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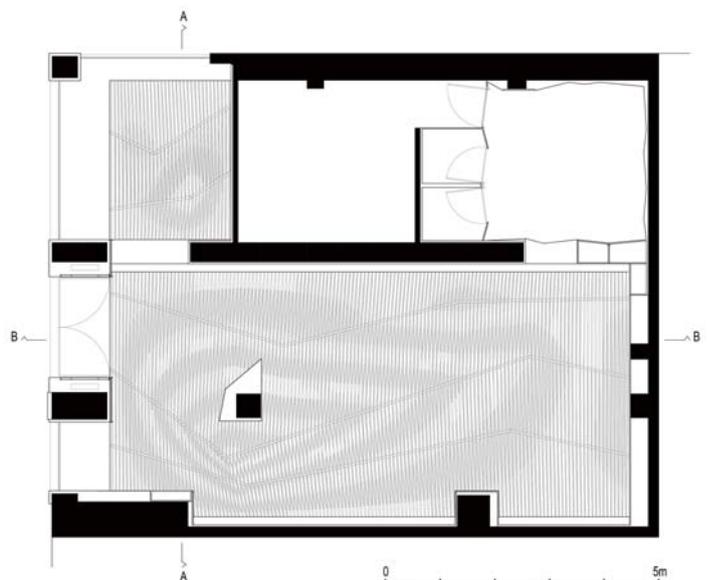
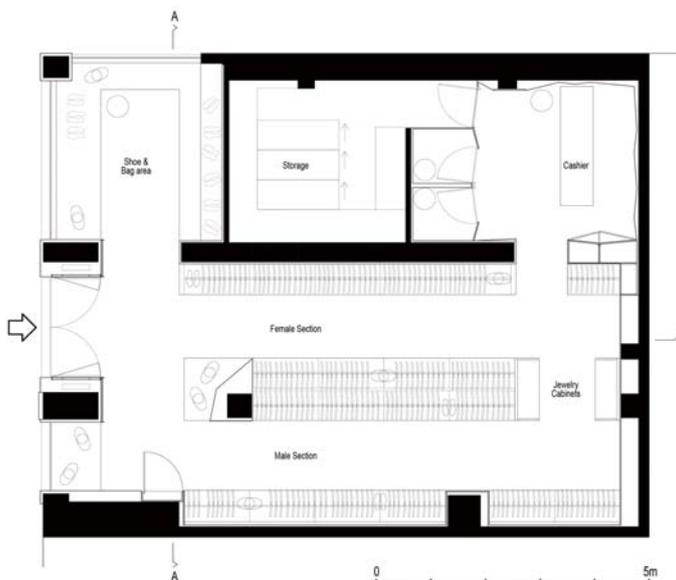
## Shine Fashion Store - Building Simplicity

Kristof Crolla

Hong Kong Retail Design, with its extremely competitive property market and a popular culture built around image and shopping, presents unique challenges for architects and interior designers. The city's retail market is saturated with exclusive high-end brands pushing for an optimal spot in one of countless generic shopping malls, which are all individually vying to be the latest, the newest, the hippest, the fanciest. With visual appearance the primary definer of value and identity, landlords attempt to redefine their properties by demanding extreme make-overs every few years. Generic building frames thus undergo facelift after facelift in a massive waste-producing cycle which reduces interior design's required life-expectancy to often little more than the grand opening party. Construction budgets frequently equal but a couple of months' rent, making project installation timelines gruesomely short. In spite having the Pearl River Delta, also known as "the factory of the world", on our doorstep and thus having any material easily accessible, time restrictions have rendered a culture of craftsmanship virtually impossible. Refined construction and meticulous, long-lasting detailing seem more the exception than the rule. And yet, with many brave and open-minded clients continuously yearning for

novelty, for architects who manage to twist these market challenges into opportunities a virtually insatiable playground for experimentation awaits! In Hong Kong, the traditional role of Interior Architecture is potentially taking a fascinating twist.

