

Indesign - From Rags to Riches



Text
Stephen Crafti
Photography
Jean-Marc Le-Floque

From Rags to Riches

From the energy of the rag trade, Flinders Lane in Melbourne is now imbued with the energy of art and design. Design practice, R-Co, is a new arrival and Stephen Crafti reports that for their own studio they have adapted the existing atmosphere to brand themselves as acutely as they do their clients.

Located in a 1930s modernist building in Flinders Lane, Melbourne, are the new offices of R-Co, a company specialising in brand identity. For Richard Henderson, CEO and Creative Director of the company, the new space encapsulates his own design philosophy. "I wanted a space with a sense of presence. I wasn't after the more crafted studio, with clutter and books spilling off shelves," says Henderson, whose passion for design can be seen from his dress sense through to the way his professional awards are carefully arranged on the Philippe Starck credenza in the boardroom.

Henderson, who worked with Mills Gorman Architects, has cleverly transformed the building, once occupied by the rag trade. The building's original steel case windows were retained, along with the original hydronic heating and steel ducts traversing the four metre high ceilings. Even the concrete floors were retained, highlighting the divisions that once appeared in the 200m² of space. "At one stage, it had been divided up into six different businesses, from seamstresses to tailors," says Henderson, pointing out the markings on the floor, where studded walls once stood.

In contrast to the previous clothing operations, R-Co is one almost completely open space. A continuous desk, seating almost the entire staff, cuts a swathe across the office. The electrical cords for the computers come from the ceiling, freeing up both floor and desk space. "Everyone is in together, from the creative to the admin staff. The only space that's separated is our web site business, Geek IT," says Henderson, pointing out the glass-fronted office. The other space, which can be screened off, is the boardroom, simply furnished with two timber veneer tables and plastic armchairs. "It's used for formal meetings, but it can also be used as another work area."

Henderson's office is designed more as an enclave than as a separate space. One of the few divisions in the space is his prized Zanotta desk. "I see myself as a navigator. It's like being the oarsman in a boat," says Henderson. "I'm making sure that everyone is paddling in the same direction."

In keeping with the metaphor, the reception area also has a boat-like feel, with "paddles" framing the light-box style counter. Normally used for strengthening walls, these acrylic blades, linked by steel rods, have been

- 1/2 The studio consists of one almost completely open space.
- 3 Plan
- 4 Reception, surrounded by "paddles"

