

PLAY IN A RETAIL SURROUNDING

-a strategic approach to offering play as a service in the IKEA department stores



Christian Strömqvist

School of Design and Crafts, University of Gothenburg

Gothenburg, spring term 2011

Degree Project 30 HECs, Fine Arts Master's Programme in Child Culture Design 120 HECs)

ABSTRACT

Play in a retail surrounding

– A strategic approach to offering play as a service in the IKEA department stores

What kind of play solutions could amuse and entertain children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store? How can a playing experience for children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store be designed to last during a desired amount of time? And how can I use my collected experiences from my Master's study at HDK when working with a sharp case? This was some of the initial questions framed in my project, in which I have developed ideas and proposals for new methods of how to create new kinds of play experiences for children inside the IKEA stores. By looking at play as a service towards children and use their perspective I have identified and defined play opportunities that already exists inside the store. This has led to a model of a working method used to make the play opportunities available to the children as well as a concept with multiple applications of the method. The project has been made with support from Inter IKEA Systems BV.

Keywords: Inter IKEA Systems BV, strategy, service design, Children, Child Culture Design, play, imagination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Background	5
1.2 Purpose	6
1.3 Aim	6
1.4 Framing of questions	7
1.5 Demarcations	7
2 IMPLEMENTATION	8
2.1 Collection of information and analysis	8
2.1.1 Different types of play	8
2.1.2 Different types of playing experiences	9
2.1.3 Important factors	9
2.1.4 Keywords	9
2.2 IKEA Bäckebol	10
2.2.1 Play facilities	10
2.2.2 The store in general	10
2.2.3 What kind of experience and structure was desired?	10
2.2.4 How could I create this?	11
2.3 Concept generating	11
2.4 New iteration	13
3 RESULT	14
3.1 The customers	14
3.2 The children	14
3.3 Services towards the adult shopper	14
3.4 Services towards the children	14
3.5 The play towers	15
3.6 How to make IKEA a funnier experience for children	15
3.7 What kind of play can occur?	16
3.8 What could a solution look like?	17
3.9 Play it!	17
3.10 The IKEA playground	18
3.11 Play as a service	19
3.12 Method	20
3.13 Connecting to IKEA's values and home furnishing	21
3.14 Identifying and defining play opportunities	21
3.15 The most important tool	22
3.16 The play signal	23
3.17 Play opportunities in Showroom	24
3.18 Play opportunities in Market hall	24
3.19 Many different play areas	25
3.19.1 Placement	25
3.19.2 Time	25
3.20 Example conceptualizing	26
3.21 Play situation: the flying carpet	26
3.21.1 The flying carpet	26
3.22 Activate space through storytelling	29
3.23 Activate space through storytelling -clues and symbols	30
3.24 Activate space through graphic floor patterns	33
3.25 Communication model	36
4 REFLECTIONS	37
4.1 The process	37
4.2 The book and illustrations	39
4.3 The examination	39
5 APPENDIX	40
5.1 Customer journey adult shopper	41
5.2 Customer journey children 3-8 yrs	42
5.3 Customer journey children 8 > yrs	43
5.4 Play opportunities Show room examples	44
5.5 Play opportunities market hall examples	45
5.6 Play opportunities market hall examples	46
5.7 Example conceptualizing	47
5.8 Illustrated user scenario	48

1 INTRODUCTION

By looking from a child's perspective at the experience that it is to go to IKEA, I have designed a series of play experiences and/or play situations in a retail surrounding. More specific the IKEA market hall. It's not a piece of furniture, it's not a playground, and it's not graphic design. It should be seen as a social service from IKEA to the children, a toolbox to a playing experience.

The project is also about tackling a commercial environment with a philosophical and poetic approach and transforming that into an idea for a working concept.

The initial brief was to create a general approach to improving the play facilities at IKEA. What I did was to analyze what play can be within the already existing context of an IKEA department store. From that, I designed a method and a general approach that is to *Play it!* It means to identify play opportunities in the furniture and space existing within IKEA, and play with/in/ at/under/over/between/thanks to it. It means to make play a natural part of an IKEA experience, and not something that has to be added. It means looking at play in IKEA not as a service towards the shopping parents, but actually towards the children. And it means using your imagination to create lasting play experiences.

In this report I will go through how and why I took the decisions to make this project into something similar to service-or experience rather design than conventional product design. The whole project became extremely important to me when it comes to defining my role as designer and Child Culture designer.

1.1 Background

During my internship period at IKEA of Sweden I Älmhult the fall semester 2010 I got the chance to work on a project for Inter IKEA Systems in Delft, Holland. Through this contact I found out that they were looking into new solutions for the IKEA stores regarding activities and play equipment for children. Since this is my field of study, I asked if I could participate in the design process and work on it for my Master Project.

Through the five month internship I had, I did not only become familiar with the design process at IKEA of Sweden, but also the stores and the way IKEA works. Because of that I felt that this project could be the perfect way to finish my master studies at the Child Culture Design Department. The IKEA stores have an enormous amount of visitors each day, and a lot of these are families and children. For the children the IKEA stores are a completely different place than what it is for adults. How they feel about that environment is really interesting, how they experience it and how they would like it to be. I really wanted to dig further into that and learn from and with children to try to make suggestions that would improve this and make that environment become better than it is today. To be able to be a part of the development of this environment and the activities felt like an amazing opportunity for me and my future working career. To work with an actual project, and also work with all the limitations and demands that comes with designing environments or products for children in IKEA.

With my background and education from HDK and our projects I was hoping that IKEA would through this project learn as much from me as I would from them. By keeping an open mind and using my knowledge but still working inside the legal framework that is applied my goal is to create suggestions that both can be applied and discussed for the future.

1.2 Purpose

My initial purpose was divided into two parts. First, from a completely subjective point of view. I wanted to learn more about designing for children, and I think an important part of that is to work with limitations and actual briefs. By doing that together with a company that has a lot of experience and a huge market I hoped to learn both from them and learn how I use my design process in this kind of project. I also wanted to maintain an investigating and critical approach to how and why things are done, also regarding my own work and what has been done before at Inter IKEA Systems. From the other point of view I hoped that what I do would not only help IKEA and support their process in improving the activities and areas for children, but also introduce new ways of thinking towards play, children and child culture.

1.3 Aim and expected result

The aim for this project was in the bigger picture connected a lot to what I wrote under purpose. To produce design suggestions to products and solutions for children in the IKEA stores worldwide. The project was initially going to revolve a lot around portable and moveable play in different ways, and in the end this would be presented in concept sketches and models as a base for discussion and hopefully continued work. But the aim was also to for myself create a bigger understanding of both my process, child culture and working towards and together with a big company like Inter IKEA Systems.

To specify more, I was going to look into further development of the play facilities in the IKEA stores worldwide, and develop suggestions for this. The main target group was supposed to be children in the age of 8 to 11, but I did not want to exclude younger children in my work. I was going to begin with looking at a wider perspective of what play could be in this context, and then decide where to put focus. If it was in a portable play solution, play areas or products (fixed or flexible) was initially going to be decided on the way.

1.4 The framing of questions

- *What kind of play solutions could amuse and entertain children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store, and how will these solutions be incorporated in the existing store concept and product range?*
- *How can I design a playing experience for children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store that will last during the desired time their mother/father/caretaker is shopping?*
- *How can I use my collected experiences from my Master's study at HDK when working with the particular requirements set by Inter IKEA Systems AB?*

1.5 Demarcations

The early demarcations set was pretty much only that I would work together with Inter IKEA Systems, but I would not be hired by them. Therefore I was going to have more freedom regarding time and budget. And there was no real obligations from me towards them, neither the opposite.

2 IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Collection of information and analysis

In this project it can be hard to difference between what is research and what is result. Since the research and the conclusions from that led to the concept and the method and became the result. Still, I have tried to separate my process to make it easier to follow.

In the beginning of the project I initially felt that I had to decide what my part would be, and how I would go about that. I was handed a brief from Inter IKEA systems that I saw as being quite open, though quite graphic- and product oriented. Together with the project leader from Inter IKEA Systems BV I decided to narrow it down to being not about all play facilities in IKEA, but more about Play in a retail surrounding. Hence the title of the project. To define more, it was supposed to be about the play situations that will occur while the parents/care-takers are shopping inside the store.

Since the project was mainly about play, I started to do an investigation about play. What kind of play is there, and what kind of play is suitable inside the IKEA stores?

The types I identified was among others:

2.1.1 Different types of play:

- *Solitary play*
- *Associative play*
- *Parallel play*
- *Creative play*
- *Active play*
- *Cooperative play*
- *Dramatic play*
- *Manipulative play*
- *Quiet play*
- *Motor/Physical Play*
- *Social Play*
- *Constructive Play*
- *Fantasy Play*
- *Games With Rules*
- *Unoccupied play*
- *Onlooker play*

One could argue that there are as many forms of play as there are pedagogues. However, these can be narrowed down and in this specific project I felt that there was six categories important to focus on. Active-, Creative-, Calm- and Dramatic play. With the sub-categories Solitary- and Cooperative play. This covers play for both boys and girls, and all different age groups.

- *Active play*
Physical play, with or without equipment
- *Creative play*
Painting, drawing, problem-solving etc.
- *Calm play*
Picture books, reading, investigating etc.
- *Dramatic play*
Role play, performing, fantasy etc.

- *Solitary play*
- *Cooperative play*

I also started researching regarding playing experiences. Already early in the project I realized that there are many ways to design a playing experience. And that there are many ways to bind these together. To not get lost in what I thought was the most important part in this specific project I re-used and modified some keywords I had used in an old project. I wanted to continue to have these in mind, since they sum up what a good playing experience is all about. They would also work as a check-list to test my concepts against.

2.1.2 Different kind of playing experiences:

- *Fixed play*
- *Flexible play*
- *Portable play*
- *Digital play*
- *Analogue play*
- *Physical play*
- *Imaginary play*

2.1.3 Important factors:

- *Exploring - treasure hunts - hide & seek*
- *Sounds*
- *Illusions*
- *Tactile experiences*
- *Scale*
- *Color*
- *Shapes*
- *Theme*

2.1.4 Keywords:

- *Proportion*
- *Unpredictable*
- *Immersion*
- *Multi-sensory*
- *Exploring*

2.2 IKEA Bäckebo

Early on I also initiated contact with the manager at the IKEA store in Bäckebo, and went there to investigate the existing play facilities and observe and interview visitors and children and draw conclusions from that. Conclusions from those initial visits was that the IKEA store is a very special environment. On a crowded day there is a huge amount of visitors there. Looking at the playing facilities in the store, they have what I could see 5 playing towers on the first floor. Four of them are spread out throughout the floor, and one is at the dining area. These are combined with childrens seating furniture from the Childrens department. They are all, with exception from the one at the dining area, placed in very narrow parts which make them not so accessible.

