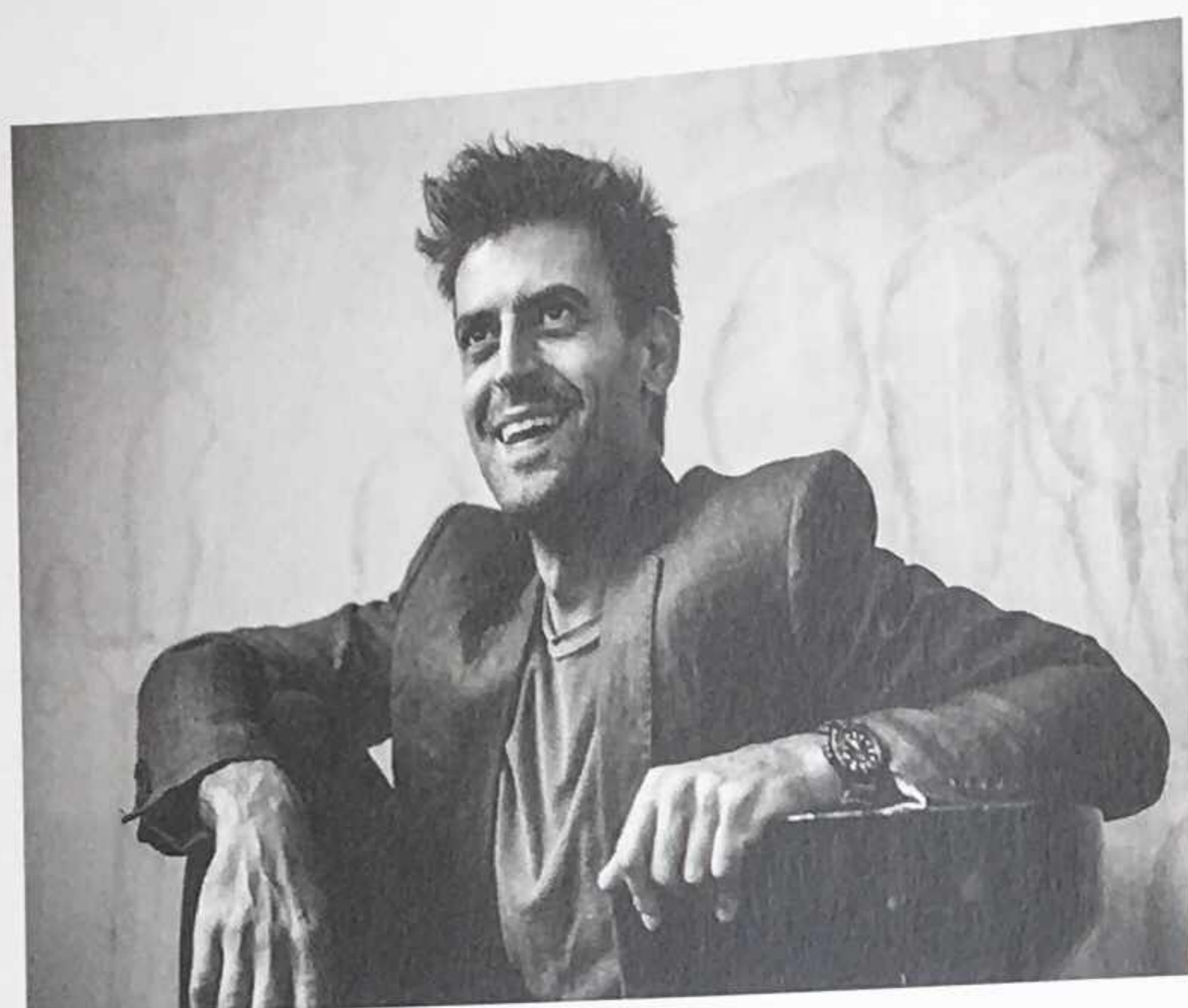




POWER SHOP 6

Retail Design Now

FRAME



Interview

ALBERTO CAIOLA

Shanghai-based designer ALBERTO CAIOLA, winner of the Frame Award for Emerging Designer of the Year in 2019, expands on the benefits of bringing people together through meaningful experiences 'in a world where digital is becoming the new reality'.

