



interior design review

(inside)

79



T2

86 (*inside*) 79

PROJECT

location Melbourne, Australia
design Landini Associates
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photography Trevor Mein,
Sharrin Rees

Brand distillation In its design for the Headquarters for tea company T2, Landini Associates delivers an appealing infusion of old and new, transforming a Melbourne warehouse into a visually rich workplace that encapsulates the company ethos.



T2 Headquarters is undoubtedly an eloquent exercise in unpretentious, dynamic interior design.

There is no shortage of recent Australian projects that have impressed for their adaptive re-use of warehouse space. Zwei Interior Architecture's Code Black Coffee retail fitout in Melbourne's Brunswick is as elegant as it is bold, while the Goodman Unit B4 workplace in Sydney's Alexandria by Make Creative compels with its thoroughly modern take on the more traditional office fitout. Each possesses that gritty, urban aesthetic typical of many warehouse conversions and for this such projects hold immense appeal.

The Headquarters for Australian tea company, T2, by Landini Associates in Melbourne's Collingwood is a new warehouse conversion that exhibits that same aesthetic and just as much appeal. Creative director Mark Landini is somewhat baffled by the favourable attention the project is receiving, although this may simply be characteristic modesty on the part of the Sydney-based designer. T2 Headquarters is undoubtedly an eloquent exercise in unpretentious, dynamic interior design.

For T2 founder and chief executive officer Maryanne Shearer, finding the perfect building came after a long search. "When I walked onto the site I thought 'this is it,'" she says. "It would require a lot of work, but the bones were there, and the opportunity to create a home for the T2 team was a dream project for me." Engaging Landini after reading an article about him in the local newspaper was the final piece in the puzzle.

Both client and designer are quick to sing the other's praises and their synergy made for a fluid working relationship. "It was clear Mark was the man for the job," says Shearer. "Once I met him and his team

there was a 'click' moment where everyone just got it." The process was underpinned by their shared set of values, which places attention to detail and an uncompromising design approach above all else.

That Landini Associates is also responsible for the recent multi-award-winning Loblaws supermarket fitout in Toronto further reinforced Shearer's choice in designer. The Loblaws project shows how strong branding and visually exciting interior design can co-exist without detriment to the other. Not only did Shearer want an office environment that felt like home rather than work; she also needed it to express the T2 brand. For Landini this was a brief he is obviously well-versed in achieving.

