

EXTERNAL REFERENCE

External Reference presents in Madrid WOW, the innovative concept retail space.

- Carmelo Zappulla, founder and executive director of External Reference, conceived and designed an innovative space for WOW where reality blends with fiction, the physical becomes digital, and shopping becomes an immersive experience.
- Located in a historic building on Gran Vía 18 in Madrid, the former Hotel Roma, this is WOW's first physical store spanning eight floors of 5,500 square meters.
- Each floor is unique and dynamic making WOW a theater of retail, an iridescent scenography, that transforms to surprise the customer.

Madrid, March 2022_ Carmelo Zappulla and his team External Reference present the first physical space designed for WOW, the innovative phygital marketplace, the new bet of Dimas Gimeno.

WOW is an articulated project, with a digital marketplace that complements the online shopping experience through interactive systems. This project nourishes the physical space, whose first spectacular point of sale opens to the public in Madrid on March 12.

External Reference has spent years developing the idea of WOW together with its investors, researching, experimenting, and innovating in the retail sector. *"Shopping malls today are in crisis, physical stores compete with the online world, and it is important that they become more attractive to continue to be a part of the leisure life of cities. - Carmelo Zappulla points out - With this objective in mind, we have designed a retail space that works like a large theatrical stage on which the elements are constantly changing, so that people who visit WOW will always find something different."*

The six floors dedicated to retail and two devoted to gastronomy, have been designed by External Reference as the stage for a constant contemporary show, where a product is discovered through various sensory experiences that alter from floor to floor, and change over time.

In WOW each space is unique, exceptional, and provocative, and they host activities that create an unforgettable experience for the user.

Different shopping scenarios imply that there will also be a continuous replacement of products, brands, and digital natives which are not sold in other physical stores and will have their exclusive spaces in WOW. The most relevant brands will have their own corners, most of them (such as TAG Heuer, FOREO or Grover) are also designed by External Reference.

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In the WOW tour, the user starts on the ground floor dedicated to cosmetics, with direct access from Gran Vía and Clavel streets. On this floor External Reference has imagined that classical Italian sculptures cross time and space and colonize the building that formerly housed the Hotel Roma. These pink painted statues have undergone spatiotemporal deformations which manifest themselves in pixelation and are used as the basis for product demonstrations.

The -1 floor houses the technology products in a space inspired by the evolution of human nature towards the artificial and digital. A landscape of marine corals 3D printed with pure.tech material (a natural mineral compound that neutralizes greenhouse gases by capturing and converting CO₂ into inert minerals) is the setting where digital and physical dimensions are integrated to generate an unprecedented shopping experience.

From the first to the third floor the spaces are dedicated to fashion represented by digital native brands, established companies and streetwear firms respectively. All of them are aesthetically and conceptually independent. The first floor will be changing its skin entirely as if it were a dress, completely renewing its aesthetics each season. Whereas, the second floor, with its imaginary inspired by a fashion show, will be changing scenarios for events. And the third floor, inspired by sports and street aesthetics, immerses the user in a more technical and urban space.

The fourth floor of the mall is dedicated to home furniture and host avatars under an aesthetic inspired by the Metaverse, theatricalizing a game situation where outer and inner space are mixed, and reality becomes a pixelated fantasy.

The whole WOW project is inside a protected building, the former Hotel Roma, the first one built on Gran Vía dating back to 1915.

The design of the interior space therefore generates a dialogue between an extremely contemporary layer and its historical context. All of WOW's internal structures and components have been designed as ephemeral elements, removable skins and furnishings conceived as free-standing art installations. The result, in addition to respecting the historical heritage, manages to generate a dialogical, artistic, and sometimes ironic reading.

The last two of the eight floors of the WOW project will soon have a new gastronomic space, also designed by External Reference. The design will be focused on an open and constantly evolving gastronomic concept, designed to host different Michelin-starred chefs who will present temporary proposals.

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Credits

Design: Carmelo Zappulla, External Reference

Audiovisual: Onionlab

Lighting: Edgar Domínguez

Construction Manager: Empty

External Reference Team: Stefano Fontolan, Ilaria Rampazzo, Sebastian Amorelli,
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