



UMANIUS

Corporate Humanism



10
BUSINESS AESTHETICS

September 2026



Contents

	01. Conceptual Framework	3
	02. Key Data	7
	03. Business Role	9
	04. Purpose-Driven Narratives	11
	05. Inspirational Quotes	14
	06. References	16
	07. Umanius Gabinet	19

UMANIUS is the publication of Auren Foundation, which, as part of its founding mission, succinctly addresses topics related to corporate humanism. Its aim is to present, propose means of implementation, disseminate, and encourage the values advocated by civic humanism within private and public enterprises and organizations.

01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

3

01 Conceptual Framework

Business Aesthetics



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - september 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

Semiotics – or semiology – is the discipline concerned with the study of signs, their coherence, their meaning and their use. A sign is understood to be anything which, by nature or convention, represents another object or idea. The specific meaning that a sign seeks to convey through its expression – its signifier – is what grants it significance within a given context.

In business, corporate signs foster the concept of the representation of the company as a shared mental reality among all its stakeholders. Such signs encapsulate the universe of the organisation and embody its values. These could be textual signs, such as corporate storytelling, reports and internal narratives; symbolic and iconographic signs, such as graphic identity; proxemic signs, such as the arrangement of spaces; or kinesic signs, such as appearance and non-verbal communication. Among these corporate signs, we may find names, emblems, management indicators, portraits, pictograms, uniforms and more. Consequently, business semiotics is to do with the meaning of this entire collection of signs.

If semiotics relates to signs and their meaning, aesthetics is concerned with signs and the meaning of a type of beauty that reflects authenticity – an ethical reality. In today's world, where existence increasingly finds its reference point in images that both sustain and universalise, a company not only engages itself but also assumes a central aesthetic role. Through its humanistic activity, the company contributes to the common good – a good that also takes into account the symbolic needs of its stakeholders. At a time of coarseness, aggressiveness or disillusionment, the aesthetic expression of business can serve as a restorative force, helping meet people's emotional needs.

Although aesthetics are rooted in an individual sensory experience, Friar Luca Pacioli, following on from Euclid, studied the golden ratio: a proportion present in countless expressions of nature. He argued that this could serve as a guide to beauty and harmony in human creation, a principle embraced by numerous artists and evident in the works of Leonardo, Velázquez and Dalí.



Title of the work: Portrait of Luca Pacioli

Author: Jacopo de' Barbari (attributed)

Description: Faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional artwork on display at the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte (Naples, Italy), inventory n° Q 58.

Image source: <http://art-in-space.blogspot.com/2017/11/attributed-to-jacopo-de-barbari.html>

Wikimedia file: Jacopo de' Barbari (attributed to) Portrait of Luca Pacioli (1445–1517) with a student (Guidobaldo da Montefeltro) (2) – File:Pacioli.jpg – Wikimedia Commons

Uploaded: 29 June 2018

Licence: PD1.0



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

Aesthetics, beliefs, collective representations, ideologies, institutions, technology and even geographic and demographic elements are all interwoven. Aesthetics relates to the set of cultural, emotional and figurative connections that individuals consciously establish with nature, society and humanity itself. Beauty contributes directly to well-being and happiness. By creating beauty, we contribute to making the world a better place.

While beauty lives in appearance, its expression should correspond to the dignity of its purpose, as only truth (not mere appearance) can generate true beauty. Aesthetic beauty is authentic and ethical: a state in which content and form are aligned, and meaning and expression are in harmony. Pure appearance, if detached from essence, is ultimately deceptive.

Aesthetics display specific traits which can also be found in business activity. In fact, corporate purpose entails a twofold objective: to satisfy a practical need, and to do so beautifully. Every ethical and humanistic business endeavour, at its core, is an exercise in reflection, invention, thought, design, choice and the search for better models. What emerges from this activity turns into goods or services (tangible and visible) that aspire to be aesthetic: the internal and the external, the visible and the invisible, intricately intertwined. This alignment strengthens the bond between the company and the stakeholders, who in turn adopt and share an image that reflects the values they perceive. Aesthetics is thus the sensitive, ethical and truthful radiance of an idea, materialised in distinctive products that grant the company unique individual positioning.

