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KENGO KUMA : ADAM KIMMEL : SUPPOSE : NENDO : TOKUJIN YOSHIOKA : LOUIS VUITTON VS TOPSHOP : FRANCESCO R
DOEPEL STRIJKERS ARCHITECTS : TROIKA : RAIMON PARERA : STUDIO ÜBERDUTCH : INODA + SVEJE : ICF : CARNOVS



**INTERIOR
REALITY**



UNDER MY SKIN

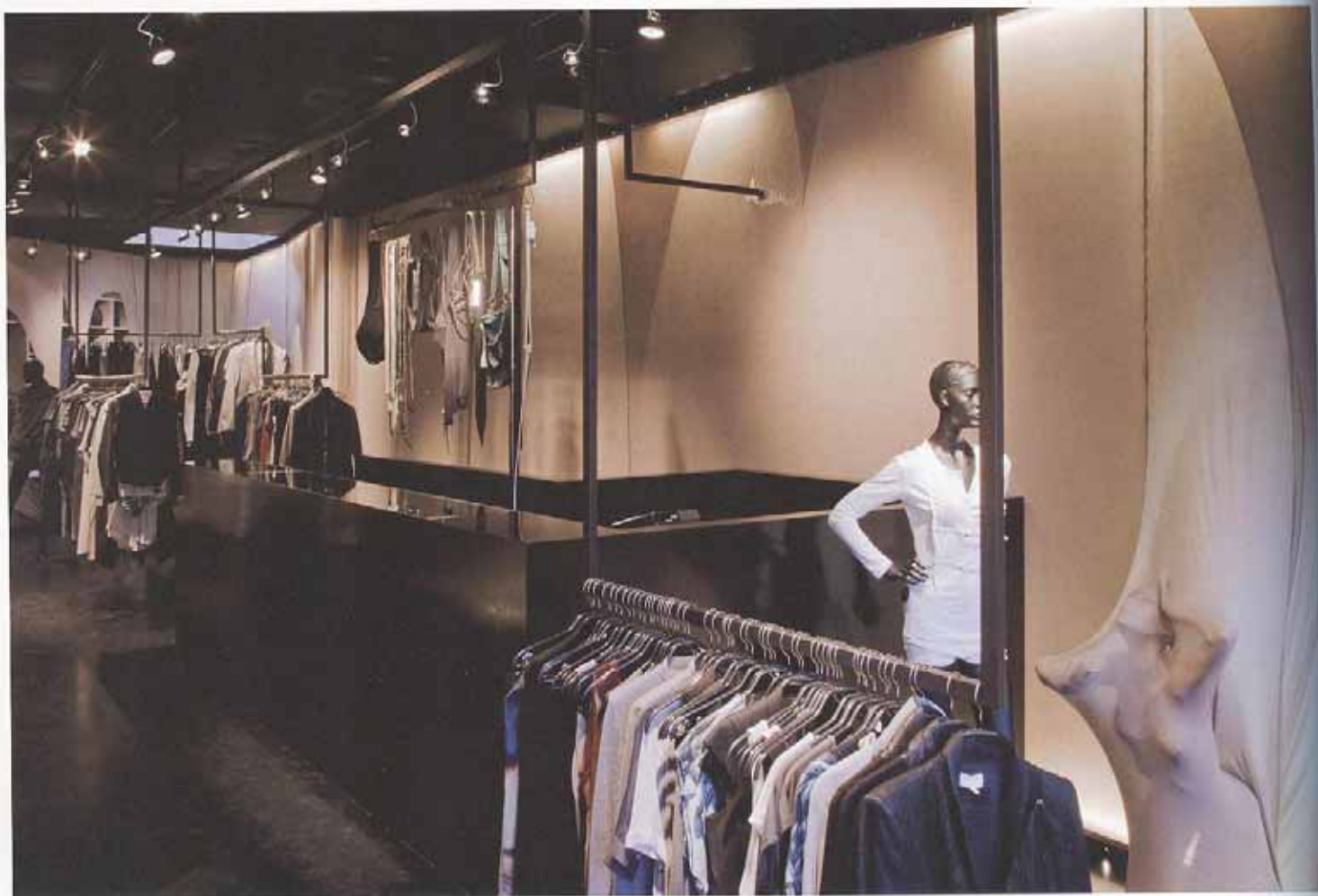


Interior architect ELINE STRIJKERS offers an insider's view of her firm's multi-layered design of the SPRMRKT STH boutique in Amsterdam.

