways, drawings have always figuratively or abstractly represented the beliefs and states of mind of the periods in which they were conceived. From the selections featured in "Graphics and Space," I see on the one end an expression of systemic interconnectivity, a probable result of the Internet, information technology and more generally globalization, and on the other end a wishful return to simplicity, to nature, a hope for balance between people and their environment. How both these movements will coincide is the adventure we are facing in the twenty-first century.



**Creative Direction** | Formavision (Sebastien Agneessens) **Architecture** | Formavision (Sebastien Agneessens) **Graphic Design** | Wall photos shot in Parisian apartment and reproduced at scale 1 with a slight green tint. **Production** | Formavision (Chris Hoover), Site NY **Photography** | Jordan Kleinman **Location** | New York, U.S.

## Marithé+François Girbaud Showroom

The New York Marithé + François Girbaud showroom brings contemporary Parisian youth culture to Manhattan through various design and artistic expressions. Designed as a Haussmanian apartment in need of renovation and featuring a mixture of new and salvaged furniture, the space is a destination for intimate concerts by both Parisian and New York bands. The walls of the space are covered with a printed wallpaper from the Parisian apartment used in the film *The Dreamers* by Bernardo Bertolucci, and reproduced at scale 1 in New York with a slight green tint, the iconic color of the brand. The showroom is a direct reference to the early career of fashion designers Marithé + François Girbaud, who made themselves famous by creating show costumes for the French rock and pop stars of the sixties.









**Creative Direction** | Sebastien Agneessens **Architecture** | Formavision, Sebastien Agneessens **Graphic Design** | Rostarr **Production** | Formavision (Chris Hoover, Shinya Nakamura), Genart, Wieden Kennedy **Photography** | Jordan Kleinman **Location** | New York, U.S.

## Starbucks Salon

The Starbucks Salon is a nomadic temporary coffeehouse concept combined with a gallery and performance venue, which features daily performances by musicians and artists such as Jose Gonzalez, Aimee Mann, Run DMC, Jim Carroll, House of Diehl and Lansing Dreiden. While the first floor was conceived as an artistic coffee shop and intimate performance space, the second floor exhibits a slanted gallery installation that aims to represent the new perspective on contemporary culture brought by increasing corporate patronage.











**Creative Direction** | Sebastien Agneessens **Architecture** | Jeroen de Schrijver, Ellen Depoorter **Graphic Design** | Mai Kato, Jonas Hjertberg **Production** | Chris Hoover **Photography** | Jordan Kleinman **Location** | New York, U.S.

## Reebok Flash

Formavision, which conceived and developed the concept store "Reebok Flash," took inspiration from Vorticism, an English arts movement from the early 20th century noted for its dynamic interpretation of Cubist and Futurist principles. Combining Vorticism's vibrant aesthetic with an assortment of cultural cues ranging from *Purple Rain* to *Miami Vice*, *Flash Dance* to *Thriller*, Formavision sought to capture the pop spirit of the '80s in order to create the ideal environment in which to reintroduce these classic styles from Reebok. The design of the space plays with depth and perspective, tricking the eye by extending three dimensional shapes into distorted graphic patterns, a camouflaging technique reminiscent of the Royal Navy's dazzle ship graphics from the First World War. Their intent is to provoke and perhaps confound visitors by making them feel as if they are stepping into a poster rather than a store.













