



KIDS IN THE CLOUDS

Perched atop the eighth floor of a brick wing of the Amsterdam Free University Medical Centre, an airy box covered in tiles mounted at different angles and made from three types of titanium reflects light like a cloud. Inside the Ronald McDonald Kinderstad, a quiet but cheerful space awaits young patients. 'The idea is to get the sick child, along with family and friends, away from the unpleasant hospital environment and into an outdoorsy setting,' says Björn van Rheenen of Sponge Architects, which planned the project together with Rupali Gupta and IOU Architecture. At the heart of the 1000-m² 'Children's City', an oak staircase doubles as tiered seating. Completing this central urban plaza are streets, lanes, hopscotch courts, lampposts and playhouses. 'From the spotter's nest, with its aeroplane hull and cockpit, you can see Schiphol Airport and hear what's happening

in the real control tower,' says IOU's Roland Pouw. 'On a little field of artificial grass overlooking Amsterdam Arena, kids can watch live Ajax training sessions or home matches on big monitors.' Reinforcing the link with nature, playhouses clad in washable prints – mosses, honeycombs, tree trunks and so forth – protrude through the façade of the building. A half year after its realization, does the Ronald McDonald Kinderstad still look like the artists' impressions? 'A lot of toys have been added,' says van Rheenen, 'but the atmosphere is still strong enough to provide relief for the sadness that often surrounds these kids.'

Words [Ingeborg van Lieshout](#)
Photos [Kees Hummel](#)



Safe Haven: Crowning the Amsterdam Free University Medical Centre, Ronald McDonald Kinderstad offers young patients the sense of spending some time outdoors.

SUNDAY BEST

Inserting a retail space into a church is no easy task. Once a flagship for Christianity, the Wolweverskapel (Weavers' Chapel) in Ghent is now a listed building housing Belgium's first McGregor flagship store. McGregor – a brand with roots in America and fashions with an undeniably British flair – saw the chapel as representative of its innovative yet traditional character. The original wooden truss and a layer of white plaster covering frescoes in need of restoration determined the approach taken by Conix Architects, an office known for restoring the Atomium in Brussels. 'The solemn, unarrayed simplicity of the chapel is pontifical. The use of transparent materials was part of our attempt to give the existing interior maximum exposure,' says architect Jan Jespers. 'At the centre of the church is a structure that solves the discrepancy between retail design and religion. The privacy needed for the women's collection is created by this steel volume, which is partially wrapped in leather bands.' Herringbone-patterned oak parquet covers the 330-m² white-painted concrete floor. Materials used for shelving and cash desk are simple and sober: painted steel – in ochre and dark brown – in combination with transparent smoked glass. New furnishings are interspersed with antique and vintage showpieces, such as a display unit from the early 20th century and a library table nearly 100 years older. Conix deliberately avoided elements that would contrast with the original surroundings, opting instead for an integrated interior that would allow the eye to shift only between clothing and church.

Words [Ingeborg van Lieshout](#)
Photos [Serge Brison](#)

Heaven's Wardrobe: Conix Architects designed the interior of Belgium's first McGregor flagship store with respect for the location: the Weavers' Chapel in Ghent.





FIFTY PIECES

From the look of things, whoever designed this interior must have put together a puzzle based on the film *101 Dalmatians* – an afternoon of fun they would have loved even more had the size and shape of the pieces been identical. The duo in question – Mika Cimolini (1971) and Igor Kebel (1970) – is Elastik, the design studio behind the recently completed Lara Bohinc jewellery shop in London. 'We've developed our own method of working – we call it Critical Geometry – in which the parameters of programme, location, budget, material and technology all bargain with one another in our development of the final design. The method moves us away from focusing on the importance of a singular object. We design relationships instead of chairs, shelves and

tables. We're interested in how objects work together in an integrated state.' It's a logical reason for basing Lara Bohinc's mysterious treasure chest on a module that functions as wall covering, lighting element and display unit. Fifty identical modules made of Kerrock, a vacuum-formed composite material, were used in the design of the 20-m2 shop interior. The mood of the space hints at luxury, ancient cultures, hidden treasure. It's a shop without shadows, a place that permits jewellery to glitter and gleam unimpeded. The interior has been compared to the mothership from *Independence Day*. Personally, I think Darth Vader would have loved buying a helmet here.

Words [Ingeborg van Lieshout](#)
Photos [Bogdan Zupan](#)



Treasure Trove: Modules made of Kerrock form the building blocks of the Lara Bohinc jewellery shop in London, the work of Elastik.