

# hinge

ARCHITECTURE  
INTERIOR DESIGN

**SEEING RAINBOWS**  
A COMMUNITY CENTRE IN VIET NAM

**STUDENT HIGHS**  
A GSD MOUNTAIN HUT

**RADIANT CITY REVISIT**  
FRANCE RETHINKS MODERNIST  
URBANISM

## **BINGE EATING...** A YEAR OF F&B DESIGN

[www.hinge.hk](http://www.hinge.hk)

ISSN 1561-781-5



9 771561 781004

HK\$80  
RMB80  
US\$11



## VOYAGER ESPRESSO

New York, USA

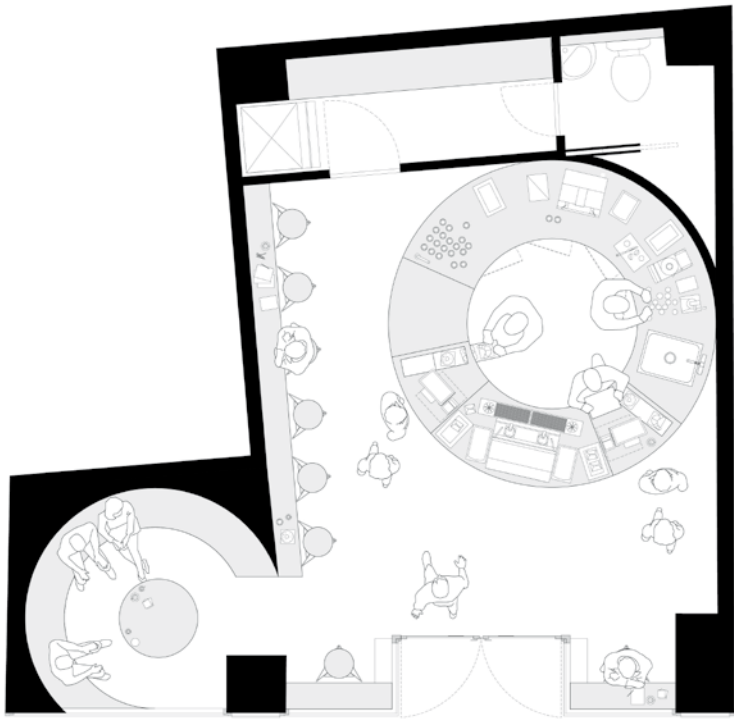
Only If

Photography by Michael Vahrenwald / ESTO

Anyone who hasn't noticed the international surge of interest in specialty coffee in recent years must really be in need of some caffeine. From Santiago to Shanghai, Montreal to Madrid, the world has gone crazy for high-end iterations of the universal drink. Small individual operators have grabbed the 'custom' or 'signature' segments of the market, as an 'up-the-food-chain' alternative to the ubiquity of Starbucks. Naturally, Manhattan is at the forefront, and this minimalist, uber-stylish new space is the latest spot to savour a substance that seems immune to the monotony of repetition. Downing a tiny cup of espresso may just be the most incessantly replayed ritual on the planet, yet it stubbornly demands ever-new variations and inventions that operate on a microscopic scale. Indeed, the world is happily coffee-addled.

The owners here are Australian, as is the barista, and they wanted to make their mark with the 550sq ft nook such that the space enhanced the brews. All the more so, given that it is an underground property located in the somewhat cuisine-challenged financial district. Then again, people will scale heights or tunnel depths for the right sniff and sip of superb joe, not least the types of young turks who move mountains of money every day before the rest of us have emptied our morning mug.

The concept was to convey both the creative and the scientific aspects of the coffee experience, which are, after all, the most interesting ones. As the name suggests, Voyager Espresso hints at a space-flight accuracy and cutting-edge scientific knowledge of its field. As designer Adam Snow Frampton puts it, "We wanted to avoid the cliched language of white tile, reclaimed wood, and exposed Edison bulbs. The material palette we developed



is inexpensive yet futuristic." Although the 'industrial chic' aesthetic is alive and prevalent worldwide (as this story proves), kudos to Voyager for breaking ranks and trying something different.

The space has been organised into two circles: a large central station where the coffee is prepared, ordered and collected, and a smaller rotunda nook called the 'grotto' where it can be savoured. The former reads as a positive object, the latter as a negative void. Wrapping all this is a stark, blanched square of space clad in strand board panels painted in aluminium enamel in a pale grey tone. Black marble tops the work surfaces, and little dollops of aluminium, copper and black rubber appear elsewhere. A single band of orange slices around the bar front, jumping out for its contrast with everything else. Lighting is simple: black 'office' fixtures either hanging or sconced off the walls. Simple metal stools welcome bums; a few similar tables provide surfaces for laptops and cups. Ceilings are blacked out. That's about it.

The cleverness, of course, is in the sparsity. Doused in the aromas of the coffees, it's as if the interior architecture wants to be a stylishly bland 'cup' for the people and the liquids. Despite the clinical vibe - which feels right for coffee - there is also an almost Edward Hopper-esque undertone to Voyager. Add a late-night loner huddled near the window over a cooling mug, plus a wearily occupied barista in the background, and you might have a 21st-century version of one of the master's canvasses. Voyager Espresso proves again that size has nothing to do with impact.

