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PHOTOGRAPHY ERIC SIERINS

ARCHITECTURE CULLEN FENG
LOCATION SYDNEY | AUS
PROJECT YELLO STUDIO

Entering from the footpath outside Yello Brands Sydney Headquarters, I'm greeted by cruisey beats and laughter as the staff enjoys some tunes and plays pool during their lunch hour. The mood is infectious and I can't wait to see more. The branding agency is passionate about Australian businesses, with some of the country's most recognisable names as clients, including Vodafone, Arnott's and Rio Tinto. Their new home on Boronia Street, Redfern is an eclectic mix of bold graphics, artworks and furniture, housed over two levels in a post-industrial warehouse building. Inside, the atmosphere is buzzing; the agency is serious about business, but not too serious about themselves.

Hello, Yello – playful and a little bit silly – the attractive odd spelling commands attention, and there is an iconic value here connected with the Australian way of life. "We believe yellow is full of optimism, we love to grow Australian brands, so we felt 'Yello' really described the Aussie world," explains Olivia Swinn, Creative Director, Yello. Yello Brands was born as a merger between two smaller agencies EKH (strong on account service and delivery) and Designworks EIG (strong on strategy and creative). The new headquarters accommodates strategic, creative and production facilities across a sequence of purposefully designed and styled spaces.

The client's former office was a stylish Burley Katon Halliday space; in contrast to the new tenancy which was tired and run down, and requiring a lot of work. Retaining the original warehouse shell, interior walls were removed to bring a number of spaces together from separate existing tenancies. Jon Cullen's design approach takes full advantage of the pre-existing structures of the warehouse. He kept many of the old structures – original timber floors, exposed steel columns and trusses, voluminous sawtooth roof forms and high ceilings on the second floor – which helped to create the new environment. The resulting warehouse shell overlaid by contemporary elements offers an intriguing juxtaposition of materials.

"The pre-existing structures presented a powerful design tool," says Cullen. "A fair proportion of the work was done already in terms of the character of the building – the fact the interior has been lived in and used has a history to it."

YELLO FEVER

BOLD GRAPHICS, ARTWORKS AND FURNITURE GIVE THIS
BRANDING AGENCY SOME SERIOUS PUNCH



PREVIOUS PAGES A sign near reception references historical advertising graphics
ABOVE A Moooi 'Horse' light sits beside the spiral staircase in the studio
OPPOSITE TOP Clients drawn as cartoons feature on the meeting room glazing
OPPOSITE BOTTOM The chalk board and a series of oversized book spines give the break-out area life

Creative backgrounds on both sides naturally formed a collaborative design approach to the interiors. The close relationship between architect and the client allowed room for Yello to make the bold statements that Cullen might not have done alone. Yello required a space that would allow them to present the brand in a way that communicated their personality to visiting clients.

"The challenge for Cullen and Yello was to be mindful of our idea – we didn't want to push our brand, we wanted to push our personality," says Swinn.

Inspired by gallery interiors, Cullen applied a blank canvas aesthetic throughout, limiting materials and working on the spatial planning, flow and restoration of the pre-existing structures. The studio itself features purposefully designed graphics, artworks and selected furniture pieces, forming a stimulating sequence of spaces home to opposing energies. Items are bold, fun and often ambiguous, including the life sized black 'Horse' light from Moooi in the studio and the yellow pool table purchased online.

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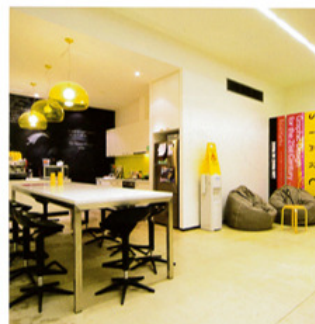
OLIVIA SWINN

The interior styling will forever remain a work in progress. A creative hub, the studio bubbles with ideas – the applied work may be transformed, changed or removed at a later date. This flexible design approach reflects the company's open character, embracing and supporting good ideas and advancement.

Designing unique ways to connect with their clients and involve staff, the various graphic treatments pokes fun at clients or draws reference from iconic advertising imagery. An artwork by Arny Arnold is visible on the far wall near reception, which was stripped back, exposing red bricks. The work references the signage of an old bottling plant, reading 'Enjoy, drink Yello in bottles; Nothing artificial sold here.' Fundamentally, this is the studio's signage cleverly disguised as art. Right of Arnold's work are the meeting rooms. High tech and professional, with magnetic walls and inbuilt audio equipment, the exterior glazing features comically-drawn people (clients) lining up, waiting to get in. Word bubbles with typical phrases from clients read; "Make the logo bigger", "We love it like this, but we are wondering... can we move things around?"

Downstairs lies the studio and adjacent library. Applied to the library glazing is an endless story about nothing in particular. The first sentence was sent around to staff on a piece of paper, then everyone wrote a sentence. The story is the result of a team building exercise to get everyone working together.

The break-out and photography studio on the ground floor is dynamic space which is used for many different purposes. A larger than life clown, drawn in chalk on the black wall, is a reminder of the staff Christmas party the Friday before. Clearly, Yello knows how to throw a party – the evening had a clown theme complete with a circus tent, dancers, pop corn machine and fortune tellers. The party also confirmed the flexibility of the studio. Swinn comments that "it is wonderful to hold events in our own space". Yello



would like to create opportunities for clients to use the space in the future. "We love that we can have a space that is so good that our clients ask if they can borrow it."

The stylishly-confident interiors of the new headquarters provide a funky, fresh, inspiring and interactive environment for Yello staff, while enhancing staff and client relationships. Yello's large and varied clientele all have very different business focuses. The dynamic and flexible nature of the headquarters forms an environment where staff are motivated and encouraged to move into a range of different client mindsets.

Anna Marsh is a freelance writer on design based in Sydney.

YELLO STUDIO

ARCHITECTURE Cullen Feng
PROJECT TEAM Jon Cullen, John Chow, Gerald Li
BUILDER Quintessence Construction Management
GRAPHIC DESIGN Yello

BUDGET \$250,000
TIME TO COMPLETE 12 months
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 800m²

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FURNISHINGS In the waiting area, custom banquette seat. In the boardroom Earnes 'Plastic' chair, in the meeting rooms Earnes Aluminium Group 'management chair' by Herman Miller available from Living Edge. 'Smooth' lounge and chair from Schamburg+Alvise and Iken custom tables in the design studio. 'Aero' workstations and storage, and 'Baron' chairs from Iken. In the director's office 'Cafifa 45' chairs by Arper from Stylecraft. Jean Nouvel 'Less' desk from Unifor. In the library 'Omega' armchairs from KFive and 'Quadro' coffee table from Iken.

LIGHTING In the reception & boardroom suspended profile lighting, in the tea room custom pleated drum pendant and recessed downlights & cable tray with T5 uplighting all from LPA lighting specialists. In the meeting room Ingo Maurer 'Bird' pendant from Space Furniture. In the studio 'Horse' light by Moooi from Space Furniture.

FINISHES Boardroom and meeting room flooring finished in CFC panels with LED uplights. In the main office existing and part new timber floorboards. In the boardroom curtains and blinds from Solis Products.

FIXED & FITTED In the boardroom, custom made YelloBoard made from magnetised yellow glass. Writing/memo board by Lettergraphics. Audio visual installation by Electronic Enterprises. Plasma screen by Samsung.

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