In a humanistic business, the pursuit of beauty is inseparable from the pursuit of improvement and excellence. It is an aspirational goal that permeates the organisation: its philosophy, policies,

structures, strategies, objectives, products and processes. This extends to its resources and the way they are employed in carrying out its activity. Within all of this, a company can discover its aesthetic choices – cultural markers that foster beauty and act simultaneously as enhancers of emotional well-being for stakeholders. This is also a hallmark of humanistic culture.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

THE CORPORATE AESTHETIC CANON

The aesthetic canon adopted by a company represents the referential code upon which to build a distinctive and authentic style. It extends to every dimension of the organisation, throughout its entire value chain, and affects all related aspects. Its values form part of the humanistic corporate culture, lending consistency to the company's identity and to the ways it manifests itself, while equipping it with points of reference to provide stability in the face of the impact of external distorting forces.

Examples of universal aesthetic values include beauty, grace, elegance, the sublime, the tragic, the dramatic and the marvellous. Appropriately aligned with the company's identity framework, these values act as guidelines for behaviour and expression, shaping an aesthetic style that defines how the company responds to different situations.

Within a humanistic enterprise, it is not possible for any aesthetic beauty to lie in irresponsibility, deceit or unethical behaviour. Humanistic business aesthetics rest on truth and the goodness of reality, and based on that foundation, they project beauty that does not mislead, for to mislead would be fraudulent. The result of this is intelligent attraction.

If business aesthetics embody the humanistic expression of an organisation, responsible communication is the means of conveying this. Every act of communication is relayed through signs. Institutional communication – and commercial communication, when properly aligned with it – seeks to express the company's identity. Responsible communication requires this expression to be truthful, fluent, relevant and consistent with an authentic ethical identity. Any gap between a company's true identity and its communicated identity runs the risk of undermining any credibility and, as a consequence, of eroding the essential outcomes of corporate communication: perceived image, positioning, reputation and competitive standing.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

7

02

Key Data



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - september 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

Despite regional differences, several recurring findings are beginning to consolidate at the international level. Research consistently shows that aesthetics influence perceptions of organizational legitimacy and that spaces considered beautiful or harmonious improve engagement, well-being, and the sense of belonging. There is also significant evidence that aesthetic coherence strengthens corporate identity and fosters creativity and innovation. Increasingly, studies also suggest that aesthetics communicate ethical values, and that organizations perceived as incoherent or inauthentic tend to experience a deterioration in their aesthetic perception as well. Although this line of research is still emerging, it is gaining growing relevance within contemporary academic debates on authenticity, organizational culture, and business ethics.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES Emerging patterns in organizational aesthetics		GLOBAL RECURRENT FINDINGS Consistent patterns in international research	
 NORTHERN EUROPE / SCANDINAVIA Very strong relationship between aesthetics, well-being, sustainability and the humanization of work. Especially: • Sweden • Denmark • Norway Aesthetics Well-being Sustainability Humanization of work		FINDINGS AND LEVEL OF EVIDENCE	
		Aesthetics influences the perception of legitimacy	HIGH ★ ★ ★
		Beautiful spaces improve engagement and well-being	HIGH ★ ★ ★
		Aesthetic coherence strengthens organizational identity	HIGH ★ ★ ★
 UNITED STATES More focused on: Employer branding Innovation Creativity Employee experience		Aesthetics influences creativity and innovation	MEDIUM-HIGH ★ ★ ★ ☆
		Aesthetics communicates ethical values	MEDIUM-HIGH ★ ★ ★ ☆
 ASIA More attention to: Harmony Collectivity Spatial symbolism Integrated experience Japan and Korea are especially interesting.		Ethical inconsistency deteriorates aesthetic perception	EMERGING BUT GROWING ★ ★ ☆ ☆
 LATIN AMERICA The field is growing rapidly: • Argentina • Brazil • Mexico Strong influence of: Semiotics Cultural identity Symbolic aesthetics			

Disruptive brands fuel long-term brand value

Brands that disrupted their category or reinvented themselves have accounted for almost three-quarters (71%) of the incremental \$9.3 trillion of value created in the Global Top 100 since 2006. In 2025 this includes Stripe and Chipotle, which have entered the ranking for the first time (in 85th and 86th place) and Aldi, which has been in the Global Top 100 for 15 of the past 20 years, and is currently ranked 94th.

