

The beauty brand's inaugural brick-and-mortar location reinterprets the old-world apothecary as a contemporary retail concept and spa





Project Year	2024 - 2025
Location	Toronto, Canada
Project Type	Interior — Retail and Treatment Spa
Client	Living Beauty
Interior Design	Odami
General Contractor	Stein + Regency
Architect of Record	NeverOnly Architecture Inc.
Engineering	Spline Group
Photos	John Alunan

Throughout history, apothecaries have acted as spaces of both curiosity and care. Traditionally defined by dark wood, elaborate detailing, and a plethora of small drawers containing unseen intrigues, these service-forward spaces offered intimate consultations conducted on either side of a counter. Living Beauty boldly reinvents this bygone but invaluable typology, defining an impactful interior design identity for the luxury beauty retailer.

Located in Toronto's Christie Pits neighbourhood, Living Beauty intends a personalized, one-to-one experience for visitors. To facilitate this, we designed a grand, wraparound bar that functions as the social heart of the space, quietly accented by streamlined Corian display tables. Tracing the perimeter, subtly arched product bays with an abundance of drawer storage for supplementary stock establish a multiplied form that's both functional and visually compelling. While gently alluding to the design language of apothecaries, these alcoves maintain a contemporary attitude, relying on modular systems, straightforward fabrication methods, and modern materials like powder-coated steel shelving.

Departing from the dark wood of traditional apothecaries, the clay-toned millwork espouses a light, uniform backdrop for different products and branding, anchored by Breccia Oniciata marble that transforms each bay into its own service counter. Rounded tambour paneling, bevelled at both ends, creates a rhythmic geometric pattern that provides texture and interest as one navigates the store.

These subtle curves are joined by a concentric floor pattern of terracotta-toned porcelain tiles, which sweep jubilantly from one side of the shop to the other. The simple but unique arrangement completes at the centre of the space, fostering a powerful visual pathway to the threshold where the store transitions to the treatment area.

Beyond the fluted glass window, the Living Beauty spa subtly evokes the design language of the retail shop while enacting a distinct spatial experience for rest and relaxation. The playful and intimate reception acts as a transition between the visual stimulus of the store and the ephemeral calmness of the spa. To carve out individual treatment rooms, we designed a high-gloss cube, a reflective form that converses with mirrored millwork, vintage sconces, and cove lighting to generate a sense of luminosity in the corridors. This clean, mint-toned structure offers an unexpected and refreshing contrast to the space's otherwise warm palette.

Such gestures allow Living Beauty to celebrate a relevant typology of the past through modern design thinking. By invoking lessons of the apothecary and rethinking them anew, the space asserts a distinctly contemporary character, engaging in a critical dialogue around aesthetics, function, and spatial values.

Photo Captions

Image 2: Custom minimalist display tables in Corian are interspersed throughout the space, designed with floor castors for flexible placement during community events.

Image 4: The grand, primary service bar enacts a strong social element in the space that facilitates casual, one-to-one consultations between staff and visitors.

Image 6: The double makeup station (including a playfully integrated companion seat) activates the retail area through service and dialogues with the factory building's hexagonal columns.

Images 11/13: Custom rounded shelf supports are designed for flexible shelving that is seamless to remove and program. The tambour panelling disguises connection points between the repeated alcove forms and articulates the singularity of each product bay. In this way, these elements add detail to the space without being purely decorative — ornamentation that is driven by practicality and the goal to improve function and durability.

Images 12/13: Behind the main counter, gold-toned product bays distinguish prestige products and brands.

Image 14: Breccia Oniciata marble counters with a double bullnose edge elevate a rich palette of orange, clay, and pink.

Image 15: Rounded tambour panelling repeats throughout the retail and treatment spaces in different ways. At a distance it resolves as a fine texture; up-close it emerges as a detail to incite surprise and visual intrigue.

Image 19: Several of the spa's treatment rooms are finished in clay-toned limewash paint with a warm, suede-like texture, while others are quietly articulated by ambient cove lighting.

Images 20/21: Terracotta-toned porcelain tiles stretch the shop in a singular radial pattern, alluding to a traditional material in a contemporary format.

Quotes

"While referencing the old-world apothecary, the space also invokes other eras and styles, incorporating retro elements like vintage light fixtures and reeded glass with chrome framing. We want to be interpretive, experimental, and playful in how we nod to the past, allowing room for something uniquely contemporary to emerge."

"The project is located in a heritage factory building with large columns and an exposed ceiling, and our design doesn't try to disguise that. We reinterpreted the apothecary typology for this post-industrial space, in hopes of creating something that feels honest, interesting, and new."

"As designers, we're seeing a hunger for more connection in retail environments. The traditional apothecary was centred around personal consultation, so we bolstered that model with modern design approaches to create a contemporary, service-forward environment that's geared toward community building."

"This space explores ornamentation in a contemporary context, full of singular gestures that are easily replicated using modern fabrication methods. The concentric floor pattern, tambour panelling, and product alcoves all create texture, depth, and interest by elevating a single repeated geometry that's impactful but simplistic in its essence."

Odami

Odami is an award-winning architecture and design studio that aims to converge the pragmatic and the expressive, the subtle and the striking, the familiar and the unexpected.

From our offices in Toronto, Canada, we specialize in the full-service design of commercial spaces, residential architecture, and purposeful furniture, objects, and other material forms.

Led by Arancha González Bernardo, a Spanish architect, and Michael Fohring, a Canadian designer, the practice represents a merging of design values and histories, a process deepened by the contemporary multiculturalism of the city in which we live and work. In embracing difference and purposely working between modes,

perspectives, and dichotomies, we're in search of a fertile meeting ground — a space of conference and connection that gives rise to inventive outcomes.

Architecturally, we strive to create environments that are atmospheric, confident, and strongly informed by their sense of place, collaborating closely with our clients to achieve their particular ambitions and goals. We work to uncover evocative forms that are distinctly soulful and simultaneously functional, thoughtfully engaging with materiality to build depth and character.

Across scales, we invoke simple gestures to achieve nuance and presence, summoning diverse approaches into conversation so that something uniquely contemporary may emerge.

Instagram: @odami.team

