

11

Field Notes

from **Future Commerce⁺**

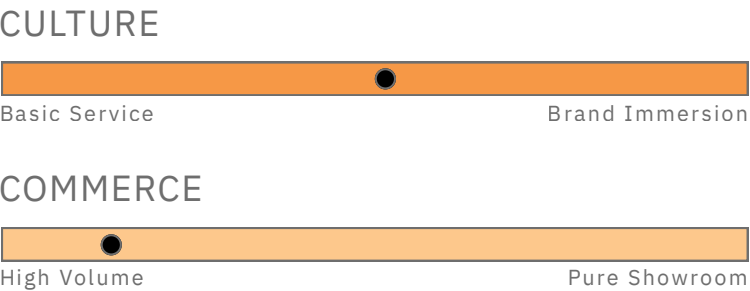


LOCATION: 12-14 Argyll St., London
VISIT DATE: July 2026
FORMAT: Flagship Store
ADJACENT STORES: IKEA Oxford Street, Urban Outfitters, House of CB, & Other Stories
WEBSITE: sostrenegrene.com
SOCIAL: @sostrenegrene

About the Brand: Søstrene Grene is a Danish retail chain that began in Aarhus, Denmark, and has since become a global sensation. Leaning into craft, whimsy, and hygge, the retailer uses its more than 400 stores across 16 European countries and online shops in 18 markets to promote a vast assortment of home interiors, furniture, hobby items, kitchen supplies, children’s toys, specialty food and candy, party supplies, and more.

Cultural “Feel”: Søstrene Grene translates to ‘the Grene sisters’ in Danish. Anna and Clara are the personas of Søstrene Grene, so the entire brand experience (including store design) is told in their voice. This 4,747-square-foot flagship is no exception. The sisters’ presence is felt through every touchpoint, from the assortment, which prioritizes hobby and cozy living, to its overall experience, which includes a piped-in pine scent.

RATINGS



STORE DETAILS

STORE DESIGN & NAVIGATION

- The flagship spans two floors, but is intentionally designed for consumers to begin their journey on the top floor and work their way down.
- Handwritten signage (in the Grene sisters’ script, of course) guides shoppers on how best to approach their shopping journey.
- The store is stacked with products, akin to a traditional general store. Each category is clearly labeled, so consumers can quickly find their preferred areas.
- Displays feature large signs promoting the product and price. This is worth calling out because product prices are incredibly unique. (A cooking spoon for £3.73, for example.) This psychological tactic helps capture attention, motivating shoppers to consider the “savings” they will get during their trip and likely driving impulse buys.
- The top of the store is primarily home goods, including teas, herbs and spices, and crafting items, while the bottom floor focuses on private-label snacks, candies, and flowers.

