

# WRITING FOR DESIGN

RESEARCH PROJECT

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# CONTENTS

## 1

### PHYSICAL CONTEXT

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Site writing / Slow looking | 4-6   |
| Photographic Montage        | 7-8   |
| Fragments & Details         | 9-12  |
| Creative Writing            | 13-16 |

## 2

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

|          |       |
|----------|-------|
| Outernet | 18-24 |
| Timeline | 25-26 |

## 3

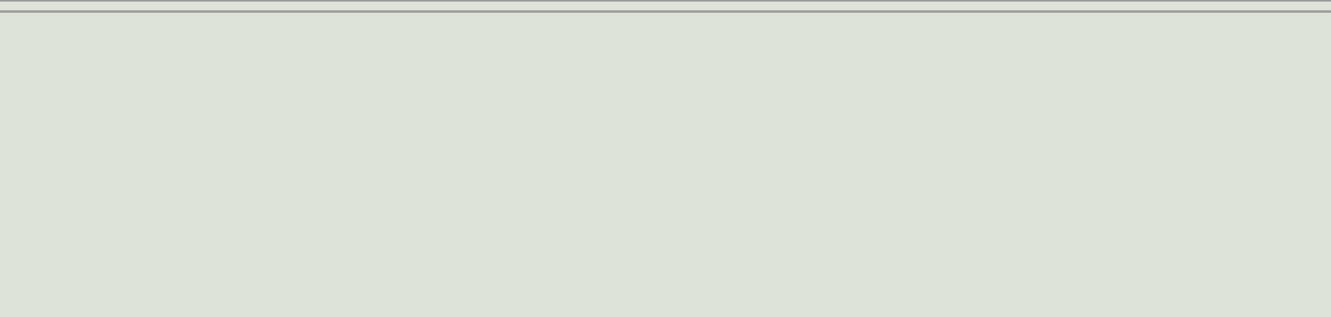
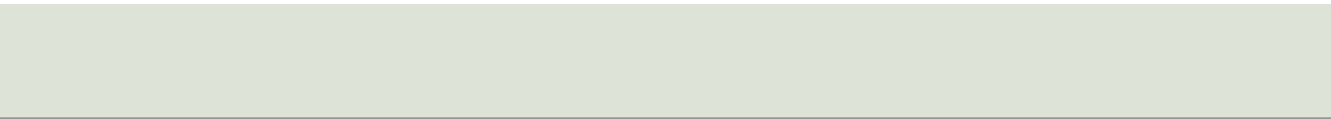
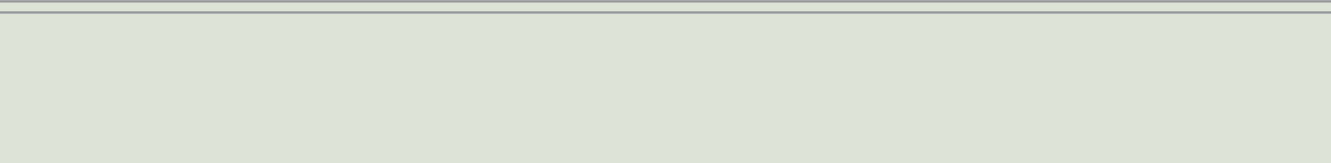
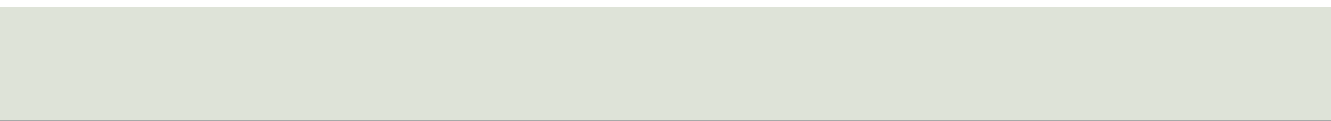
### CRITICAL CONTEXT

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Sensory Selling:<br>An Investigation into the relationship between the senses and<br>retail design | 28- 48 |
|--|--------|

## 4

### APPENDICES

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Collaboration with MA | 50    |
| Essay Plan            | 51-54 |
| Bibliography          | 55-56 |
| Critical Reflection   | 57-58 |



# 1

## PHYSICAL CONTEXT

# SITE WRITING/SLOW LOOKING

## Personal reaction and connection to the site

Located on the eastern end of Oxford Street within the City of Westminster, West End of London, lies the site that I will be re-designing. It's currently a currency exchange shop known as 'Change Money', nearest to Tottenham Court Road Station, and sandwiched between Primark and McDonalds.



## SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The surrounding environment of the site maintains a busy and erratic feel due to the many shoppers and tourists that crowd the streets and continuous pile of traffic. Due to its insertion within a popular shopping destination, the site loses its attraction and importance. It becomes invisible to the public as human bodies scurry along the pavement, taking in no regard for the site. Due to passing vehicles and murmurs of conversation, the noise levels tend to take over the area as well as the mix of pungent scents of petrol fumes and aromatic smell of fast food. Therefore this is a chance to focus on visual means of targeting the senses and drawing people within the space to escape and detach from the chaos of Oxford Street.

Directly opposite the site, stands 'ONE Oxford Street', which is currently under development in becoming a 'vibrant new retail destination in the heart of the West End', containing five new retail units that will benefit from the footfall and spend growth projected for the eastern side of Oxford Street. This provides this area of Oxford Street with ample opportunity of slowing down shoppers to observe their surroundings and be exposed to the site.

# SITE WRITING/SLOW LOOKING

Personal reaction and connection to the site

## EXTERIOR OBSERVATION AND FEEL

Whilst standing in front of 'ONE Oxford Street', directly facing the site with a clear field of vision, I was able to observe its disparaged character. My initial thoughts of the site was how it felt and appeared insignificant and belittled, in condition and size, compared to the buildings that touch it. The site feels inserted later on in a timeline and squashed between grander buildings with facades that take more care and detail. The façade of the site above the ground floor appears to be dirty and coarse with cracks to its plaster and paint, appearing to be neglected. The site radiates a sense of vulnerability due to its raw and rusty appearance and unintentionally slanting rooftop. Its windows hold no breathing room as its framing detail overcrowd the façade. This acts in contrast to the metal frame and large glass windows on the ground floor façade which provides a contemporary twist to the protected history and lineage of ornate building facades on Oxford Street. The posters in place of the window creates the impression on an unwelcoming destination where people are not invited in to explore and discover, but rather simply carry out the transaction of changing money.





