

## théATRE TEA (Beijing) concept store

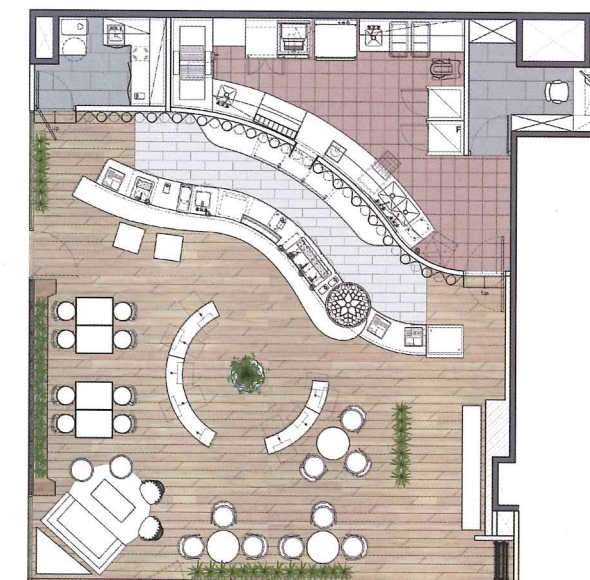
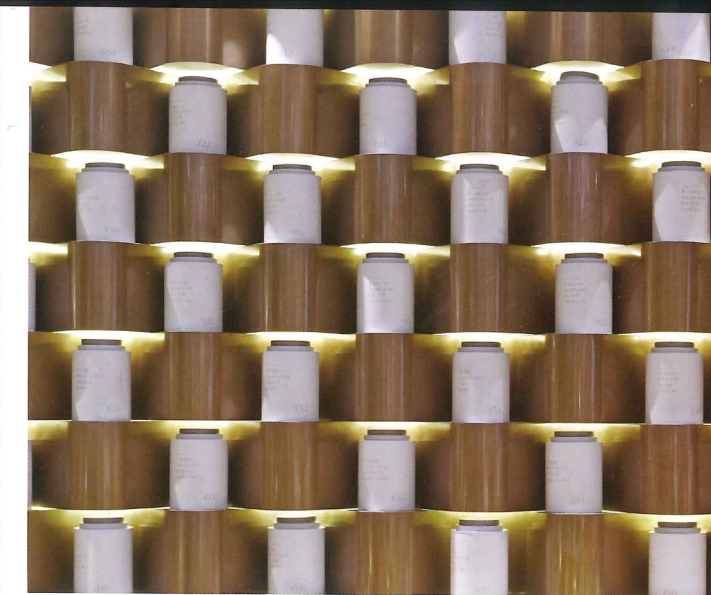
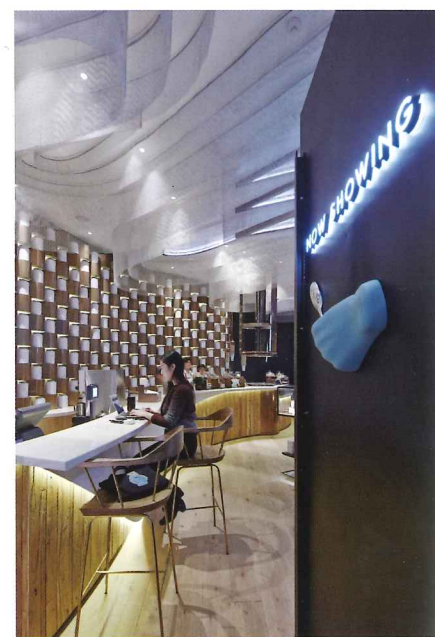
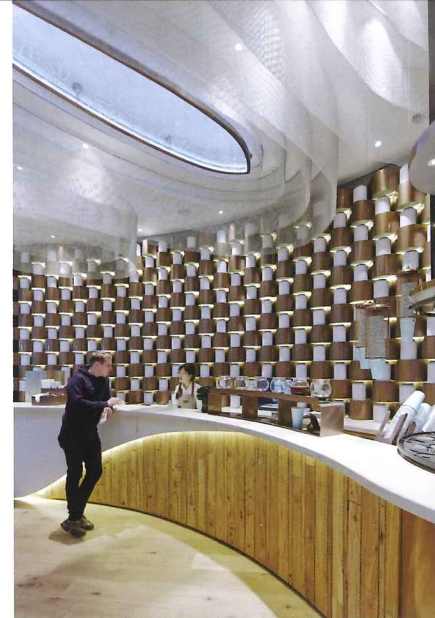
Yen Partnership Architects

Location	Area	Completion	Photography
Beijing, China	128 square meters	2016	Shu He

théATRE TEA offers a contemporary alternative to the traditional tea experience. Believing that tea is ceremonial, communal, and a beautiful ritual, the design team created the first concept store for this completely new tea brand. The space is made for experiencing the beauty of tea mixology, which at the same time is part of the brand spirit.

