

A Model Practice

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BUILT IN 1986, THIS NORTH SYDNEY BUILDING WAS DESIGNED BY RICE DAUBNEY WHO ALSO WORKED OUT OF IT BETWEEN 1988 AND 1996 BEFORE MOVING TO OTHER OFFICES NEARBY. NEEDING TO MOVE, THEY ARE NOW BACK IN THE BUILDING AFTER A STAFF SURVEY SHOWED A PREFERENCE FOR STAYING IN THE AREA. BUT PAUL MCGILICK REPORTS THAT IT ALSO REPRESENTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE SOME KEY ARCHITECTURAL ISSUES.

ANALYSIS PAUL MCGILICK PHOTOGRAPHY DANNY KILDARE DISSECTION ANGELA BYRNES

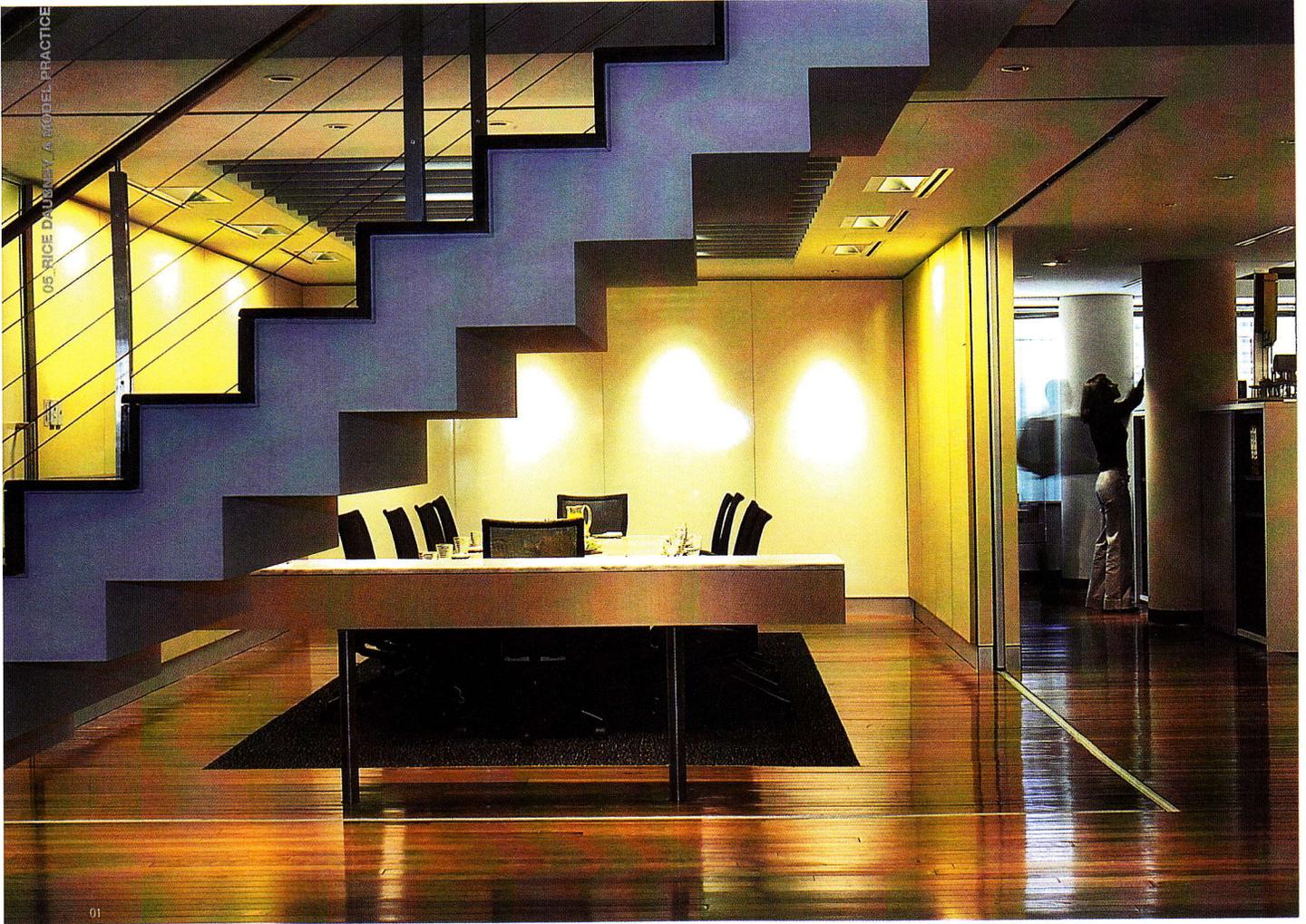
|| For a large architectural practice with its own in-house model-making studio, it seems thoroughly appropriate that when it came to designing their own work environment, Rice Daubney should set out to make it a model of its kind. Keen to be seen practising what they preached, they wanted their new space to embody the principles they were always exhorting their clients to adopt.