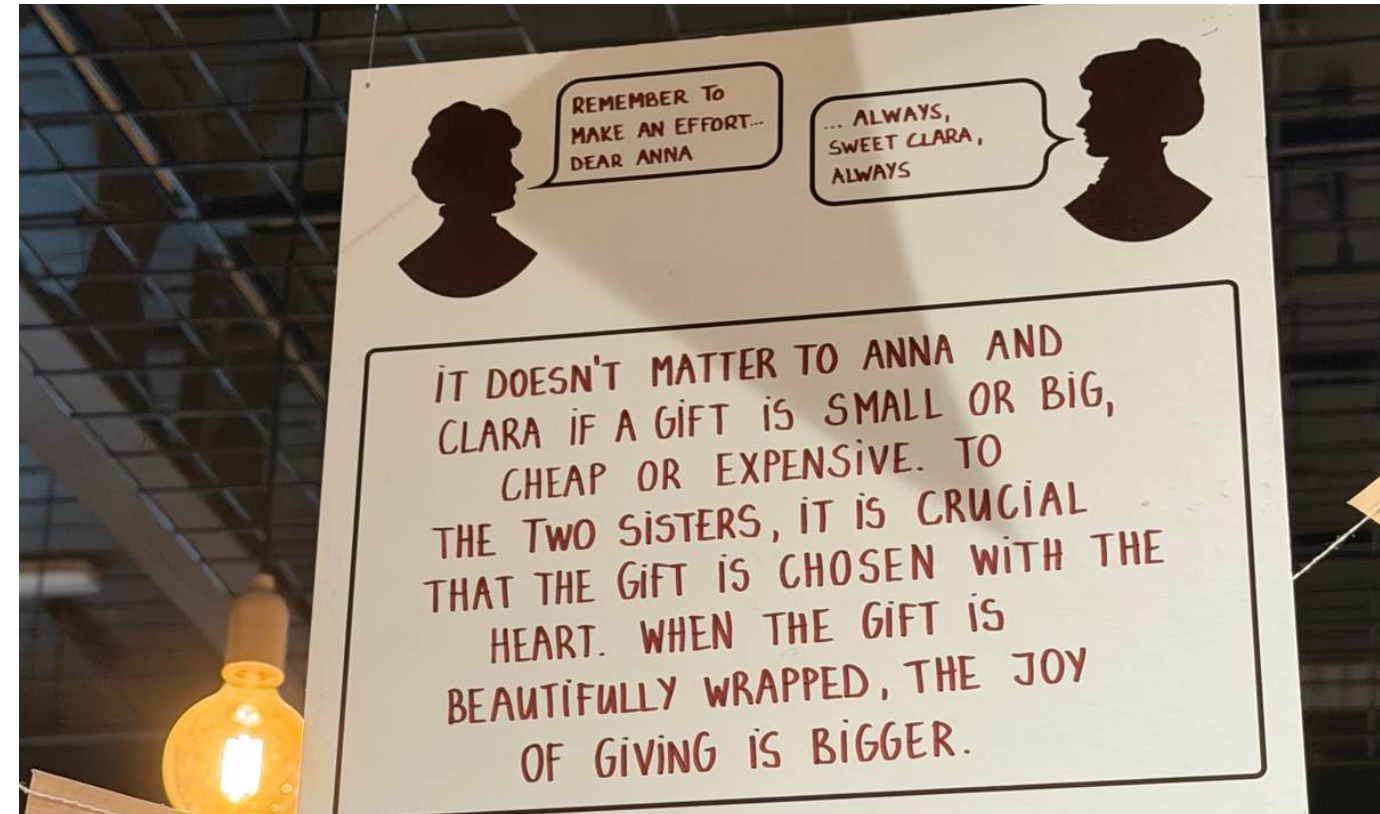


MERCHANDISING & ASSORTMENT

- The brand is rooted in hygge living, a Danish and Norwegian term for a sense of coziness and togetherness that supports mental well-being and contentment. All products are curated around this way of life and have a simple design and in-store presentation.
- The assortment is also vast, including everything from snacks and teas to crafting items, gift wrapping, toys, and home decor.
- The assortment has a consistent design language across categories, with accessible prices that make it easy to try a new hobby and enjoy life's simple pleasures.

AESTHETICS

- The store feels like you're entering the home of Anna and Clara Grene. The displays are stacked, almost cluttered, evoking a lived-in feeling. And you even see a silhouette of one of the sisters as you venture up the escalator to the top floor.
- Every aesthetic surface, from bookshelves to staging furniture, features curated products like plants, trinkets, and baskets. This design choice makes you feel like the people behind the store put incredible thought and intention into the space.
- The primary furniture, however, is made of light pine, reinforcing the brand's story, which centers on simplicity and care through the creative process, whether it's a warm cup of herbal tea or a birthday gift.
- While the store's materials are natural and somewhat bare, that doesn't mean it lacks personality. In the children's section, in particular, the store has touches of pastel and whimsy, including crafting and DIY vignettes.
- The store's front windows are the ultimate draw. Featuring paper flowers, greenery, macramé, and a perfectly set dining table, the windows show pedestrians what the brand is before they even enter the store.



SMALL PLEASURES, ACCESSIBLE PRICES

A distinctly Millennial mix is on display: fibercraft tools, watercolor kits, journals, pens, knick-knacks, and loose-leaf teas. Prices recall Five Below, paired with beautiful design. Apart from teas, no brand names are to be found, making for a Cracker-Barrel-meets-Buc-ee's private-label emporium. Experience economy with K-shaped economics in mind: a new hobby, a carefully wrapped gift, or a small ritual need not be an expensive undertaking.