What makes a successful retail space design? I believe there is not one strategy for all; every retailer will have to find their own unique path to engage with their clients and become attractive to other audiences. It is important that a wider connection is found that helps the brand communicate on a deeper emotional level. Design plays a role in this. Like music, it needs to take you somewhere else, to provide disruptive experiences and new sensations.

The blend of retail and hospitality is not a new trend, nor is the multi-purpose retail space. But more and more stores are moving a step further, into the realm of a community-building destination. Why do you think that is? The more we experience our globalised world through the lens of our screens, the more we need to exist in the physical world, to connect with people and share a sense of place. I believe we are increasingly missing a sense of identity which has to be found in communities and social ties in order to help us redefine our role in society.

Bringing people together in a call to action with positive values seems to me a great way to empower them and address a much needed sense of belonging.

What do you think is the main advantage and the main challenge of this approach to retail space design? As our lives become more driven by algorithms which are telling us what to do and what to buy, the idea of discovering something physically, through an unexpected shopping experience that surprises us becomes very appealing. Creating the opportunity for customers to connect with other people who

are passionate and dedicated to a common interest further brings the brand alive, humanising it. This gives brands the chance to create a fan base or cultural club around an object, point of view or ideal.

The main challenge is to stay true to the brand's values while remaining relevant by generating new experiences.

We're seeing an ever-growing number of brick-and-mortar versions of online brands. Why are retail spaces still meaningful today? It stems from what I said above. As human beings, we will always need to exist within a community. Together with the promise to experience something new and meaningful, worth leaving the house for, this makes physical stores more meaningful than ever — in a world where digital is becoming the new reality.

What, in your opinion, is the main goal of retail spaces today, and how can interior design contribute to it? Online and offline are integrating each other. As online media is fulfilling the functions of stores — stock display, sales, etc. — stores are becoming media. They are no longer distributing products, but experiences. I believe our role as designers today is to develop successful frameworks for these experiences, in which brand stories can shine. Stores are territories to be explored, entertainment venues, cultural hubs, temples of enthusiasm to strongly support the values and the lifestyle or promises of the brand.

How do you envision the future of retail design? I picture it as a dynamic, immersive, multidimensional and visceral experience through a perfectly curated context.

'STORES ARE NO LONGER DISTRIBUTING PRODUCTS BUT EXPERIENCES'



