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RETAIL

WGNB responds to Seoulites' craving for curated spaces with a knitted installation for an optician's store

SEOUL — Oversize hand-knits have been around in fashion and furnishings for a while now, so perhaps it was only a matter of time before they made their way into interior architecture. In Endpiece, an optician's store in Seoul, South Korea, designed by local office WGNB, a curved hand-knitted wall partitions the space. 'On a practical level, we needed to divide the store into a public retail area and a more private optometry room and workroom,' explains WGNB's Jonghwan Baek. 'The knitted wall separates them from the store without giving a claustrophobic feeling.'

In addition, Baek says, 'I wanted the delicacy of handicraft for this project. I thought it would be great if the wall could be experienced as a kind of work of art, beyond its function. These days in Seoul, people prefer spaces that have a distinct identity, where the interior is curated and edited rather than just manufactured — and is capable of raising the value of a person visiting the shop.'

Baek recruited designer Kwangho Lee to co-create the feature wall. 'Lee has made knitted lamps in the past, which I really like,' he says. 'Although he hadn't done architecture before, we developed his method to make it suitable for a wall, using electrical wire that was produced to order by a local factory. I realized that the finished piece would be too heavy to manipulate in its entirety, so we made it in ten sections in Lee's studio, pieced them together lengthwise on site, and attached the ensemble to a skeleton of metal pipes.' It took a week to knit the wall, after a wait of 20 days for the factory to produce the wire in a custom colour.

The completed structure measures 7 by 2.5 m. And is the knitted wall a first? 'It is,' says Baek. 'At least, it's the first one we've done, and the first one I've ever seen.' — JS

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