At the same time, the project aimed to create the ideal working space. So, it was effectively a case study exploring how design could create, sustain and reveal the core values of a commercial or corporate institution. In this case, it was an architectural practice. But the values could be equally assigned to any contemporary office – a non-hierarchical environment, promoting teamwork, creativity, a sense of 'family' (while still respecting the needs and talents of the individual) and environmental sustainability and responsibility.

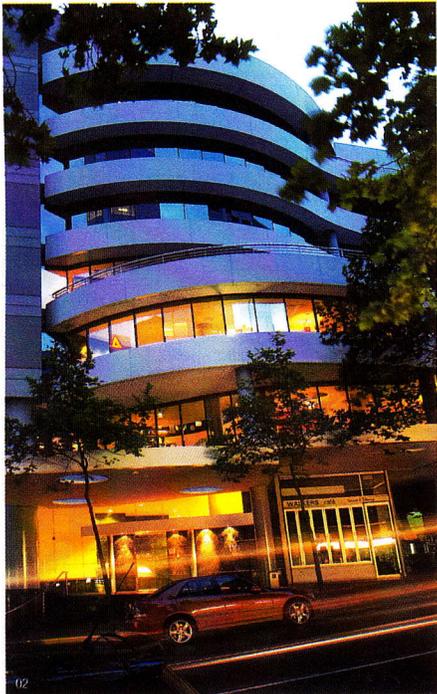
Like any good case study, the process was as important as the final product. Hence, there was extensive consultation and workshopping with both staff and clients. This began with identifying the best location and went on to reach consensus about the Rice Daubney working culture. As part of this process, key activities in the office were matched to physical spaces.

This is a 'bottom-up' approach which assumes that for operational decisions to be effective they need to genuinely address the needs of all levels of an organisation and of all the stakeholders – as distinct from a 'top-down' process which only identifies needs as perceived by boffins at the top. These days, the most enlightened organisations use a combination of 'top down' and 'bottom-up'.

It has to be said that it is an approach more often honoured in the breach than in the observance. But in workplace design it is increasingly seen as indispensable to design research and development. By genuinely listening to what employees have to say, designers and management can both unearth the actual underlying culture of a workplace, and identify the real needs – as distinct from the perceived needs – of workers. It also leads to a sense of ownership, so that the resulting workplace is a happy and functional place rather than a case of trying to squeeze square pegs into round holes. >>