(<https://www.medialoop.co.za>)

According with the 20th edition of Kantar BrandZ's Most Valuable Global Brands report, Innovators keeping up with consumer needs or redefining them entirely are the brands fundamentally reshaping the Global Top 100 over the past two decades – think Uber, Booking.com and now ChatGPT. The most successful – like Apple, Amazon, Google and Microsoft – have long moved away from their original product base.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

9

03

The Role of Business



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - September 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET

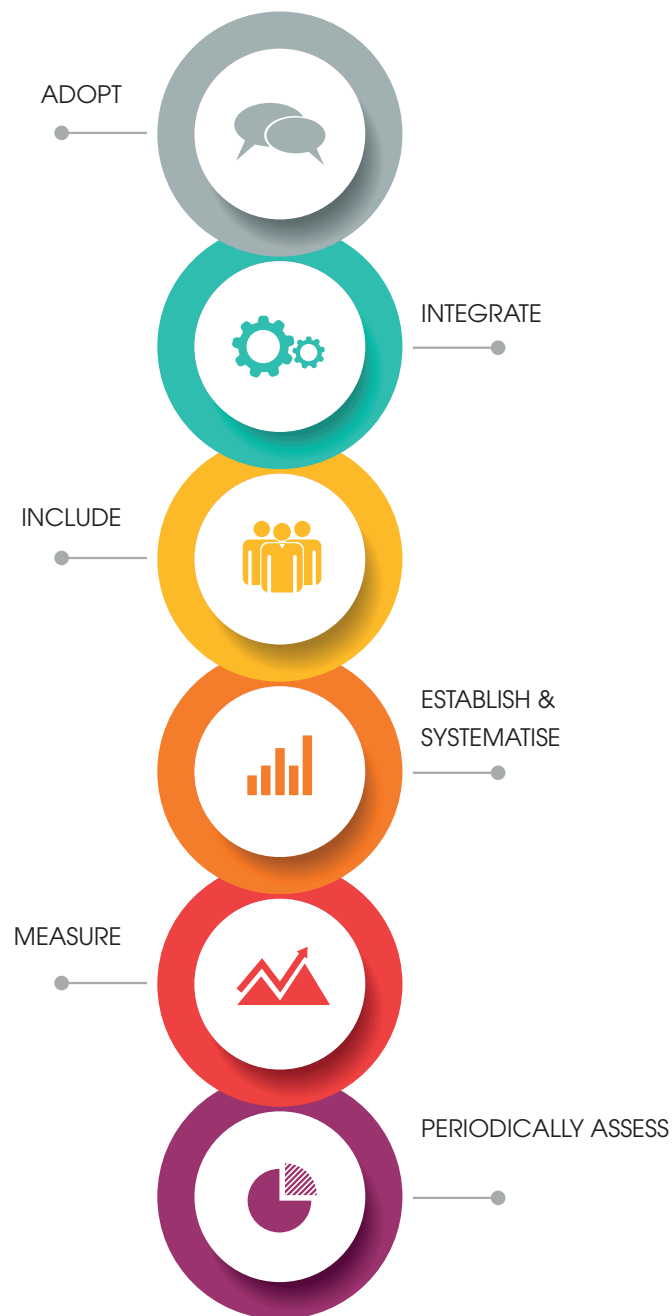


CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

- » Adopting a Corporate Aesthetic Canon.
- » Integrating the Aesthetic Canon into the company's Code of Conduct.
- » Including members with aesthetic expertise on the Conduct Committee.
- » Establishing and systematising an aesthetic policy (processes, procedures and records) to provide guidance on:
 - The alignment between corporate identity and the aesthetic values adopted.
 - Consistency between aesthetic values and communication and expression standards.
 - Identification of elements that are especially significant in their aesthetic expression and the approach required.
 - Implementing a training policy that incorporates aesthetic values.
- » Measuring the impact of the corporate aesthetic policy using appropriate indicators.
- » Periodically assessing whether the company's image and communications reflect its culture and the aesthetic standards adopted.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

11

04

Purpose-Driven Narratives

The Rebranding Journey



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - september 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

When the executives of Indura S.A., a long-established manufacturer of industrial components, decided it was time to modernise, their first step was to consider removing the bottle-green colour from their logo. “*Outdated,*” said CEO Esteban Lorenzana, tossing a folder onto the boardroom table. No-one dared mention that this shade of green had been chosen by the company’s founder - Esteban’s grandfather - and had endured as a symbol of stability. Now, they sought something more digital, fresher.

