

(inside)


interior review





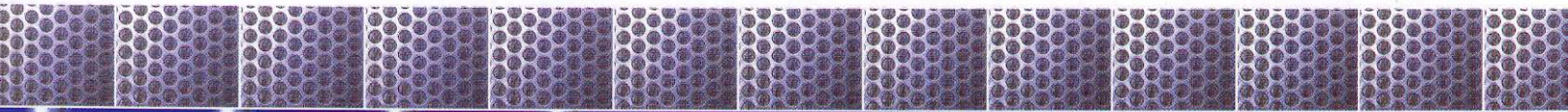
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REVIEW LEON VAN SCHAIK PHOTOGRAPHY TIM GRIFFITH
MODEL ELAINE MIVAL HAIR/MAKE-UP MARC STRATH



✚ Melbourne has another unexpected powerhouse of creative horizontality – Cummins Advertising Agency atelier in St Kilda. Slotted above a Community Migrant Resource Centre, it faces north-west to Albert Park through a screen of plane trees, in a newly buzzy part of the Fitzroy Street strip. The horizontal window plane is framed in vermillion that glows in the sunset. It sits on the cube of the foyer, painted out in the dense corporate purple of Cummins, and illuminated by a white neon Cummins logo – the copyright ©. This contrast emphasises the modernist intentions of the building, once the office of Merchant Builders. Architect James Brearley won the job by getting the clients to bob up and down on the inflatable balls that he has used as seats in the fitout. Instinctively he knew that the cerebral whiz kids would fall for this new idea – back health maintained by strengthening the balance muscles adjacent to the spine which also promotes lateral thinking. The whiz kids can be seen bouncing when a good song comes on the stereo as they dream up successor campaigns to Cummins' "You'll love every piece of it" (Tourism Victoria), "All creatures great and small" (RSPCA) and "Where I can be me" (Club Med). Brearley Middleton had to work with a small budget (\$95,000 including external works and furniture for 1000 square metres). The brief centred on creating an atelier for Cummins' 10-person creative unit that projected the vision of a company capable of working on campaigns large and small. A few bold moves achieve this end. The floor plane is a clean, varnished concrete. The architects kept the existing 1960s perforated metal ceiling and fluorescent light. They retro-fitted data, power and phone cables, delivering them to work stations through flexible metal tubing.

THIS REMARKABLY ZESTFUL ADVERTISING AGENCY FIT-OUT PROVES AGAIN THAT INNOVATIVE, **VISION-DIRECTED DESIGN** IS ACHIEVABLE WITHIN SMALL BUDGETS



1 CUMMINS WHITE NEON LOGO AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SPACE



ARRIVING ON THE FIRST LEVEL AFTER STEERING PAST THE DRAMATIC WHITE NEON LOGO IN ITS DEEP PURPLE CUBE, THE FIRST IMPRESSION IS OF BEING IN A TREE HOUSE FILLED WITH TOYS



2 VIEW ALONG THE MAIN PARTITIONED OFFICE SPINE.

3 BACK-LIT CURTAINS PROVIDE A DIFFUSED PURPLE LIGHT IN THE INFORMAL MEETING ROOM.



- 1 MEETING ROOM
- 2 MEETING ROOM
- 3 MEETING ROOM
- 4 GENERAL OFFICE
- 5 RECEPTION
- 6 THINK TANK
- 7 THINK TANK
- 8 UTILITY
- 9 MIRROR PLANE
- 10 PARALLAX OFFICES



EVERYTHING IS NOT WHAT IT AT FIRST SEEMS TO BE. EVERYTHING REQUIRES A SECOND AND A THIRD LOOK





They mirrored the north-end wall, doubling the depth of the space and the length of the view. A skewed glass wall running opposite to the window wall, compresses the space towards the mirror wall, sets one of the two rows of columns into diminishing counterpoint with the space and creates a perspective illusion that enhances the sense of deep space.

The glass wall encloses three curtained spaces, one silver lamé, one corporate purple, one white. Screens of perforated stainless-steel and translucent metallic fabric interact with the curtains to allow a wide range of effects. When lit from within, these three spaces glow in the colour of their curtains, which also provide degrees of privacy and acoustic damping. Arriving on the first level after steering past the dramatic white neon logo in its deep purple cube, the first impression is of being in a tree house filled with toys.



4 MAIN OPEN-PLAN OFFICE SPACE WITH INFLATABLE BOBBING BALLS USED AS SEATING.

5 VIEW OF RECEPTION AREA WITH THE DESK MADE FROM TWO READY-MADE ROAD BARRIERS.

6 THE BOARDROOM INTERIOR IS COCOONED BY WHITE CURTAINS WHICH SOFTEN THE NATURAL LIGHT FROM THE WINDOWS.

There is an immediate sense of lightheartedness, offset impressively by a copywriter deep in thought in an armchair in one of the think tanks. Everything is not what it at first seems to be. Everything requires a second and a third look. Brearley Middleton made the white base to the reception desk out of two 'ready-made' road barriers and these they surmounted with plate glass locked in place by stainless-steel fixers. A perforated metal screen with a 'pic perf' made © corporate logo renders the space beyond ambiguous. Together with a free-standing column this makes it very difficult to spot the mirror wall for what it is, even after you realise that it is a mirror wall –

which many people will never do. The 2.4 metre-long benches that angle through the space as a series of miniature buildings are proportioned to match the horizontal box of the whole space. Brearley Middleton researched, designed and developed the desks using polyurethane technology. They are cheap, light enough to be lifted by a child and the corporate purple is solid through the polyurethane ensuring that they will not show damage. Brearley and Middleton have also designed audio visual table units and desk-top organisational paraphernalia. Purple clad upholstered boxes form a waiting alcove, and an improbable purple and

stainless-steel sofa marks the coffee kitchen zone.

This remarkably zestful fitout proves again that innovative, vision-directed design is achievable within small budgets. The sharing of this vision has brought together a collection of eight other like-minded creative firms (graphic designers, Brearley Middleton architects and urban designers, a marketing group, a fashion group, spatial demographic analysts and a TV production company). Linked as "Parallax" they work in various constellations of association from the rear of the atelier. Brearley and Middleton's design for this demandingly aware client has both represented and then

created the "large and dynamic" capability that the client sought at the outset. [D]

LEON VAN SCHAİK IS THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF THE CONSTRUCTED ENVIRONMENT AT RMIT.

[CUMMINS PROJECT SUMMARY]

Interior architect James Brearley and Luke Middleton **Project design team** Anthony Windust, Irene Papadimitriou **Client** Cummins & Partners **Builder** Office Interiors **Budget** \$95 000 **Size** 1000 sq. m **Time to complete** 2 1/2 months **Lighting** Concord, Sylvania Lighting; Mark Gower, Studio Italia **Reception desk** Street Barrier, **Chairs/seating** Medi Balls, Health Trek **Desks** Brearley Middleton **Flooring** Waldial Concrete **Paint** Dulux **Laminates** Laminex **Stainless-steel** Richardson Pacific **Hardware** Domino & Staff **Curtains** Spotlight **Partitioning** Office Interiors **Audio-visual systems** Data, Brooks & Knuckly **Screen material** Creation **Baumann Phone Communications** Total Communications