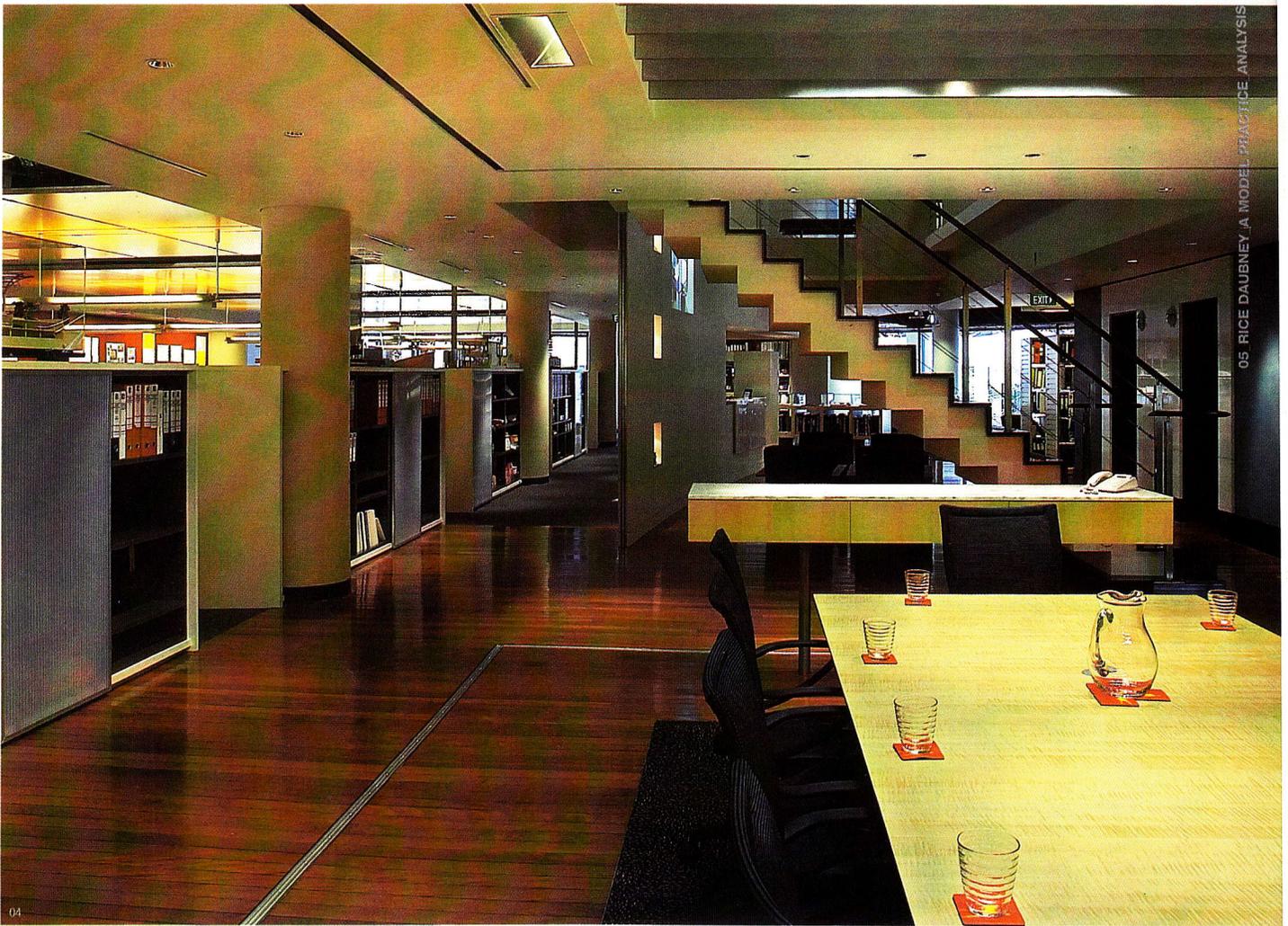
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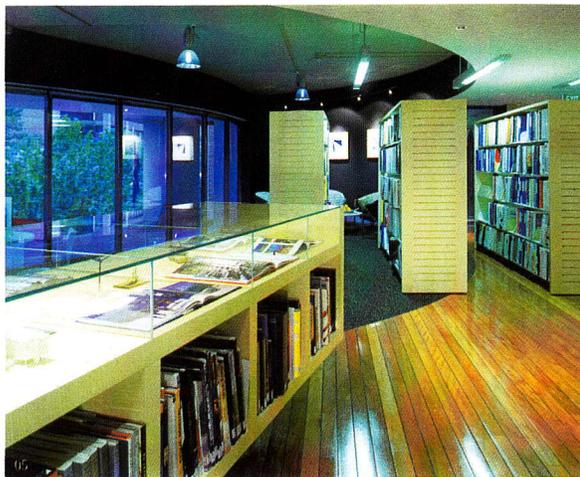
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A BLADE WALL CONNECTS BOTH FLOORS OF THE OFFICE, BUT ALSO SLICES THROUGH THE FIRST FLOOR TO SEPARATE RECEPTION FROM THE DESIGN STUDIO



This latter point was not lost on Rice Daubney because they do a lot of work in the retail and health areas where it is vital that people feel at home – in retail so that they stay longer and spend more, in health because it helps people to get better more quickly. Moreover, they were conscious of the fact that they were selling the benefits of a user-friendly work environment to clients, arguing that it increased productivity, improved morale, lowered staff turn-over and reduced absenteeism.