They commissioned Mirada, a boutique consultancy specialising in brand identity and values, to lead the rebrand. Its motto, set out in a calm, unadorned typeface, was straightforward: “*Beauty without truth does not last. Truth without beauty does not move.*”

Mirada did not take on clients lightly. There was an ethical rigour to their acceptance process. When they agreed to work with Indura, they made it clear that this rebrand would not be cosmetic. Mirada’s creative director, Valeria Sanz, spoke in a calm but resolute voice:

“We do not transform appearances. We reveal the beauty of what exists, yet remains unseen.”

The first meeting was cordial. Valeria and her team requested access to the workshops, factories and frontline employees. They wanted to observe how components were assembled, how people spoke in the corridors, and the scent of the workplace at dawn.

Esteban frowned.

“Why do you need to speak with the operators? Isn’t this a design matter?”

Valeria looked at him unfrontationally.

“True image emerges from essence. You do not sell steel; you sell reliability. What we aim to show is not just what you do, but what you mean to those around you.”

For several weeks, Mirada immersed themselves in the world of Indura. They discovered that, despite the senior management’s desire to appear to be a tech start-up, the company’s strength lay in its quiet commitment: suppliers loyal for twenty years, employees who greeted each other by name, a warehouse that maintained a technical library started in 1973 by a retired operator.

The design team proposed a sober visual identity, with clean lines, a symbol evoking precision mechanics, and fonts inspired by the original blueprints from the company’s founding years. The green was retained, but softened to a deep mineral hue. The website would be clear, without empty promises, reflecting the company’s values and spirit of identity, with personal profiles of employees and detailed product sheets including real anecdotes of how items were designed or improved.

The presentation of the concept was met with both applause and cool scepticism.

Esteban spoke:

“I understand the emotional approach, but... I’m not sure this positions us as innovators. We want to have the appearance of leaders, not a workshop drenched in nostalgia.”

Valeria drew a deep breath.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

13



"What you are is a solid company, with unique expertise. That is your strength. It is not about pretending to be something you are not. It is about presenting your truth beautifully."

Silence fell. Some executives checked their watches. One murmured:

"Perhaps we need something bolder, more disruptive."

That evening, Valeria reflected: *"Sometimes the hardest part is convincing the client that their truth is beautiful enough."*

Weeks of exchanges, drafts, and adjustments followed. The tension was clear: Indura wanted a mask; Mirada, a mirror.

Finally, at the closing meeting, Esteban relented. Not because he had changed his mind, but because his now-retired father saw a mock-up of the website and said, feeling moved:

"This is Indura."

The project launched successfully. It was not viral, nor did it win any international awards. Yet suppliers began recommending the website to other partners, and a group of young engineers applied to join, saying:

"We like what they convey; they seem genuine."

Months later, Esteban called Valeria, asking for support with another project, this time from the outset.

"We want to launch a new product line. But this time... from within."

Valeria smiled, recognising that Esteban had understood that sometimes one must sow truth for beauty to flourish.



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

14

05

Inspirational Quotes



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - September 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

The beauty of the body is a herald of the beauty of the soul.
SOCRATES, PHILOSOPHER

Beauty is the splendour of truth
PLATO, PHILOSOPHER

Beauty is the symbol of the morally good.
IMMANUEL KANT, PHILOSOPHER

Every brand is a promise: its semiotics define that promise
before a single word is spoken.
JEAN-MARIE FLOCH, FRENCH SEMIOTICIAN

Aesthetics is the ethics of the future.
VLADIMIR NABOKOV, WRITER, TRANSLATOR, ENTOMOLOGIST,
AND PROFESSOR

Form follows function.
LOUIS SULLIVAN, AMERICAN ARCHITECT

A logo is only the tip of the iceberg. Behind it lies a system of
signs that communicates the company's personality.
RACHEL LAWES, AUTHOR, SPEAKER, AND CONSULTANT

Successful brands do not only sell products; they sell aesthetic
experiences.
MARTY NEUMEIER, WRITER AND BRANDING EXPERT