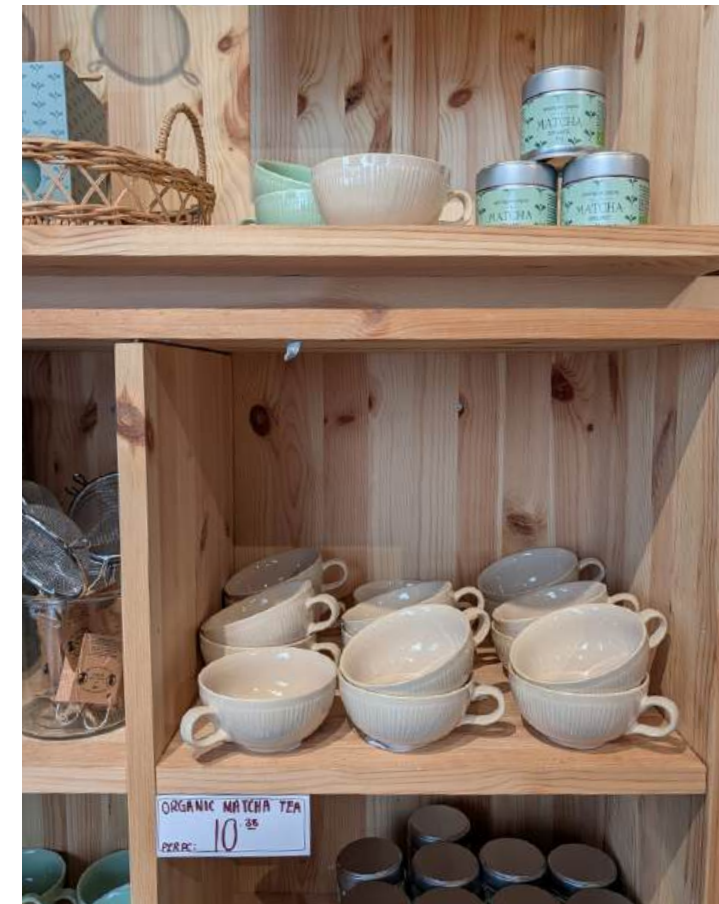
PROOF OF WORK

Sharpie-pen brush strokes are visible even in the wayfinding. Alongside handwritten signs, visible marks of real human effort helps us buy into the sisters' otherwise fictional world.



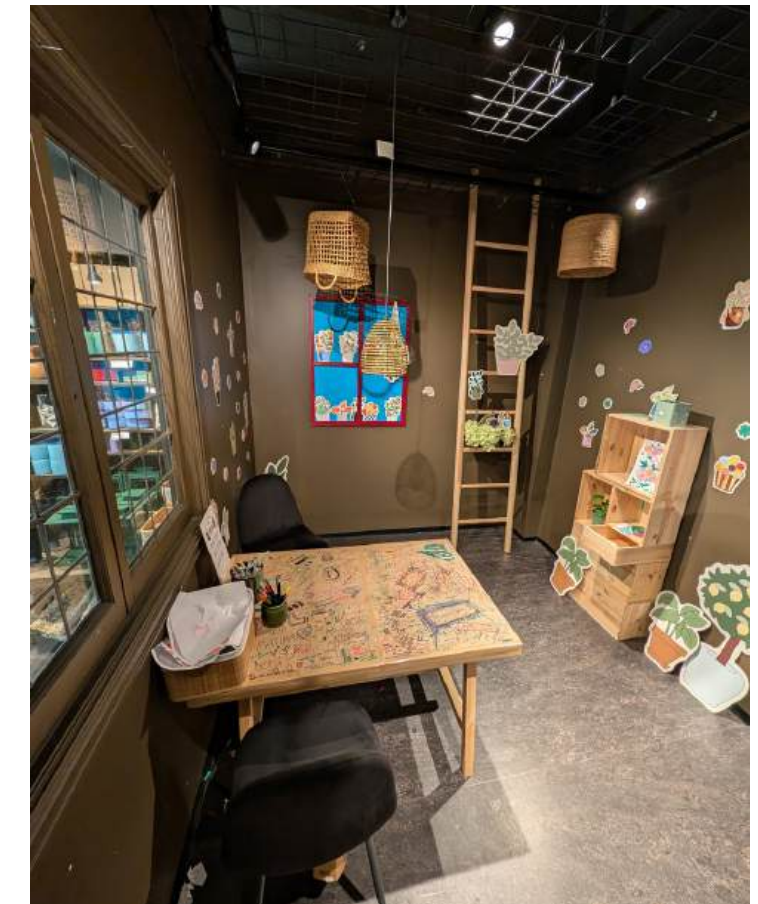
THE GIFT IS IN THE GIVING

Paper and ribbon receive as much attention as the present. The display makes the pleasure of preparing a gift part of shopping.