On the bottom floor there is one playing tower outside Småland, and one in the entrance. Besides the playing towers there is a quite big area with a slide in the shape of a ladybug in the Childrens department. The further in the store I got, the more children played with the towers. However, I saw more children running around the actual departments, investigating products, opening drawers, looking in boxes. I found there is a benefit in the stores with the pathway leading through the store. It gives a direction, and could also be used in this specific project.

2.2.1 Play facilities:

- *Not enough play facilities*
- *Children have to stand in line*
- *Requires a certain level of understanding, or is too simple*
- *Doesn't fit in the store*
- *Lacking space-crowded areas*

2.2.2 The store in general:

- *Crowded*
- *Many shelves*
- *Many potential hazards*
- *Easy to lose track of children*
- *One defined pathway throughout the store*

So after finishing the first investigating step in the project, that included what I summed up above, I had a number of conclusions to work with.

2.2.3 What kind of experience and structure was desired?

- *A consistent playing experience - an experience that lasts from door to door (what doors is to be decided -IKEA entrance, the home, or a computer etc)*
- *A playing experience that provides a playing value both for*

younger and older children

- *A playing experience that works together with the store - not just placed in the store*
- *A game structure that does not require the game to be finished - that focuses on the experience and not the score*

2.2.4 How could I create this?

- *To work with pathways*
- *To connect the different playing areas to each other*
- *To work with sensations and tactile values*
- *To create a structure that can be modified according to space To provide spaces for children to create their own experiences*
- *To create a platform for imaginary play*
- *To work with different sizes and proportions, making new worlds*
- *To work with unpredictable experiences*
- *To provide a platform for immersive play*
- *To work with all or many of the senses*
- *To create a sensation of exploring, working with traces and tracks*
- *To use sounds, images, and light to create games and experiences that can be interesting and amusing for all ages*
- *To work with structures and materials that is an experience in themselves*
- *To work with meetings between children*
- *To work with interactivity- not necessarily digital such*

2.3 Concept Generating

From this I went into the next phase and started to generate concepts. In this I had four directions. The first was more focused on products; to create spatial play areas in the store by working with foldable play structures.

They had different benefits and qualities:

- *Space efficient*
- *Can change depending on location*
- *Can serve as both "play panels" with games/interactivity/ etc. and walls*
- *Possible room makers/dividers*
- *Can create stages for performing - performing play*
- *Possibilities to create different structures - buildings, roofs, climbing structures, etc.*

The second part concerned storytelling, and how important I felt that was for a functional concept. Initial ideas was:

- *Connecting elements*
- *Theme Scandinavian, forest, fairy, mushrooms*
- *Home furnishing - the home - building your own home*
Intriguing for both children and tweens
- *Adventure*
- *Playing with scale*
- *Magic, circus, "amazing"*

The third part was about exploring, and about using the fact that since IKEA is an area that is full of interesting objects and pathways the exploring aspect of play should really be used in the concept.

- *Hide and seek*
- *Spread out elements*
- *Finding/collecting*
- *Finding parts - building (digital or analogue?)*
- *Exploring senses - sounds, images, optical illusions, physical abilities etc*
- *Pathways*
- *Traces*
- *Lots of drawers - open, close, discover*

The fourth and last part never got really defined or used for that matter, but was a generation phase concerning ideas that had to do with digital attributes and interactivity through digital media. Some of the ideas:

- *Using digital media - RFID, GPS*
- *Giving (children?) tweens their own carts*
- *Hidden transmitters in the store*
- *Possibilities to lock up levels/collect points/open and play games*
- *possibilities to continue games/building at home*
- *Building your own home - the tween wants to be an adult "buying" interactive furniture*
- *Introducing or changing the behavior of "IKEA shopping"*
Connecting to games like SIMS but IKEA- although more simple, cheaper

However, although all these concept parts and conclusions were necessary and interesting in different ways, it felt really hard to turn this into new products for play. The foldable structures was the ideas that I liked the most since they would work together with the store, although still placed in the store. They had the benefit that they could be transformed and changed together with the store. But although it was still just an idea and a structure, I started to feel that this was not the solution. I also got feedback from Inter IKEA Systems BV, when I went to their office in Helsingborg, that it might be hard to actually make them function in the store. A big reason for this is that it can be a problem that it requires the store employees to take an active part in the care and handling.

So after going through my ideas, my time plan, and after having tutoring sessions I decided to use all the facts and start a completely new iteration.

2.4 New iteration

I started with redefining the brief I got and tried to identify the "real" problems, since I felt that just adding new play facilities is not the solution.

Some challenges to work from was:

- *Problem communication*

I felt that there is a big problem in the communication between the different IKEA companies. There is a lot of good thoughts and knowledge about play and what it is to play on both the web and inside IoS, that is not communicated to Inter IKEA Systems BV. I felt a clear common ground and a platform is important.

- *Problem usage*

With the existing Play towers there is a big problem in how they are being used in the stores, mainly from the employee side but also in how and where they are placed in the store. The play facilities has to be done so they work with the store.

- *Identifying needs*

When working with play facilities the most important target group is the children. It is so important to identify the needs of them. How they can play, where they can play, and how long they can play among other things.

- *Seeing potential in existing environment*

This is the part that became most important for me; that today I feel that there is a lot of (play-) potential in the existing environment in IKEA, but it is unused for a number of reasons.

By working from this and all the other research and ideas I had from my process, I started to form what would eventually become the result of my master degree project.

What I did was that I developed a concept that I call Play it! The concept alone is not the result though, it needs the research, analysis and the background to be understood. In the following part, the result, I will go through it and explain what it is all about.

3 RESULT

3.1 The customers

A store would not be much without its customers. And IKEA has a lot of them. Of course people come to IKEA for shopping, but often a visit becomes an experience that does not include only that. The numbers of services provided by IKEA towards its customers are many, making into something else than just a store. Its a travel destination. People take their whole family there. Travel agencies has special "IKEA-packages". And we spend a lot of time in the store.

3.2 The children

Children are a big part of IKEA, somewhere around 20 % actually. But they are not considered customers. Why? Well for one reason since they don't have any money of their own. Because they are children. They are also special since compared to the other 80% of the visitors to IKEA most of them are not there by their own free will. It's quite a special situation.

3.3 Services towards the adult shopper

Focusing on a visit to the store, the adult shopper will encounter a lot of touch points between him/ her and IKEA. There are many services provided by a number of reasons, but to enhance the shopping experience.

Already at home you can plan your shopping through the website. You get offers through commercials in newspapers, on TV, and on the web. When you go there you meet ads and when arriving there are lots of information on the parking lot. You enter, and get a choice to leave your children in Småland, you can pick up a shopping cart or shopping bag, there are catalogues there... the list goes on. Since there is a pathway to follow in the store these touch points will follow in a quite convenient way to make sure your shopping experience makes you satisfied so you will return next time.

3.4 Services towards the children

Looking at the services provided for children, we can see that the touch points are not as many. For the younger children, the only service provided inside the actual store is the play towers, the toilets, the restaurants, and Children's IKEA. For the older children, around 8-11, the touch points are almost non existing. And I would say that none of these services are for the children, but they are for their parents. I will talk more about that.

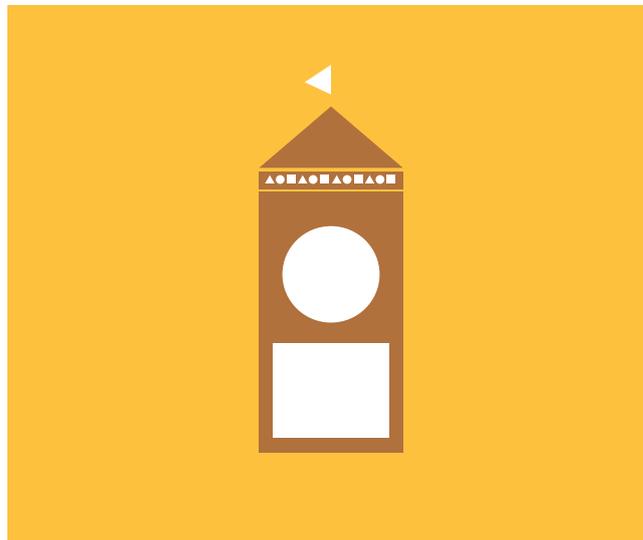
The only actual play services that are provided inside the store, with some exceptions, is represented by the play towers.

3.5 The play towers

The existing play towers, consisting of a tower construction with a number of games provided, is not fully functional.

They are only working towards younger children, they are hard to fit in the crowded space and can be seen blocking the path of the shopping carts, they don't work so well together with the store lay out and the products being sold, they make unwanted sounds and they provide quite simple game solutions that has small or no connection to home furnishing.

Positive things are that they are flexible, they seem to be attractive for the young children, and they are quite easy to handle.



3.6 So how could a visit to IKEA become a funnier experience for children?

When it comes to placing play facilities in the store, a lot of issues have to be considered. Some examples:

- *The (lack of) space*
- *The store lay-out*
- *Exhibitions are changed quite frequently*
- *The shopping carts used in the store*