Alberto Caiola
HARBOOK



DAK WITEN

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POWERSHOP 6

BETTER TOGETHER

ALBERTO CAIOLA

HARBOOK

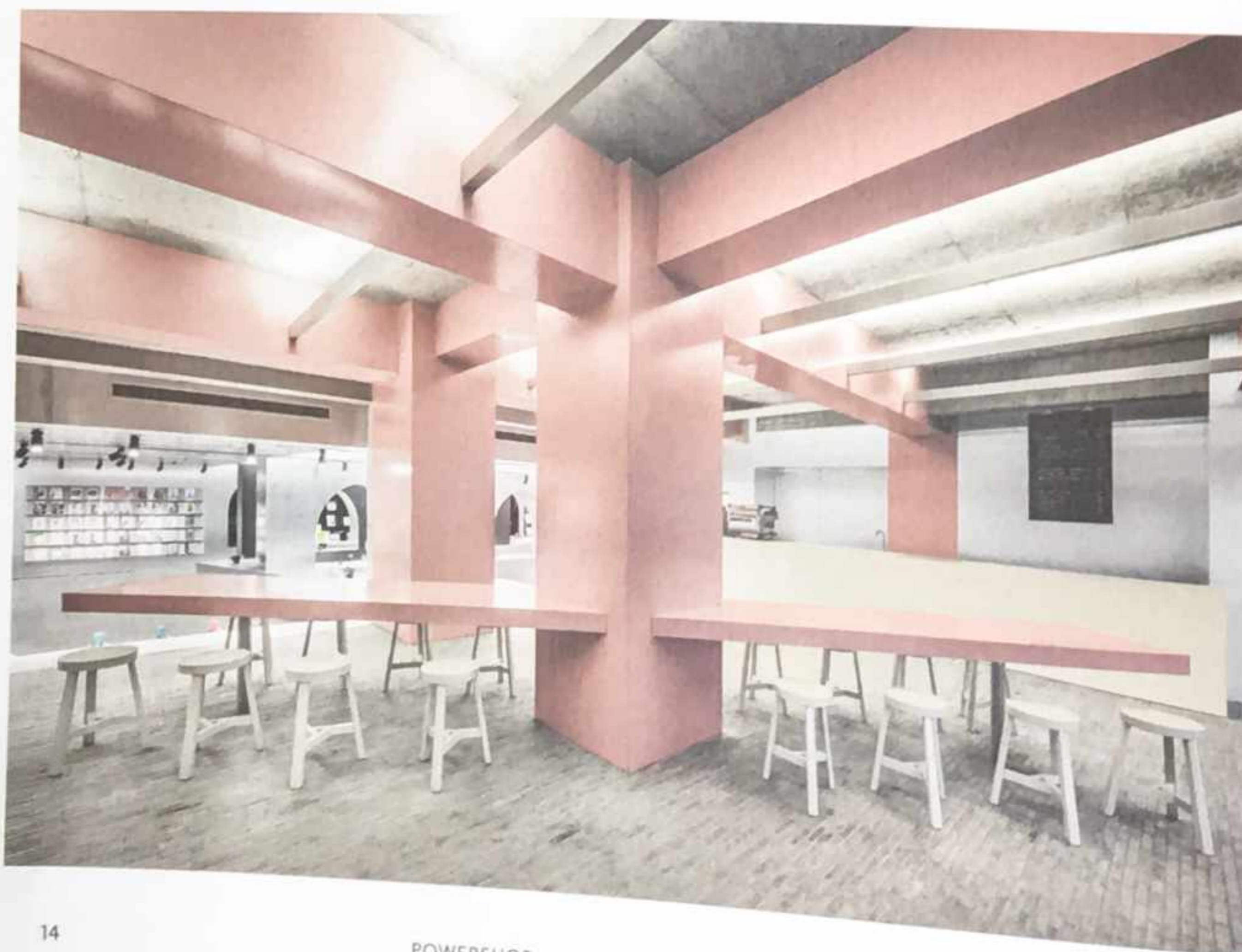
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In an era of gadgets and screens, ALBERTO CAIOLA's bookstore/furniture showroom celebrates the luxury of the printed page

HANGZHOU — This Chinese city has been home to writers, philosophers and poets of legend, but Harbook shoulders its heritage in a progressive spirit, mixing lifestyle elements into its retail space to draw in a new generation of city-dwellers. The 600-m² bookstore, café, and contemporary Scandinavian furniture showroom, is a new model that blends tradition with aspiration.

Like a landscape in a Salvador Dali painting, the space abstracts an urban environment — thick arches, columns, and indoor skies — a provocation to the imagination. Extending across an otherwise open-plan space, a series of thick arches evoke classical Italian porticos, which are associated with socialising, cultural exchange, shopping and dining across eras and cultures. To emphasise this cityscape, stand-alone geometric displays embellish the space like abstract sculptures and the luminous ceiling is gridded with Barrisol. The colour scheme — dusty pink, timeworn industrial concrete, silver and black — and an unconventional mash-up of materials co-exist with more classical elements. Nearby, a custom staircase ascends to a raised café area floored with locally sourced grey brick (a nod to the Chinese context in an otherwise culturally neutral environment). Overhead, an LED light installation serves as both a dramatic centrepiece and a metaphor for the enlightenment contained in books — as opposed to the ubiquitous backlit screen.

A SERIES OF THICK ARCHES EVOKE CLASSICAL ITALIAN PORTICOS, WHICH ARE ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIALISING, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, SHOPPING AND DINING



PREVIOUS SPREAD The shop resembles an abstracted Dali landscape (before it melts), and is meant to accommodate a mixture of products.

ABOVE Postmodern geometric stand-alone displays create landmarks in the surreal landscape.