## INTERIOR FEEL

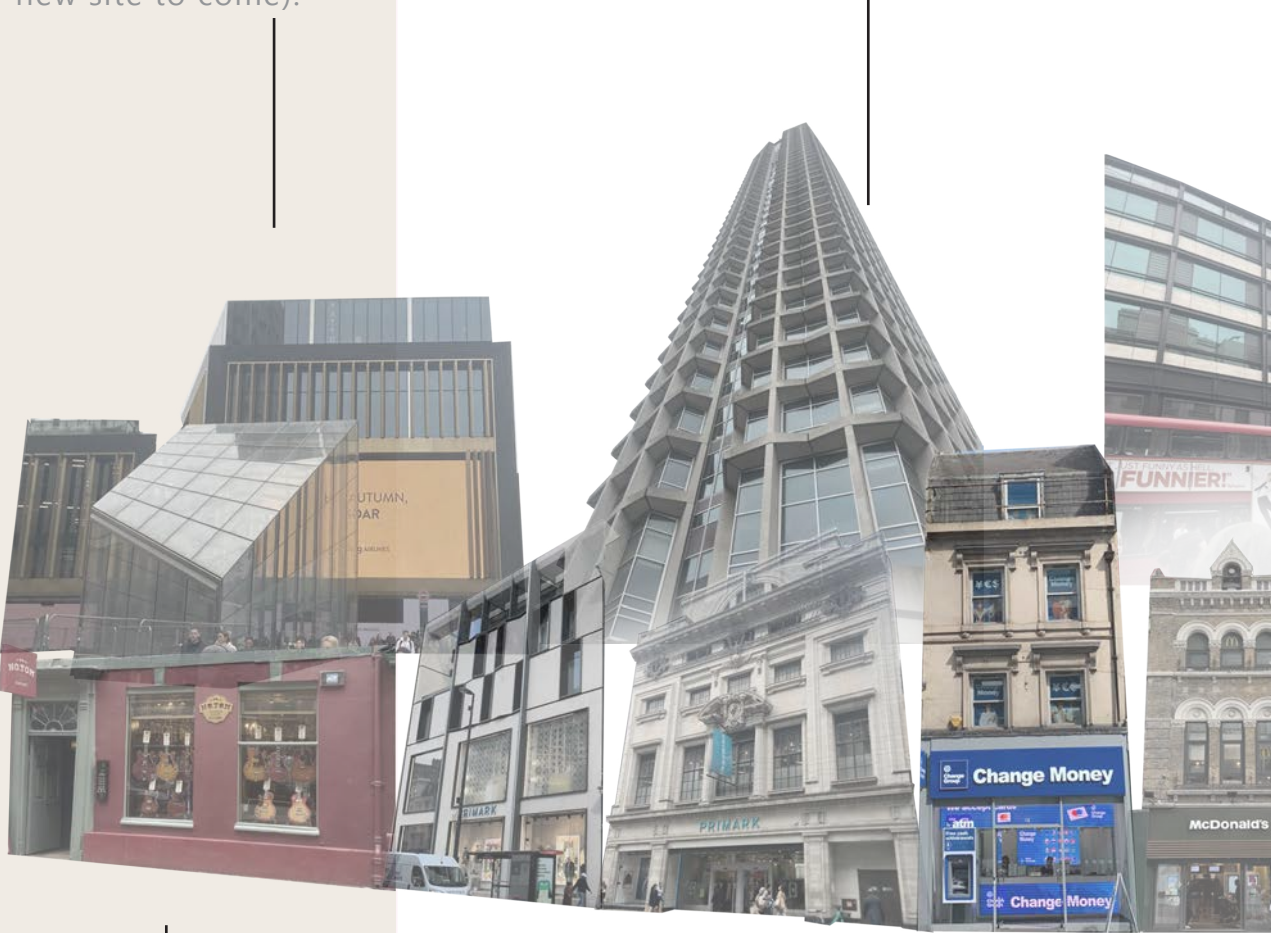
The Interior is extremely limited as it provides small standing room before being confronted with a desk that stretches across the width of the space, suggesting visitors cannot go or see any further into the interior. This eradicates any opportunity of exploration, discovery or excitement to be instilled within customers, although it does provide clear, straightforward and noticeable function for the space. It appears to be confrontational and honest which may hold some benefits in attracting the correct customer base. Although, I would like to create a journey through the re-design of the space in order to provide the interior with more purpose and flare.

# PHOTOGRAPHIC MONTAGE

## Streetscape of Oxford Street

Outernet & Tottenham Court Road Station (Within close range to the site, providing exposure and large footfall for the new site to come).

Centre Point (34 storey skyscraper containing flats that draw the eye upwards).



No. Tom Guitars - Denmark Street (Denmark Street has history as its reputation states it was the heart of the British music industry in the 1960s).

Primark (grand facade with care to ornate detailing that pays homage to British architecture on Oxford Street).

Site - Change Money (Insignificant facade in comparison to grander size of neighbouring buildings including Primark).



ONE Oxford Street (New retail destination, currently under development, containing five new retail units).



Basicmart Superstore

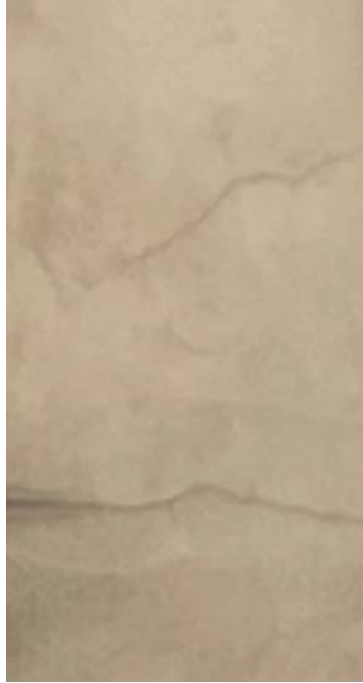
Mcdonalds (fast food amongst a retail environment to provide an inclusive experience of leisure on Oxford Street).

Flying Horse - Traditional Pub

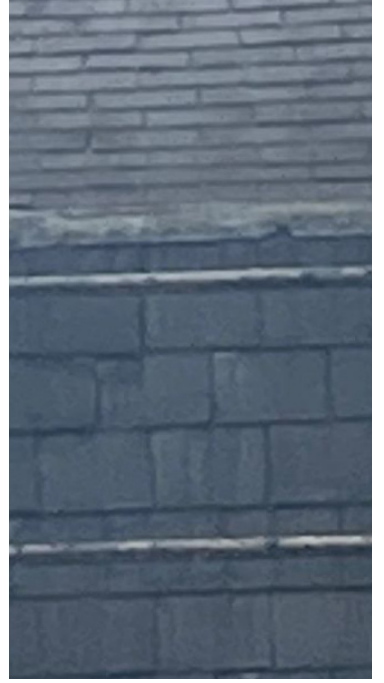
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2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



# FRAGMENTS & DETAILS

## Zooming in on and around the site

- 1 The ornate details surrounding the window frames is symbolic of time and history within British design in its methods of drawing attention to minute details and provide a rich and architecturally busy facade. This relates to and communicate with surrounding buildings on Oxford Street.
- 2 Cracks and imperfections within the plaster demonstrate deterioration and flaws within the site that come with age and highlights how materials transform.
- 3 Looking closely at the detailing of the roof tiles, they have lost their sharp edges and appear to be crumbling with age as some appear to be lifted. The rusty railings reinforces this concept further.
- 4 This cracked corner losing its floor finish which separates it from the public footpath, demonstrates a lack of care and attention to hidden spaces. This could be used to an advantage in the re-design of the space by focusing on drawing people in to corners and hidden spaces.
- 5 The scratched and marked metal frame for the facade shows history in which people could have physical contact to leave an impression.
- 6 Beside the site, the stone facade of Primark mirrors the markings and historical impressions of the metal frame, as well as its fading in colour. This shows the effects of nature and imprints that events leave behind. This is a concept I could utilise in the design of the Aesop retail store.

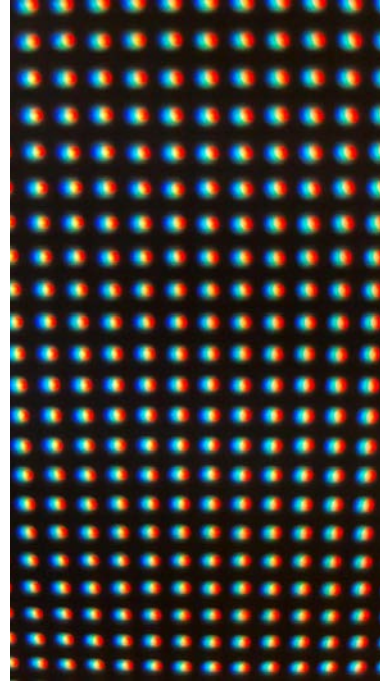
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# FRAGMENTS & DETAILS

## Zooming in on and around the site

- 1 Taken from a detailed, ornate column outside of Selfridges; there is a sense of luxury in it' s golden/bronze brushed tone and sculptural technique.
- 2 These bricks are found on the exterior shell of Centre Point which lay in a uniform arrangement that appear clean and organised, in contrast to the deterioration of the site' s facade.
- 3 Zooming in to the detail of Outernet' s digital screens, there is a sense of exposure and honesty about the mini pixels that collate in order to form the high definition visuals that engulf visitors. It' s an interesting concept in uncovering the truth about how things work/function.
- 4 Within Liberty' s Aesop store, I noticed the detailing of carved slots that hold spatulas for product testing application. This is a unique and interesting element of storage with hidden functions that allow the surrounding environment of the store to appear neat.
- 5 Another detailed element of the Aesop store is its vintage-looking taps that mirror the luxurious gold/bronze tone evident within the exterior of selfridges. This highlights the high-end experience of Oxford Street, especially through the tap' s exaggerated, ornate design.
- 6 Within the Apple Store, the detail of the handrail transforms the experience of walking on the staircase as it provides a smooth and sleek touch. It' s curved shape allows for the hand to comfortably wrap around and inside the rail, providing the feeling of protection and relaxation. This encourages customers to feel comfortable and confident within the store, wanting to elongate their stay and experience.

# CREATIVE WRITING

## The Candle



**Etymology:** From the Latin word *candela*, meaning “a light, torch, candle made of tallow or wax” , derived from the verb *candere*, meaning “to shine” .