WORDS TRACEY INGRAM
PHOTOS WOUTER VAN DEN BRINK

FIGURES ENVELOPED IN A TRANSLUCENT MEMBRANE
PASSERS-BY TO ENTER SPIRIT STH.





'The second-hand design phenomenon is quickly becoming boring'
Eline Strijkers

FLESH-TONED FABRIC CONTRASTS WITH A DENSELY BLACK FLOOR AND CEILING.



The first SPRMRKT, which opened in Amsterdam's Rozengracht in 2003, was the brainchild of fashionista Nelleke Strijkers. Her sister, Eline Strijkers, is one half of architecture firm Doepel Strijkers (Duzam Doepel is the other half), which undertook the task of designing a second store. With a retail portfolio that includes a few statement shops, such as an outlet for designer label Humanoid in the Dutch city of Arnhem, the architects are known for projects that exhibit a strong conceptual basis. 'These days,' says Eline Strijkers, 'a lot of designers are more interested in making expensive, beautiful shops full of luxury brands set against glossy interiors than in producing original statements. On the other hand, there's the second-hand design phenomenon, where used furniture is reconfigured or an inexpensive material such

as cardboard defines the project. The former is quite a permanent intervention, often lacking an interesting concept, and the latter is a quick interior solution that we've seen before - in a language that is quickly becoming boring.'

Given just seven weeks to complete the project, the architects sought a design gesture for the second SPRMRKT that would explain the essence of the brand - luxury with a raw edge - while inspiring the clientele. Taking no cues from the flagship store - which wasn't designed in the traditional sense but developed organically, with new elements added over time - the new space needed a single strong statement that would leave the modest 110-m² interior uncluttered. The concept evolved from the idea of a second skin that would merge the interior, the body and the clothing. 'We were inspired by perfection versus

imperfection and driven by bodily irregularities, such as the mutation of skin through tattoos and piercings,' says Strijkers. 'The human body can be seen as a form of clothing that conveys personality. We wanted to bring skin, body and clothing together, but in a subtle way.'

In choosing a fabric to represent the second skin, the design team had to consider the limitations and possibilities of various textiles, as well as the dimensions of the mannequins - factors that would influence the final design to no small degree. 'We needed to be able to cut and stretch the material, and it had to be strong enough to not ladder or pull easily,' recalls Strijkers. After settling on a suitable pantyhose fabric, the team developed design details through experimentation. Initially envisioning an entrance with real people veiled in skin, >>>

FABRIC FORMS A FLOWING NECKLINE
ON A STANDING MANNEQUIN.