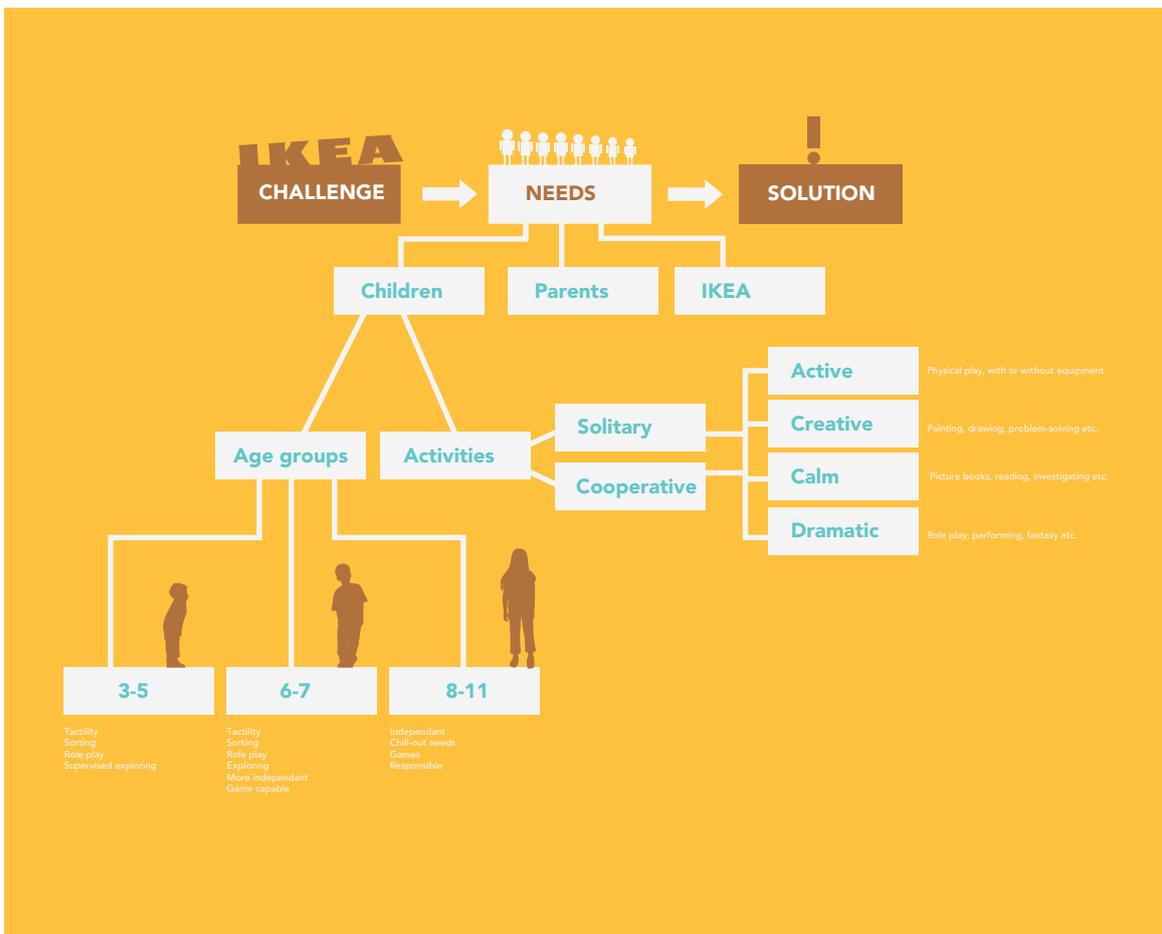
The solutions provided has to be very flexible and space efficient in order to work well within the store. Since exhibitions in both showroom, market hall, and other areas will be moved around during the year it is also very important that the play facilities can work together with these factors.

3.7 What kind of play can occur?

Focusing on the children's needs, what play can occur in the store? There are of course many ways to play. But as seen below the different age groups have different needs and different ways of playing. Even though all age groups can do all the different types of play, the way they do it will differ.

As it is right now the biggest needs are within the age group 8-11. These children can be considered too old to play with toys, and too young to be adult consumers.

Other needs has to be considered, like the fact that some children play by themselves, and other together with peers. Solutions should have the possibilities to offer both solitary and cooperative play.



3.8 So what could a solution look like?

The solution to offering play in a retail surrounding like the IKEA department store is not to add more play facilities like the play towers. Instead, it can be summed up like this:

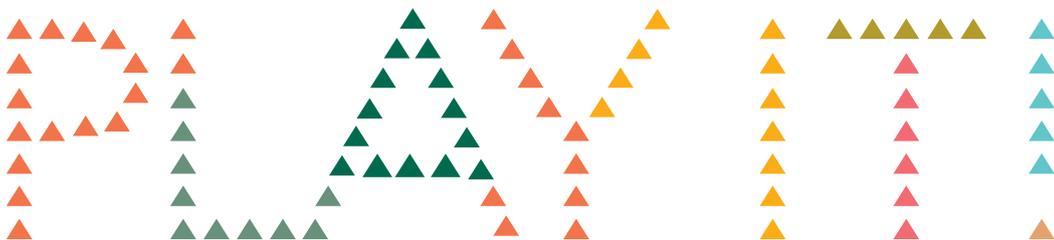
- *Using the already existing space and furniture for play by changing or enhancing the meaning of it rather than adding new play facilities.*
- *Looking at the existing space provided and defining what play opportunities that can occur*
- *Transforming those play opportunities into play experiences*
- *Looking at how it can be made possible to maintain a play experience throughout the store by working with what happens between the touch points.*

To explain what I mean with this I created the concept, that I call Play it!

3.9 Play it!

The concept, Play it! consists of

- *A general approach and idea*
- *Looking at IKEA as a playground*
- *Play as a service*
- *Connect to IKEA's values and home furnishing*
- *A method*
- *Define play opportunities in the store*
- *Create play areas connected to the departments*
- *Activate play space in the store using storytelling*
- *Activate play space through graphic floor patterns*
- *Open ended approach to play - DIY-thinking*



3.10 The IKEA playground

To be able to work with play in IKEA in an efficient and intelligent way we have to look at what IKEA is, what children are, and what it means to play.

IKEA can already be defined in a way as an amazing playground. It has many things that separates IKEA from other stores, but also from other playgrounds. First, its like an elongation of the home. Here you have all the things that you have in a home environment (kitchen, bedroom, living room, sofas, beds etc.) with all the play opportunities that are provided there.

Besides that, you have other spaces with amazing play opportunities. A whole department full of beds for example. Endless corridors perfect for hide and seek games.

Children are quite amazing, that they don't really need toys to play. Play can be about investigating, exploring, learning and having fun. And IKEA already provides all this.





3.11 Play as a service

So what's new with looking at play as a service from IKEA's side? They have had play services before some might argue. Well, I would say that it is not the play that has been a service, it is the offering of play facilities.

By thinking of play as a service from IKEA towards the children and not their parents, a more dynamic and interesting play environment can be created that not only the children but also IKEA and the parents can benefit from. This means looking through the glasses of children when looking for play opportunities and also when defining the most important touch points to work with.

With the starting point that play is provided as a service from IKEA's side towards children, I have developed a method for working toward intelligent and creative solutions for play as can be seen to the left. The different steps will be explained in detail further on.

Play in IKEA



Define play opportunities:

What situations/objects affords play and how does it afford play?



Define touch points:

The point where the play service from IKEA meets the child



Play areas



Play activities



Conceptualize

3.13 Play it! aims to connect to IKEA's values and home furnishing by:

- *Making use of existing range to create meaning and to trigger play*
- *To as far as it is possible define play opportunities within the existing products and using them instead of adding things.*
- *Keep it simple*
- *By not making complicated games and play facilities when the play opportunities already exists within the store.*
- *Make use of store lay out*
- *To think about play areas and where play can occur already when designing store lay out and exhibitions.*
- *Having an approach to play that makes people value the service*
- *To work with the play opportunities in the store in a way that makes not only children enjoy them, but also making parents/ caretakers and elderly value them.*
- *Relate play to IKEA furniture*
- *By using the existing range and space in the store the customers can relate play and play opportunities to home furnishing*

3.14 Identifying and defining play opportunities

As already been said IKEA can be seen as a playground, full of play opportunities.

The opportunities can be divided into many different possibilities.

- *Playing with furniture.*
- *Playing with the space in between the furniture.*
- *Playing within the room structure.*
- *Playing with the structures originally there to carry furniture.*
- *Imaginary play connected to all these*
- *And playing in combinations of these.*

To not get lost in trying to identify and use these opportunities it is important to use the whole design method to not forget aspects like safety, usage and cost.

