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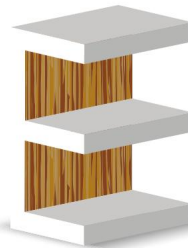
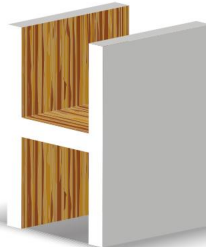
The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

An ITP Business Publication

December Vol.8 Issue 12

Wonder women

SELFRIDGES REDESIGN
INSPIRED BY FEMALE ICONS

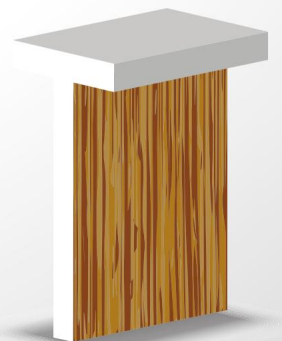
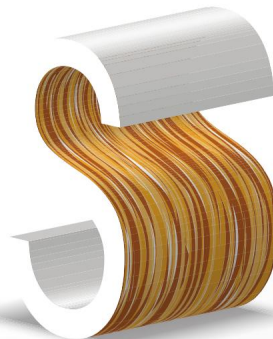
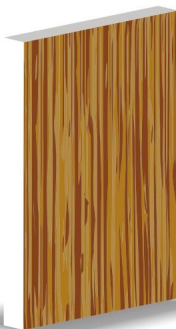
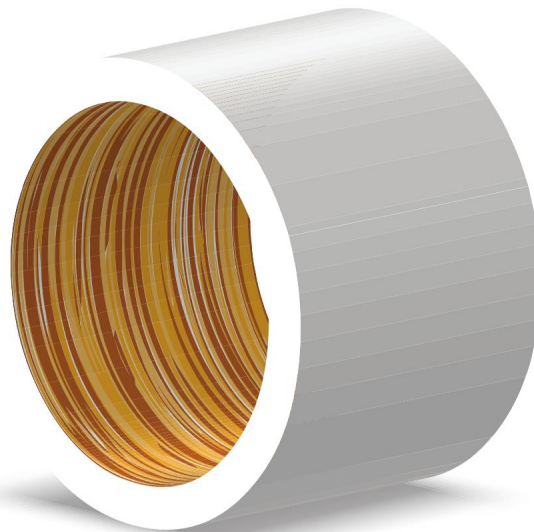
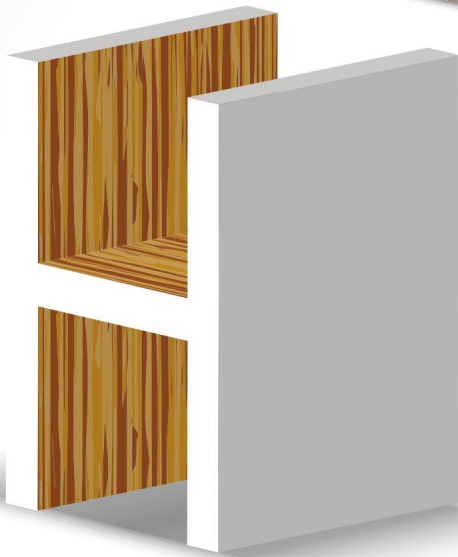


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Wonder Women

WALDO WORKS' REDESIGN OF SELFRIDGES
PERSONAL SHOPPING IS INSPIRED BY ICONIC
WOMEN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Waldo Works, an architectural and interior design studio, known for its modern British design, has redesigned Selfridges Personal Shopping in the UK, creating a space very much like an apartment with a series of private spaces — seven dressing rooms and two VIP suites — that branch out of the central salon.

“When it was designed originally, it was seen as more of a functional service, and now it becomes much more important because the clients are expecting a type of service that you get in a Five Star hotel,” says Tom Bartlett, founder, Waldo Works. “Selfridges really wanted to top up their game in terms of luxury, comfort and service.”

The salon being the focal point of the space, takes up to almost 500m², organised into separate enclaves including a bar, library and drawing room, feeling like a special members club.

“First, we looked at the architectural layouts that existed and adjusted them to suit the new brief where we made the public spaces much larger and also added further dressing rooms,” says Bartlett. “Then we applied a rather residential approach to the spaces in terms of looking at very specific pieces of furniture like you would do for a private client,” he adds.

Choosing bespoke and tasteful furniture is one of Bartlett’s wonders, says Alannah Weston, creative director, Selfridges, explaining that she chose Bartlett for the project “because I wanted a domestic, yet elegant feel for the space. He is brilliant at layering unexpected objects and providing mixture of furniture styles, so that it looks like the contents of a room have been collected rather than designed.”

