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Central da Graça by Jorge Sousa Santos

Our main concern was to create a unit of space defined by a uniform skin that would embrace the whole store area,' says architect Jorge Sousa Santos of his striking design for Central da Graça, an independent optician's shop located in the old hilltop parish of Graça, which is part of Lisbon. A visually appealing entrance invites visitors into a long, dramatic corridor lined with black MDF, the material the architect chose to unify the interior. Its boundaries are ambiguous. Black walls morph into the ceiling or are pierced by brightly illuminated shelving units featuring self-supporting honeycomb modules of transparent acrylic. Imposing as well as functional, the black skin conceals storage spaces, modulates lighting and puts products in the limelight. A white floor and white furnishings, along with expanses of

mirror and a prominent array of tube lights, ensure an effect that is neither too dark nor overpowering. A luminous freestanding glass island forms a workspace for the staff. Central da Graça takes a seemingly prosaic project—a compact eyewear store—and turns it into a seductive architectural proposal, proving that micro-projects are often a great way for architecture practices to test new ideas that leave traditional assumptions behind.

Words Margarida Ventosa

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Black adds drama to the compact interior of the Central da Graça optician store in Lisbon.