### CONCRETE - PARTICULAR:

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This object consists of a clear glass jar, cold to the touch, that holds a heavy chunk of cream coloured wax. The wax represents a sense of history and past tense in its use as its layers are melted away, revealing fresh wax and leaving solidified drips that overlap and cascade down the interior edges of the jar over time. The solid wax has a smooth, creamy, wet touch at its base surrounding the wick. Although, this soothing sensation is disrupted as my finger curves around the edges and stretches over the bumpy texture of drips, folds, cracks and imperfections. There is a sense of a moment captured in time where the droplets of wax undergo a physical and temperature transformation from being a hot liquid into a cold solid. This suggests a unique quality to this particular candle as it lacks any control or influence in its appearance other than the flame that affects it. The powerful scent of vanilla and honey swims around the container and escapes into my nostrils as I become intimately close with the candle. This contrasts the strong stench of fire from the black, burnt, crisp wick which allows me to imagine the sound of a burning, crackling noise. The touch of the wick feels coarse and delicate in contrast to the wax whilst it leaves a dark, dusty mark on my finger.

## PERSONAL - ANECDOTE:

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This object provides me with comfort, peace and recollection of mind in times of need. It allows me to relax and embrace the delicacy and serenity of a moment. It places me in a mode of focus and concentration in order to encourage my flow of thinking. I use it in complete solitude in my home to appreciate its full benefits as it's proven to play an essential role in the physiological effects of mood, stress, working capacity and mental health. Psychotherapist and cognitive behavioural therapist, Chryssa Chalkia, states "The soothing effect that candles have is based on how the brain processes smells. The smell of scented candles stimulates our limbic system, the part of the brain that is home to our memory and emotions. Hormones like serotonin and dopamine can be produced to help regulate mood. Therefore, our emotional state is influenced by the relationship that exists between scents, memories, and emotions". The scent of vanilla and honey triggers my memory of sweet treats and baked goods, reminiscent of my childhood, providing me with of emotion of joyful innocence that trumps any hardships.

I work on my laptop as it sits across the room on my desk. I use it when reading a fiction book as I lay in my soft bedding wrapped in a warm blanket on a rainy evening. It provides warmth and protection from the dark, cold and the outside. I remember to blow it out before going to sleep as I bare in mind the danger it can cause if it were to tip over. I remember its heat that warms up the glass container that holds it; careful not to touch. I regard it with precious care as it does for me.







LOOKING CLOSELY...



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## PROJECT - LINK:

Bumps, cracks, layers and imperfections in the solidified wax drips has a link to the texture and appearance of skin and how it adapts/changes over time through response to environment, condition and age. This also links to the transformation element of the object where the wax turns from liquid to solid, similarly how the skin changes over time from smooth to wrinkles, representing a history, past and narrative. The immersive space which is about slowing down links to the slow and patient process of a burning candle that takes time. The wax' s texture allows for imprints of fingers, demonstrating an intimate connection between the candle and the surface of the skin. The idea of containment and safety/protection that skin provides links to how the candle provides a sense of envelope and protection in its psychological effects as well as how it physically contains the wax in a glass jar. Overall, the candle provides a complete sensory pleasure experience through the sound of crackling, the touch of warmth, the sight of a dancing flame/drips of wax, and the smell of fire, vanilla and honey.

# 2

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

# OUTERNET

## History around the site

Located in the West end of London, Outernet opened in 2022 after undergoing more than ten years of construction, providing the purpose of being an immersive entertainment district. The brand is a global media and entertainment company that aims to adapt the way people experience music, film, art, gaming and retail experiences. Containing the largest digital exhibition space in Europe, its immersive technology creates a cultural hut where communities of people gather for the appreciation of art, music and culture.

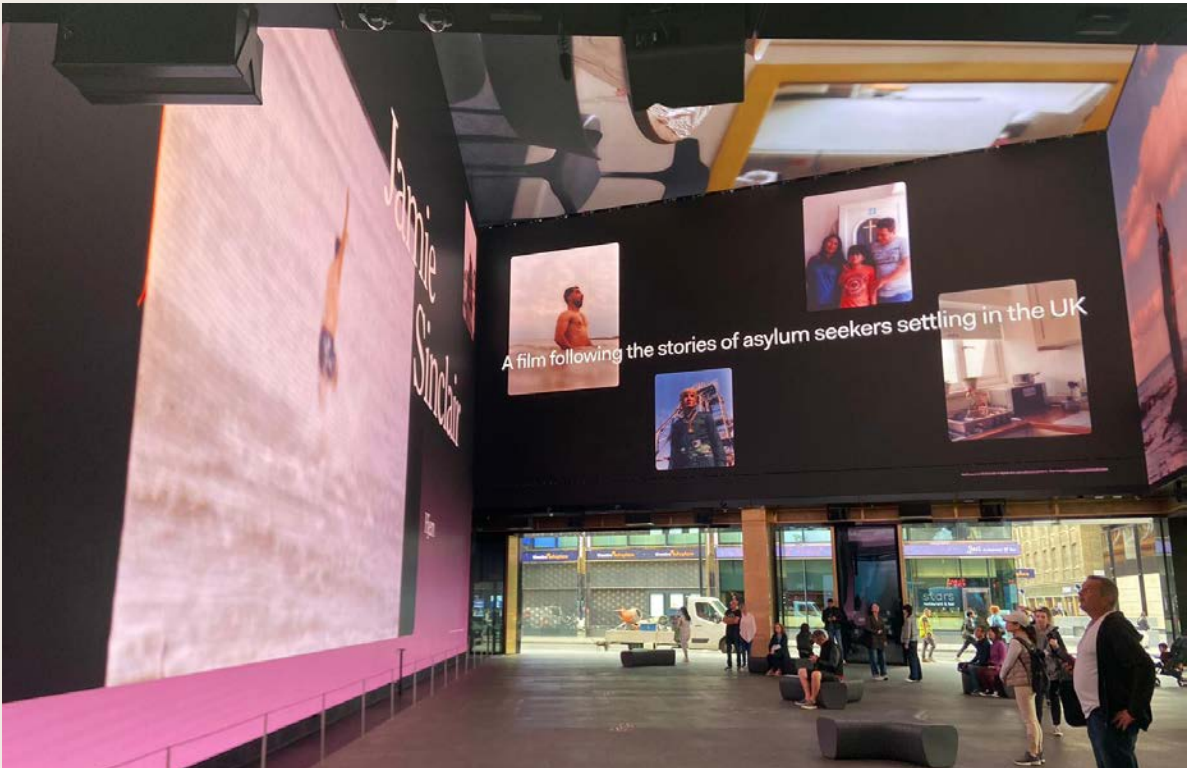


## THE NOW BUILDING

The Now building sits at the intersection of Tottenham Court Road and Charing Cross next to Centre point and is known for broadcasting content on its 360-degree, LED screens with 4D and interactive capabilities that wraps around and envelops its audience. The four storey building also holds the Tattu Restaurant on its rooftop serving Chinese cuisine.

The façade of the Now building contains a large digital screen, broadcasting content for the public to be drawn to, making it impossible to ignore. The open, wide threshold blurs the boundary between indoor and outdoor space and psychologically pulls people into the space as they feel welcomed and less intimidated by the restriction of a door; encouraging communities to come together within the space.

The digital screens that wrap around the sides of the building reflects the modern era of design that we live in which rejects the ornate detailing of Oxford Street' s historical architecture and provides a look into the future in its capability of transforming spaces through technology.



Interior of the Now Building with digital wrapping screens and seating

## NOW TRENDING

Similar to the Now building, 'Now Trending' provides a smaller version of a LED screen wrapped environment used for product sampling and interactive exhibits. The separation of this space from the Now building forces people to cross over through the exterior pathway which leads them to the back of the building that in turn leads to the 'Now Arcade' .

The application of black within the façade and interior of the space allows the bright LED screens to be the focus and causes the imagery to appear more poignant. It also provides a soothing space in which people feel safe within as they become submerged within the darkness of the floors and seating, allowing the digital experience to take over their mind. The gold framing on the façade provides a sense of luxury that the West End of London brings and the high quality of experiences that Outernet can evoke, standing out against its surroundings in a eye-catching manner.