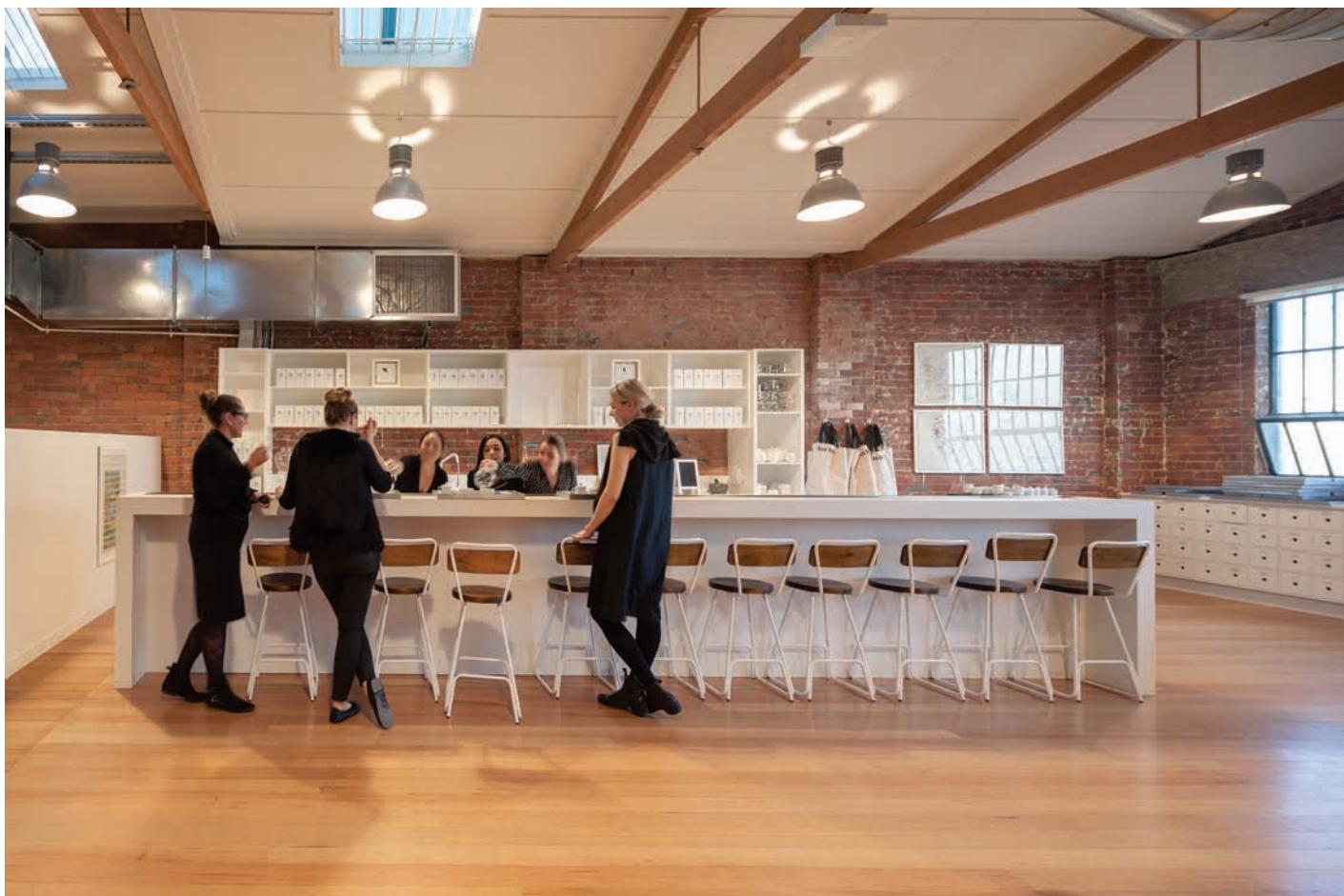
The overarching identity of the T2 brand is that tea is at its heart. Shearer and her team are passionate about their product and Landini wanted to represent this as clearly as possible. This ethos has its strongest expression in T2 Central, the office's reception area. "The idea is that you're not greeted by a receptionist who's manning the phones, but rather by someone who offers you a cup of tea," says Landini. "So when you enter the T2 office, you actually enter into the heart and spirit of what they're all about, which is the celebration of tea."

Doing away with the traditional reception area concept allowed Landini to install a robust standing-height concrete bar. It effectively contrasts with the tea canister-filled pigeonholes on the walls and gives the entry a relaxed, uncorporate quality. This informality resonates with the T2 team's youthful energy and immediately suggests their unorthodox approach, which is what sets the business apart.



Left—The reception area, named T2 Central, welcomes visitors into a tea bar surrounded by T2 product

