ISSUE #31. JUNE + JULY 2008

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RM4.90(PM)
PP 13134/04/2009(020768)
ISSN 1675-6266

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Arty space

Nothing too rigid or typical for creative and media agencies

UNLIKE CONVENTIONAL OFFICES, creative and media agencies require work spaces that are able to inspire their people to come up with ideas and solutions. As the saying goes: something to get their "creative juices flowing". Nothing too rigid or typical. A true reflection of their people's personality and creative capabilities.

Therefore, it is no easy task for an interior designer to find the perfect balance between comfort, professionalism and current trends while keeping to a certain budget and meeting client's expectations when designing for agencies.

One similar requirement stood out for the three agencies featured here — Leo Burnett, Milk + Co and Vizeum Media Services — is that they work longer than the standard office hours and need a comfortable, conducive, non-rigid and relaxed atmosphere.

From fresh strawberries and cream to delightful mini cupcakes, freshly baked chocolate chip cookies and fresh fruit juices, *haven* checks out each company's uniqueness — one very chic, the other bright and lively, and the third timeless.

Clockwise from this picture A warm welcome at the spacious reception • The very 'lived-in' office workspace • The 'serambi' view from Ali Mohamed's office

Leo Burnett

Jalan Raja Chulan, KL
Designer: Brian Quirk of Quirk & Associates

Taking the escalator up to the fifth floor, visitors are welcomed by a portrait of Mr Leo Burnett himself. Timeless and classic — this is what can be said of the office. It may come as a surprise that the 25,000 sq ft office was done up eight years ago but the space is as relevant today as it was then.

The *serambi* or veranda has a very lived in yet calming effect. From the office of chairman emeritus Ali Mohamed to the connecting offices with paperwork piled high, the office oozes comfort and a sense of belonging. Terrazo flooring adds to the warm and earthy feel.

Quirk says: "We always look for the story or the soul of the project — residential, commercial, office — what makes them unique. What was interesting about Leo Burnett was their laid-back process of discussion. We spent time trying to understand the agency, watching the dynamics of the people in the office and just talking to them. Then we start putting the pieces of the puzzle together."

According to Mohamed, the brief given to Quirk was short — nothing too office-like but it had to have a Malaysian identity. "We believe best ideas are expressed when people are not feeling intimidated. Brian came up with a lot of relax areas and I thought they were brilliant!"

He has had visitors who at some point felt they were in a holiday resort and some American visitors had even commented that it feels like in New York — modern yet warm.

"It has its own character — contemporary design yet still has a lot of textures to it," Quirk says.

Leo Burnett chairman emeritus Ali Mohamed (left) and Brian Quirk

Having lived in Malaysia for the past 18 years, Brian Quirk *has been dealing with clients from the retail, resorts and spas to F&B, residential, commercial and office sectors. Quirk & Associates focuses on life-style-oriented projects and believes in communicating its design through innovative ideas.*

What is the main feature of the office and the most common materials used?
Terrazo, timber — nothing used in a typical office fitout is used in this project. Most materials were drawn from the residential construction of the 1960s and 1970s.

Where is the most interesting area in the office and why?
Everything is interesting as spaces are constantly changing — we specifically tried to make each turn a new experience.

Are there any current trends for creative/media offices?
There are too many to tackle here but for me, in general, it is about the convergence of office, residential and hospitality design into a single discipline, which is about creating good environments that engage people.

What would be most essential for an interior designer when conceptualising to design a creative/media agency?
The story.