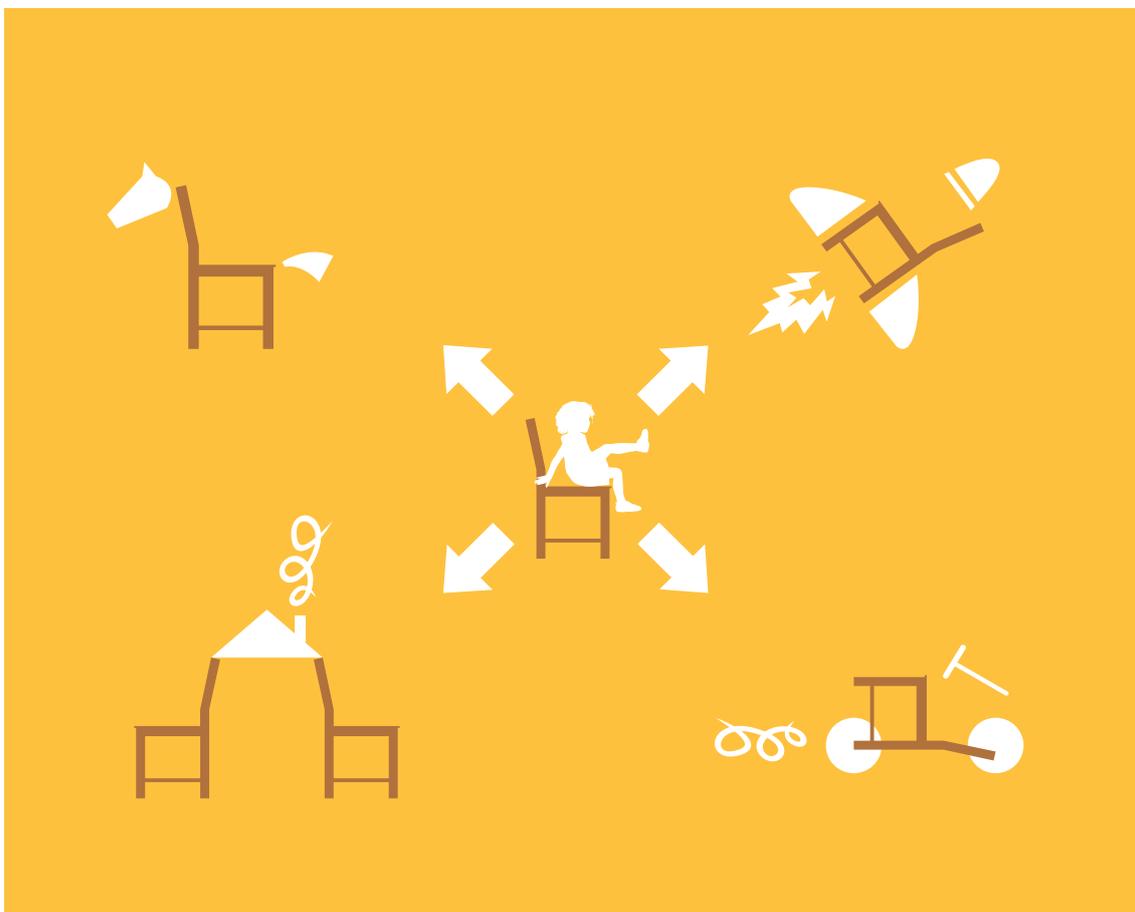
3.15 The most important tool; the child

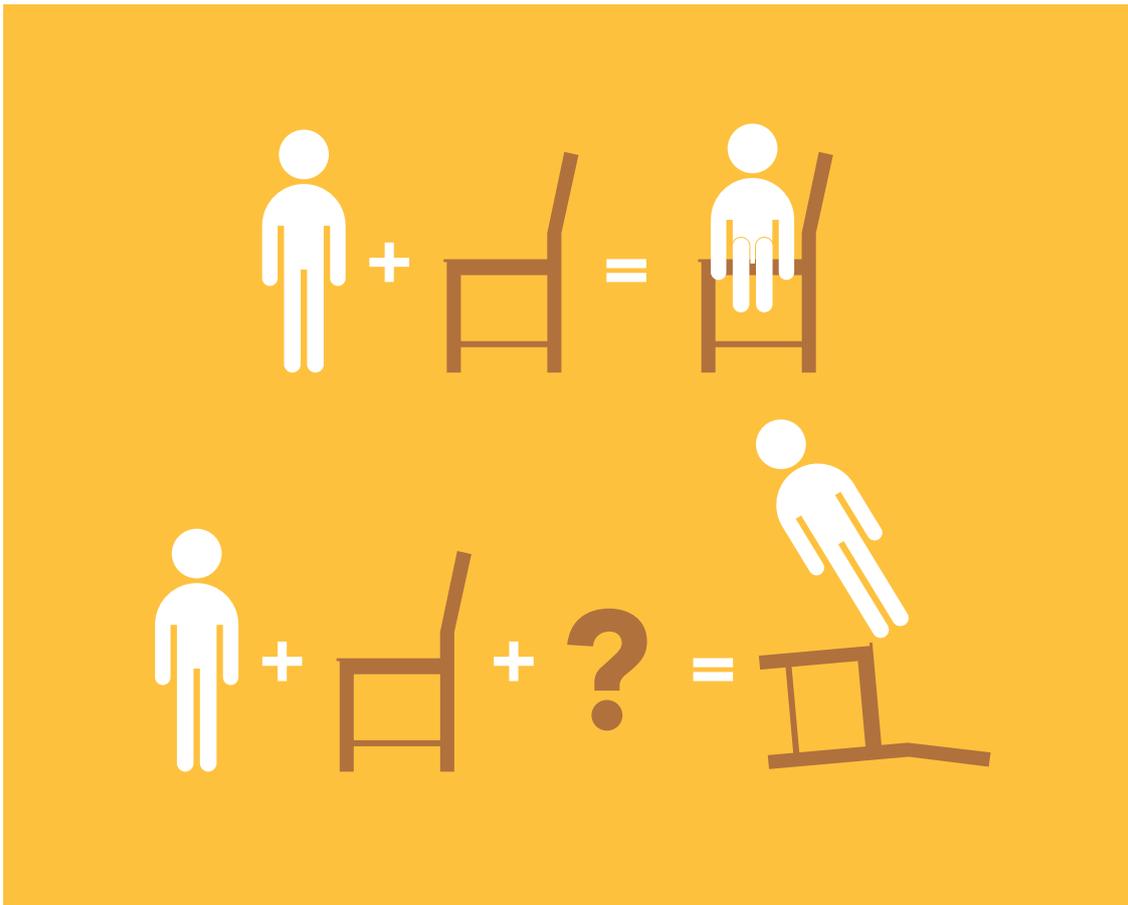
The most important tool for identifying the play opportunities is of course the child itself.

In the mind of a child everything can become anything. In a special retail environment like the IKEA store the possibilities are almost endless. The structure is already there and by looking at how a child is playing at home that will also be a clue to how IKEA can use this to enhance the play experiences in the store.

The best way of finding many of the play experiences is just observing or asking a child. How can you play here? What can you do here? Who can live here? And then finding out how to make those opportunities into real and safe situations and activities.

Identifying play opportunities is also a way to use the existing store for designing new play equipment. By investigating how fun a sofa can be in itself it is possible to transfer that into a playing experience. The actual experience can then come alive in a number of ways; through building a play sofa, through putting a rough textile on a sofa, or putting a book in the sofa. The list can be made long. It is important to remember that the meaning and function of an object like a bed can change just depending on what you put in it.





3.16 The play signal

Connected to the play opportunity is of course the play signal. When having identified and defined the play opportunity is important to reflect about the play signal. The play signal is the thing that actually triggers the play activity. The x- factor that transforms a situation into something else.

What that trigger is depends on situation. But by thinking and working with it, the need for play facilities in a place like the IKEA department store could completely disappear.

It can be worked with it in different ways. It can be something imaginative like just a thought, it can be a friend or another person, it can be something material like some stairs up to a bed or just a sign that says “please play here”. Important to remember is that the function of play signal can change from person to person, and situation to situation.

3.17 Play opportunities in SHOWROOM

Showroom can be said to be like a big doll house. Lot's of rooms without anyone living there. All these rooms are of course great opportunities for role- and act out play. All that is needed for a controlled play experience is a designated play signal to certain play areas.

Other specific play opportunities could be a creative desk area in the work section. A sofa made for climbing in the living room area. Or just a bed with some books and cushions in it in the bedroom area.

The IKEA's children's kitchen could always be presented in the kitchen section, and have an area there designated to role play. Not only to play kitchen but also to give children an opportunity to imitate parents shopping.

In storage section there could be areas connected to sorting and organizing, in closet and wardrobes it's possible to work with solutions related to space/darkness, narrow areas etc.

3.18 Play opportunities MARKET HALL

Market hall is a little harder area to define play opportunities within, however the need for play areas are even bigger here.

But there are big possibilities to create areas that are working with the specific department themes and is far more interesting than regular play facilities.

In Market Hall there are big open spaces which offers opportunities for active play. The rugs & flooring section provides great tactile possibilities. Home organization and wall decoration could use the fact that they are selling pictures and mirrors and use convex and concave mirrors or/and building mirror rooms. Lighting section could offer a play area designated to lamps and optical phenomenons.

Other play opportunities can be defined within the actual space. Exploring, active games, treasure hunts, use of imagination. I will give examples of these kind of play opportunities further on.

3.19 Many different play areas

Instead of having a few designated play units or areas, my opinion is that it should be many. Preferably at least one in every department. This would create a better consumer flow and a more playful experience for children. As long as possible these areas can be connected to defined play opportunities, but can also consist of more simple solutions like carpets on the floor with toys or poufs, benches that offers play opportunities, etc.

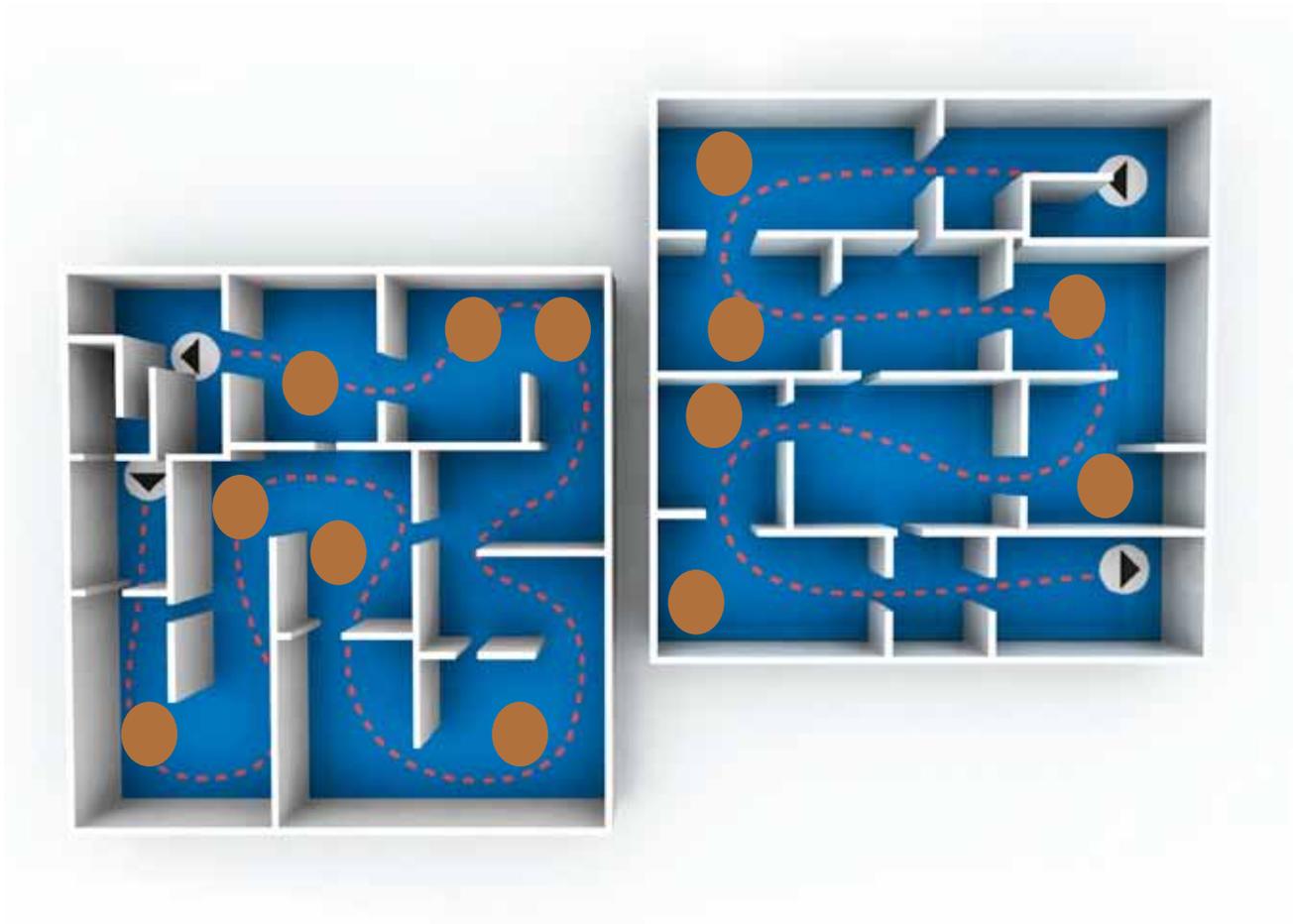
By doing like this the parent/caretaker is given an opportunity to concentrate in every department, while the child gets an experience that is fun/challenging/interesting for a certain amount of time.

3.19.1 Placement

The play areas should be placed in a central place of the department where the parent/caretaker has full visual control. It is also important so the child has a feeling of security and can see where the parent/caretaker is.

3.19.2 Time

The play areas should be designed to not offer play for more than 5-10 minutes. This to make the child want to continue to next, and leave room for more children.



3.20 Example conceptualizing

One method to create valid concepts from the play opportunities in the different departments is to do it according to the table that can be seen in the appendix.

By putting up a table with certain parameters and keywords belonging to in this case the Rugs and Flooring area, one can start narrowing down to get a more distilled amount of keywords. And by doing that intensifying the design process.

In the example that is made I chose the parameters equipment/area, connotative aspects, and emotional and tactile values.

By testing and with some experience and imagination, the words “flying carpet, oriental, grass/ hill, show tables” and “active”, can be enough to get a sketching phase initiated or ideas for how to define a play area and turning it into a working concept.

3.21 Play situation: the flying carpet

The flying carpet is an example on how a play area designed after the methods and ideas in this booklet can function and appear.

