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Global Retail Trends Almanac 2021





Trends Still Matter

2020 is the year that the Retail Apocalypse finally happened. As the economic and social shocks of the pandemic continue to resonate, retail will readjust to the new reality. Cities, high streets and global shopping malls will be struck with a wave of closures of legacy retailers who failed to adapt. At the same time, retail will evolve and innovate. The covid crisis has accelerated existing trends, speeding up the inexorable rise of online, but also cementing the importance of local, ethical and responsive retail. Our Global Retail Trends Almanac is a trend based round up of the very best of global retail in 2021; from food to fashion, from automotive and sports to books. These 30 stores are clear proof that retail innovation is thriving around the world and that an exciting future awaits.

6 Themes: 30 Amazing Global Stores

1. Future Flagships

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2. Zongshuge Books, China
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5. Nordstrom, New York
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1. Future Flagships

The role of the flagship continues to be hotly disputed in retail. Is it merely the largest store in the portfolio, or does it offer a unique brand experience? As retail becomes more sophisticated, the role and nature of the flagship is changing. In the new age of online, flagships are all about brand storytelling. The best flagships aren't cookie cutter rollouts but unique spaces with architecture and design that is sensitive to location and heritage. Flagships are celebrations of a brand, welcoming customers into the wider ecosystem with aspirational spaces, inspiring products and engaging experiences. As department stores and malls come under threat, they too need to think like flagships, creating destinations packed with art, culture and hospitality.



House of Rituals Amsterdam

Dutch cosmetics brand Rituals has opened 'House of Rituals' in its home town of Amsterdam in the heart of the crisis. This flagship lifestyle concept was launched to celebrate the brand's 20th anniversary, and at 1,900m² it is Rituals' largest store worldwide.

In keeping with the brand's 'Art of Soulful living' philosophy, House of Rituals is designed as an escape from the hectic city life, and a holistic haven for the mind, body and soul.

It features a number of firsts for the brand, including exclusive new co-created products, a new homewares collection, as well various opportunities to personalise items. This is in addition to the new wellbeing and dining experiences, which are designed to get customers to embrace a Rituals lifestyle, that goes way beyond their beauty products and household scents.

Due to COVID-19, the four storey store will have a phased opening, the ground and first floor featuring Ritual's retail and restaurant offer have opened first, two further floors will open in the summer of 2021. The second floor will host the 'Body Spa' a relaxing space offering massage and beauty consultations treatments, while the third floor 'Mind Spa' will offer stress reduction treatments, meditation classes and relaxation treatments, a space where customers can recharge. There are a few instagram moments and they've even created their own Snapchat filter allowing customers to experience the House of Rituals with spectacular 3D effects.

The store allows them to test new products and services, if successful the plan is to open further House of Rituals in other European cities.

The House of Rituals tuk-tuk provides a playful piece of point of sale, and a way to share their story of travel and provenance of their scents and ingredients.





Zhongshuge Books, Beijing, Dujiangyan, Guangzhou & Ningbo

Zhongshuge is now the most exciting book retailer on the planet. Its latest stores in key Chinese cities confirm that the bookstore is still very much alive.

The Chinese place huge importance on their literary culture and heritage. Zongshuge tap into this by creating unique designs for each store, based on local history and architecture. So they actively avoid cookie cutter roll outs.

These new bookstores are aimed at making books and reading part of a fashionable lifestyle.