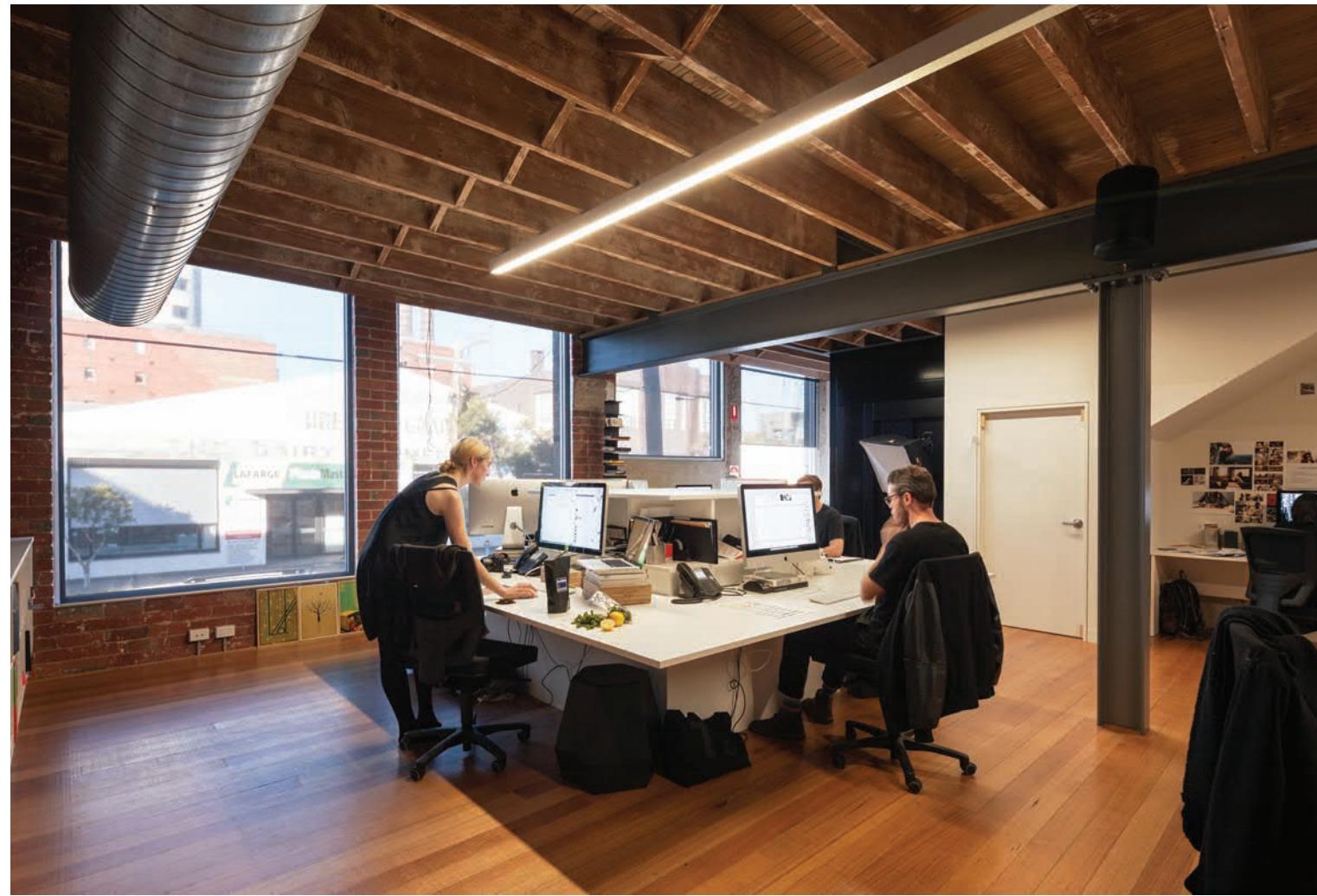
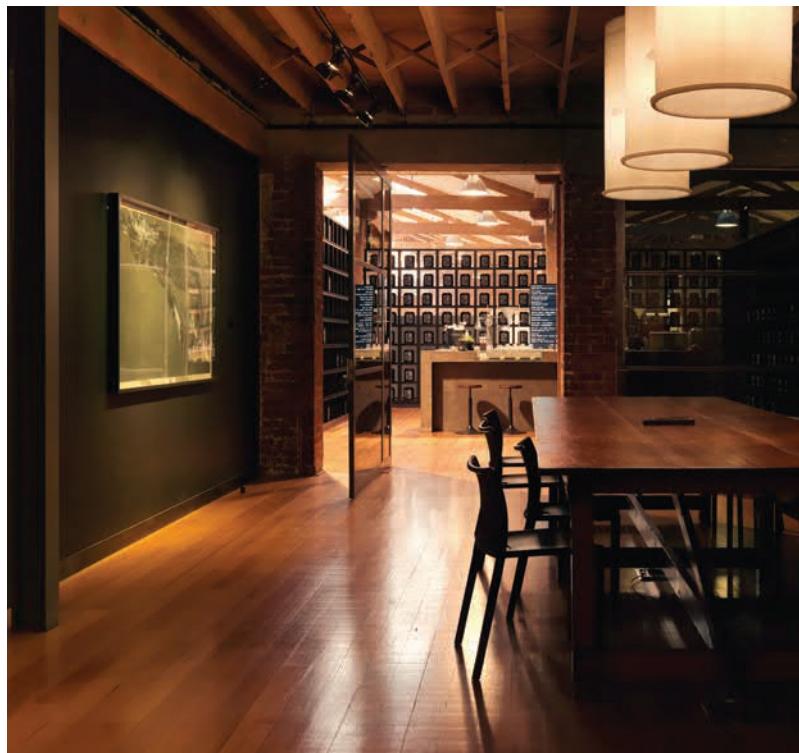
Below—The Tea Lab, located on the upper level, is a light and bright space that contrasts with the darker palette elsewhere in the fitout