- *Multiple solutions*
- *Does not require any additional space in the department*
- *Offers show table properties*
- *May offer rug storage*
- *Provides a creative sitting experience*
- *Offers the 8-11 year olds to zone out and relax as well as a stimulating and creative climbing/sitting situation*
- *Offers the lower age groups a tactile, explorative and imaginative experience and play situation*
- *Connects directly to the specific department and the surrounding environment*
- *Creates (hopefully, yet not tested) a playing experience for a longer amount of time to live up to estimated shopping time*
- *Connotes different games depending on the rug*
- *Modular and flexible*

3.21.1 The Flying Carpet

Could be many flexible module solutions within the same size as today's show tables. Possibly a wood/plywood construction with grip material on top to prevent sliding and closing mechanisms on the sides to prevent movement. Should be possible to move depending on exhibitions, but act as a play area in a relatively central space. The play experience (tactileness, softness, visual appearance) will change depending on the rug/rugs laying on top being on show for the moment.



Flying carpet user possibilities 8-11 years old

Allows age group 8-11 to enjoy a tactile and different area to sit down and zone out.

Talking to their friends or siblings or using their cellphone while waiting for their parents to finish shopping. Creative sitting for new experiences and sensorial and motor practice.



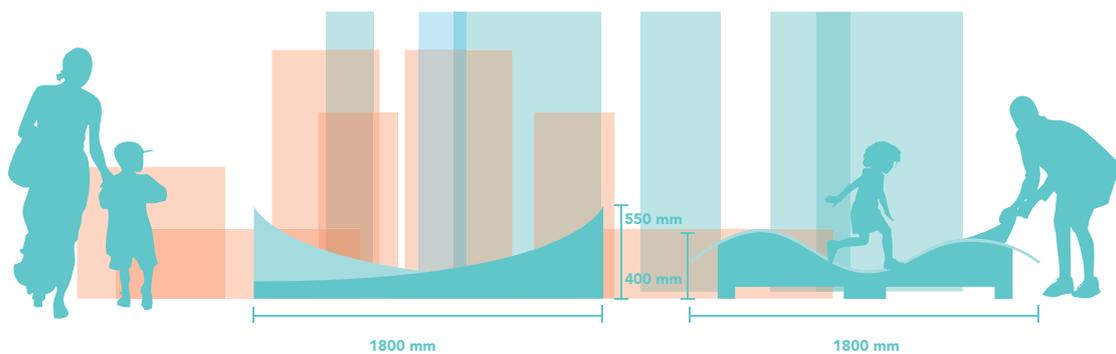
User possibilities 5-7 years old

Allows age group 5-7 to enjoy a tactile and different area to sit down and move around, using imagination to play active, imaginary and explorative games. Also good for sensorial and motor practice.



User possibilities 3-4 years old and younger

Offers the younger children a creative, tactile and active play area. To enjoy by themselves or together with parent/caretaker or friends/siblings.



3.22 Activate space through storytelling

Instead of putting in lots of extra play equipment to create an exiting play experience it can be better to use the fact that IKEA has a lot of different kind of spaces. To combine this with a child imagination can very well be enough to create desired effect.

And to achieve this through storytelling could be a both fun and effective way. It is easy to see that in between all the shelves and in all the rooms there are a lot of play opportunities. This might very well be enough for play, but one could also add clues to direct the play situation and enhance the play experience.

By adding signs and symbols that helps the child to create stories about the environment, a seed is planted that hopefully will create a chain of thoughts that makes a otherwise “empty” area play active in the child’s mind.



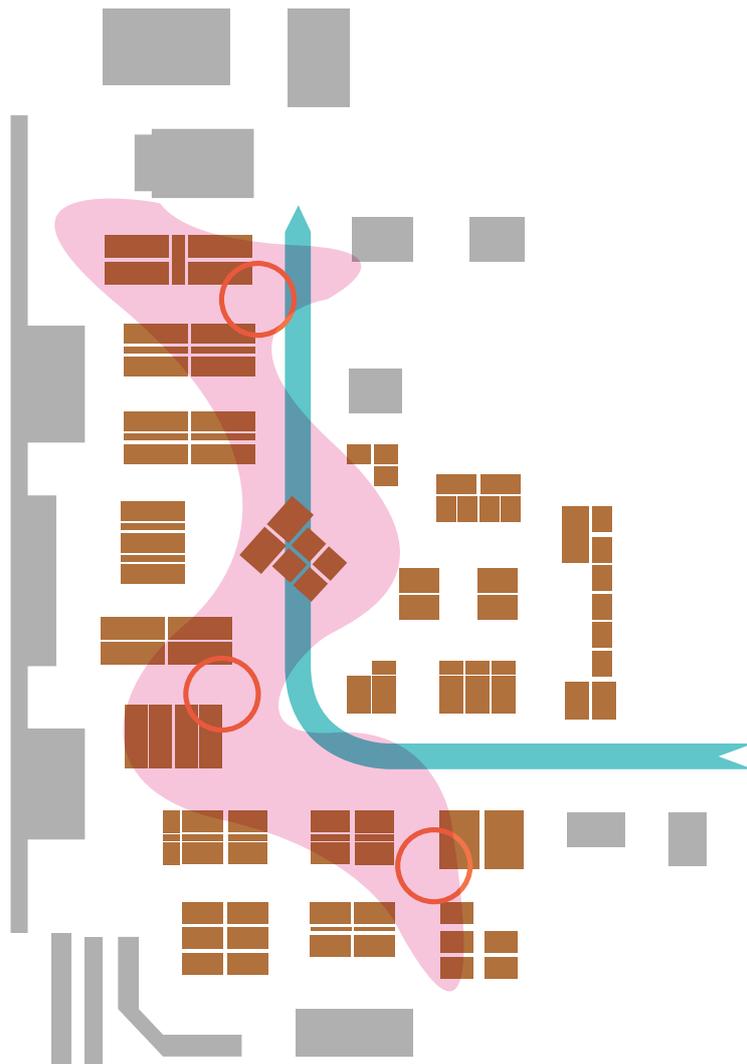
3.23 Activate space through storytelling - clues and symbols

As an example I have designed a series of symbols that all have in common that they do not usually occur inside IKEA and that they are some form of index.

By putting these tracks and traces through out the store I want the child to start reflecting about the space and the meaning of the furniture around him/her.

As an example by adding pictures of leaves below a shelf, it can change the meaning of it and turn it into a tree. By putting a image of a puddle of water on the floor makes the child think about how it got there and can transport the child to an imaginary outdoor environment. An image of a couple of glasses makes you wonder who left them there? Who lives here? Who could live here? And so on.

A continuation could be to provide the children with a “creative storybook” in the beginning of the tour, and let them create stories in different ways with help of the symbols on the way.





Using reflective foil to give impression of a puddle of water



Exploring, investigating and imagining

Moving around in the store together with parent/caretaker and using these clues and symbols to give objects and spaces a new meaning. In this case handprints on the floor; who left them there? And why?



Exploring, investigating and imagining

Using reflective foil to create an effect of a shiny puddle of water under a shelf with towels. Why is that there? Has there been water here? What can have happened prior to this?

3.24 Activate space through graphic floor patterns

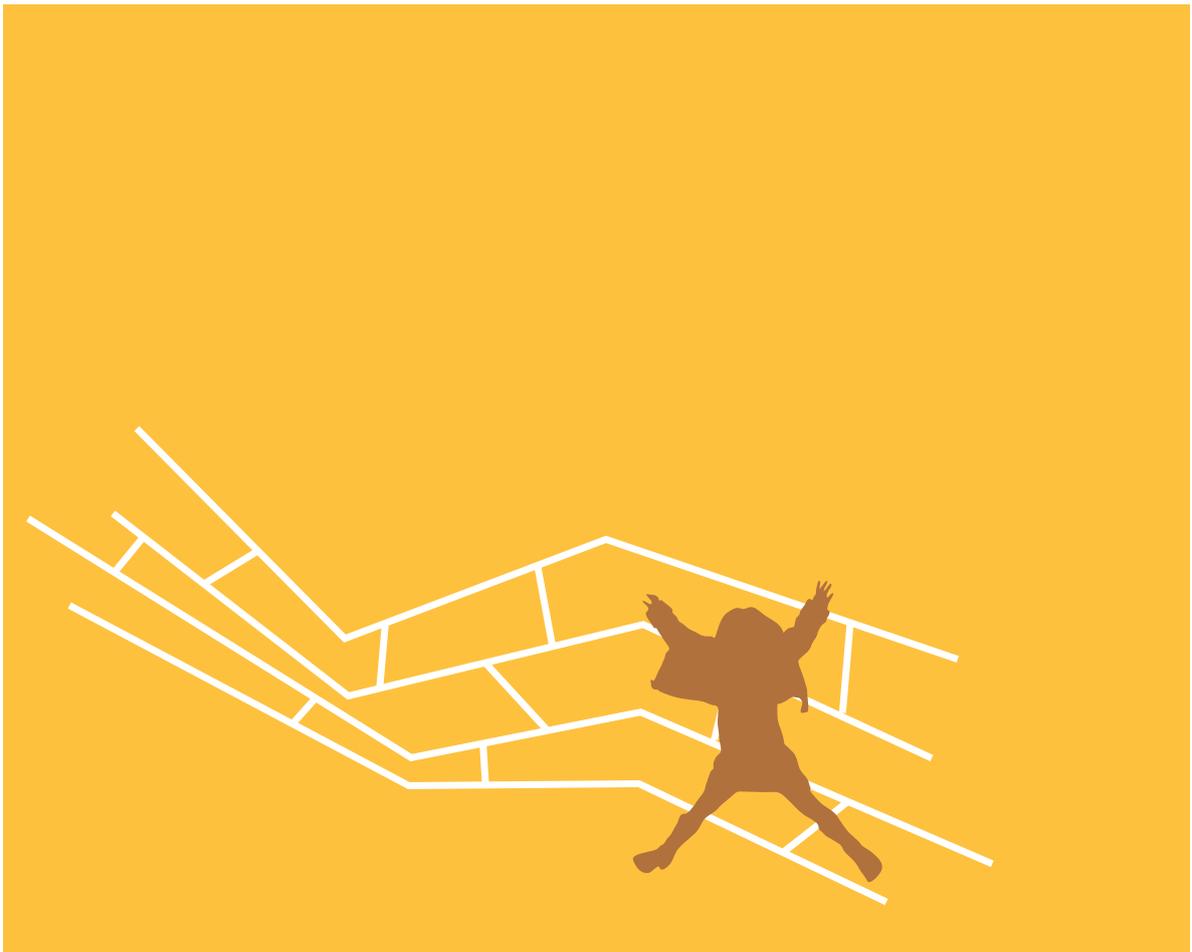
Since there might be problems to create platforms for active play in the store environment because of lack of space, one way of achieving this anyway is to work with a playing situation consisting of different kind of patterns on the floor.

