

Delicatessen

Store
Delicatessen
(Idit Barak and Sharon Gurel)

Location
Tel Aviv, Israel

Architect
GZ-A

Guy Zucker
'Fashion design is a creative field that
has managed to completely merge
with contemporary life.'

Text
Shonquis Moreno

Photography
Nomi Yogev

In Tel Aviv, GZ-A elevates the humblest of materials to make a statement – architects everywhere would do well to listen.

Guy Zucker has redeemed linoleum. This could not have been an easy task, but he made it look simple. With Tel Aviv's Delicatessen – not a corned-beef-on-rye joint but a clothing shop – Zucker has created an interior of unsurpassed resourcefulness and crisp good looks. Using only linoleum and cardboard tubes, the designer sheathed the 84-square-metre space in a thin 'garment' that forms the store's furniture: display racks, fitting room, cash desk and display window. With a change of season, change of mode or change of the owner's heart, this garment can be easily removed and replaced, permitting the interior architecture to keep pace with the mercurial fashion industry. Any repeat customer used to the turnover of merchandise will be pleased to encounter an occasional immersive shift in the space itself. (Indeed, we've learned that spaces made to be reconfigured aren't necessarily reconfigured by management; nonetheless, convertibility of retail space, especially fashion retail, is to be lauded and encouraged.) Not least, the entire project cost a mere \$3000: \$2000 for labour and \$1000 for materials.

Zucker cut, folded, rolled, stacked and wrapped his selection of pedestrian, ephemeral, ready-made materials, transforming them into something fine. He used fleeting materials to house fleeting fashions. Of course, unlike fashion, which is conspicuously overvalued, cardboard and linoleum have long been undervalued; labelling them 'design resources' elevates their status considerably. Zucker laid the furniture garment very lightly over the raw space of the interior and contrasted it sharply, in terms of both colour and form, with the outer envelope. Instead of blending the two, he applied the grey and yellow pieces to the envelope with a perceptible 'cut and paste' technique. The use of only two materials and two colours allowed him to maintain the sharp, clean, refined lines of the interior, an effect usually accomplished with classier materials, details and finishes. When compared with this tailored and finely garbed design, the use of expensive elements elsewhere seems like cheating.

The interior flows from the display window through a doorway and ends at the fashion designer's workshop at the rear of the boutique. To emphasize the symbiotic relationship (both physical and commercial) between spaces, Zucker stretched three linoleum strips from the back all the way into the window display. These strips climb, roll, wrap and curl around the tubes (which are bunched in a softened beehive form to create display surfaces) and across

the floor. They resemble assembly-line conveyor belts and recall for visitors an antiseptic version of the factory. These grey belts both hold the merchandise and serve as a backdrop that accentuates the clothing to keen effect.

Zucker's ongoing investigations into the boundaries between the permanent and the ephemeral in architecture make him a fine choice to design a fashion boutique. As Zucker sees it, every shopper is aware of the fact that she is paying, usually through the nose, for design and brand rather than for material. She's also aware that she stops wearing a garment when the current trend changes and not when and because the article of clothing wears out. In the field of architecture, this situation is reversed; the cost of building materials far exceeds the cost of the design. QED. Fashion design = 80% design + 20% material. Architectural design = 20% design + 80% material. Thus, instead of following the laws of architecture, Zucker flouts them quite prettily. By elevating inexpensive, lowbrow materials and by dressing the shop in a garment that can be easily discarded, he has made Delicatessen a shop that inverts the logic of architectural valuation and follows the logic of the fashion industry.

In another inversion of architectural convention, the designer chose his materials – yellow and grey double-sided linoleum and painted cardboard tubes – at the beginning of the design process instead of applying them to a full-blown concept. At Delicatessen, materials dictate the forms and the functional potential of the space. Zucker made the display furniture, for instance, by following the structure of the cardboard tubes. Display 'fins', much like poster racks, take advantage of the flexible qualities of linoleum. The fitting room, also made of linoleum, folds outwards to open and inwards when not in use, disappearing into the wall. As this folding and unfolding occurs, the dual colour of the linoleum accentuates a ritual that is peculiar to shopping for clothing.