Rice Daubney identified six key functional spaces in the office which they termed: the Atrium (reception), the Hub (resource centre), the Design Studio (the work area), the Engine Room (reprographics, model shop and sample area), Alexander's Table (staff break-out area), and Meeting Spaces (each named after a famous architect who practised in Australia).

This formed the basis of a rational plan which revolves around the two-storey atrium. Here a blade wall connects both floors of the office, but also slices through the first floor to separate reception from the design studio, a bold gesture which brings a sense of organisation to what is essentially an open plan.

Research showed that visiting clients like to see the practice at work. So, the Studio is immediately visible to anyone stepping out of the lift where the reception is backed by the blade wall whose slots reveal the studio behind. The wall also acts as an audio-visual display screen, as a display plinth for models and as a directional element guiding visitors to the waiting area, on to the Hub (work table, computers, CDs, books and magazines for staff and visitors' use) and eventually into the Studio (like the Hub, a multi-functional space for both staff and clients) and out the other side, past an informal meeting area and into the Engine Room.

In all of these spaces the ESD agenda is foregrounded through energy reduction and material selection. Indirect lighting in the Studio, for example, utilises T5 lamp technology which has great light output with less energy consumption, while electronic ballasts are used with all the low-voltage

Lighting for energy efficiency, together with motion sensors in the enclosed rooms. All fabrics are either re-cycled (eg. from PET bottles) or made from natural materials such as wool and cotton. The Hub chairs are re-cycled from the old premises, but re-upholstered in an Eames fabric from Maharam which is 100% re-cyclable. In the Studio all the walls are pinnable either in re-cyclable fabric or bulletin board, and the Herman Miller workstations all have Maharam Messenger fabric from re-cycled materials. Carpet tiles were used partly because they are easily re-configured into different patterns, and partly because they are made by Interface which is the only carpet manufacturer in Australia to hold Environmental Accreditation (they have reduced waste in their Australian plant by 85% since 1994).

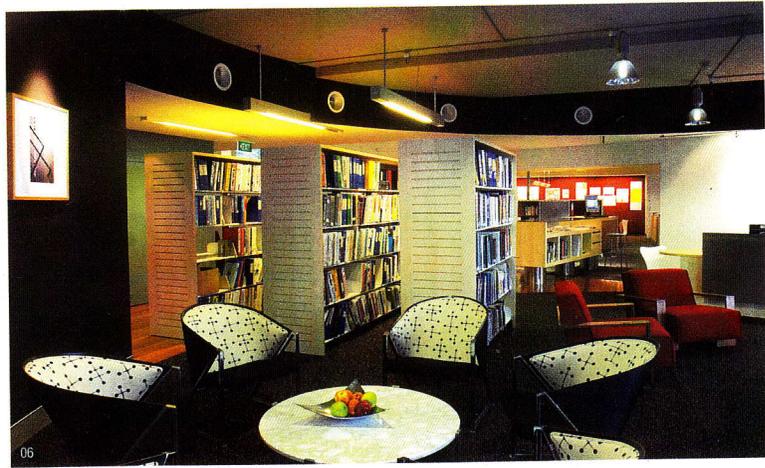
The theme of interaction is continued on the upper level which wraps around the atrium, with services clustered on the lift core side, allowing the rest of the space to open up. The unusual curved profile of the building – it turns gently to look down Walker Street towards the Harbour rather looking straight out on to the street – is used to advantage on this level, especially in the way the staff area has been opened up to continue on to the terrace. The space can be used for informal presentations and meetings and has a recessed projection screen and speakers in the ceiling with the table (made from timber re-cycled from the Harbour Bridge) wired for computer connection.

This level also has the largest meeting room (seating sixteen) and a dining room with Bruno chairs re-cycled from the previous office but re-upholstered in Maraham Weimer, quiet rooms and the IT area.