The first challenge was to filter out the noise and crowd but still create a sense of a place that was a part of office life for everyone in the tower; a place

to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of tea on a daily basis. The designers tried to eliminate the visual boundaries as much as possible to make the shop a part of the lobby lounge for the office tower, yet without spreading the seating and tables out to the main lobby area, which is designated for special events only. A physical perimeter closure was still necessary for the extremely dry and cold winters in Beijing. In order to maintain the feeling of openness in the summer, the full-height glazed walls at the shop front are movable panels.



As the brand name suggests, thÉATRE is a performance space. The bar is the best performance stage for tea mixologists. While waiting for the tea to be made, customers can pick up great selections of the tea in the retail area or enjoy watching the tea mixing and brewing process by the mixologist. The shop signs and brand objects work as the hints for this metaphoric theater space.

The brand also emphasizes the natural aspects of tea. The designers transformed the natural environment into interior design elements, such as the curve of the

bar counter from a river and the shape of the custom pendant lights from tea leaves. Modern tea-shaped monograms that resemble tea DNA were engraved at each layer of the glass, creating an interesting optical aligning effect when audiences stand right beneath the pendant; representing the mixology of traditional tea and modern office life.

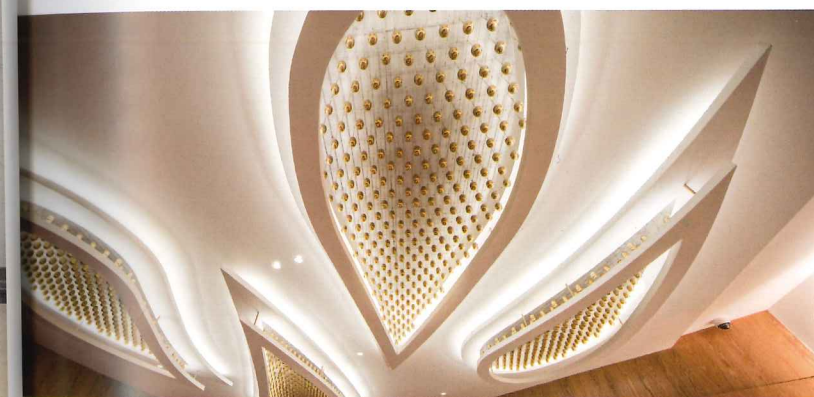
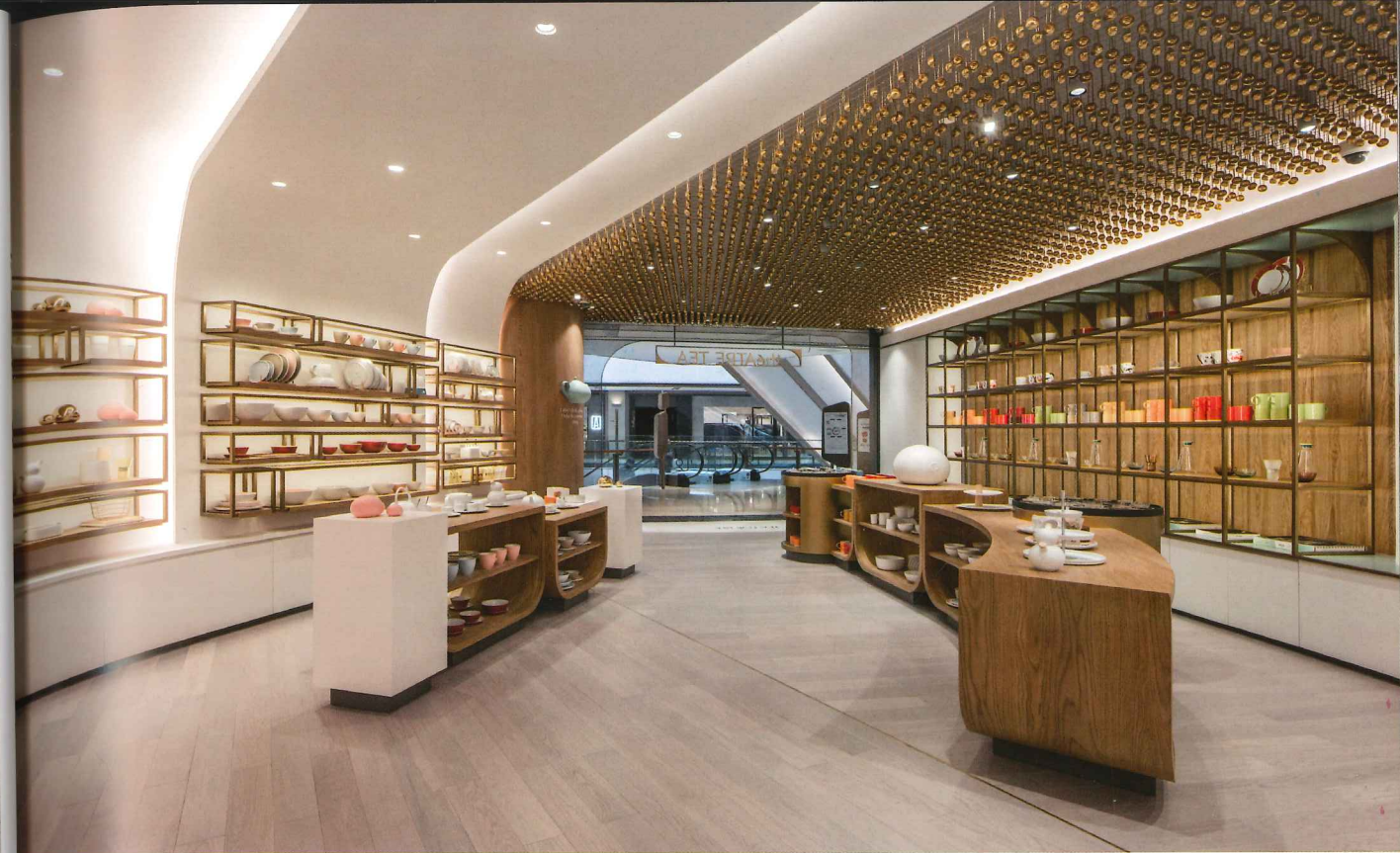
The ceiling meshes around the pendant lights creating the lighting effect, which resembles the layers, different shades of green in a tea farm on a misty day. The space provides a relaxing

