



## cloud nine

*firm: studio paolo ferrari site: toronto*

*At Alchemy, a cannabis dispensary, custom-molded eco-resin forms a feature wall in the accessories room. ➤*

**WALK**through  
health/wellness



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health/wellness



**It was only in June of 2018**

that legislation passed to legalize cannabis on a federal level in Canada. Since, the country has been quick to respond, with dispensaries opening all over, from Vancouver to Nova Scotia. Toronto alone has dozens, one of note in the heart of downtown. Alchemy by Studio Paolo Ferrari not only subverts the marijuana clichés but also delivers an interactive and elevated boutique experience.

Material choices throughout the project's four areas totaling 1,500 square feet explore a fundamental tension within the world of cannabis: The product is a plant that grows from the ground but uses cutting-edge technology to maximize its potential. So at Alchemy, industrial elements like anodized aluminum, solid-surfacing, and eco-resin, the latter in the form of an undulat-

ing feature wall, mix with natural ones, such as solid ash, terrazzo, and terra-cotta. "There's something beautiful about the highly engineered alongside the earthy," Paolo Ferrari says. "The store is somewhere between a temple and a factory."

There's also color play. While the predominant impression is an all-white environment, there are moments of saturated hues. The feature wall, which is found in the accessories room, is a fiery orange, and it's coordinated with carpet in the same shade. Most of the columns and storage displays of oils, concentrates, and topicals in the rest of the shop are white or silver, but there's the occasional one in canary yellow. "Color was used to punctuate the concept of alchemic transformation," Ferrari explains, "to be all-encompassing and visceral."

The shopping experience is multisensory. Upon entering, ➤



JOEL ESPOSITO



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**Clockwise from top left:** Beneath a ceiling of anodized-aluminum fins, inspired by those Oscar Niemeyer developed in 1971 for the Paris communist party headquarters, a solid white-ash table is embedded with interactive screens. Carpet in the accessories room is nylon. Oils, concentrates, and topicals are stored in anodized-aluminum shelving units, the rear one powder-coated. Other shelving is solid-surfacing. Flooring is terrazzo.



## WALKthrough health/wellness

*Clockwise from top left: Unglazed terra-cotta tiles clad the cash-wrap desk, column, and wall, where the commissioned digital artwork is by Tristan C-M. Orders are fulfilled in the back of house, visible through a portal of aluminum-framed glass. An aperture fitted with LED grow lights maintains the ficus at the store's entry. Edibles are locked inside eco-resin domes.*

visitors discover small digital viewers containing kaleidoscopic visuals embedded in the walls. Farther in, when they engage with “sniff jars,” product information comes up on touch screens set into a large organically shaped table. Behind the cash-wrap desk, an oversize screen loops videos of cannabis macro imagery. It’s a favorite area for Ferrari. “It’s the opposite of what you’d expect,” he says, noting the tactility of the desk’s terra-cotta tile as opposed to the smoothness found elsewhere. “It gives a *wabi-sabi* sensibility.”

Behind the desk is a generous round window revealing the store’s back of house. It

is Ferrari’s way of making a regulatory requirement, in this case that orders must be fulfilled out of reach of customers, an attractive component. He’s done the same at the entry. Due to COVID-19 capacity limitations, customers often have to line up. So Ferrari rewards their wait with a 10-foot-tall live ficus that looks like a giant weed plant. —**Wilson Barlow**

**FROM FRONT MASLAND CONTRACT:** CARPET (ACCESSORIES). **THROUGHOUT KLINE SPECIALTY FABRICATION:** CUSTOM FURNITURE, BUILT-INS, CEILING. **CLÉ:** TILE. **SANTA MARGHERITA:** TERRAZZO. **DUPONT:** SOLID-SURFACING. **BARRISOL:** STRETCHED CEILING. **SHERWIN-WILLIAMS COMPANY:** PAINT. **INVERSE LIGHTING:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **ELEVATE BUILD:** PROJECT MANAGEMENT, FIXTURE CONTRACTOR.



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