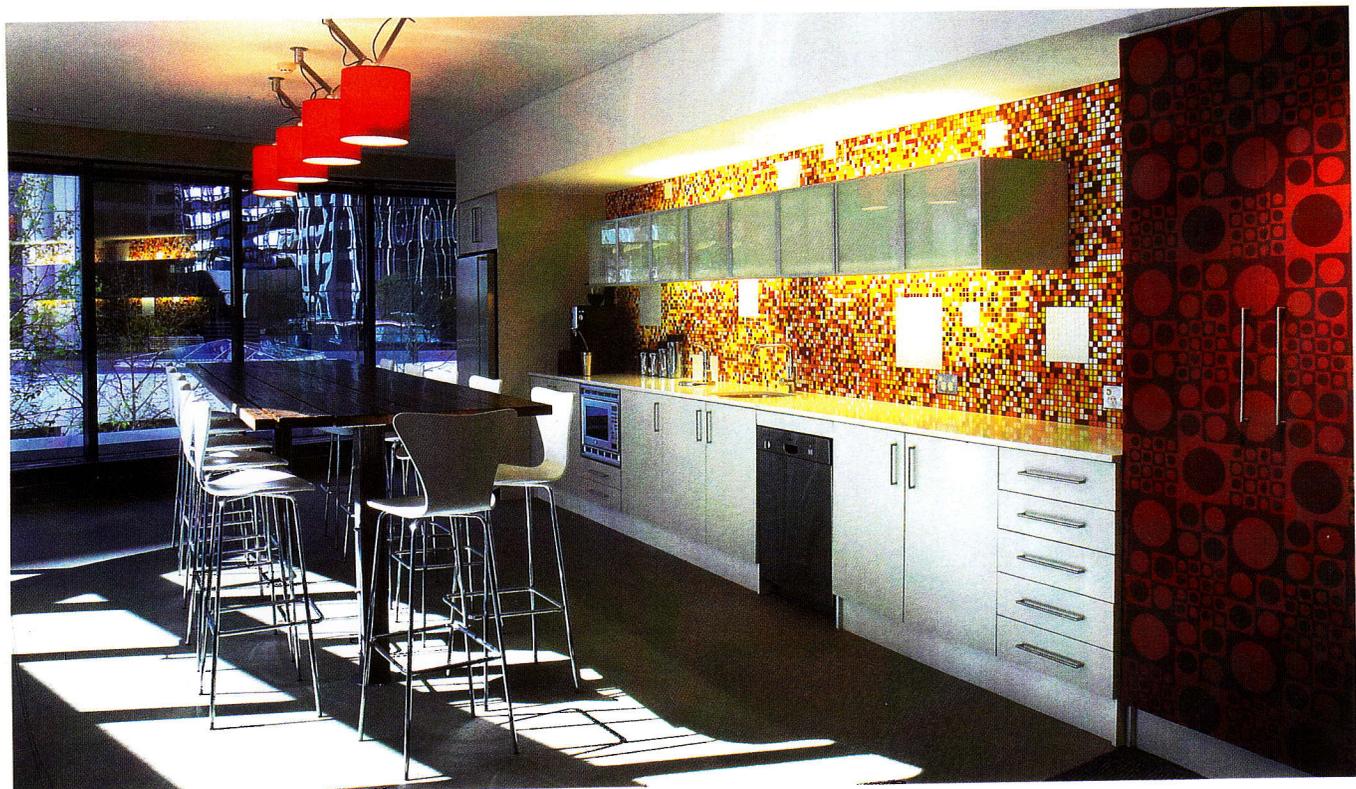
With such an extensive and calculated agenda, this environment could have ended up as a dry and somewhat rhetorical space – a kind of illustrated thesis. In fact it is a dynamic experience with the angled blade wall at reception initiating an almost vortical journey around and up, culminating in the staff area and terrace. In this way, the space takes on metaphorical dimensions, communicating the idea that design is a collaborative journey which rarely takes a straight line. It is the curves and deviations which make the journey interesting and, in design terms, produce the best results.

At the very least it is a case of the medium is the message – a design practice whose physical character embodies its own culture and way of working, and the values it seeks to invest in the projects it undertakes.

