



THE DESIGN OF EDUCATION

— *Child-Friendly Designs for Global Learning*

The Italian Studio Vudafieri Saverino Partners recently designed four kindergartens in China, where the immersive and experiential architectural space becomes a stimulus for imagination and learning. An ever closer relationship links architecture and pedagogy: school spaces play today a decisive role in the education of children, fostering their wellbeing and accompanying their learning process. This is the principle behind the project by Vudafieri Saverino Partners, an architecture studio based in Milan and Shanghai, for Gymboree Play & Music. The American brand offers courses for infants and children up to the age of 6, with the aim of developing their cognitive and relational skills in early childhood, through play activities based on listening to music, art classes, group activities and problem solving games.





The interior spaces are designed to interpret the theme of "travel" through shapes, colors and materials, with different areas recreating different environments: the ocean, a forest, a desert, the Arctic, a canyon and space. A magical, dreamlike context stimulates the children to use their imagination to live unique experiences and visit unknown worlds.

Without leaving their classrooms they are able to rest in the shade of a tree in the middle of the forest; immerse themselves underwater with the inhabitants of the ocean, and run up and down dunes until they reach an oasis in the desert. The protagonists of this adventure are not only the children, but also their parents, who are able to relive the fun of childhood and develop their creative potential along with their children. The concept finds its brightest expression in the school of Shenzhen Upper Hills, a space of over 2,000 square meters, which accommodates the offices of Gymboree employees as well as the classrooms. Here, the whole building - not just the classrooms - is an immersive and highly experiential space. Colors, shapes and geometries become tools for giving life to an imaginative world, which characterizes the corridors, transit areas, the reception, the bar, the common areas and the classrooms. The central garden with playground allows children to interact and play in the open air. The offices are located on the upper floor and accommodate the entire Gymboree team in Shenzhen with meeting rooms and training areas, a bar and a kitchen. The lavish program of additional activities - such as gymnastics and cooking classes - is also open to parents, who can enjoy themselves while their children are having fun in class. The Gymboree logo and its iconic orange color characterize the facades, making the space immediately recognizable from the outside.

