

Darren Sylvester
Céline

B

Bus Projects acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past and present of the Kulin nations.

Bus Projects is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Bus Projects' 2017 Program is supported by the City of Yarra. Bus Projects is a member of All Conference.



S







Darren Sylvester

Céline

04.10.17–28.10.17

In the Céline store in Omotesando, a marbled green onyx panel spans the length of the shopfront window. It displays just one item: a series of silhouetted letters forming the word ‘Céline.’ Back-lit with a soft halo of yellow light, the brand name hovers in front of the onyx like a lovely dream. It is a subtle reminder that the ‘idea’ of Celine transcends any of its products.

Luxury needs to be staged.¹ Creative director Phoebe Philo, has carefully cultivated the material language of Céline stores and each one is a highly considered total composition. Céline stores feature a distinct material palette of pebblecrete, plaster, raw concrete, marble, onyx, resin and warm wood. Feature walls partition the shop floor to create discrete product areas. Garments are displayed on minimal fixtures and much of the floor space is given over to diffusion products such as handbags and wallets. The staff are dressed in neat chinos, woollen jumpers and shirts with the collars tucked in. Compositions of potted plants, cabinets and bespoke concrete, wooden and resin plinths appear throughout Céline stores. The custom plinths feature product but they are also occasionally left empty, simply displayed as themselves. The plinths are designed by a Danish artist called FOS.² They could exist as stand-alone sculptures.

Céline products cannot be purchased on the Internet, so the physical stores must create memorable experiences. In 2016, the Céline flagship store opened in Mount Street, London. Casper Mueller Kneer - an architecture studio based in London and Berlin - designed the space, extending ideas from the catwalk into a full retail concept.³

1 Atle Hauge, “Negotiating and Producing Symbolic Value”, *Spatial Dynamics in the Experience Economy*, eds Anne Lorentzen, Karin Topso Larsen, Lise Schröder (London and New York, 2015) p.39

2 Kat Herriman, “Secret Weapon”, *WMagazine*, 29 September 2015. URL: <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/thomas-poulsen-fos-celine>

3 Casper Mueller Kneer, URL: <http://cmk-architects.com/projects/celine-concept-store-mount-street-london>

Casper Mueller Kneer had previously worked with Céline to conceive of a catwalk environment for Céline's AW 2013-14 collection, which was presented in the Tennis Club de Paris for Paris Fashion Week.⁴ The designers' approach was to rethink the hierarchy of viewing positions in a fashion show. In a conventional fashion presentation, the models are elevated on a platform and the audience observes a procession of garments from distant rows of seating, much like in a theatre. Casper Mueller Kneer flipped this dynamic, placing the models on the same plane as the audience. In this way the audience became an object in the show and the models a part of the audience's real, everyday life.⁵ The architects distilled the field of fashion into a network of performative relationships, a dynamic which in many ways has been repeated throughout each Céline store.

Céline stores are not that distant from a scene in a commercial gallery. In Céline's Spring 2017 catwalk presentation, Phoebe Philo's daughter and her friends can be seen lingering in the middle of the catwalk path.⁶ The models don't seem to notice as they stride past. Her daughter is an incongruous element in the scene - not part of the show and not really part of the audience. She is a part of 'real' life sharing space with an event. There is a line from an Andrea Fraser performance that sums up this performative dynamic well: "Today I'm not a person. I'm an object in a work of art".⁷

Nella Themelios

Creative Producer, RMIT Design Hub, RMIT University

4 Casper Mueller Kneer, URL: <http://cmk-architects.com/projects/celine-catwalk-aw-2013-14/>

5 Charles Edmond Harry, "Casper Mueller Kneer", interview, Purple Magazine, 22, Fall/Winter, 2014. URL: <http://purple.fr/magazine/fw-2014-issue-22/casper-mueller-kneer/>. See also Andrea Tognon Architecture, URL: <http://atognon.com/project-overview/shops/celine-project-hidden>

6 Steff Yotka, "8 Things to Know Céline's Spring 2017 Show", Vogue, 2 October 2016. URL: <https://www.vogue.com/article/celine-spring-2017-fashion-show-paris-fashion-week-news>

7 Andrea Fraser, Official Welcome, performance, Hamburger Kunstverein, 2003.

B

U

Bus Projects,
25-31 Rokeby Street,
Collingwood,
VIC 3066 Australia.
busprojects.org.au/

S

PROJECTS