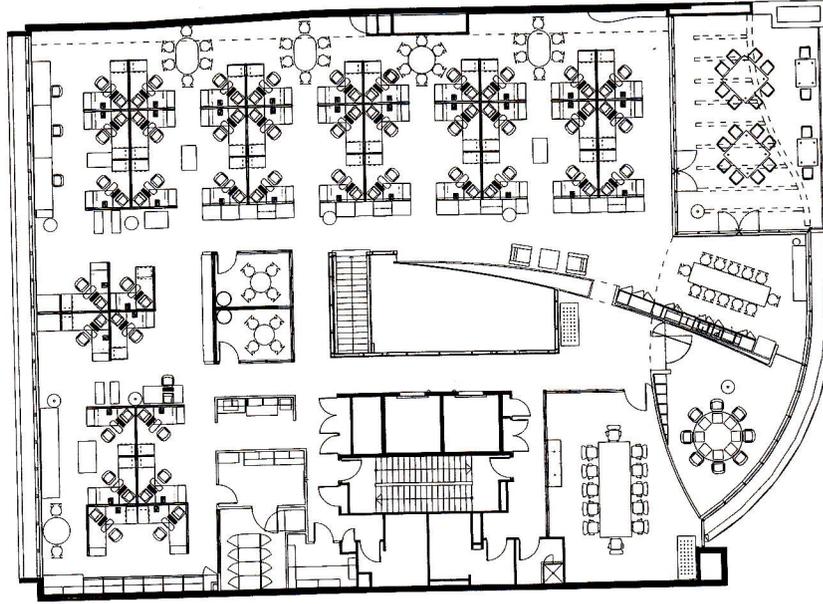
PROJECT TEAM ARCHITECT RICE DAUBNEY **PROJECT DIRECTOR** STEVEN SHAW **SENIOR DESIGNER** GI PAOLETTI **DESIGN TEAM** ADRIAN FOUNG, SIMON GRIMES, ERIC CHOW, THOMAS KHIANG **CONSTRUCTION MANAGER** BUILDCORP **INTERIORS ENGINEERS** ENGINEITY PARTITIONS D&T **INTERIORS ELECTRICAL** LITEMASTER **ELECTRICAL AUDIO-VISUAL DESIGN AND INSTALLATION** SPACE AGE **COMMUNICATIONS MECHANICAL** ENOVATE **SECURITY** CAGE SECURITY **JOINERY** APR JOINERY



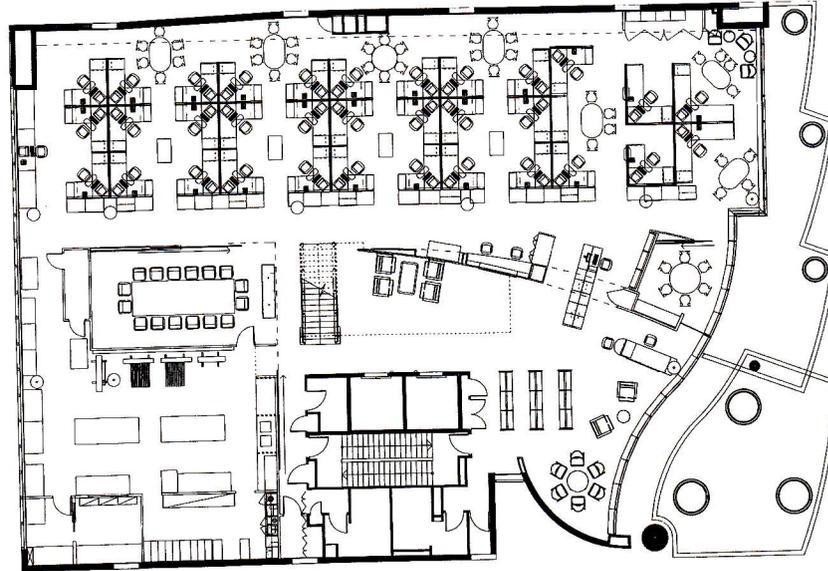
THE UNUSUAL CURVED PROFILE OF THE BUILDING IS USED TO ADVANTAGE ON THIS LEVEL, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAY THE STAFF AREA HAS BEEN OPENED UP TO CONTINUE ON TO THE TERRACE