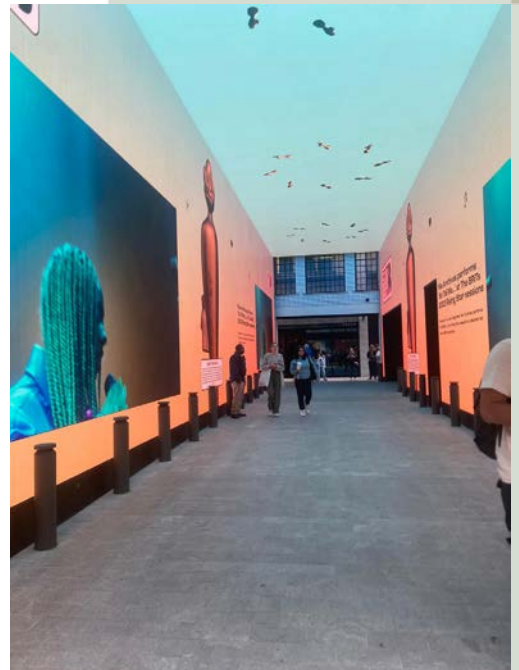
Interior of Now Trending

## NOW ARCADE

The Now arcade acts as an extension of the Now building but in the form of an LED tunnel which creates an immersive walkthrough experience through digital exhibitions. It physically connects the technology evolving world of the Now building with the historical and cultural heritage of Denmark Street. This metaphorical journey of rewinding time back to its origins, demonstrates how the entertainment industry has adapted and excelled.



Interior of the Now Arcade



Interior of the Now Arcade

## DENMARK STREET

The iconic Denmark Street was once known for its reputation of being the heart of the British music industry in the 1960s, where stars like David Bowie, Elton John and the Sex Pistols started their careers and the Rolling Stones recorded their first album.

As result of Outernet, Denmark Street was restored and revived through the repair of iconic shops and clubs, new live venues, a free recording studio and the session rooms of Chateau Denmark; bringing back this historic part of London to the cultural scene. Chateau Denmark offers hospitality in their belief within 'creative expression' with 55 session rooms and apartments open to artists.



Denmark Street in the 1960s



Facade of No.Tom instrument store on Denmark Street

## THE LOWER THIRD

Support of new artists is conveyed within the grassroots music and events venue 'The Lower Third', which is a former 12-bar club that has been restored, paying homage to its 16th century forge. The new venue consists of a club that holds three levels with a bar and several locations for live music, allowing them to host showcases, parties, functions, photoshoots, launches, award ceremonies and networking events.



Interior of the Lower Third



## HERE

'HERE' at Outernet sits underneath The Now building, and offers a 10,000 square foot venue with a capacity of 2000 to host creative and cultural events, including some of the popular names within live music and DJ.

As for the future use of the space, I believe the purpose of the building should still be to encourage communities to come together and feel immersed within the space. However, I do think there's opportunity for more purpose and activity to occur where visitors would spend a larger quantity of time in, such as a theatre, or gaming/arcade space.



Facade of Outernet The Now building and Now Trending



Interior of 'HERE'

# TIMELINE:

## Historical buildings on Oxford Street



1875

### **LIBERTY' S**

A luxury department store located on Great Marlborough Street that is known for its close connection to art and culture. The facade resembles a tudor-revival building which makes it a historical icon in the heart of London.

1897

### **HERTFORD HOUSE**

The 16th and 17th century building known as Hertford House in Manchester Square, London, holds a museum known as the Wallace Collection, and was the former townhouse of the Seymour family, Marquesses of Hertford.

1909

### **SELFRIDGES**

An upscale department store on Oxford Street that aimed to make shopping a form of leisure, transforming the department store into a social and cultural landmark. The facade of Selfridges spans around a corner, demonstrating its grandeur, facilitated by eye-catching illumination at night.

1932

### **BROADCASTING HOUSE**

The headquarters of BBC in Portland place and Langham place, London. It is a Grade II listed building in Art Deco style, made of Portland stone. The facade curves with panels of glass windows which contrasts against the portland stone of the main building' s facade.



1966

### CENTRE POINT

A 34 storey building holding flats, constructed from 1963-1966, acting as one of the first skyscrapers in London and is considered a Grade II listed building since 1995. The facade of repeating glass windows against the stone-concrete creates a tower that draws the eye upwards.

1971

### PHOTOGRAPHER' S GALLERY

The first public gallery in the UK devoted solely to photography, founded by Sue Davies. The facade combines a Victorian red brick warehouse with a modern steel frame extension to illustrate a respect to history and a step into the future.

2004

### APPLE STORE

The Apple store on Regent Street was the first such store in Europe in 2004 and largest Apple store worldwide until 2010. The building that houses the store is Grade II listed, built in 1898. The store' s facade is very ornate in respects to London architecture, with large glass windows to resemble Apple' s sleek and modern brand.

2022

### OUTERNET

An immersive entertainment district sandwiched between Tottenham Court Road Station and Charing Cross, with the largest digital exhibition space in Europe. Outernet' s facade highlights the evolution of design in modern day with it' s digital screen and open space that blurs the boundary between the exterior and interior.

# 3

## CRITICAL CONTEXT

# SENSORY SELLING:

## An Investigation into the relationship between the senses and retail design

### ABSTRACT:

“The nuance of an image, the delight of an unfamiliar taste, the memory of a familiar sound, the gentle caress of a soft fabric, the associations of an ancient smell”<sup>1</sup>. The senses that we experience are a powerful tool in provoking an emotional or physical reaction to our surroundings. It allows us to engage with the space and conform to immersive experiences curated by designers in aim of having an impact on its users.

This essay will explore the transformation of retail today in providing more experiential design that focuses on sensory engagement. Is the experience of the 4 senses other than sight becoming more important and prevalent in contemporary design? I will be discussing examples of how retail stores draw on particular senses such as touch, auditory, scent, and sight, to produce engaging encounters for its consumers.

Our first instinct as humans is to feel with our eyes, which leads us to seeing with our hands. The sense of touch provides us with clarification of what we suspected it to feel like when initially exposed to the subject. This is an occurring theme within Bala’s SoHo store by Ringo Studio which contains sculptural elements that encourages the notion of testing through touching; exploring how the skin stretches, folds and curves around the products.

Through the isolation of the other senses, audio & scent become predominant within Selfridges’ Fragrance Lab which molds an individual’s character into a personalised fragrance. Hearing becomes essential in the process of the retail experience as it guides the user through the space which then encourages the activity of exploring scents that either attract or disagree with the customer.

It is commonly argued that sight is the most significant and dominating sense in architectural culture and design; due to the array of visual components it presents to us such as light, colour, shape and movement. Louis Vuitton stores in collaboration with Yayoi Kusama polka-dots provides a visually stimulating and hypnotic atmosphere for driving customers into the space.

The unpacking of this topic should provide an understanding to the reader of how designers manipulate retail stores to provide compelling sensory engagements between the interior and consumer. This demonstrates the accelerating force in transforming the future of retail as we aim to detach from digital commerce and encourage people to immerse themselves within the physical reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Gobâe, M. (2001) Emotional branding: the new paradigm for connecting brands to people. New York: Allworth Press.

# SENSORY SELLING:

An Investigation into the relationship between the senses and retail design

## INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I will be discussing how design considers the senses to provoke engagement and personal connection within a space. I am writing this essay as I believe it is significant to understand and investigate how design looks beyond the dominance of the visual world; uncovering our experience of the other senses in how it consumes us and how people can connect on a deeper level with their surrounding environment. I will be looking specifically at retail environments due to their fascinating position in the design industry as they adapt to current trends and evolve from being about primarily product consumption to a more stimulating atmosphere that delves into the world of leisure and experience-led shopping. This suggests a relationship between selling products through the sensory manipulation incorporated in retail design, hence the term, 'sensory selling' .

As a method of perceiving and experiencing the physical world, the senses reach out as a source of information that allows us to understand and connect with the surrounding environment. Each sense mode including 'sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing can be defined as the faculties by which external or internal stimuli are perceived, involving the transmission of nerve impulses from receptors to the brain' .<sup>1</sup> 'Sense' has a significant duality and ambiguity in its language which conveys its closely connected relationship between the immediate experience of sensations and broader mental constructs in which it's referred to as 'meaning' .<sup>2</sup>

'A sensuous experience is often a complex of senses working together offering a range of clues about the environment through which the body is passing...one might also argue that each sense is both a medium and message' .<sup>3</sup> This demonstrates its role as a medium in gathering sensory information from the environment – light, odours, sounds, textures – and providing a message as it participates in sense-making.

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1 Potvin, J. Marchand, M-E. and Beaulieu, B. (2023) The senses in interior design: Sensorial expressions and experiences. Manchester University Press.