If a brand genuinely wants to make a social contribution, it
should start with who they are, not what they do.
SIMON MAINWARING, AUTHOR AND BRANDING EXPERT

Advertising does not sell goods; it sells meaning.
ROLAND BARTHES, CRITIC, LITERARY THEORIST, SEMIOTICIAN, AND
PHILOSOPHER



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

16

06

References

Bibliography

Websites

Videos



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - september 2026





Bibliography

- Strati, A. (1999). Organization and aesthetics. London: SAGE Publications. ISBN: 9780761952398.
- Baldessarelli, G., Stigliani, I., & Elsbach, K. D. (2022). "The aesthetic dimension of organizing: A review and research agenda." *Academy of Management Annals*, 16(1), 217–257. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2020.0198>
- Shrivastava, P., Ivanaj, S., & Persson, S. (2013/2017). "Aesthetic rationality in organizations." *Journal of Business Ethics* /
- "The value of beauty for organizations." *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2018).
- Linstead, S., & Höpfl, H. (Eds.). (2000). The aesthetics of organization. London: SAGE.
- Schmitt, Bernd & Simonson, Alex. Marketing and Aesthetics: Strategic Management of Brand, Identity, and Image. Free Press
- Gagliardi, P. (Ed.). (1996). Exploring the aesthetic side of organizational life. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Dale, K., & Burrell, G. (2008). The spaces of organisation and the organisation of space. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Warhurst, C., Nickson, D., Witz, A., & Cullen, A. M. (2000). "Aesthetic labour in interactive service work." *Work, Employment and Society*, 14(1), 1–19. University Press.
- Scarry, E. (1999). On beauty and being just. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1986). The relevance of the beautiful and other essays. Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor & Hansen (2005) *Journal of Management studies*

Websites

- Philip Hancock – "Uncovering the Semiotic in Organizational Aesthetics" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1350508405048575>
- Strati & Guillet de Montoux – "Organizing Aesthetics (Introduction)" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0018726702557001>
- Antonio Strati – "Putting People in the Picture" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0170840600210004>
- "The Aesthetic Dimension of Organizing" <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2020.0198>
- "The value of beauty for organizations" <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652618311491>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366791854_A_paradigm_change_Aesthetics_in_the_management_of_organizations
- <https://knowledgelibrary.ifma.org/design-that-works-how-aesthetics-boost-your-team/>
- Library from Copenhagen business School, publications on aesthetics; https://libsearch.cbs.dk/discovery/search?query=any,contains,aesthetic&tab=Everything&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&vid=45KBDK_CBS:CBS&lang=en&offset=0

01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

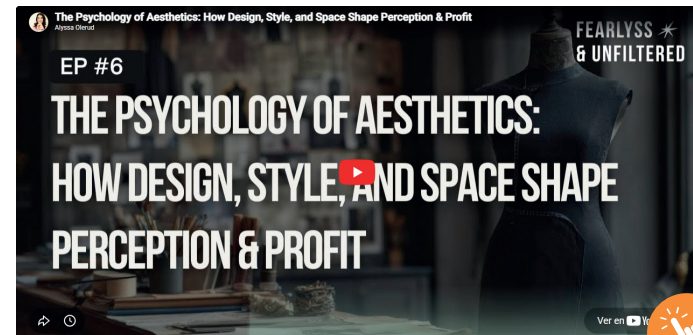
September 2026

Videos

The Surprising Power of Workplace Design – Bukky Akinsanmi Oyedele, TEDx London Business School



The Psychology of Aesthetics: How Design, Style, and Space Shape Perception & Profit