For designers operating in this image-driven market, today's user-friendly 3D digital design and scripting tools have become popular weapons of choice. Playfully manipulated complex shapes are effortlessly assembled in virtual, unrestricted environments and easily rendered photo-realistically for client's approval. At the very least of their potential, these tools allow for quick and easy production of highly ornamental, graphical output. Material properties, fabrication and detailing are of secondary importance. Further along a plethora of artificial materials will be used to make undulating laminate walls look as if carved from expensive mahogany or marble, and couches and pillows as if from exotic alligator leather or exclusive ostrich skin. A few months of use and this thin layer of artificiality, poorly glued onto inferior substructures, starts to chip and wear down, allowing the image to survive just long enough for the next makeover. With little or no remaining motivation for form or style, the urge for short-lived graphics

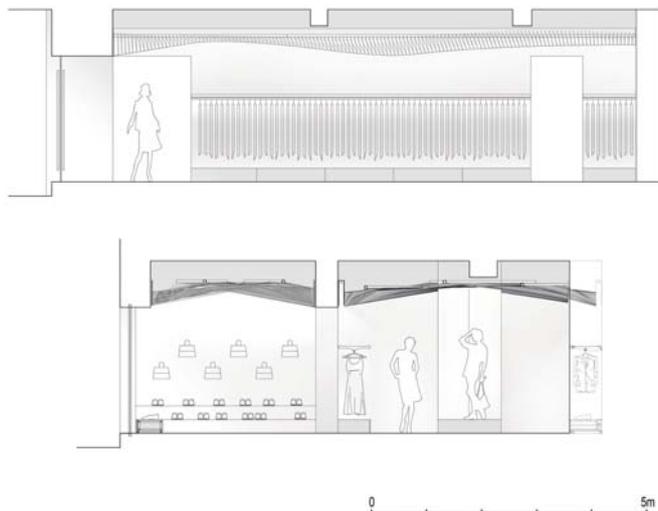


and form is perpetuated and consequently, a wide, yet extremely shallow proliferation of digital design techniques ensues. The power of these very tools, however, can easily be implemented to enable new ways of material use and fabrication, which can give architectural ambitions a higher chance for survival.

The Shine Flagship Fashion Store in Causeway Bay's Fashion Walk constructively turns time and material challenges into opportunities, as the Store directs the application of digital design tools towards the straightforward fabrication of visual complexity. The 80sqm corner store is designed by the Laboratory for Explorative Architecture & Design Ltd. (LEAD) and NC Design & Architecture Ltd. (NCDA) and completed in the summer of 2011. With little room for experimentation in the pragmatic layout of its monochromatic interior, the focus of design exploration is shifted towards the ceiling. Over 900 shimmering white bungee cords are woven into undulating overlapping planes that create starkly contrasting Moiré patterns against the dark ceiling backdrop. A fully mirrored back wall enhances the effect by visually doubling the limited floor area. The ceiling seduces shoppers by playing on their perception: walking underneath it suggests the illusion of movement as hidden images appear to be flashing and vibrating in the ceiling and swelling, warping patterns emerge. The ceiling design questions and explores the dematerialisation of surfaces through the weaving of thread – an element commonly found in contemporary textile patterns and fabrics – and alludes to principles of Op Art by directly referring to graphical experimentation in the grisaille paintings by artists like Victor Vasarely and others.

The white cords are standard, inexpensive and extremely durable industrial elastics. They are manually woven through two plasma-jet cut, undulating, steel wall profiles and three standard U-shaped profiles, all with pre-drilled, equidistant holes. With no need for plans or sections construction workers installed the ceiling overnight, allowing the Moiré effects that were pre-programmed into the geometry to emerge flawlessly. The surfaces they form are easily pushed aside for maintenance and are open for cooled air or sprinkler water to pass through.

Although humble in size, the underlying principles and concepts of the ceiling design are scalable, and through these the Shine Fashion Store suggests an alternative to the unsustainable model for retail design. By expanding on the graphic possibilities of digital design and computer programming and combining them with strategic digital fabrication technology, not only can we lower costs and speed up construction times of intricate designs – indeed we can increase onsite design opportunities in situations where complexity is considered highly impractical.



Top: Section AA and BB  
Right: Store Photography by Dennis Lo Designs