2 Rodaway, P. (1994) Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place. London : Routledge.

3 Rodaway, P. (1994) Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place. London : Routledge.

Interior design targets the stimulation of the senses to evoke powerful emotional, physical, and psychological responses from its users to engage and immerse themselves within the space. Designers have experimented with, embraced, and harnessed new materials, objects, and technologies to heighten sensory awareness. However, in our current time, a detailed discussion of the senses is often ignored due to the 'modernist approach in architectural history' where the focus of interiors has been placed on key designers/ideal interiors, 'disregarding the embodied, sensorial agency'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is integral to explore how design is expanding the realm of sensory experiences to capitalize on our powers of perception.

This research focuses on the development of interior design in implementing sensory experiences within the context of retail to encourage engagement. The following text will look at the preconception of sight as the most dominant sense within design, and how this is becoming less significant in the face of maximising the other senses through immersive retail design.

The first theme will explore the olfactory experience, uncovering how the sense of smell is dominant within Selfridge's Fragrance Lab where personality is formulated 'into a scent through an immersive experience by Campaign and The Future Laboratory'<sup>2</sup>. The second theme provides an understanding of the haptic quality, where touch is provoked in Bala's Soho store by Ringo Studio through sculptural elements that 'create nooks for testing, touching, and trying out in person'<sup>3</sup>. The third theme analyses auditory culture within the Sonos store, in how the design of the sound pods accommodates for isolating the activity of hearing.

However, the discussion around retail design is considered insignificant where commercial interiors are under-represented in academic discourse. Therefore, a large portion of my essay regarding my case studies is supported by referring to online design journals, such as Dezeen. This is where I can bring in academic discourse through *The Eyes of the Skin*, *Sensuous Geographies*, and *Sensory Formations* to interrogate these case studies.

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1 Potvin, J. Marchand, M-E. and Beaulieu, B. (2023) *The senses in interior design: Sensorial expressions and experiences*. Manchester University Press.

2 Howarth, D. (2014) Selfridges' Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/02/selfridges-fragrance-lab-distill-your-character-into-a-scent/> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

3 Howarth, D. (2022) Bala's SoHo store by Ringo Studio features oversized fitness equipment. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/04/30/bala-store-soho-new-york-ringo-studio/> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

## CONTEXT

'Ocularcentrism is the term used to express the emphasis that Western culture places on the visual sense'<sup>1</sup> as it is historically considered to be one of the noblest of the senses. Juhani Pallasmaa states in *The Eyes of the Skin* that 'during the Renaissance, the five senses were understood to form a hierarchical system from the highest sense of vision down to touch', due to its ability to 'grasp, fixate...dominate, secure and control'.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrates the dominance of the visual form in architecture which has led to its fixation with appearances that provide striking images for instant persuasion, although they lack depth and candour. 'Most design is caged by the image. We look at design, we don't feel, experience, or sense it'.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the significance of the eye has caused the other senses to be suppressed, leading to an imbalance in the sensory system, causing detachment from the inhumane nature of contemporary design.<sup>4</sup> The overbearing reliance on sight as a sense appealed to most within architecture, is made prevalent within Louis Vuitton's retail store in collaboration with Yayoi Kusama which captures the essence of visual hallucinations that Kusama has experienced and utilised as artistic output. The space plays on the perception of the physical world through sight within its mirrored reflections of a spotted motif, seen in Figure 1, that aims to engulf the consumers' field of vision. This demonstrates the dominance of the visual sense in design which consumes us and becomes overstimulating, resulting in the disconnection between individuals and their other senses.



Figure 1: Louis Vuitton retail store in collaboration with Yayoi Kusama in Tokyo

1 Brook, I. (2014) 'Experiencing Interiors: Ocularcentrism and Merleau-Ponty's Redeeming of the Role of Vision', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 33:1, pp.68. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2002.11007361>

2 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.

3 Lupton, E. and Lipps, A. (2018) *The Senses: Design Beyond Vision*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

4 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.



In a retail architectural world where the predominance of the visual experience mutes other sensations, there must be consideration for the visually impaired who are forced to rely on haptic, auditory, and olfactory perceptions to engage with the built environment. According to Pallasmaa, 'we join the world not because of sight, but because of the rest of the other senses' , allowing the blind to give meaning to places based on their experiences, emotions, memories, and imaginations, as they pay more attention to the other senses; causing 'the blind perception to add a new spectrum or essence into the field of architecture' .<sup>1</sup>

Designing for the blind demands us to see in new ways through our sensorial qualities, extending the scope of our perception. This is conveyed within the 2012 'renovation of an existing library for the blind as part of Ciudad de los Libros' <sup>2</sup> in Mexico, which aims to create a powerful atmosphere that does not 'focus exclusively on sight but attempts to restore the sensitivity of the skin to exposure to light, to wind, the aromas emitted, the vibrations of the voice' .<sup>3</sup> Sound is articulated through the 'water channel that runs along the central plaza with a rippling rhythm' <sup>4</sup> that guides the path, as seen in Figure 2, as well as sound-insulated booths that reduce the density of noise.



Figure 2: Water channel along the central plaza at a library for the blind in Mexico

- 1 BNP, F. and HETTIARACHCHI, A. (2016) BLIND SENSE OF PLACE A sensory ethnographic study on parameters of optimal design. FARU PROCEEDINGS-2016, p.97.
- 2 Carrillo, G. (2020) Building for the blind. Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/building-for-the-blind> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).
- 3 Carrillo, G. (2020) Building for the blind. Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/building-for-the-blind> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).
- 4 Carrillo, G. (2020) Building for the blind. Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/building-for-the-blind> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

Touch is explored through ridges along the bookshelves and the texture of braille text imprinted on handrails and tables, portrayed in Figure 3. The scent of carefully positioned lemon, rosemary and jasmine in an aromatic garden and the seeping smell of the furniture' s skin provide stimulation for the blind. 'The space becomes intricate as it strengthens the existing phenomena and what our senses are capable of perceiving' .<sup>1</sup> Therefore, designing for those whose sense of sight is impaired means understanding their reliance on the other senses, to experience the physical world that surrounds them. Designers can learn and take inspiration from this when designing retail environments that engulf and engage by implementing aspects that draw on the senses besides sight.



Figure 3: Ridges along bookshelves at a library for the blind in Mexico

1 Carrillo, G. (2020) Building for the blind. Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/building-for-the-blind> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

Drawing from the sensuous experience of architecture that the visually impaired must undergo; retail has evolved to excite and engage customers through experiential and sensory design, beyond the visual quality, that connects them to the space and brand. Recently, the shopping experience has adapted to the rise of technology and online channels, leading to the 'retail environment working harder to attract and maintain customer interest in stores, remaining at the forefront of contemporary interior design' .<sup>1</sup> 'Consumers tend to pursue hedonic shopping motivations, involving behavioural aspects related to multi-sensory, fantasy and emotional consumption...suggesting the experience of the purchase may be more important than the acquisition of the product' .<sup>2</sup> Therefore, through interactivity and experiential retailing aided by sensory stimuli in the design of stores; there is potential for captivation and increasing consumer engagement. Sensory design allows the pace of the experience to 'slow down and feel thicker, as it moves us through the space' <sup>3</sup>, supporting our ability to explore the world as it enhances our health and wellbeing whilst considering 'not just the shape of things but how things shape us – our behaviour and emotions' .<sup>4</sup> The rise of experiential retail gives us a scope to embrace all of the senses, whereas, in the past, retail was only concerned with browsing and purchasing products. This has evolved as we now feel a need to test and a desire to engage with the products; the tactile quality and experiential encounter with the product becomes important and how it feels and looks becomes more embracing.

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1 Anderson, S. and Mesher, L. (2019) Retail design. 2nd edn. London : Bloomsbury Publishing.

2 Clarke, D.W. Perry, P and Denson, H. (2012) 'The sensory retail environment of small fashion boutiques ', Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management , Volume 16 Issue 4. Available at:<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13612021211265872/full/html?fullSc=1&mbSc=1> (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

3 Lupton, E. and Lipps, A. (2018) The Senses: Design Beyond Vision. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

4 Lupton, E. and Lipps, A. (2018) The Senses: Design Beyond Vision. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.