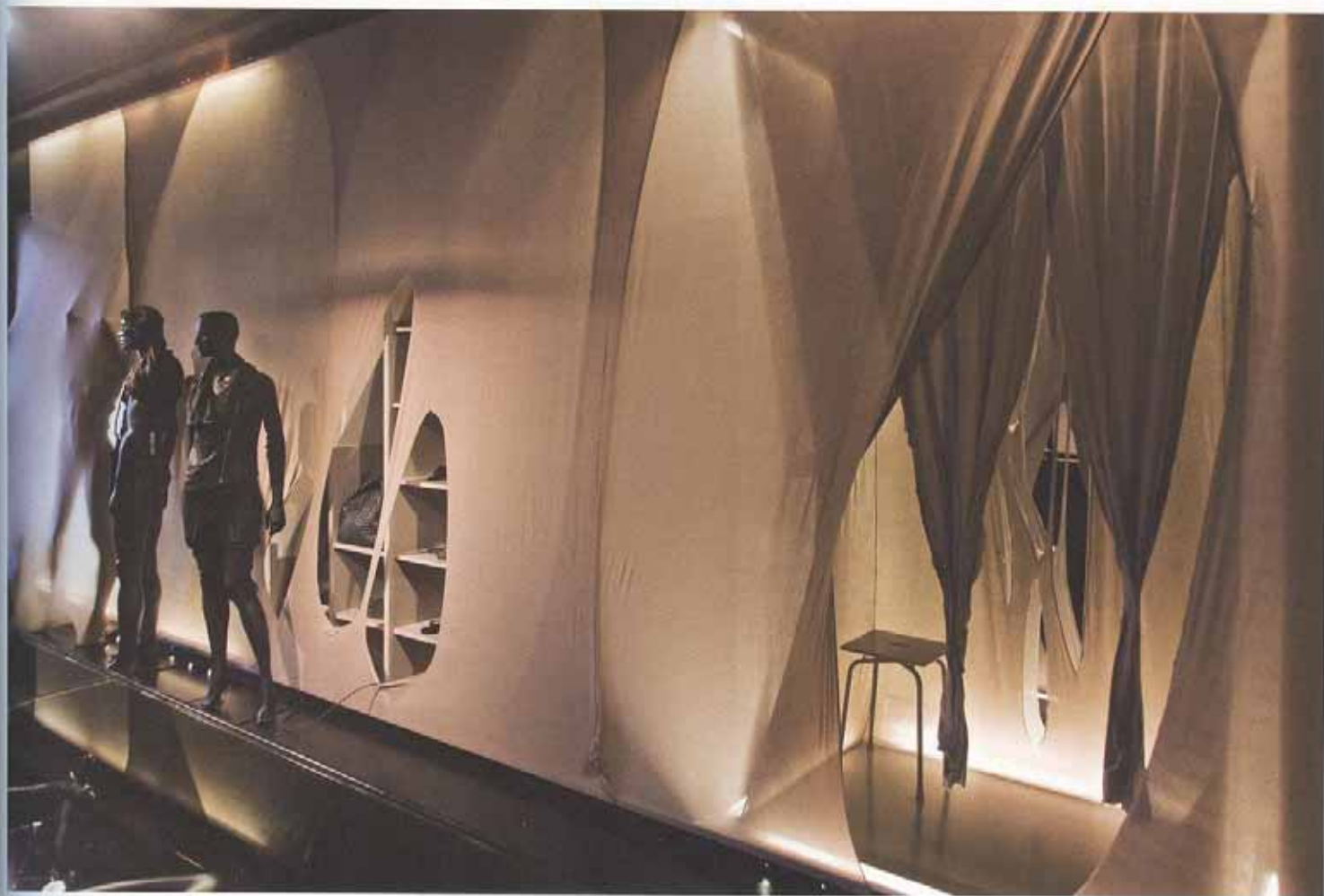
IN A SMALL-SCALE EXPERIMENT, DOLLS IN PANTYHOSE WERE USED TO TEST THE EFFECTS OF TRANSLUCENT FABRIC ON THE BODY.



WHITE FABRICS WERE SOAKED IN TEA DURING THE TEST PHASE, BUT TIME RESTRAINTS ULTIMATELY FORCED THE ARCHITECTS TO USE A FLESH-TONED DYE FOR THE FINISHED PRODUCT.

BOXES OF PANTYHOSE WERE USED TO SELECT FABRIC COLOURS.





Were the skin to disappear from the framework, the bones would still remain

THE SKIN IS PIERCED AND TORN TO REVEAL FITTING ROOMS, MIRRORS AND STORAGE.

creating a surreal and ever-changing environment, the architects soon abandoned the idea as idealistic and infeasible. Instead, they transformed stationary mannequins into fluid figures enveloped in a translucent membrane and had them welcome passers-by into an environment that is both eerily haunting and strangely seductive.

The thin layer of fabric morphs as you move through the space and is eventually pierced and torn to reveal fitting rooms, mirrors and storage. Scrunch up the material in your hand, and it contracts to make an opening to the fitting rooms; stretch it out again, and you can conceal yourself behind it. Visitors interact with the pliable textile, generating and manipulating the space around them. The skin is fixed to the walls; it's sewn together; it 'clothes' the body.