FINING PAGES DETAIL OF STAFFROOM FABRIC DOORS 01 THE RECEPTION LEVEL MEETING ROOM CAN BE CLOSED OFF FOR PRIVACY BY SLIDING DOORS
 THE DISTINCTIVE CURVED FACADE OF THE BUILDING SEEN FROM WALKER STREET 03 LOOKING DOWN INTO THE RECEPTION AREA 04 THE GLASS WALL
 PARTIES RECEPTION FROM THE STUDIO 05 THE HUB SHOWING RESOURCE MATERIALS AND THE CURVED GLASS WALL 06 THE HUB'S INFORMAL MEETING
 EA WITH RE-CYCLED AND REUPHOLSTERED CHAIRS 07 STAFF BREAK-OUT AREA LOOKING OUT ON TO THE TERRACE 08 SECOND LEVEL PLAN 09 FIRST
 /EL RECEPTION PLAN



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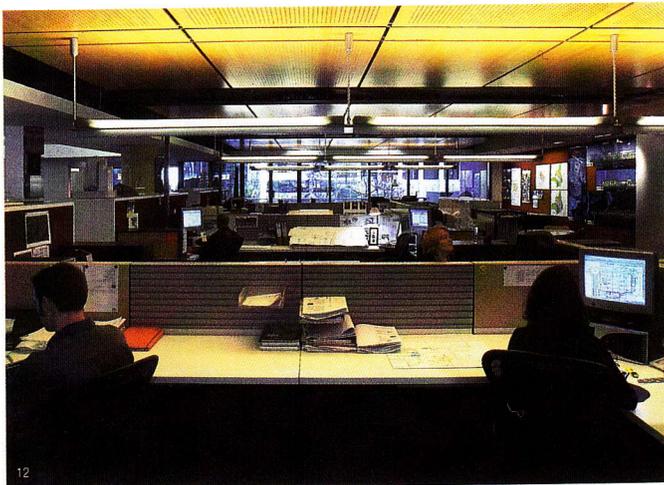


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... THE SPACE TAKES ON METAPHORICAL DIMENSIONS, COMMUNICATING THE IDEA THAT DESIGN IS A COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY





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Reception Uses environmentally friendly Murobond cement paint in 'Kaldor'. Murobond is low in VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) and made from crushed marble and concrete in a powder process, so no waste water results. The Brush Box plantation timber flooring in the reception and surrounding area is available through Boral Timbers and comes from a certified forest. The desktop is from honed and sealed white marble, available from Volpato Stone. The box coffee table is by Stylecraft. 'Demille' armchairs are available through Norman and Quaine and are upholstered in 'Touch' fabric – 85% wool, 100% recyclable material from Instyle Contract Textiles. Murobond T (61 2) 9906 7299 F (61 2) 9439 7593 Boral Timbers T 1800 267 2560 E info@boraltimber.com W boraltimber.com Stylecraft T (61 2) 9331 8388 F (61 2) 9331 8399 E sydney@stylecraft.com.au W stylecraft.com.au Norman and Quaine T (61 2) 9212 3542 F (61 2) 9212 3540 E sales@normanquaine.com.au W normanquaine.com.au Instyle Contract Textiles (61 2) 9698 7255 F (61 2) 9699 3328 E esales@instylecontracttextiles.com.au W instylecontracttextiles.com.au

The Hub Accent carpet is from the 'Dotcom' range by Interface Australia. Existing chairs have been re-used and re-upholstered by G. Mack in Eames 'Dot Pattern' fabric 100% recyclable, available through Kvadrat Maharam and 'Contract' available through Woven Image. The energy-efficient, low-voltage lighting in the library stack is 'Modular SL100' from JSB Lighting. Interface Australia T (61 2) 9318 1999 F (61 2) 9318 1996 W interfaceap.com Textile Mania T (61 3) 9427 1166 F (61 3) 9427 1138 Kvadrat Maharam T (61 2) 9212 4277 F (61 2) 9212 4288 W kvadratmaharam.com.au Woven Image T (61 2) 9326 0433 F (61 2) 9326 0316 JSB Lighting T (61 2) 9571 8800 F (61 2) 9571 8811 E sales@jsblighting.com.au