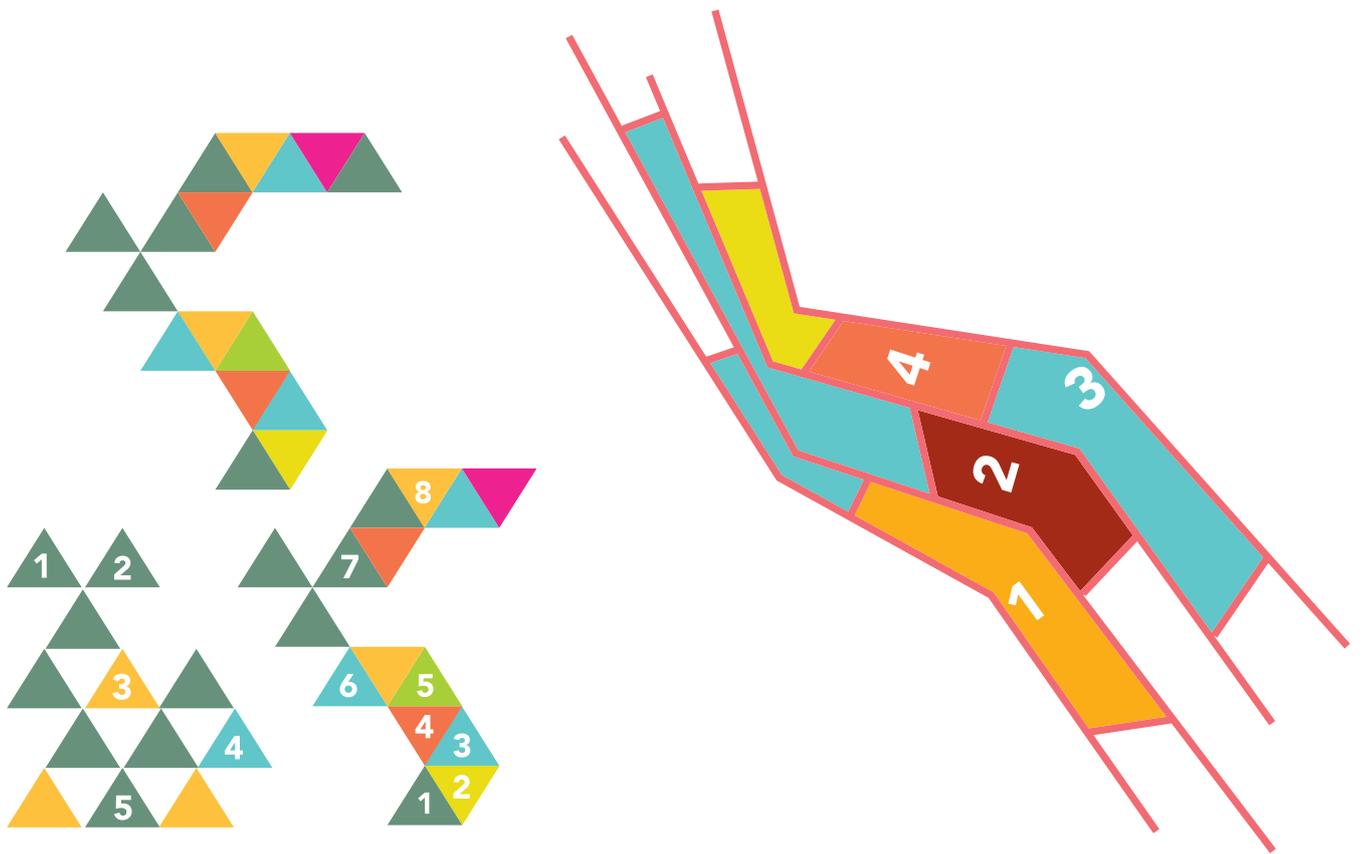
Depending on appearance and placement these can trigger different kinds of active play opportunities in the already existing space.

As an example, more narrow areas can have patterns that triggers slow kind of active play like balance practice. Other areas that are more open, like in the end of the Market hall, other patterns that triggers jumping or running can be tested.

These can patterns can be both completely abstract and contain game structures and clues to predetermined functions like reading, counting etc.

These also has the benefit that they can easily be moved and replaced when exhibitions change.





*Activate space through graphic floor patterns
Different examples of open ended patterns using the graphic system.*



*Active games inside the store
By adding abstract floor patterns in an innovative way it is possible to create a platform for active and creative play. It could be in the form of a hopscotch game, letting the children deciding the rules.*



Active games inside the store

Where there are bigger space, patterns that require bigger motions can be applied. Of course safety has to be reconsidered at all these occasions.



Active games inside the store

At more narrow areas, patterns that promotes balance practice or thinking/creative games can be applied. To be a trigger for more calm play. At places like here in the Rugs & Flooring section, the actual rugs can be invited into the interaction.

3.25 Communication model -graphic elements

The thought with Play it! is to use the store in itself as the play generator. However, there might be a reason to say that it's allowed to play in some places and in others not. If not only for the children, also for the parents so they actually are allowed to play there. Therefor I designed a graphic system as example of how to use a such. Also for the times when the concept of "Play it!" has to be communicated

1. The logo Play it! and the arrows

The idea behind the arrows is simply to point out play opportunities and give hints on where to go . "Here you can play!"

2. The lines

This is just another example of how an open ended graphic element can look. What I wanted was an element that is playful without being figurative and childish.

3. The colors

The colors are also just meant to be a direction. To follow the rest of the concept I wanted colors that feels playful without being childish, and that can connect to a home environment.



4 REFLECTIONS

4.1 The process

By doing this project in a little different way than I planned from the beginning, I wanted to show Inter IKEA a different way of working with play in a retail surrounding.

When reflecting over my result and what I did, there are so many things that comes to mind. From a sometimes quite confusing design process, I managed to get myself together, start up something new, and pull together a project that made me feel really proud in the end.

To reflect upon what I have done, I want to start with going back to what I wrote initially about purpose of the project:

” My initial purpose was divided into two parts. First, from a completely subjective point of view. I wanted to learn more about designing for children, and I think an important part of that is to work with limitations and actual briefs...”

”From the other point of view I hoped that what I do would not only help IKEA and support their process in improving the activities and areas for children, but also introduce new ways of thinking towards play, children and child culture”

And also regarding the aim of the project:

”To produce design suggestions to products and solutions for children in the IKEA stores worldwide...”

” But the aim was also to for myself create a bigger understanding of both my process, child culture and working towards and together with a big company like Inter IKEA Systems”

Though I expected that the project might end up in a product that would be placed in the stores, like the foldable structures I was initially sketching on, I am very happy that the project took a different direction. Because in some ways, that goes even better with the purpose and the aim of the project; to both learn about children and play, and also how it is to work for a big company like Inter IKEA Systems BV. Without stepping away from the brief, although I re-defined it or the meaning of it, I managed to identify the (according to me) hidden problems or challenges to why new play facilities were needed instead of just trying to fix them. By doing that I feel I actually reached another level in defining my role as a designer. Instead of doing what was expected, from both myself and the client, I delivered what I felt was needed. And I also managed to communicate this in a way that made it understandable and clear.

I still feel limitations and a brief is important when it comes to learning "how" to be a designer. But I feel it is also important to be able to re-define it when it feels necessary, in order to become an independent designer.

When it comes to the some what hefty purpose to try to help IKEA improve their play facilities and introduce new ways of thinking towards play and child culture, I do feel that by doing the project the way I did I did just that. It has during the process become obvious to me that I have learned a great deal about design and child culture design in particular, and this really became the way to use this knowledge and test it out.

And the insights I have about play, how play can occur and the play signal among other this are pieces of knowledge that I have learned that people are interested in. That also helps me to define my part as a designer in my working life. I do hope that IKEA can find a good way of using the material so that it can be tested and put into use. It will require some effort, but used correctly or just as an eye-opener I think it will have positive consequences that concerns financial, sustainable and emotional reasons among others.

So I think I did indeed gain a much bigger understanding of my process, child culture and how it can be working with a big client and a specific task, which was my aim for the project.

I also want to comment on the framing of questions that I initially asked.

1. *What kind of play solutions could amuse and entertain children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store, and how will these solutions be incorporated in the existing store concept and product range?*
2. *How can I design a playing experience for children in a retail surrounding as the IKEA store that will last during the desired time their mother/father/caretaker is shopping?*
3. *How can I use my collected experiences from my Master's study at HDK when working with the particular requirements set by Inter IKEA Systems AB?*

Regarding number one I feel that the question has been answered in the result. By using my method the solutions can consist of identified play opportunities already existing in the store, and might not even need further incorporation.

The second question is also answered by the identification of play opportunities combined with the usage of many small play areas that lets children and shoppers keep a similar pace through the store.

The answer to the last question I feel has already been answered in the reflection over purpose and aim.

4.2 The book and illustrations

All the research and all my conclusions became in the end a quite extensive piece of work with both a lot of pictures, figures and charts and a lot of text. To be able to communicate this in a way that can make it easy understandable and graphically appealing I felt that it might be done best in a presentation that could also be printed as a book. I chose to work with fonts, colors and illustrations that could be seen as somehow connected to IKEA but still very different. This to emphasize that I have done my own project, that could be used in IKEA but also in many other ways and places. So far, I think it worked quite well and gets the information through in the way I wished for.

4.3 The examination

I feel that during the examination, I managed to communicate my project in a way that summed up the quite extensive theoretical work that I had done in a sufficient way. I feel that the fact that I had already illustrated the different parts made it easier to explain than if it was just plain facts and figures.

I can feel that the form giving of the book made to communicate my concept sometimes got more attention than my actual concept, which might have been avoided if illustrated in a different way. However I feel that in the end this was the best way, to be able to communicate it both during the examination, and later on for IKEA to be able to communicate it further to other parts within the organization.

**Play opportunities:
Rugs & Flooring section**

Examples on how play opportunities can be defined in the Rugs & Flooring section.



1. Big open floor area
All open floors are a natural place for active body play

3. Indoor bench
IKEA provides a service for people that are tired, an indoor bench. However, this could be improved in a more innovative way to offer play/creative seating/seating.