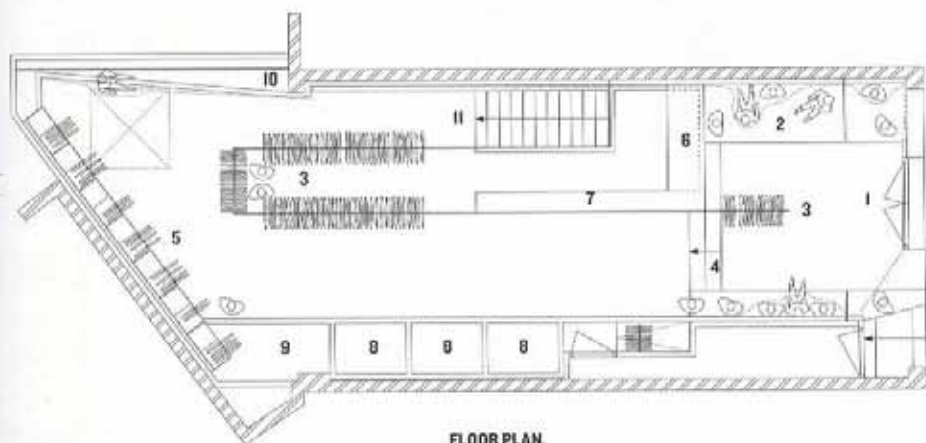
Fabric forms a flowing neckline on a standing mannequin and becomes a short skirt on a seated model, whose legs emerge from the 'hemline'.

The skin is one of two main gestures within the space, the other being the densely black floor and ceiling, a backdrop to the sheer shell of fabric. Black was chosen both to ground the design and to establish harmony between the merchandise and the space: most fashions in the SPRMRKT collection are black. Attached to the charcoal ceiling is a display system – custom-designed, like everything in the store – which shifts like an angular snake along the surface, spawning options for hanging whatever takes the fancy of the style-devoted sales assistants. In another display area, the hands and arms of mannequins fill a glass-topped counter, >>>





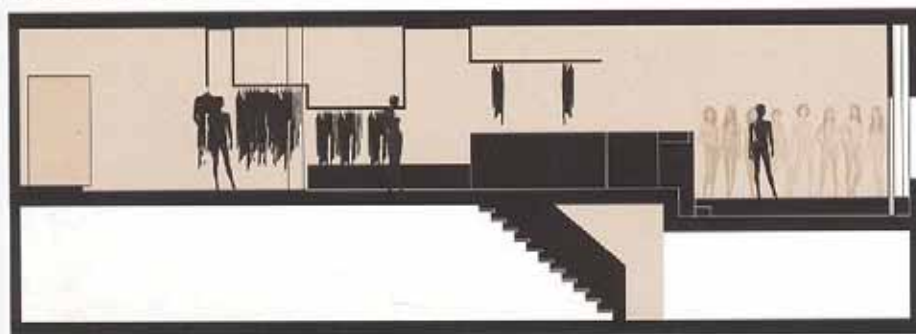
BLACK WAS CHOSEN TO GROUND THE DESIGN: MOST FASHIONS IN THE SPRMRKT COLLECTION ARE BLACK.