EVERYDAY RITUALS

Beautiful cups and teapots make the slow-living promise tangible. Paired with the loose-leaf tea selection, ordinary routines become small pleasures.



A PLACE FOR LITTLES

This kid-friendly zone gives children a place to sit, play, and create while adults shop. A creative nook tucked in amongst the store's wayfinding footpath.

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EXPERIENTIAL NOTABLES

Storytelling

- Anna and Clara walk shoppers through the store using signage. Price tags are handwritten in the sisters' distinctive style to create the feeling that they made them themselves.
- In addition to prices, clever callouts and speech bubbles allow the sisters to comment on the products and sections of the store. With these signs, people glimpse their personalities and thoughts on life—a little “proof of human” that makes the fiction inviting.

Human Interaction

- Because the store has a wayfinding layout, it is difficult to have a truly relaxed service experience. Signs do the heavy lifting, with associates on hand to answer urgent questions and needs.
- The store still offers moments of interactivity. In the crafting section, a small picnic table lets kids sit and create while their caretakers shop.
- The store features subtle (and minimal) moments of delight, such as a secret portal in the children's section that opens to a secret puppet show.

Technology

- The store is completely free of technology, save for the POS. It feels like time capsule of sorts; a way for consumers to venture into a simpler, cozier, space.



THE VALUE-EXPERIENCE 2x2

↑ EXPERIENTIAL VALUE

SØSTRENE GRENE

Søstrene Grene pairs accessible prices with a strong sense of place. Hobby, craft, and everyday rituals give a broad assortment a coherent cultural appeal.

DESTINATION BOUTIQUE

The destination boutique: atmosphere, storytelling, and service support a premium. The experience is part of what the customer pays for.

← FUNCTIONAL

PREMIUM →

POUND-SHOP FORMAT

The pound-shop reference point: breadth, convenience, and a clear bargain. Price and utility do most of the work of explaining the offer.

SPECIALIST RETAIL

The specialist offer: materials, expertise, or performance justify the spend. An elaborate fictional world is not essential to the proposition.

↓ PRACTICAL VALUE

GAMIFIED MECHANICS HARD AT WORK IN ALL RETAIL ENVIRONMENTS

Even the blind-box finds a place here: ribbon-tied surprise bags turn an impulse purchase into a small gamble.

This is where we see the greatest departure from the familiar pound-shop format in the UK; culturally-attuned merchandising.



THE SENSES MATRIX

SIGHT

- ❑ The store's stacked displays were a feast for the eyes. Every nook and cranny had something to see and buy.
- ❑ The store's maze-like layout was intentionally designed to ensure visitors walked through every display, no matter how rushed they were.

SOUND

- ❑ Very subtle music played in the background, but it didn't contribute nor detract from the storytelling.

TOUCH

- ❑ All items were on display for shoppers, which meant it was easy to touch, inspect, and compare.
- ❑ Interactive elements, such as the crafting areas and the "treat yourself" dry bars, made us feel like we were in a hygge-inspired general store.

PALATE

- ❑ Piped-in pine filled the store, accentuating the pinewood boxes used for product displays.
- ❑ The store included many items that shoppers could taste, such as teas, pantry items, and candy.

SIXTH SENSE

- ❑ Technology was completely hidden from the core experience to not take away from the aesthetics that inspire escapism.

FIELD TEST

Ask these questions to benchmark key learnings against your branded environments.

1

Does your brand have a persona? Is there a living or pretend mascot you can use to support storytelling?

2

How do small touches, such as furniture finishes, tie your store's assortment together into a cohesive experience?

3

What tactile elements and experiential moments can you add to entertain and serve your customers? How can wayfinding tools reduce the need for in-aisle service?