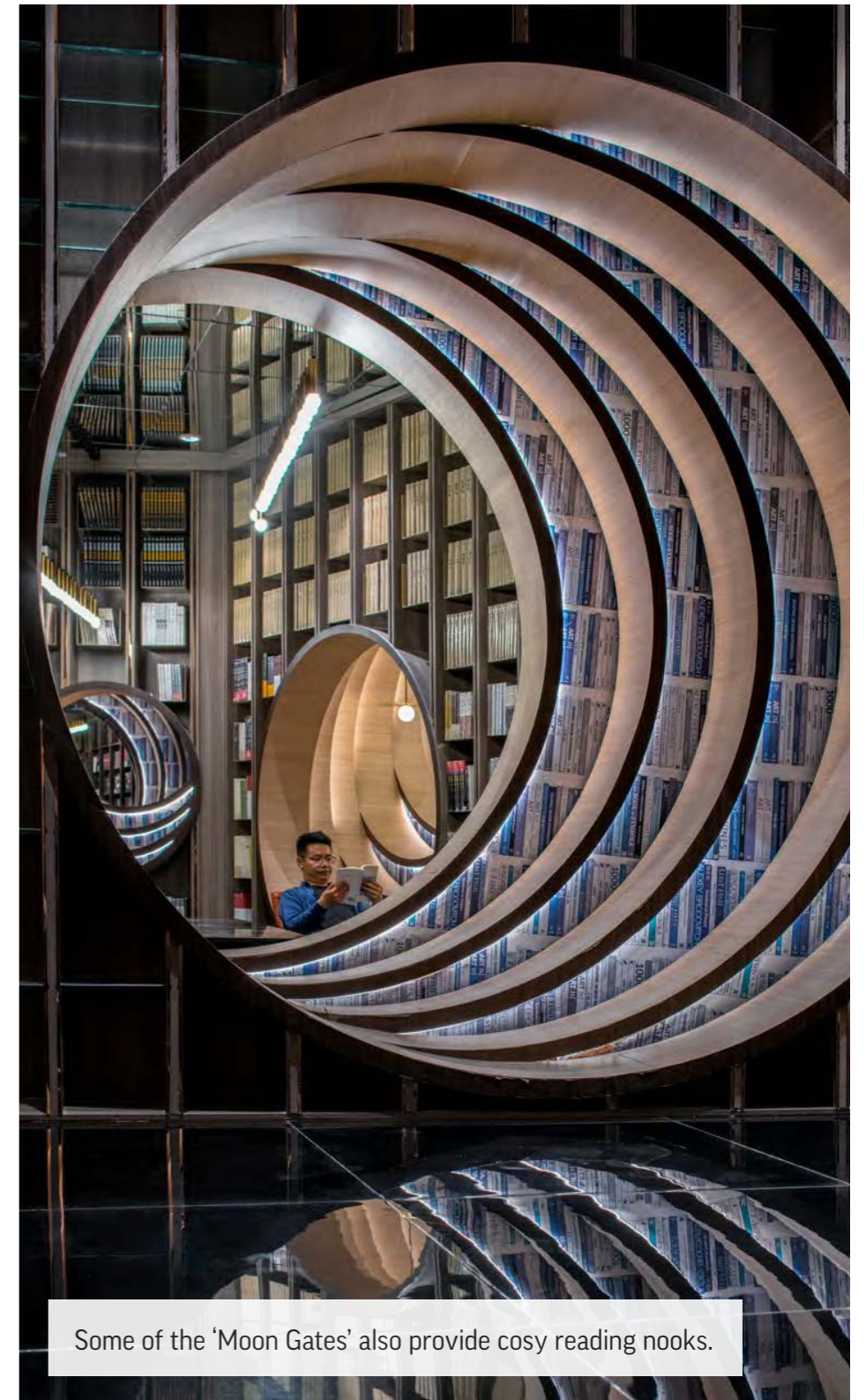
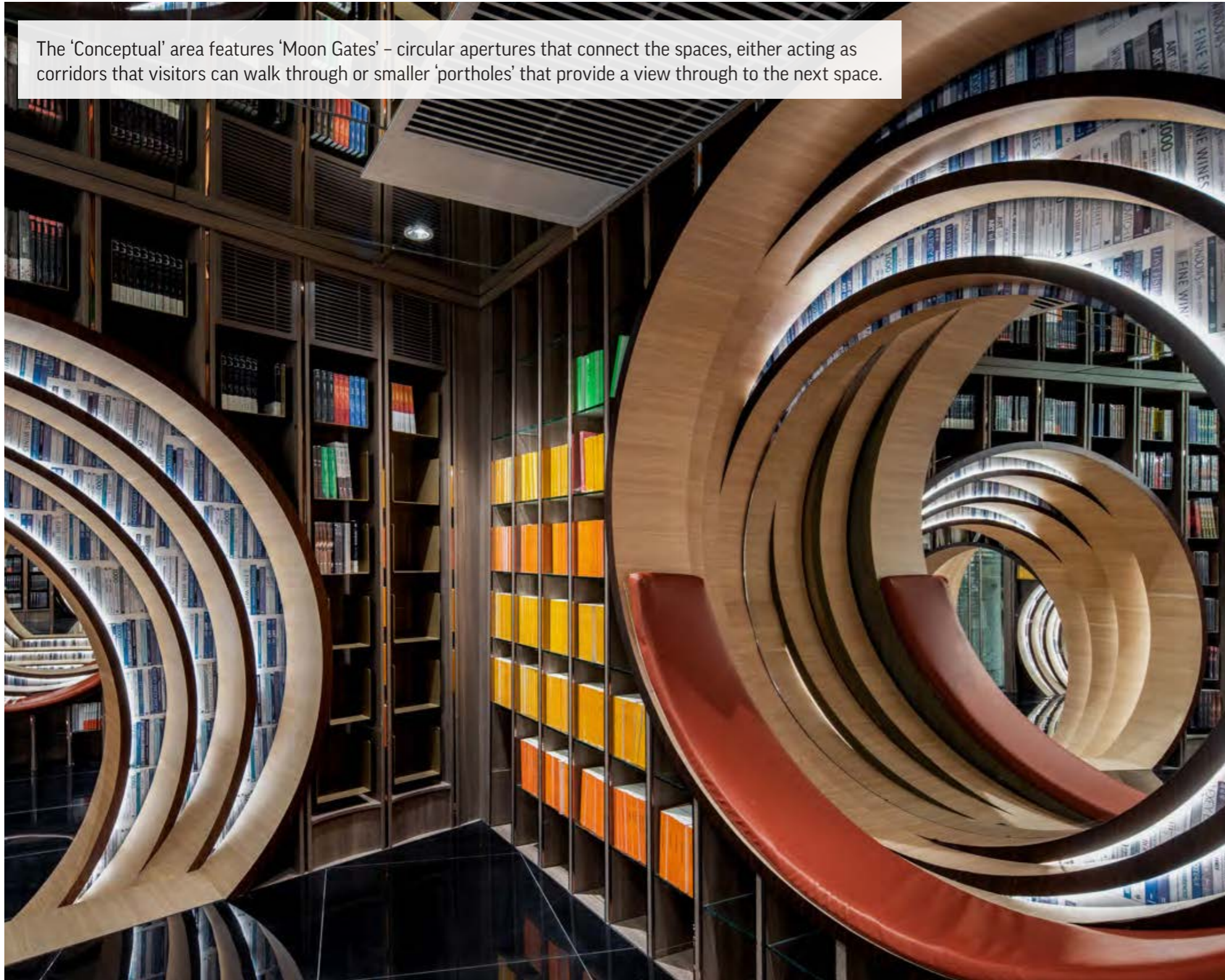
Zongshuge stores offer community spaces and cafés and feature lots of reading nooks. There is a strong focus on spaces for children and they also sell associated merchandise, to encourage longer dwell times and create additional revenue streams.