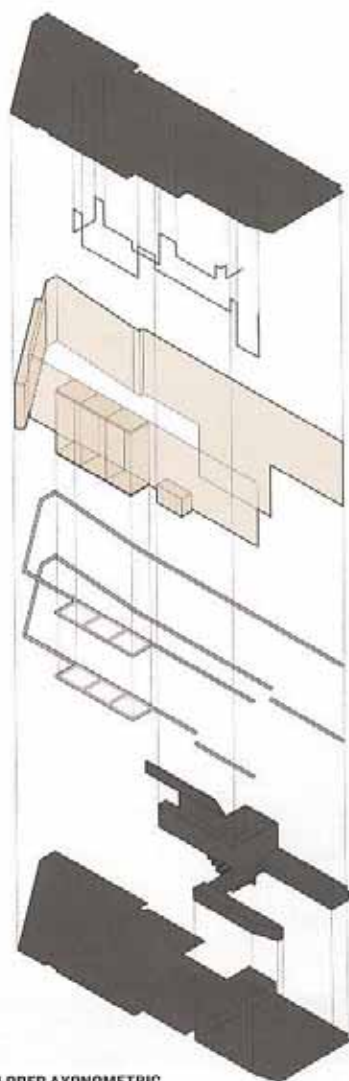
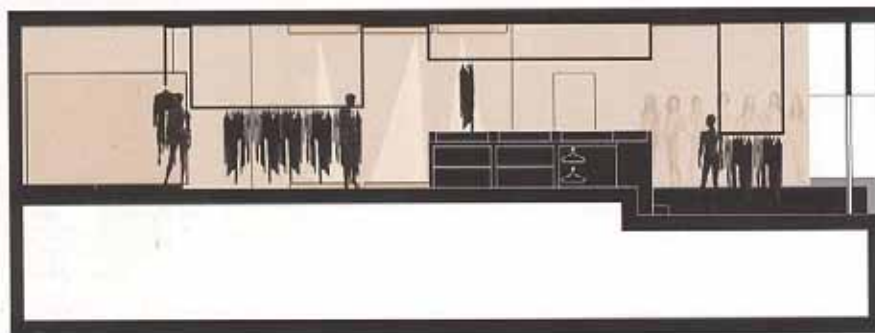
FLOOR PLAN.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ENTRANCE | 6. SALES COUNTER |
| 2. CATWALK | 7. DISPLAY COUNTER |
| 3. FRAME FOR HANGING CLOTHES | 8. FITTING ROOM |
| 4. STAIRS | 9. STORAGE |
| 5. CLOSET | 10. MIRROR WALL |
| | 11. STAIRS TO BASEMENT |

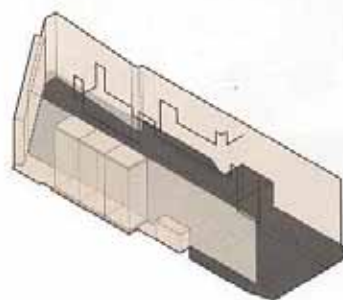
LONGITUDINAL SECTION BB.



LONGITUDINAL SECTION AA.



EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC DRAWING OF THE SPACE.



delicately grasping pieces of jewellery. Behind the counter, clearly visible stitching secures two pieces of the fabric skin together. Strijkers explains that 'through computer drafting, we knew where the joins would be, and we needed a solution for how to treat these areas'. The intricate sutures, personally sewn by the architect, allude to surgical augmentation, further strengthening the themes of skin, perfection and imperfection.

Punching obvious gaps in the skin's surface, the stitches reveal a cavity between the outer layer and the original walls. A steel profile projecting from the surface of the wall holds the fabric in place and leaves room for integrated lighting. Although a flexible space was not the designers' main objective, the shop is detailed to allow for a makeover if desired. In a couple

of years, the material could be removed from the profile, and a completely new design could emerge from the framework. The skin would disappear, but the bones would still remain.

Doepel Strijkers is in the early stages of designing a menswear section for the basement of the building. An alternative to extending the skin and having it wrap the lower level would be to draw a distinct line between the two zones, thus taking advantage of the potential to share the architects' viewpoint on retail design in the form of an even newer concept. 'So many shops look the same, and I like finding the story behind the brand and designing from there,' concludes Eline Strijkers. 'Designers should make people think - should prompt them to look beyond the surface of a brand, while also creating a space that helps the retailer sell products.' ■

SPRMRKT STH

LOCATION Willemsparkweg 100, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
DESIGNER Doepel Strijkers Architects (dsarotterdam.com)
CLIENT SPRMRKT
AREA 110 m²
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER Quirinus Niemöller
LIGHTING MANUFACTURER Doepel Strijkers Architects
FABRIC PRODUCTION Doepel Strijkers Architects
BUDGET €50,000
COMPLETED March 2010