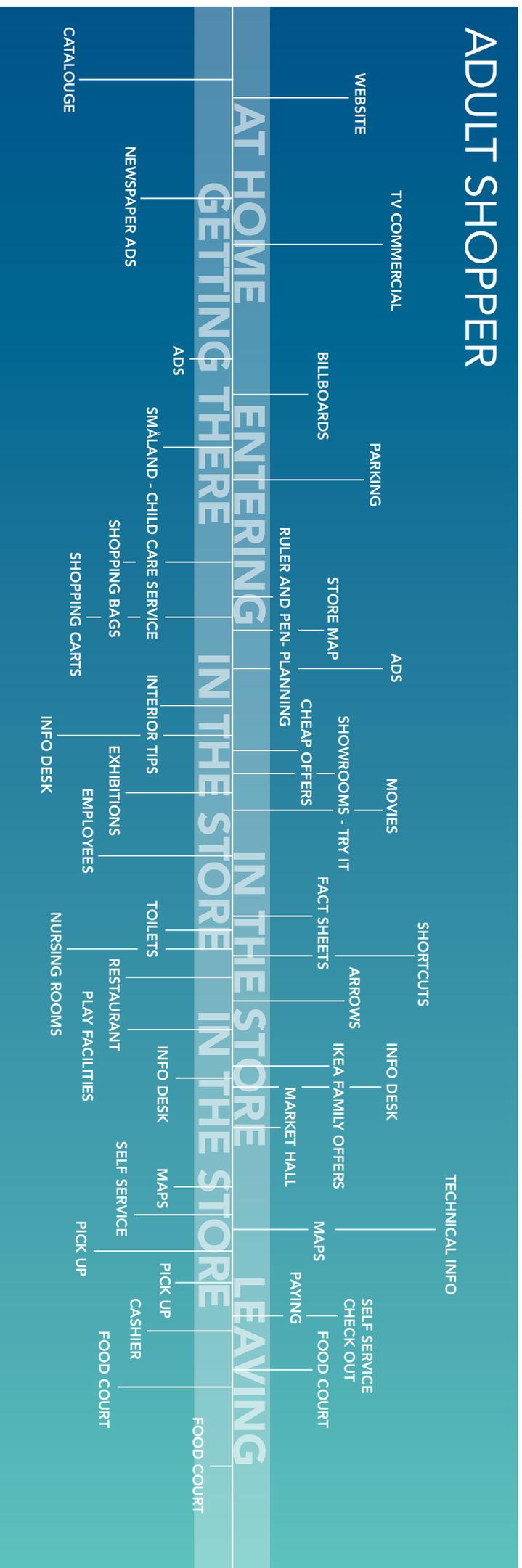
2. Rug show table
Presenting rugs in a way that offers curiosity, play opportunity and usage.

4. Rugs
The rugs are very tactile kind of furniture that could offer a big amount of play opportunities in itself

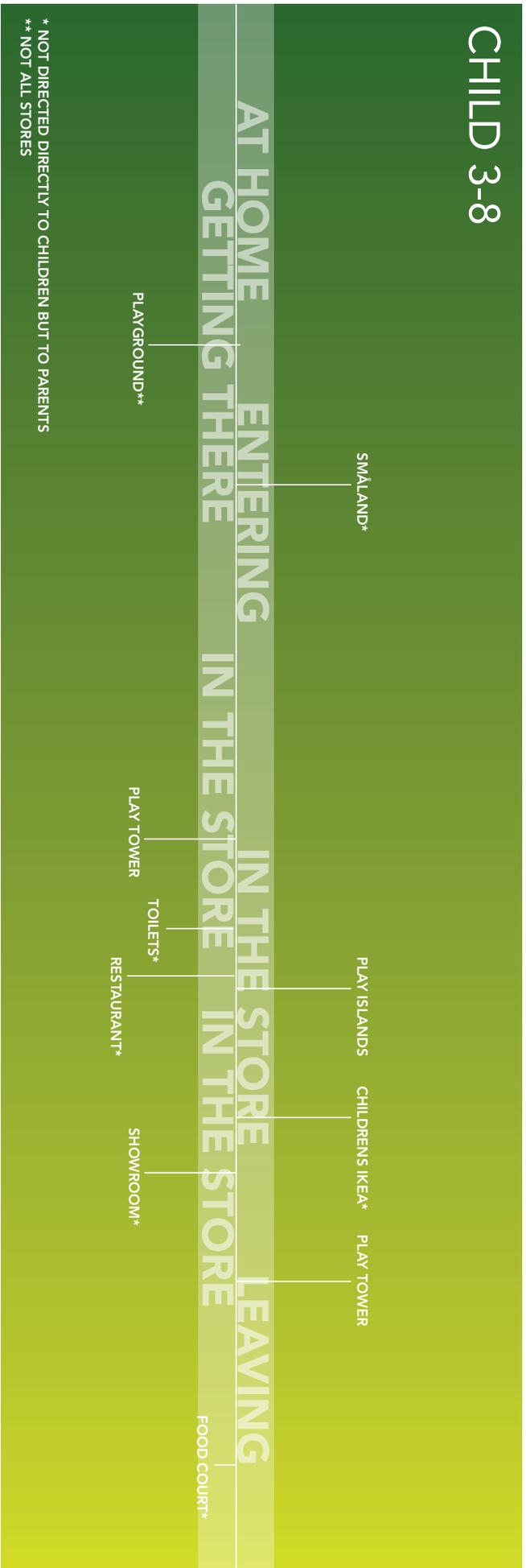
5. Hanging rug stand
Hanging rugs create layers of material that could be used for exploring and hiding

6. Aisles
All the hanging carpets makes these aisles in between the show areas really interesting room creators and scenography for imaginary games.