The designer's (X+Living) aim is to provide experiential spaces that transport visitors to somewhere magical, just in the same way that a good book can, and the creation of these escapist experiences is designed as important antidote to the hectic lives people lead in the busy cities in which they are situated.

While most of the stores are standalone entities, the new Beijing store is co-located with the Galeries Lafayette department store – a tactical move that opens up the Zhongshuge brand to a new consumer audience.

While there are similarities in the design approach of the Zhongshuge stores, each has distinct theme, that makes it unique to the location, with each one setting visitors on a voyage of discovery.

The 'Conceptual' area features 'Moon Gates' – circular apertures that connect the spaces, either acting as corridors that visitors can walk through or smaller 'portholes' that provide a view through to the next space.



Some of the 'Moon Gates' also provide cosy reading nooks.



Samsung KX Coal Drops Yard, London

Korean multinational Samsung has opened its state of the art, and most immersive space to date. Samsung KX can be found under Thomas Heatherwick's iconic 'kissing' rooftops at Coal Drops Yard in King's Cross. The concept moves away from the traditional retail model, as the brand declares that Samsung KX, 'is not a shop', instead putting focus on customer experience and increased dwell time.

The 20,000 ft² open-plan space includes an area dedicated to events and skill-sharing workshops, from live tutorials and film nights, to supper clubs, yoga and photography masterclasses, run in collaboration with local educational institutions and community groups.

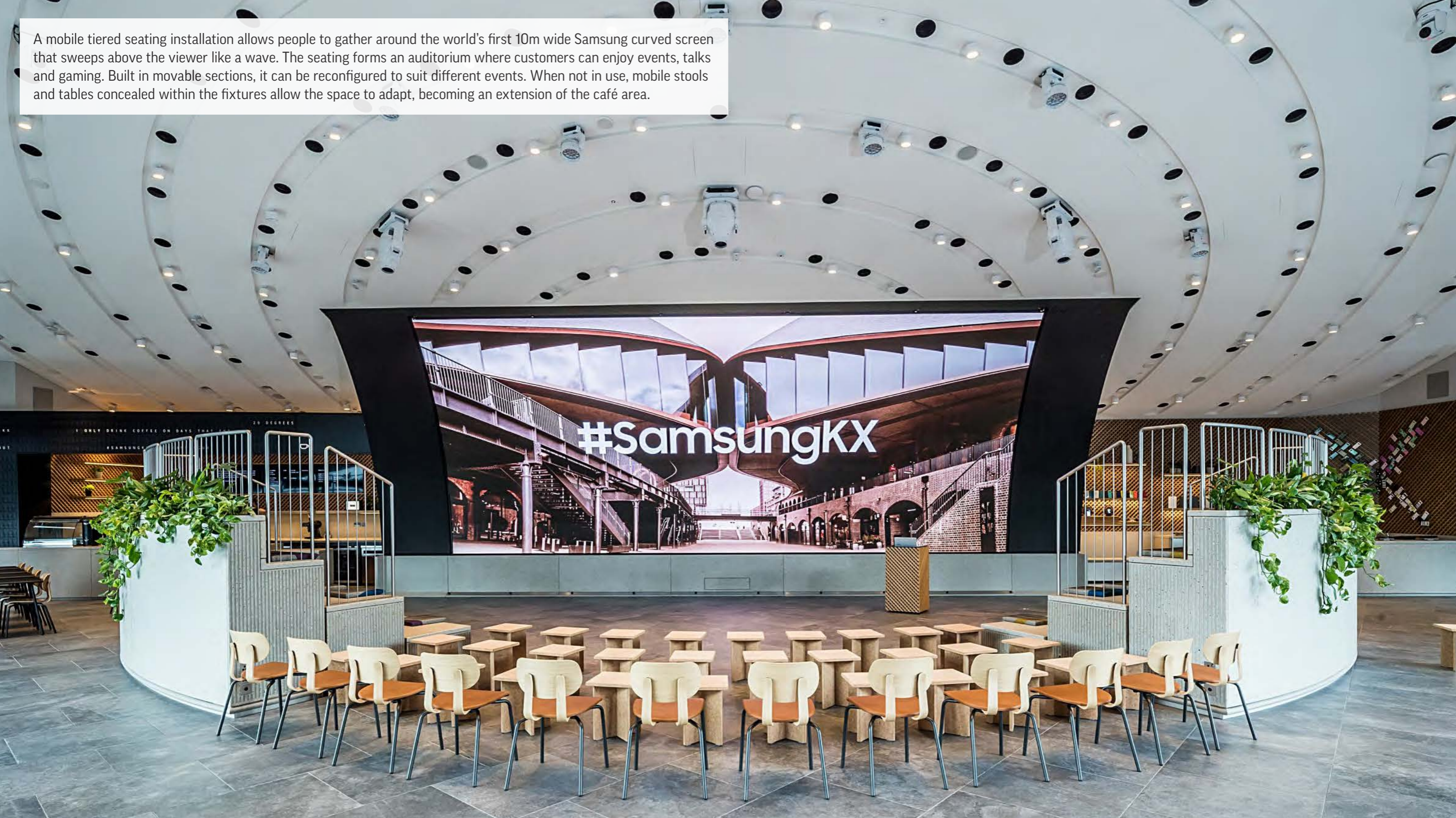
Coupled with the stunning and unique architecture of the space, Samsung have interiors to match. Designed by UK consultancy Brinkworth, they worked to the brief for a 'Pioneer's Sanctuary' to create a showcase for technical innovation and a cultural destination.

