



DIMENSIONS



IS DESIGN A GATEWAY TO DESTIGMATIZING PSYCHEDELICS?

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With the rise of psychedelic-assisted therapy and microdosing, psychedelic design – a term once associated with the groovy patterns and kaleidoscopic colours of the 1960s and '70s – has adopted a wellbeing-oriented aesthetic.

Headlines abound referencing the use of psychedelics to treat mental health issues, backed up by studies from across the globe, from [Imperial College London's Centre for Psychedelic Research](#) to [St Vincent's Hospital](#) in Sydney. Google 'psychedelic therapy' and you'll see a notable rise since 2021, with a radical, near-vertical leap on the line graph in July 2022. This can perhaps be attributed to the launch of the Netflix docuseries *How to Change Your Mind*, in which author Michael Pollan explores the history and uses of psychedelics.

As awareness rises, and the laws surrounding psychedelics become more lenient in certain areas – particularly [North America](#) – the commercial psychedelics industry looks set to [double by 2027](#) to reach a value of €9.83 billion. In anticipation, studios are stepping in to conceptualize products for this assumed future, using their designs to shift any stigma surrounding the substances.



Cover and above: NewTerritory's conceptual microdosing project Human Nature was inspired by the notion of breath and the flow of air, and focuses on future-forward materials and technologies like 3D printing, regenerative and biodegradable materials, foam glass and reusable silicon.

Both NewTerritory's Human Nature and Layer's Keia are at-home kits for microdosing (another term that shot up in the Google search stats in July 2022). The idea is to gain the wellbeing benefits without the high – an idea that echoes the difference between CBD and marijuana. It's therefore unsurprising that the design direction of new products and spaces for psychedelics aligns with [CBD's recent 'rebranding'](#) away from stoner stereotypes. Think interiors that resemble calming yoga studios, cosy ski lodges or meditative spas, and products that say 'nature-meets-science, innovation, trustworthy'. Hold the kaleidoscopic colours and groovy patterns.

Layer looked to the natural world, parcelling a month's supply of consumables in home-compostable materials that reflect each of the three products, such as mycelium

for the psilocybin chewables (both relate to fungi). NewTerritory was inspired by the notion of breath and the flow of air, and focused on future-forward materials and technologies like 3D printing, regenerative and biodegradable materials, foam glass and reusable silicon. 'Our overriding motivation behind this project surrounded the changing perceptions of what drugs of this nature can provide for the human psyche,' says James Ravenhall, creative director at NewTerritory. 'It's as much an educational project as it is a practical one.'

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While these projects may be unrealized – the products they provide are currently illegal in most places – 'momentum and awareness around psychedelic-assisted wellness

continue to generate lots of interest, even as some markets adopt a slower pace to legalization than expected,' says Anwar Mekhayech, founding partner of DesignAgency. 'Unique experiences, wellness and great design continue to lead the travel and hospitality space, and psychedelics offer a new and exciting market segment that brings together all these elements. There's still lots of growth to come.'

Together with landscape architect Joel Loblaw, DesignAgency is responsible for the design of Dimensions Algonquin Highlands. Located around three hours north of Toronto, it's the first retreat destination from Canadian company Dimensions, which launched two years ago and offers 'safe and legal psychedelic-assisted experiences for personal growth, well-being, and creative exploration'. A sprawling landscape discreetly dotted with 17 private cabins on the shores of Maple Lake, the project taps into the multisensory movement and includes interiors with tactile natural materials, and gardens (one for scent, another for edible organic produce).



With Keia, a conceptual subscription service for microdosing psychedelics, Layer hopes to shift the perception of microdosing from an underground trend to a mainstream wellness solution, using materials and design cues that draw from nature.





Canadian psychedelic healing retreat Dimensions Algonquin Highlands includes 17 private wedge-shaped cabin suites that fit quietly into the landscape.

Dimensions cofounder and CEO Christopher Dawson believes that for psychedelics to grow as an industry and a movement, we need to ‘move beyond the converted and into the curious. This means adopting core business practices focused on safety, convenience and luxury.’ The design of spaces and products can support this agenda, conveying the same qualities. ‘In psychedelic-assisted therapy, “set and setting” is a common phrase that refers to the mindset (“set”) and the physical and social environment (“setting”),’ says DesignAgency’s Mekhayech. ‘If the set and setting are calm, comfortable, safe and supportive, the psychedelic-assisted therapy experience is positively enhanced.’

For Dimensions, nature is a key ingredient for an ideal ‘set and setting’. Not only are the built spaces immersed in nature, featuring skylights and large windows to intensify the connection with the outdoors, but the brand will continue to focus on nature-based settings as it expands into Europe – once legislation allows it.

While psychedelic retreats have been around for decades, they’re often steeped in mysticism and hosted in far-flung locations. ‘The evolution and arrival of a science-based retreat [Dimensions] is the main point of difference between then and now,’ says Dawson. ‘This change, in relation to retreats, is the next step in the wellness-travel evolution, which may not be focused on exotic destinations around the world, but be around the corner instead.’ In short: the industry is on the cusp of becoming much more accessible – in location and in looks.



For the look and feel of Dimensions Algonquin Highlands, DesignAgency leaned into the philosophies of biophilic design, *hygge* (comfort and contentment) and *wabi-sabi* (beauty in imperfection – authenticity).