Work Spaces Herman Miller 'Ethospace' workstations are supplied by Living Edge with recyclable 'Messenger' fabric available through Kvadrat Maharam. Desktops are finished in 'White with flint finish' plastic laminate. All walls are pinnable and fabric panels are 100% recyclable. The Herman Miller 'Aeron' task seating is available through Living Edge. DecorImage timber ceiling panels suspended over workstations are recyclable, non-toxic and allergy-free with acoustic DecorSorb backing in 'Euro Beech' from Decor Systems. The indirect general office lighting (ID-VM) and the low voltage downlights with motion sensors for energy efficiency are from Zumtobel Staff. The 'Napoleon' carpet tiles throughout the workspace are made from recycled materials designed by Interface Australia. Walls and columns painted in 'Burma Buff' B131-03 in low sheen finish by Bristol. Accent paints are by Dulux Living Edge T (61 2) 9360 6290 F (61 2) 9360 6146 E sydney@livingedge.com.au W livingedge.com.au

Kvadrat Maharam T (61 2) 9212 4277 F (61 2) 9212 4288 W kvadratmaharam.com.au Decor Systems T (61 2) 9748 1800 F (61 2) 9748 0911 Zumtobel Staff T (61 2) 4340 3200 F (61 2) 4340 2108 E info@zumtobelstaff.com.au W zumtobelstaff.com Interface Australia T (61 2) 9318 1999 F (61 2) 9318 1996 W interfaceap.com Bristol T 13 16 86 W bristol.com.au Dulux T 13 25 25 F 1800 800 864 E dulux.customer.service@orica.com.au W dulux.com.au

Staff Room / Terrace The Terrace features 'Indecasa' MAR Chairs and Armani Progetto Tables and the Staff Room features white 'Ponte' stools all available through Ke-Zu. The table is made from timber taken from the Sydney Harbour Bridge, supplied by Ironwood, designed by Simon Grimes and made by Hytech Joinery. The Staff Room fabric doors use the 'Geometri' pattern, colour: 002 Red / Carmine available through Kvadrat Maharam and fully recyclable. The speciality lighting above the table is 'Modular Nomad' from JSB Lighting. The glass mosaic splashback is manufactured by Bisazza Ceramic Tiles available through Academy Tiles. Pinnable red wall fabric panelling 'Irresistible' by Instyle Contract Textiles. Upper cabinet doors in 'Olive Monocoat frost' by Astor Industries. Joinery door fronts in 'Sarsen Grey' from Laminex. The bench top is clad in Quartz, Color: '9141-Ice Snow' available from Ceasar Stone. Plynyl flooring in 'Dashes' range, Colour: 'Sagebrush' is completely anti-microbial and stain-resistant from Chilewich LLC. Ke-Zu T (61 2) 9571 8200 F (61 2) 9571 8300 E info@kezu.com.au W kezu.com.au Ironwood T (61 2) 9818 1166 F (61 2) 9818 1112 E sales@ironwood.com.au W ironwood.com.au Hytech Joinery T (61 2) 9877 6000 Kvadrat Maharam T (61 2) 9212 4277 F (61 2) 9212 4288 W kvadratmaharam.com.au Academy Tiles T (61 2) 9436 3566 F (61 2) 9436 3577 E info@academytiles.com.au W academytiles.com.au Instyle Contract Textiles T (61 2) 9698 7255 F (61 2) 9699 3328 The Laminex Group T (61 2) 8394 9696 F (61 2) 8394 9796 W thelaminexgroup.com.au Astor Industries T (61 2) 9726 2766 F (61 2) 9727 9056 Ceasar Stone (61 2) 9737 9446 F (61 2) 9748 4764 Chilewich LLC T (212) 679 9204 F (212) 213 9435 E jstonich@chilewich.com W chilewich.com

Meeting Rooms Level 1 Meeting Room pinnable fabric panel is by Arkitek in 'Whimsy', colour: '01 Frost' and is 100% recyclable. The table is made from White Sycamore and the chairs are by Haworth. Level 2 Meeting Room seating is 'X99' by Haworth. Lighting is the George Nelson 'Saucer' lamp from Spence & Lyda Arkitek T (61 2) 9331 4544 F (61 2) 9331 7644 Haworth T (61 2) 8234 7900 F (61 2) 9279 4901 Haworth T (61 2) 8234 7900 W haworth.com Spence & Lyda T (61 2) 9212 6747 F (61 2) 9212 6728 E mail@spenceandlyda.com.au W spenceandlyda.com.au