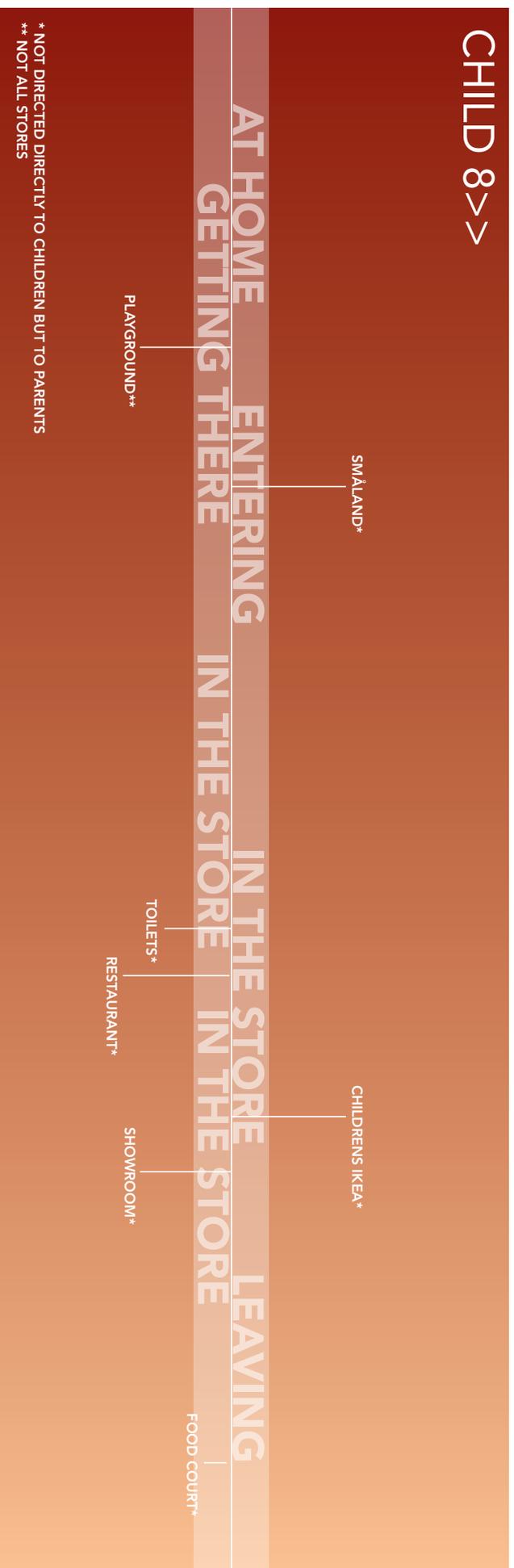
ADULT SHOPPER



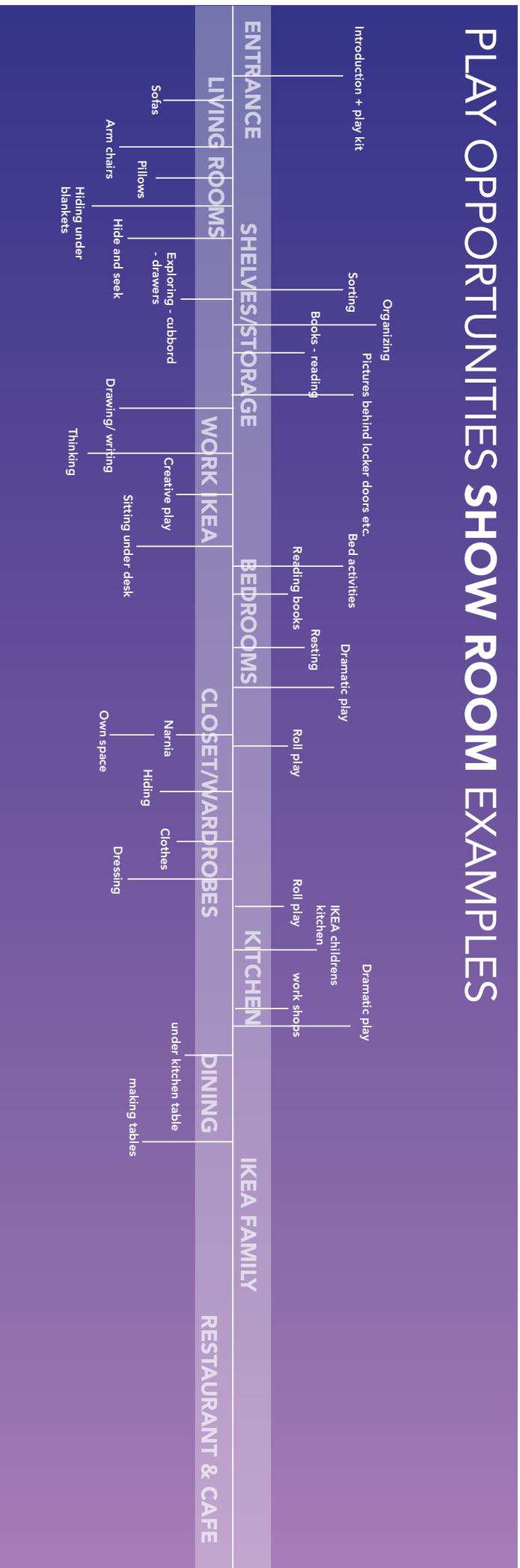
CHILD 3-8



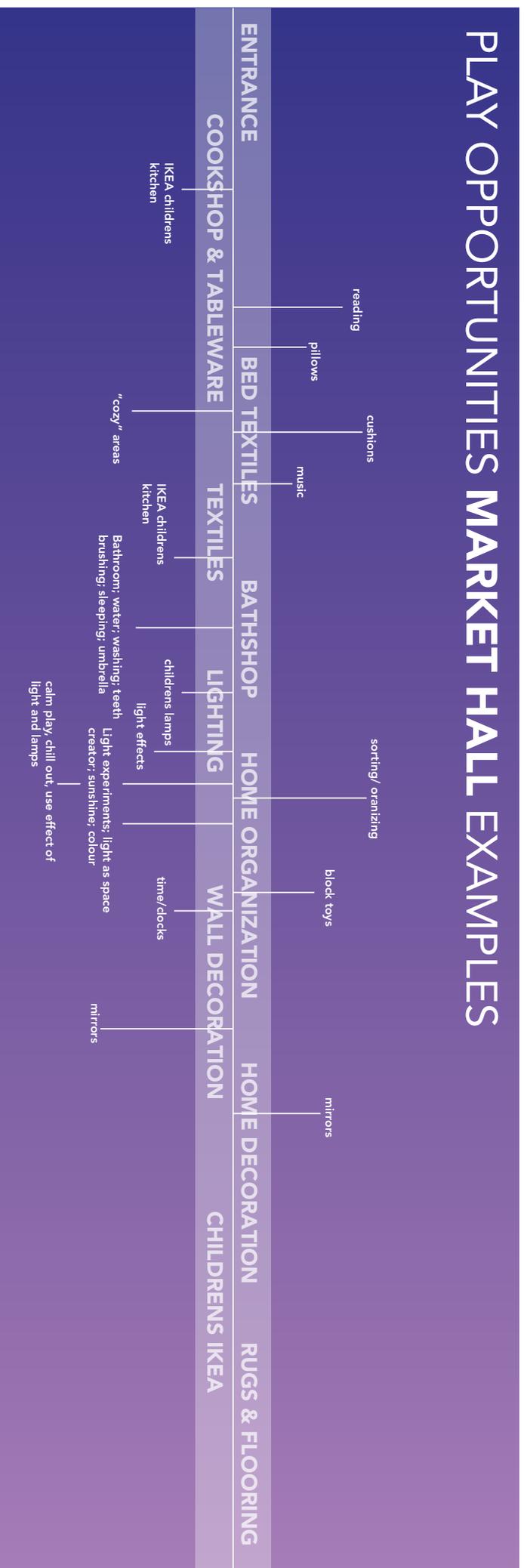
CHILD 8>>



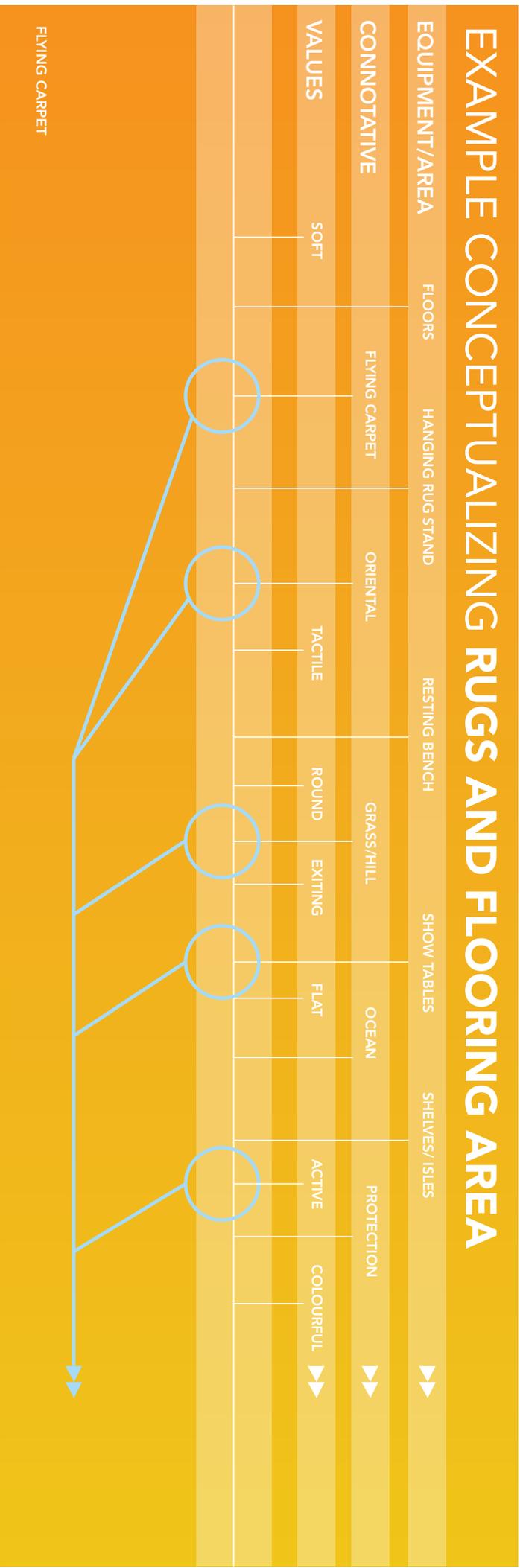
PLAY OPPORTUNITIES SHOW ROOM EXAMPLES



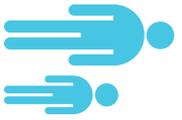
PLAY OPPORTUNITIES MARKET HALL EXAMPLES



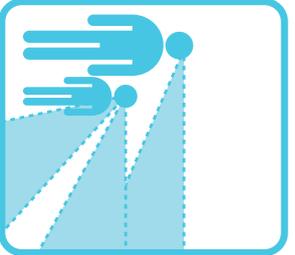
EXAMPLE CONCEPTUALIZING RUGS AND FLOORING AREA



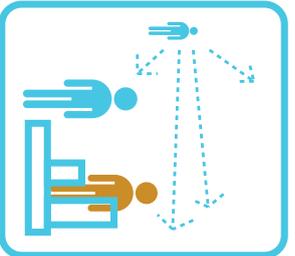
Entrance



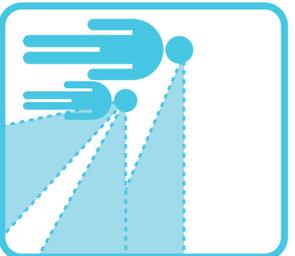
Entering



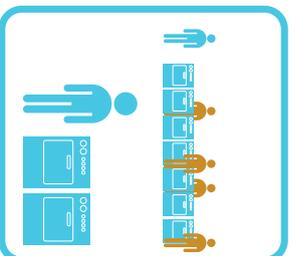
Scanning in different ways, effect of having two different perceptions of IKEA. By experience the child remembers IKEA as a really funny experience.



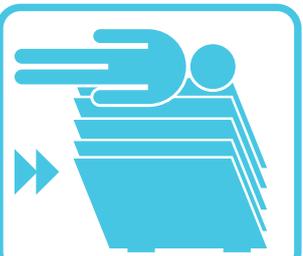
The child directly sees the arrows on the floor pointing towards the designated play area in the showroom area. He/she goes there to investigate and interact with other kids. Higher parent/careaker takes the time to scan the surroundings, but can see the child during all that time.



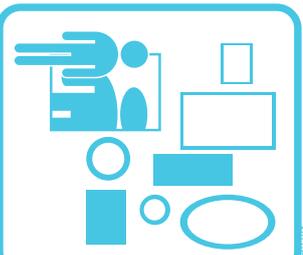
After a couple minutes both the child and the parent/careaker are ready to move on. The parent/careaker keep scanning products while the child is not only looking for the next play area but also keeping eye open for the arrows and prices, but can see the child's main life and in between the shelves.



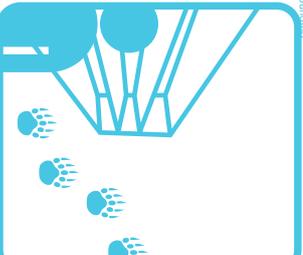
In the hidden area the parent/careaker is walking around looking at kitchen solutions. The child is walking to the play area connected to this that is a set up of the kitchen equipment from childrens IKEA. The parent/careaker and playing shopper, sibling/friend they interact with each other and engage in roll play in a kitchen surroundings.



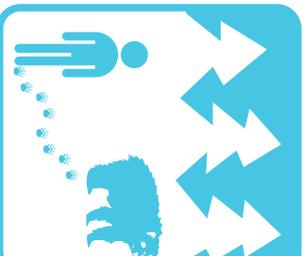
The child is in the same area triggered to do some exploring play because an arrow on the floor is pointing to the kitchen doors. While using them exiting and surprising images appear in between.



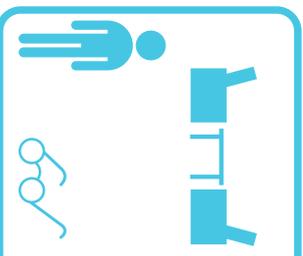
In mirror department there is a play area in between the mirrors, with concave and convex mirrors. By using these together with the regular mirrors the child is not only using them but involving the effect of the regular mirrors in the store too.



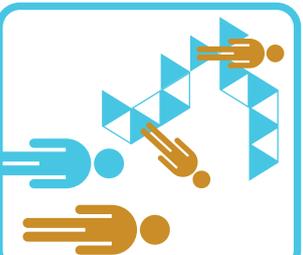
In between the shelves something is showing on the floor. It's a footprint of some animal! Why was it there? How did it get in here?



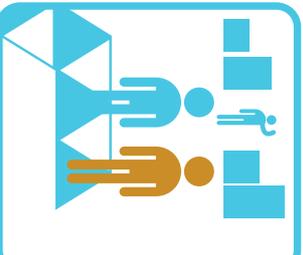
Lets go bearhunting! The shelves becomes a forest, with mountains in the distance.



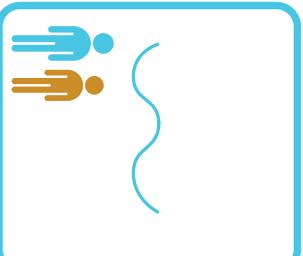
When suddenly a couple of glasses shows on the floor, the play changes character. Its just beside a room sitting with a sofa and some chairs... Do the glasses belong to the person living in the room? Who lives there?



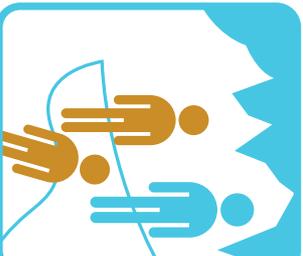
All of a sudden those thoughts are being interrupted by another child asking if they should play a game that she just came up with, and you have to be ready to play it! Its a jumping game, and they will be the diamond pattern over doors on the floor!



While having a lot of fun, the child now and then checks where his/her parent/careaker is. But somehow they manage to maintain the same pace through the store.



When walking along they discover something really cool! Its a flying carpet!



In their games they visit new worlds and climb Mount Everest!



Tired from play they rest, feeling the rug and pretending they are on a grassy hill in the sunshine.