'Fashion design is a creative field that has managed to completely merge with contemporary life,' says Zucker. 'The entire industry is based on global realities and constant transformation. Architecture has to confront the same realities of ever-changing programmes, budgets and building uses. If we want to learn from fashion design, we have to change our expectations. If we don't expect all architectural products to become monuments, if we can invest less in "high-end" materials, we might be able to give more importance to the manipulation of material and the quality of design rather than to the cost of material – and to give more importance to the designer than to the contractor.'

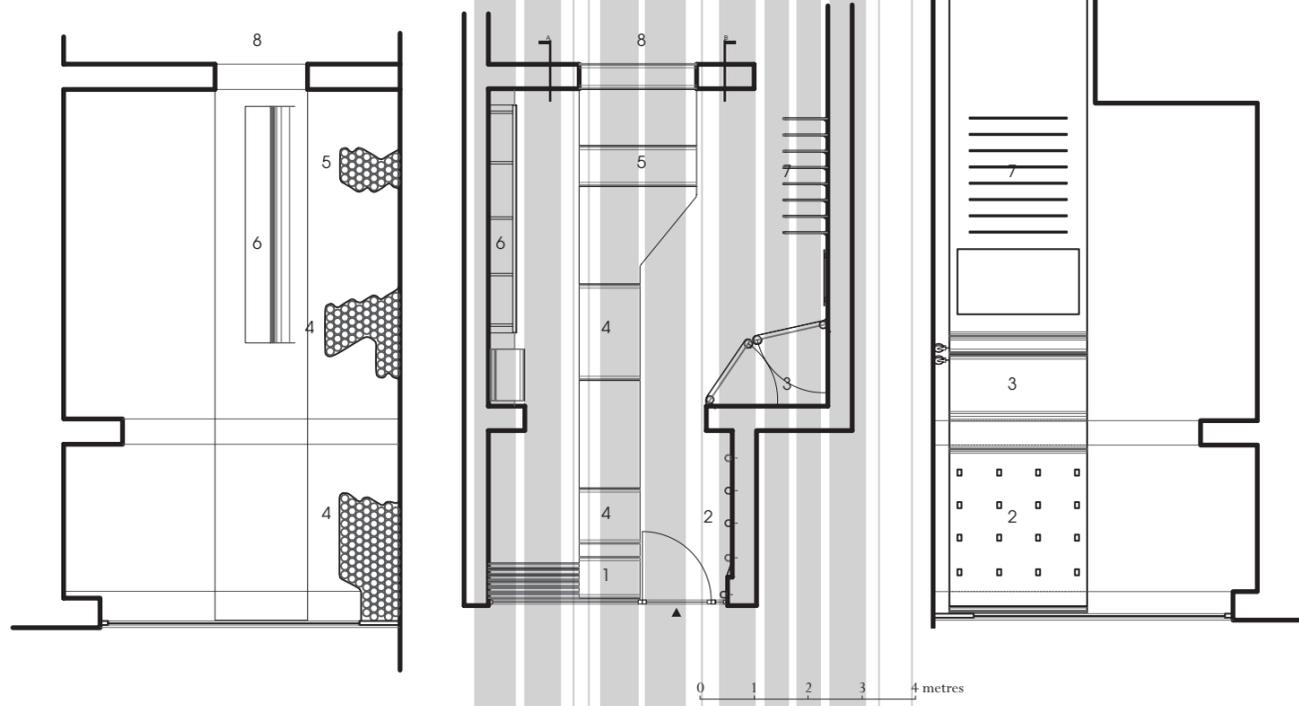


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Preceding page
Guy Zucker crafted the interior of Tel Aviv's Delicatessen boutique for a mere \$3000, design and labour included. A ribbon of grey linoleum links production space at the rear with the crisply sartorial retail area, emphasizing the physically and commercially symbiotic relationship between the two.

- Floor plan
1. Retail area
 2. Display shelves
 3. Fitting room
 4. Display table
 5. Cash desk
 6. Hanging display
 7. Display fins
 8. Rear area

Opposite page
Using only linoleum and cardboard tubes, the designer sheathed the tiny shop in a thin 'garment' that forms display racks, fitting room, cash desk and retail space. Zucker's design elevates materials normally considered quite humble.





Below, bottom and opposite Zucker laid the furniture 'garment' very lightly over the envelope of the interior. To underscore contrasts in colour and form, he 'cut and pasted' the grey and yellow pieces over the envelope.

By using only two materials and two colours, he maintained the sharp, refined lines of the interior, something usually accomplished with much finer materials, details and finishes.