atmosphere for customers to enjoy the great mix of tea. With boundaries reduced, the shop becomes a space open to natural light that shines over the office lobby, with contrasting tones at night. To cater to the changes in natural light, colder light temperatures were implemented on the outskirts of the shop, while the service island and copper back wall were brushed with warmer lights.

The backdrop of the shop is a floor-to-ceiling tea storage wall. The counter was elongated to display the tea-mixing performance, but the tea-mixing

process requires roughly 70 tins of tea handy along the bar. Therefore, the back bar and its wall became the best display of the tea available at the store.

The inspiration for the shape of the shelves came from the bamboo basket for tea leaf picking. The bamboo weaving pattern forms the feature wall and function as a tea display at the same time. There is also a tea and spices spinning table available at the counter where orders are placed. The spinning table is the best tool for the customer to experience the richness, beauty, and varieties of tea mixing.



## théATRE TEA (Shanghai)

Yen Partnership Architects

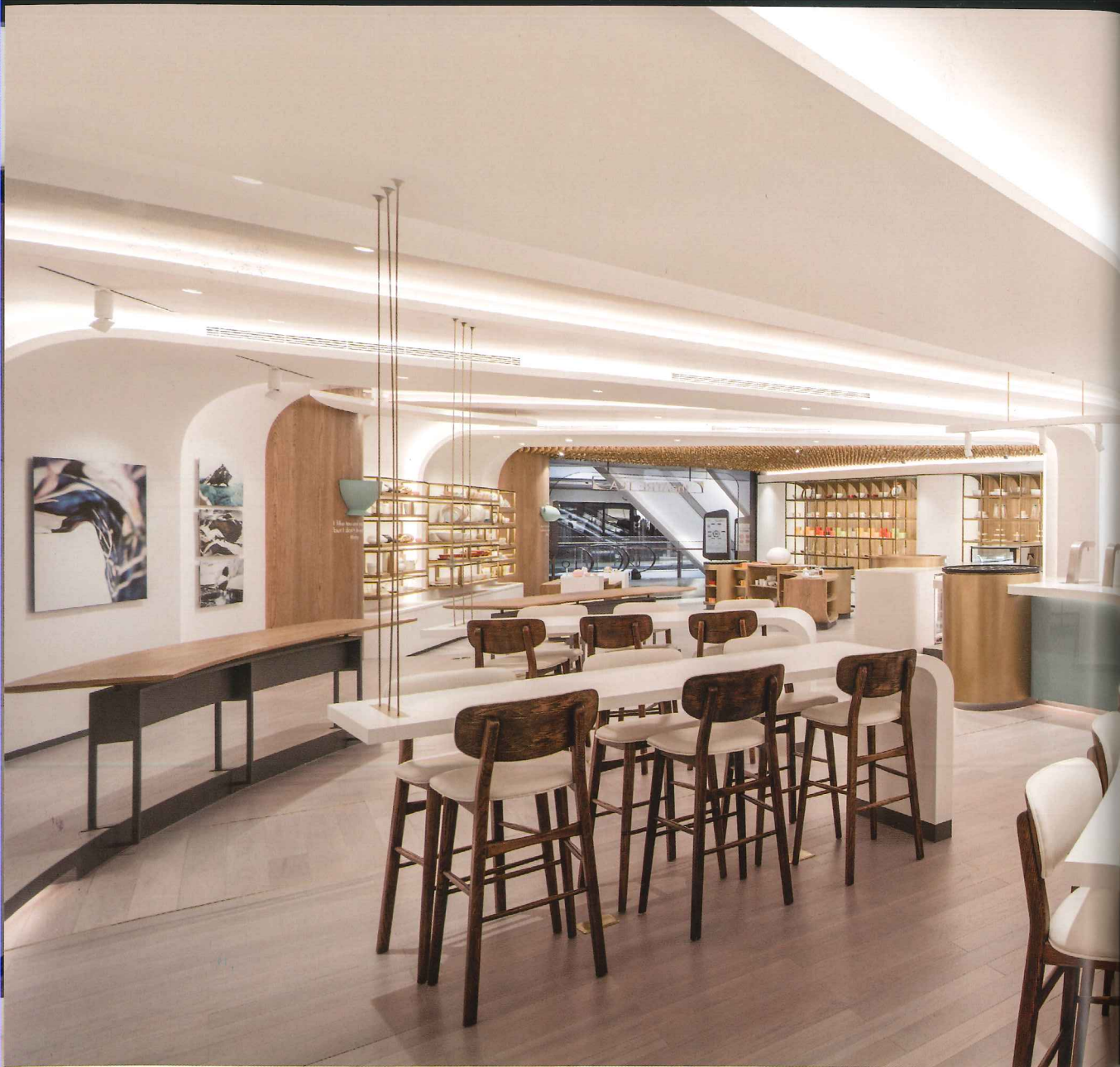
Location	Area	Completion	Photography
Shanghai, China	357 square meters	2018	Sui Sicong

Teahouses have always been perceived as classic or traditional. However, for théATRE TEA in Shanghai, the designers created an ultra-modern expression of the tea culture in everyday life represented through this experimental theatre concept.

The diversity of the tea experience is provided through the retail and tasting area with the form of mixology, as well as bringing tea-making performance, art, and a gallery space into the dining area. Far from the typical tea saloon, here the tea-drinking experience has been being expanded into

a theatrical encounter. There exists a metaphoric rhythm of space that connects each different program together. The designers interpreted the company's motto, "Tea for Life," into a series of spatial languages and aspired to achieve a space to be an ever-evolving experience of the beauty in life.

The venue is a triangular-shaped space with a narrow entrance. The layout concept was to create an internal flow within the space. By utilizing the narrow and deep space, the visual sequence of lighting strip leads the focal point to the tea bar,



which is the stage of this play. As it is a theatrical piece composed of elements—boundaries, a stage, audiences, performers, and a back stage, the designers sought to reinterpret the relationship of “scenes in the play” versus “theater of life” through the design elements.

The Shanghai théATRE TEA is a lifestyle concept store consisting of retail sales, food and beverage, an art gallery, and a multifunction space. The complexity of the program in a limited floor space set the challenge and requirement for the flexibility



of boundaries. The designers, therefore, set the movable boundaries and kept the visual connection by using the patterns of the flooring, the steps, and the combinations of furniture.

The program and activity itself also forms a sense of space that sets invisible boundaries. Sometimes the boundaries disappear because of the crossover or mix of the activities. The designers intended to create a rhythm in the space that is an analogy of the traces of tides, and is a boundary at the same time.