Figure 4: Reception at Selfridge's Fragrance Lab in London

The olfactory experience relates to the sense of smell, where 'olfaction concentrates on the relationship which occurs when smells, odours or aromas penetrate space'.<sup>1</sup> Olfaction provides enrichment to our 'sense of space and character of the place' as it stimulates emotional arousal through 'permeating the environment and penetrating the body, in contrast to the visual experience which distances us from the subject, involving thought and cognition'.<sup>2</sup> Smell is considered to be an intimate sense, alongside the haptic experience, which 'generates an immediate geography and emotionally establishes a strong connection in the near encounter between person and environment'.<sup>3</sup> This connection is articulated through the significant influence that aromas have on triggering memory and personal history, providing the reconstruction of one's past; thus creating a meaningful relationship between the scent and person, as olfactory receptors link to 'the brain's limbic system, also known as the seat of emotion'.<sup>4</sup>

1 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

2 Drobnick, J. (2006) *Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

3 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

4 Drobnick, J. (2006) *Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

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The concept of 'Toposmia' uncovers smell's spatial quality, 'serving as a distinctive sensory marker or is strategically added for manipulative purposes' in which the 'odours define and alter the traditional visualist conceptions of the landscape, design and architecture'.<sup>1</sup> This creates 'Smellscapes' which expresses that odours may be 'spatially ordered or place-related' and will be perceived as 'non-continuous, fragmentary in space and episodic in time'.<sup>2</sup>

When looking at Selfridge's Fragrance lab designed by Campaign and The Future Laboratory in London in 2014<sup>3</sup>, we can see how it connects to the themes of toposmia, smellscapes, and memory/emotional encounters. It achieves this through its retail installation design which provides a physically, psychologically and emotionally engaging retail experience. The space looks at the future of in-store retail through a 'meaningful consumer experience' that analyses 'habits, preferences, tastes and physical interaction'<sup>4</sup> in an attempt to create a scent based on personal character. The journey begins in a reception space, as seen in Figure 4, where a personality test is conducted, followed by a soothing audio guide through a set of headphones that aim to draw on the auditory sense to create the element of isolation and focus, as it builds anticipation through instruction of how to navigate the space.

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1 Drobnick, J. (2006) *Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

2 Drobnick, J. (2006) *Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

3 Retail Design Blog (2014) Fragrance Lab installation by Campaign, The Future Laboratory, Selfridges and Givaudan, London. Available at: <https://retaildesignblog.net/2014/05/19/fragrance-lab-installation-by-campaign-the-future-laboratory-selfridges-and-givaudan-london/> (Accessed: 2 December 2023).

4 Retail Design Blog (2014) Fragrance Lab installation by Campaign, The Future Laboratory, Selfridges and Givaudan, London. Available at: <https://retaildesignblog.net/2014/05/19/fragrance-lab-installation-by-campaign-the-future-laboratory-selfridges-and-givaudan-london/> (Accessed: 2 December 2023).

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According to the 2014 Dezeen article 'Selfridges' Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent'<sup>1</sup>, Dan Howarth expresses that the experience follows with uncertainty in a dark space, limiting the activity of the visual sense to provide a clear head for what's to come. An array of scents contained within drawers in the next room 'have been chosen to evoke particular memories'<sup>2</sup>. This provides an intimate encounter for the consumer as they physically interact with the space by activating their sense of touch with a drawer. The depiction of a drawer links to the idea of domesticity, resembling a homely and comforting atmosphere which tends to promote emotions of protection and reminiscing of the past. This encourages the individual to feel safe in having an emotional connection or memory with the scent present in the drawer. Therefore, toposmia is articulated within the space as it purposefully uses smell's spatial character in the confines and intimacy of drawers, to emotionally and psychologically manipulate the mind; providing information for the construction process of the personalised fragrance.

The customer's journey ends in a 'white laboratory-like environment filled with mist, faceted shapes and copper tubes'<sup>3</sup>, portrayed in Figure 5, that reveal variations of the personalised fragrance which was curated through the narrative and captured data of the consumer's sensorially engaging experience. This atmosphere acts as a symbolised smellscape as the scents are spatially organised in the copper tubes. The design provides the concept of permanency for aromas, as scents tend to be 'episodic' with remaining in space as they 'defy containment and refuse to respect borders'<sup>4</sup>. 'Episodic' implies a sense of discontinuity and irregularity as scent possesses a fragmented disposition in travelling and breaking apart through space; conceptually illustrated within the design of the installation's faceted faces, presented in Figure 5. This is complemented by the jagged copper tubes that extend and wrap around themselves to create the impression of scent weaving itself through the open air. This is made significant in appearance as the raw copper surface contrasts against the sleek white installations; providing the olfactory experience with a physical appearance.

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1 Howarth, D. (2014) Selfridges' Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/02/selfridges-fragrance-lab-distill-your-character-into-a-scent/> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

2 Howarth, D. (2014) Selfridges' Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/02/selfridges-fragrance-lab-distill-your-character-into-a-scent/> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

3 Howarth, D. (2014) Selfridges' Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/02/selfridges-fragrance-lab-distill-your-character-into-a-scent/> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

4 Drobnick, J. (2006) Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader. Oxford : Berg.

The decline of ocularcentrism is evident in this case study which draws on the sense of smell to provide an immersive and personal journey through a retail environment, focusing less on the visual sense. This targets our olfactory perception to experience a world that connects us on a deeper level with our sense of character as we become consumed in the articulation of toposmia and smellscapes.



Figure 5: Laboratory-like environment filled with faceted shapes, mist and copper tubes in Selfridge's Fragrance Lab in London

'Haptic' refers to the sense of touch 'as a system involving the coordination of receptor cells and muscles of the body' <sup>1</sup> in response to physical contact, to provide individuals with integral information about their surrounding environment. The sense of touch is under the assumption of being primarily concerned with fingers; although Montagu (1971) emphasizes through the labelling of 'haptic', that touch is 'a property of the whole skin covering the body' <sup>2</sup>. The tactile world is explored and appreciated through the delicacy and curiosity of touch which 'provides us with a sensation of our mental processes' ; eliminating the Western belief that touch is concerned with 'brute physicality...in opposition to the intellect' <sup>3</sup>. It provides us with the truth of our pre-conceptions, thus tends to be the most trusted sense as acts of grasping, stroking, and embracing, 'enables us to possess the world, to wrap our consciousness around it' <sup>4</sup>.

David Howes discusses the concept of 'skinscapes' which looks at the skin obtaining knowledge of the world in both passive and active methods through the examination of the 'size, shape, weight, texture and temperature of features in the environment' <sup>5</sup> to develop an understanding of its character. The communication of reaching out to the environment and in return coming into contact with the body creates a connection to the physical world and a sense of belonging to which we establish our place within that world, as it 'tattoos our skin with tactile impressions' <sup>6</sup>. This insinuates that touch is an intimate sense, as it's considered the most personal invasion of privacy, and thus is mindfully protected. Although, when used it can be perceived as the most powerful sense, due to its ability to connect us to the physicality of the world and leave the memory of impressions on our skin.

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1 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

2 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

3 Classen, C. (2005) *The book of touch*. Oxford: Berg.

4 Gobâe, M. (2001) *Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. New York : Allworth Press.

5 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

6 Classen, C. (2005) *The book of touch*. Oxford: Berg.



To be stripped of this intimacy and tactile experience means to lose connection with the physical world and sense of being. However, in the absence of the visual sense, the blind' s sense of touch becomes heightened as they must navigate through the world in the form of physical contact. Touch becomes more than 'the mere feeling of things but becomes a highly tuned sense in its own right' <sup>1</sup>, allowing the experience of the 'subtleties and complexity of touch' <sup>2</sup> to inspire the experience of today' s retail design.



Figure 6: Bala pop-up store by Ringo Studio in New York City

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1 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.  
2 Classen, C. (2005) *The book of touch*. Oxford: Berg.



Figure 7: Entrance of Bala pop-up store by Ringo Studio in New York City



Figure 8: Fitting room of Bala pop-up store by Ringo Studio in New York City

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Due to living in a society dominated by the visual, the lack of ‘tactile gratification’ that comes with visual imagery has led to the development of touch as ‘the hungriest sense of postmodernity’, which causes ‘a sense of alienation in being out of touch with one’s environment’.<sup>1</sup> In regards to retail environments, consumers explore products through testing and touching to accommodate for their restricted information and experience of the product.

Within NYC’s Bala pop-up store, Ringo Studio aimed to provide customers with a ‘product playground’ in which ‘objects and interiors are designed to be experienced, felt and unfolded’ to stimulate emotion through the ‘gratification of the desire to touch’.<sup>2</sup> This is seen in Figure 6, where the fitness brand uses enlarged versions of their products to encourage touching and testing in person, through sculptural features. The smooth, curved forms present in the brand identity of the product is translated into features of the retail space including walls and counters, as shown in Figure 7. This allows a soft and safe atmosphere to emerge, inviting consumers to caress and wrap their touch around the edges of the seamless surface. The visual sense is appealed to in the stimulating use of hues including pastel blues, pinks and greens, to provoke the hunger for touch which invites customers to engage with the product in a physically interactive, tactile way. The physically sensuous journey of the store comes to completion with a space submerged in pink with velvet fitting room curtains and a fluffy carpet in Figure 8, enhancing the soft textural quality and visually vibrant atmosphere reinforced within the design of the store.