The distinctive site provides two spaces to fulfil the brands needs: The Playground, which showcases product in domestic context, primarily for independent exploration and The Foundry, a social space for collaboration, engagement and relaxation.

Through both the physical design and experientially, Samsung KX embodies the brand's #dowhatyoucant ethos.

As well as showcasing things that are readily available, Samsung has products on show that are in beta mode, prototypes which show that they are at the forefront of innovation and give guests a taste of things that are yet to come.

A mobile tiered seating installation allows people to gather around the world's first 10m wide Samsung curved screen that sweeps above the viewer like a wave. The seating forms an auditorium where customers can enjoy events, talks and gaming. Built in movable sections, it can be reconfigured to suit different events. When not in use, mobile stools and tables concealed within the fixtures allow the space to adapt, becoming an extension of the café area.





In The Playground, small living clusters evoke household spaces and provide intimacy to discover Samsung's cutting edge products.

A sample of the continual calendar of guest experiences, classes, event and talks taking place at Samsung KX.





SKP-S - 'Digital-Analog Future' Beijing, China

SKP-S Beijing is a surreal, art-driven, alternative vision of luxury department-store-meets-shopping mall. Known as an innovator that constantly reinvents itself, SKP called upon Sybarite, as well as the creative disruptors behind Korean cult eye-wear brand Gentle Monster, to design the new SKP-S Beijing concept. The result is pure 'Curetail' aka 'Curated Retail'.

The concept is designed as an art gallery style destination, with changing themes and a curated mix of beauty, fashion, shoes and food. SKP-S makes use of Gentle Monster's fantastical storytelling to take visitors on a curious, simulated journey from Earth to Mars.

The concept follows a single overarching story, making the space a journey of discovery. By opening up the façades of the luxury brand stores, they have created open space for customers to explore. In this way, SKP-S transitions from a mall full of individual shops into a cohesive department store.