Building a Brand – Redesigning a Business Start to Finish



Michael Pirson, Humanistic Management



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026

19

07



The Aesthetic Image



UMANIUS
Corporate Humanism

No 10 - BUSINESS AESTHETICS - september 2026



01

CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

02

KEY DATA

03

BUSINESS ROLE

04

PURPOSE-DRIVEN
NARRATIVES

05

INSPIRATIONAL
QUOTES

06

REFERENCES

07

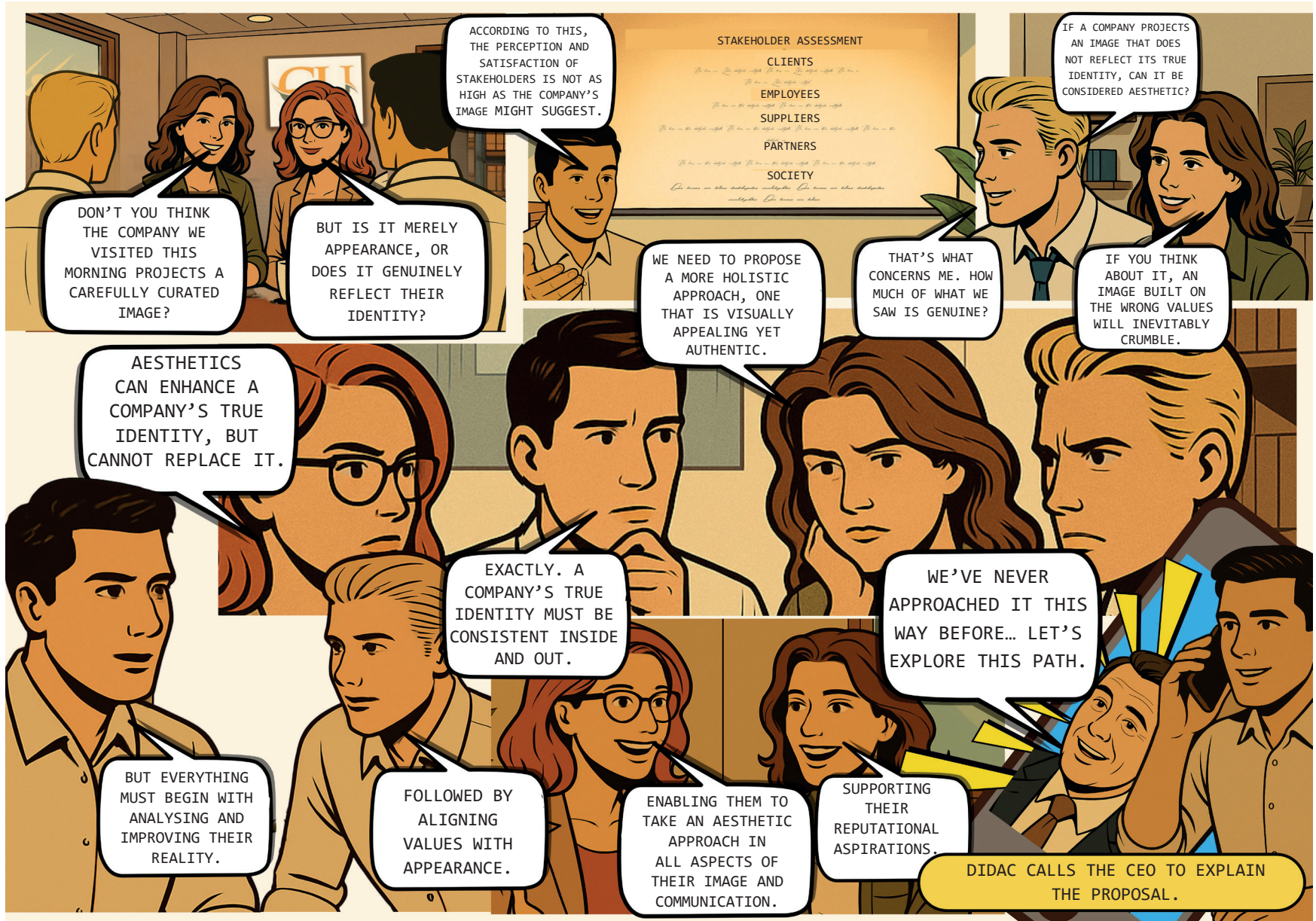
UMANIUS
GABINET



CONTENTS

No 10 - BUSINESS
AESTHETICS

September 2026





UMANIUS

Corporate Humanism

10

BUSINESS AESTHETICS

September 2026

© 2026 Fundación Auren – Editorial Rights Reserved

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any mechanical or electronic means, without prior written permission from the publisher.

UMANIUS is published thanks to the generous collaboration of current and former Auren professionals, who voluntarily contributed to the development, design, and layout of the content.

Illustrations for the comic page are by Roberto Catalá Nacher.

For further information: info@fundacionauren.com