As a result, this retail space creates a ‘skinscape’ where customers become physically and emotionally connected to the space and brand by having the ability to explore its character; and test the weight, size, texture and shape of the fitness equipment through the touch of their fingertips as it influences the movement of their body; allowing it’s tactile impression to tattoo their skin.

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1 Classen, C. (2005) *The book of touch*. Oxford: Berg.

2 Classen, C. (2005) *The book of touch*. Oxford: Berg.

The sense of hearing is concerned with an auditory experience which explores the perception of sound, allowing us to 'think with our ears', offering the opportunity to 'comprehend our world and our encounters with it'.<sup>1</sup> Although an understanding of the world is cultivated through the visual sense, the sense of sight 'implies exteriority' due to its nature of being a 'solitary observer'<sup>2</sup> which in effect isolates the user, providing little depth to the imagery that the eye must reach. In opposition to sight, 'sound incorporates' to create an 'experience of interiority' as omnidirectional sounds approach the ear to receive air vibrations that wrap around us, providing a 'sense of connection and solidarity'.<sup>3</sup> The 'engulfing, multi-directionality' of sound creates a blurry distinction in the perceived 'relationship between subject and object; inside and outside; and the public and private'.<sup>4</sup>

Sounds are considered to be as close to us as our thoughts, according to Bishop Berkley<sup>5</sup>, as they have an 'immediate effect on recall and emotions' which can produce an 'uncontrolled hierarchy of associations within the brain'.<sup>6</sup> However, sound possesses both positive and negative associations in which it allows us to develop intimate and manageable spaces to occupy, although it also can turn into an unwanted and deafening invasion.

Traditionally sound invades the privacy of the individual where environmental noises were forced to be let in by the ears of the past. This has evolved in recent times due to the uprising of technology where 'users can now filter out the random sounds to be replaced by chosen sounds of the user'<sup>7</sup> allowing 'power to the ear'<sup>8</sup> and creating a sense of 'privatisation and individualism'.<sup>9</sup>

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1 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

2 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.

3 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.

4 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

5 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

6 Gobâe, M. (2001) *Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. New York : Allworth Press.

7 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

8 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.

9 Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) *Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader*. Oxford : Berg.



Figure 9: Sonos sound booth representing miniature homes in New York City



Figure 10: Interior of a Sonos sound booth representing a miniature home in New York City

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The privatisation of sound in a retail environment to heighten engagement is perceived within Soho, New York's flagship store, Sonos, designed by Partners & Spade. The smart speaker company provides an immersive custom-built experience in its first retail store through the production of seven listening environments that represent intimate home settings, as seen in Figure 9. The concept derived from the idea that people tend to use Sonos products in the comfort of their homes and thus creates an environment which allows them to experience the sound system as they would at home, in the privacy of their personal listening pod. Each sound pod was constructed with 'four layers of acoustic sheet rock and a steel-framed glass door'<sup>1</sup> to guarantee that sounds are confined to the space. This provides a transformable experience as they step away from the public chaos of the outside world to 'soak up the sound of music without cacophony or distraction'<sup>2</sup>, creating a sense of intimacy and immersion within the sound as the boundary between subject and object and public and private becomes blurred.

New York City entails a busy and noisy urban environment in which a desire for escape and isolation is fulfilled by the intimate soundscapes in Sonos sound pods which function as a homely atmosphere, as seen in Figure 10, for a secluded sound bubble, protecting against the hectic urban life.

The Sonos retail store 'builds a deeper and truer relationship with its customers through an enhanced customer experience'<sup>3</sup>. This is achieved within the design of its experiential sound pods that draw on the sense of hearing to influence the disposition of customers and increase sales through sensory selling. It allows customers to form an emotional connection with the space as the activity of listening to music 'encourages the release of endorphins in the body, activating the compelling pleasure centres of the brain'<sup>4</sup>, which can cause a momentary feeling of separation from existence, allowing the seduction of sound to take over.

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1 Something Special About Sonos' New Experiential Store. (2016) Available at: <https://futurestores.wbresearch.com/blog/sonos-new-experiential-store> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

2 Something Special About Sonos' New Experiential Store. (2016) Available at: <https://futurestores.wbresearch.com/blog/sonos-new-experiential-store> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

3 Something Special About Sonos' New Experiential Store. (2016) Available at: <https://futurestores.wbresearch.com/blog/sonos-new-experiential-store> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

4 Gobâe, M. (2001) Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people. New York : Allworth Press.

## CONCLUSION

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It is perceived that commonalities between the experience of the senses occur within the retail environment of Fragrance Lab, Bala and Sonos. Smell and touch are regarded as 'intimate senses within reach of the body'<sup>1</sup>, involving physical interaction and penetration of the personal bubble. Although hearing is typically considered a 'distant sense' as it experiences the world 'beyond the body's immediate reach'.<sup>2</sup> In Sonos' particular case, the sense of hearing is utilized more intimately through its immersive listening rooms, providing the same amount of engagement to the retail space as smell and touch.

The retail environments that cater towards a specific sensory element to engage consumers are used due to the specific sense that the product targets, demonstrating the hierarchical emphasis of that sense in the experience of the space. Sonos sells speakers relating to the auditory sense; Fragrance Lab sells perfume connecting with the olfactory sense and Bala sells fitness equipment appealing to the haptic sense. However, this provides a basis of inspiration for future retail environments which may evolve into multi-sensory spaces that may not focus on the subject matter of the product, although embrace the same qualities and purpose in immersing customers within the space. This involves the collaboration of the senses which work together in 'many combinations to exceed the effectiveness of each sense alone in providing environmental information, enhancing perceptual accuracy'.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of multi-sensory spaces, also known as 'the polyphony of the senses'<sup>4</sup> in retail is seen within the Mugler pop-up store for Selfridges designed by Random Studio. The fragmented bodyscape installation seen in Figure 11 creates segments of retail sensory experiences including 'a polyphonic soundscape of siren-esque voices that coaxes visitors into the space, towards a scent sculpture, illuminated by undulating lights'.<sup>5</sup> This demonstrates that 'architecture can involve several realms of sensory experiences that fuse into each other to strengthen existential experience'<sup>6</sup> in an attempt to transform the engagement of consumers in retail.

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1 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

2 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

3 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place*. London : Routledge.

4 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.

5 Parkes, J. (2022) Random Studio creates "giant fragments of a woman's body" for Mugler pop-up. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/12/05/random-studio-mugler-pop-up-selfridges-london-retail-interiors/> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

6 Pallasmaa, J. (2012) *The Eyes of the Skin*. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.



The knowledge I have acquired through this research has allowed me to inform my current design project through an understanding of how the senses can be appealed to within my Aesop retail space to create an engaging experience. I've applied the concept of skinscapes where the sense of touch is appealed to through enticing curvature forms of the design and zones dedicated to the exploration of the product through embracing its physical quality, allowing customers to feel connected and a sense of belonging.

This essay discussion has allowed me to analyse these commercial interiors within retail and integrate them into an academic discourse so that we begin to acknowledge and value the contributions that are made to the evolution of sensory discipline in interior design. In a world where the visual sense is no longer sufficient in satisfying consumers, the evolving future of retail is concerned with harnessing a multi-sensory approach to design providing 'harmonious integration of all our senses' through the exploration of 'new frontiers...creating enchanting environments that transport customers to realms of wonder'<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 11: Mulger pop-up store for Selfridges by Random Studio

1 Beyond visuals: retail of the future will tantalise ALL of our senses (2023) Available at: <https://blog.richardvanhooijdonk.com/en/retail-of-the-future-will-tantalise-all-of-our-senses/> (Accessed: 10 December 2023).

# 4

## APPENDICES

# COLLABORATION:

## The sharing and contribution of ideas with MA

The collaboration meeting with **REDACTED** provided me with insight on the design projects that they are currently working on, including: a communal space sponsored by NHS to discourage drug use within Oxford street by Aisha; and a youth centre aiming to alleviate the crime rate through a calming atmosphere which provides teenagers with engaging activities by Pheobe. In order to expand their ideas for activities they could include within the space, I suggested including workshops/classes which teach skills to adolescents, such as literature, music or art classes, in order for them to explore a potential passion.