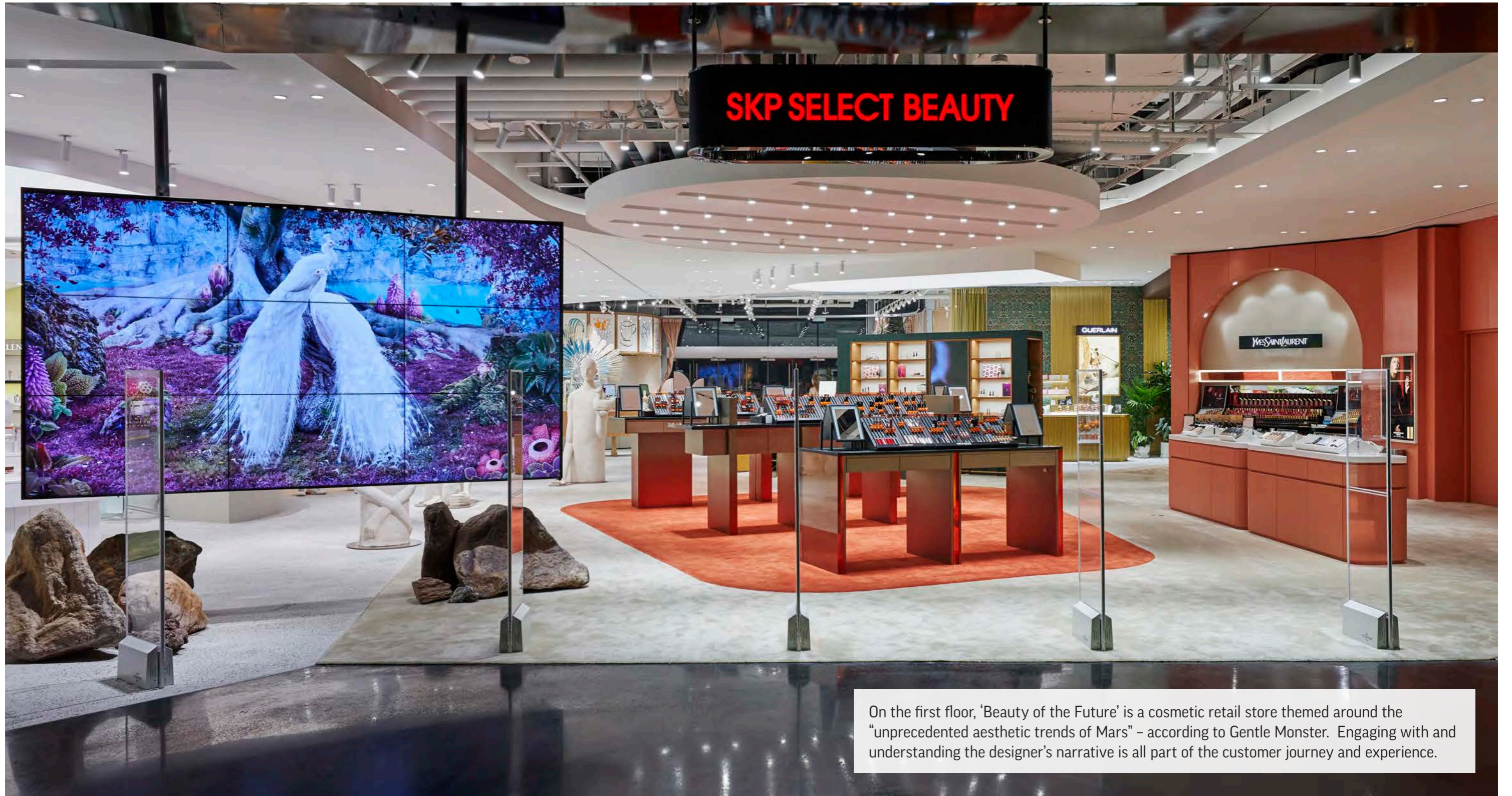
Intersecting communal spaces are filled with curated art installations, exhibiting curiosities and automata that transport visitors into another world.

The four-storey 27,000m² store is located in Chaoyang business district opposite the original SKP flagship. Targeting local office staff, they have relocated SKP-S's hospitality offer to the basement, adjacent to the subway station, which has helped draw workers into the store.