Due to the “blankness” of the rooms, as Bartlett explains, the aim was to truly individualise the spaces because,

as he puts it, “the personal shopping service is about individuals.”

He adds: “As you are choosing a dress and suit, you can now choose a Selfridges room.”

The plainness of the rooms inspired thought on true character and individualism, where the concept of strong, iconic women sprung up.

“We started with Grace Jones — it can’t get much stronger, can’t get much more iconic,” he says. “We then started to base a small furniture collection, hues and colours around the stories of these women for each of the rooms.”

The Grace Jones room is black and white, including an 80s ‘power chair’, the Le Corbusier LC in gun metal grey and chrome and hints of leather to characterise the graphic strength and boldness of the Jamaican singer, actress and model.

“It’s like inventing a story with the way we design that actually gives us some

- 1 Selfridges Library
- 2 Lanvin Room
- 3 Grace Jones Room



direction, because at the end of the day, we have to make this stuff up,” Bartlett comments.

Another dressing room was influenced by Jeanne Lanvin, influential fashion designer, fitted out in powder blue paintwork and silk, with Marianna Kennedy plaster lamps.

One of the VIP rooms has been designed as a tribute to Tamara de Lampicka, a Polish artist of the 1920s, whose infamous ‘Self-portrait in the green Bugatti’ is indicated through the colour scheme, notable on the Fromental silk wallpaper in tones of celadon. Her era is also translated through the brushed oak, jade green veneers, nickel and Michael Anastassiades’ onyx urn lamps.

4 Military Man Room

However, not all the rooms were inspired by a particular woman in history; the idea of women also played a

5 White Shirt Room

great role including rooms that cater for men. “We decided to look at women’s stereotyped ideas of men as well as men that are a woman’s caricature of themselves, when we created the White Room,” says Bartlett.

The White Room includes quilted white curtaining stitched with blanket edging and side tables in petrified wood. The suites that are designed with a more masculine feel include the Military Man knitted out in Danish military cloth upholstery, while the second suite is inspired by the Saville Row alpha male, manifested in striped suiting to the sofa, a Classicon orbis chrome desk lamp and a library chair in Scottish tweed.

Standing out from the rest of the spaces within the Selfridges Personal Shopping, the central room has an agenda of its own.

“We wanted it to be an all-white room based on the avant-garde 1920s designer, Syrie Maugham, who created this crazy room for her very spoiled daughter during the time of the roaring 20s in London; very glamorous,” Bartlett says.

He continues: “It became famous because of its layered approach to creating an all-white space, you can see it in photographs, and we wondered ‘how could we combine the space with the rest?’ So we started to kind of bleed the colours from each of the rooms around the space into this white room, so it looks like the colours are kind of bleeding out of the doors of the dressing rooms. It is all a strange mix of powerful woman and colour theory.”

Bartlett reveals that the dominant material used across the public spaces was velvet.



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“We used various types of velvet including silk velvet because we wanted to keep all the textures the same because of the bleeding colours, so there is this sense of simplicity.”

He also adds that the furniture used wasn't very focused on being ultra-modern but rather has a more comfortable feel as the team was keen on making people linger.

References were made to Selfridges itself, especially integrated in the main room through archival material.

“We used the Selfridges art archive on the walls and part of that allowed me to go through its photographic history and re-print images such as fashion shows from the 50s and photographs of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, so there is a lot of history of the Selfridges on the walls and also ones that are from its recent, contemporary

collection,” Bartlett explains. Another tribute to the Selfridges brand was made by the Yellow Selfridges room, which was conceived as a play on the brand's identifiable colour. The grey mohair velvet curtain was chosen to expose the yellow silk lining inspired by the idea of the ‘Selfridges girl.’


“The Selfridges's girl is based on the idea of a city, working girl because the staff there are absolutely extraordinary in the way that they are trained which is so professional, so one of them became the inspiration for one of the rooms,” says Bartlett.

As smooth sailing as it all may sound, the Waldo Works team did face some challenges during the process of designing the space.

“The creative director gave us a useful brief and then said, ‘go and do what you want to do,’” Bartlett recalls

with a laugh. He continues: “So, we set our own ideas about what we should be looking at and how we should structure the rooms and the main spaces.”

Bartlett explains the obstacles the team faced: “I think the main challenge was that we had, in fact, almost too much of a blank slate when we were beginning the design process. We were almost having to create these personalities and you can see now why we had to go down that kind of road. It was almost like designing a huge residential building and thinking, ‘oh, now we are in guest room number 49, how are we going to make this one different?’”

Yet the outcome of the space definitely did not disappoint. Bartlett concludes: “We had to stick very strongly to what we believed in terms of the concept, which I guess was both a difficulty and a pleasure.” 

6
Tamara de Lempicka
Room

7
Saville Road Room

8
Selfridges Room

Images:
Ruy Teixeira