We also discussed our writing projects to which I discovered that Phoebe aims to research cultural design/architecture and how it' s fading away in today' s world. After listening to my essay subject of senses in interiors and how it links to my design project where I aim to evoke sensory pleasure, Phoebe asked me how she could link her essay to her design project to which I suggested how she could focus on what draws people into a space and the psychology behind how a youth centre could make people feel and react, in order to understand her user. Phoebe suggested that I look into the book 'Retail design: What' s in the name?' As it discusses how retail engages the senses, thus directly applies to my essay subject and design project. Therefore I could use this to gauge a deeper understanding and build my essay argument of how retail seduces their clients, as well as apply some of the techniques within my design project.



# ESSAY PLAN:

## Sensory Selling: An Investigation into the relationship between the senses and retail design

(3000-4000 words)

### INTRODUCTION:

(300-400 words) 10%

#### Senses in Interior Design:

- 'One of the primary ways to experience and understand the physical world is through the five senses. Sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing can be defined as 'the faculties by which external or internal stimuli are perceived, involving the transmission of nerve impulses from specialised neurons (receptors) to the brain.' - Potvin, J. Marchand, M-E.

and Beaulieu, B. (2023) The senses in interior design: Sensorial expressions and experiences. Manchester University Press.

- Senses are a powerful tool in provoking an emotional/physical reaction to our surroundings, & engage with the space/conform to immersive experiences.
- Rodaway, P. (1994) Sensuous geographies: body, sense and place. London : Routledge.

### CONTEXT:

(600-800words) 20%

#### Sight as predominant sense & retail design changing this preconception:

- 'During the Renaissance, the five senses were understood to form a hierarchical system from the highest sense of vision down to touch.' - Pallasmaa, J. (2012) The Eyes of the Skin. 3rd edn. Chichester: Wiley.
- Our over-reliance on sight as it's the most significant sense. Within design, sight is appealed to most.
- ^ Example: Louis Vuitton x Yayoi Kusama retail stores captures the essence of the visual hallucinations that Kusama experienced and utilised as artistic output. It plays on the perception of sight through its mirrored reflections of a motif, in order to engulf consumers.

Vision impaired people have to rely on other senses to experience the physical world, demonstrating a higher demand for design to engage its users through other senses.

- ^ Example: Building for the blind – ‘ Composing a space for the blind means asking yourself how to see with other senses. It means rediscovering all the sensations that are muted by the dominance of vision’
- ‘ In the pursuit of powerful atmosphere, we cannot focus exclusively on sight, but must attempt to restore the sensitivity of the skin to exposure to light, to wind, the aromas emitted, the vibrations of the voice.’ - Carrillo, G. (2020) Building for the blind. Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/building-for-the-blind> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).
- Transformation of retail today in providing more experiential design that focuses on sensory engagement beyond sight.– using the ‘visually impaired case study’ and applying the theory of it to retail space.
- Anderson, S. and Mesher, L. (2019) Retail design. 2nd edn. London : Bloomsbury Publishing.

### Examples of retail using sensory engagement:

#### THEME 1 - SMELL:

(600-800 words) 20%

How is smell encouraged within retail design and what effect does it have on users of the space?

- Case study: Selfridges’ fragrance lab
- ‘the guide invites the visitor to open the drawers one by one and smell a variety of pleasant and unpleasant scents contained inside, which have been chosen to evoke particular memories.’ - Howarth, D. (2014) Selfridges’ Fragrance Lab attempts to distil your character into a scent. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/02/selfridges-fragrance-lab-distill-your-character-into-a-scent/> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).
- Analysis of case study: laboratory-like, white space & audio to isolate and focus the sense of smell.
- Smell is arguably the strongest of the senses, yet scent is an often neglected tool for providing consumers with engaging and emotional experiences. An array of studies reveal that odour has the potential to evoke our emotions with more potency than any of the other senses’ - Gobâe, M. (2001) Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people. New York : Allworth Press.
- Drobnick, J. (2006) Sensory Formations: The smell culture reader. Oxford : Berg.

## THEME 2 - TOUCH:

(600-800 words) 20%

How is touch encouraged within retail design and what effect does it have on users of the space?

- Case study: Ringo Studio
- “These sculptural elements create nooks for testing, touching, and trying out in-person.”  
- Howarth, D. (2022) Bala’ s SoHo store by Ringo Studio features oversized fitness equipment. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/04/30/bala-store-so-ho-new-york-ringo-studio/> (Accessed: 22 October 2023).
- Analysis of case study: curved surfaces/ enlarged objects/ textures.
- ‘While most of the senses inform us of the world, most often it is touch that enables us to ultimately possess the world, to wrap our consciousness around it... shoppers compensate for an absence of information by using their senses to gain more knowledge.’ – Gobâe, M. (2001) Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people. New York : Allworth Press.
- Classen, C. (2005) Sensory Formations: The book of touch. Oxford : Berg.

## THEME 3 - SOUND:

(600-800 words) 20%

How is sound encouraged within retail design and what effect does it have on users of the space?

- Case study: Sonos
- ‘Resembling miniature houses – each furnished and decorated to represent different styled homes – the Sonos Listening Rooms are effectively ‘sound pods’ , built with four layers of acoustic sheet rock and a steel-framed glass door to ensure sounds are contained within the individual space.’ - Something Special About Sonos’ New Experiential Store. (2016) Available at: <https://futurestores.wbresearch.com/blog/sonos-newexperiential-store> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).
- Analysis of case study: noise/domestic setting/materials/acoustic separation.
- ‘Studies indicate that activities, such as listening to music, encourage the release of endorphins in the body, activating the very powerful pleasure centers of the brain.’ -  
Gobâe, M. (2001) Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people. New York : Allworth Press.
- Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) Sensory Formations: The auditory culture reader. Oxford : Berg.

## CONCLUSION:

(300-400 words) 10%

- The potential emergence of multi-sensory spaces in retail to heighten and engage each sense.
- Example of a space that includes the engagement of all 4 senses of touch, sound, smell and sight - "A polyphonic soundscape of siren-esque voices coaxes visitors into the space and towards a scent sculpture, illuminated by undulating lights," - Parkes, J. (2022) Random Studio creates "giant fragments of a woman's body" for Mugler popup. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/12/05/random-studio-mugler-pop-up-selfridges-london-retail-interiors/>

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## CRITICAL REFLECTION:

### Reflection on first semester projects



Upon reflection of my first semester, I believe that my design and writing projects have allowed me to improve as a designer who focuses on the detail within a space and provides a narrative for the user experience. Within my design project involving the transformation of a neglected Oxford Street building into an immersive Aesop store, I've enjoyed developing a conceptual approach that utilises the qualities of the skin through its fluidity and purpose of containment to influence the forms and circulation of the space. The notion of expansion, contraction, stretching, and folding of the skin as it wraps around us as a safety net, inspires design features such as the helical staircase and rising product display. This centralises activity within the space, encouraging users to move up through the floors and experience the Aesop store that slows down in experience and transactional speed as they walk up, contrasting the hectic atmosphere of Oxford Street.

However, my design project could have been improved through a more detailed or intricate floor plan as a lot of the space is dedicated to areas of seclusion such as the product testing area, workshop and facial appointment suites which leaves the rest of the space to be primarily focused on the circulation of movement.



Through researching the Aesop brand, their consideration for the sensory pleasure of users inspired me to expand my knowledge within my essay on how the senses could be appealed to within retail interior design to encourage engagement and personal connection with an immersive space. Through extensive research of appealing to the sense of sight, touch, smell and hearing; it allowed me to inform my design project further by taking into consideration spaces which can engage particular senses. For example, the leather wall upon entry in my design encourages the motion of touching and caressing, allowing the detail of the leather pattern to feel like the grooves of human skin when felt and looked at closely.

This research project has enabled me to delve deeper into the context of the design project and explore the site/Oxford Street closely through various writing techniques. For instance, the site writing allowed me to expel my first impressions which promoted my thought process of how I would want to transform the site to draw attention. Whereas, the creative writing provided me with food for thought to inspire my design project and appreciate the details and experience of an object, thus slowing down and understanding that design can be zoomed in and explored in more depth. The close analysis of the candle wax in its 'folds, cracks and imperfections' related to the texture/appearance of the skin which translates into materiality and form within my design. However, there's room for improvement in my research project where I could have benefitted from using the history of Oxford Street, such as my historical context writing of Outernet, to inspire and influence my design project.

In regards to my final project, I may decide to approach it with consideration of designing a space that expands on the concept of pampering and indulgence, appealing to the pleasure of the users and focusing on their experience, such as possibly a hotel or private members club.