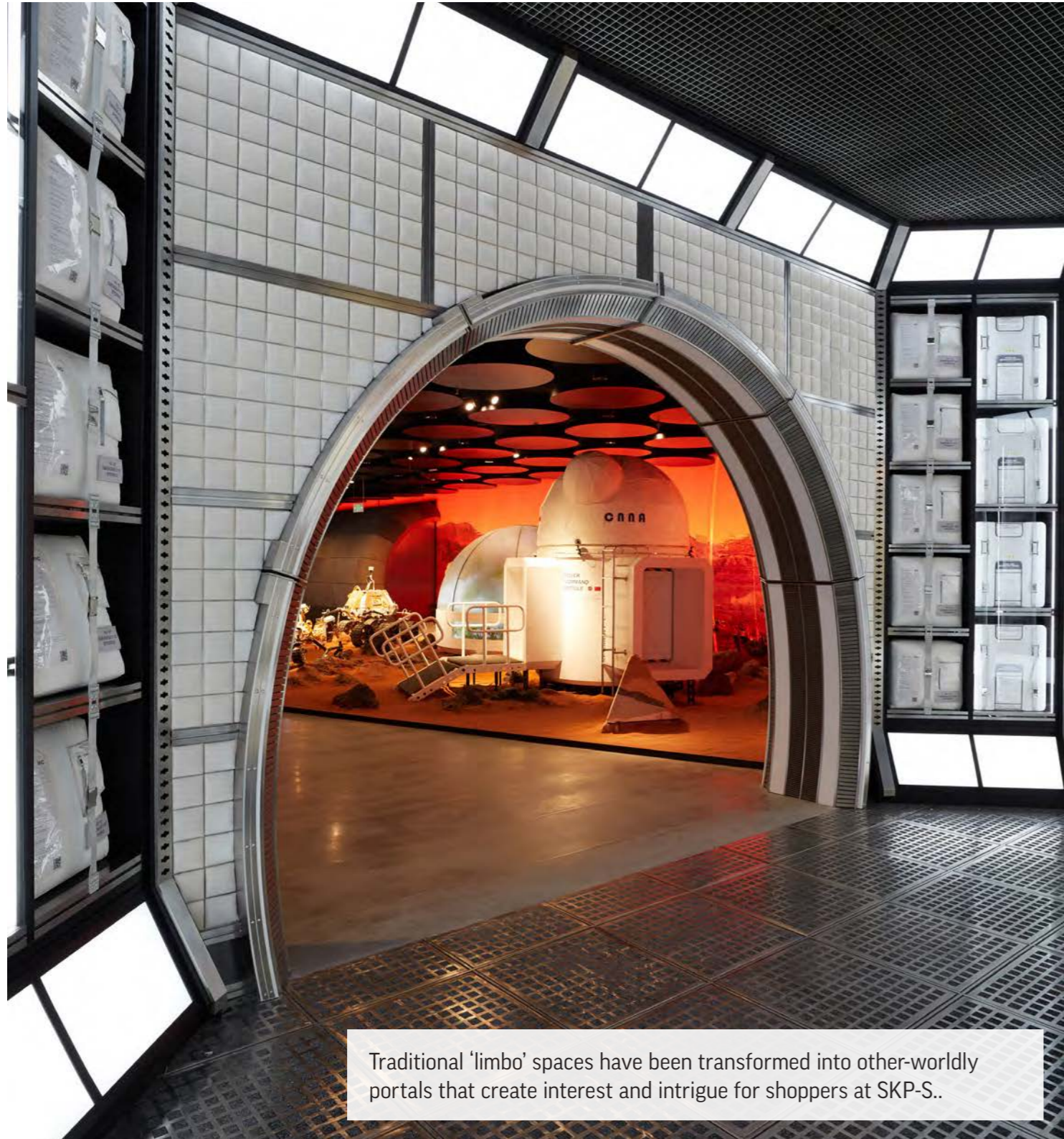
SKP-S is a 'department store' designed to be a living building that will evolve naturally over time. This lets SKP keep ahead in the competitive Chinese market.



With bricks-and-mortar retailers facing stiff competition from online innovators, multi-brand retailers are beginning to deploy new strategies to keep people engaged. Comprising multiple floors, SKP-S is anchored by a continually changing Art Experiment Space, that will feature a roster of exhibitions and installations. A new theme is planned each year.



On the first floor, 'Beauty of the Future' is a cosmetic retail store themed around the "unprecedented aesthetic trends of Mars" – according to Gentle Monster. Engaging with and understanding the designer's narrative is all part of the customer journey and experience.



Traditional 'limbo' spaces have been transformed into other-worldly portals that create interest and intrigue for shoppers at SKP-S..



In summary...

If the lockdown has taught us anything, it has shown that we shop because we want to do things. We want to get out and meet friends, try things on, be inspired and be treated with respect. Online retail proves that we no longer 'need' shops the way we perhaps once did. However, this means smart brands must work harder to sell us 'must have' products in 'must do' spaces. Shops must connect with us, direct and seduce us through design. Exciting events and promotions, inspiring architecture and generous community spaces are tools to make us feel wanted, connected, involved and relevant. The future of retail will see new direct to consumer brands use pop up and permanent physical retail to build brand love through unique experiences. At the same time, traditional retailers will experiment with new mission-driven ways to combine the analogue and digital to create seamless brand experiences – offering gamified loyalty, more attentive service and personalised products. Powered by technology, but delivered by humans, this will give them an edge over pure online retail. It's all about surprise and delight.

Echochamber are retail specialists who travel the world seeking out retail innovation and evolving consumer trends. Echochamber works with retailers, brands, malls and developers, to help them improve their businesses, developing new retail ecosystems, innovative concepts and experiential pop ups. If you would like to help with global benchmarking, inspiration or trend futureproofing, or you'd like to take your team on a virtual (or real) retail safari, do get in touch.

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