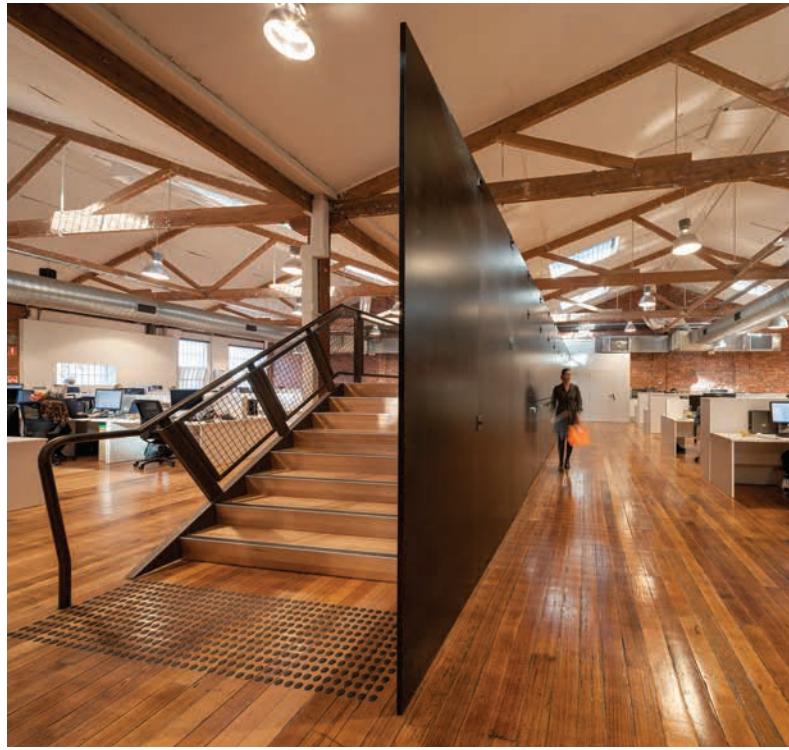
Right—Located on the lower level, the meeting rooms reflect the company's trademark dark interior palette

Below—Working zones celebrate the structure of the original warehouse shell

Opposite—A catwalk runs through the centre of the workplace, with steps that address the sloping site



project
T2 Headquarters



Landini's generous use of black in T2 Central, the kitchen, boardroom and meeting rooms extends the well-known identity of T2's many national retail outlets. This cohesion leaves no doubt as to the strength of the T2 brand. "I know it sounds funny, but they actually like their black," says Landini. "Wearing black is even part of their office dress code." Far from making each space appear oppressive, the black walls have a calming effect that reiterates the workplace's relaxed environment.

To complement the dark hue, Landini stripped back the timber beams and exposed the brick walls, which add warmth to the two-level 1305-square metre interior. Due to multiple level changes the old floors were removed and new timber floors installed, which further heightens the rich material palette. Landini also ripped out a lot of walls so that the ground level studio and upstairs Tea Lab could be transformed into large open-plan working areas. These spaces receive an abundance of natural light and their joinery and ceilings are finished white in contrast to the project's darkened spaces.

The team literally comes together in the studio and Tea Lab, and this is very much in keeping with the company's spirit of camaraderie. In a clever feature designed to accommodate the site's slope, a stepped 'catwalk' runs from the rear of the studio to the front. Along with a lightweight partition wall, it also acts to divide, as Shearer sees it, the 'left brain' science side of the business from the 'right brain' experience side of the business. The former houses the finance, IT and merchandising departments, while the latter houses the marketing, creative and sales departments.

Landini and Shearer continue to work on T2 projects together and the recent completion of T2B in Westfield Sydney is yet another successful instalment in their working relationship. The store is a new retailing concept for the brand and, unlike the standard T2 outlets, this one has the sale of brewed tea to either take away or be consumed on the premises as its primary business.

Interestingly, Landini used the Headquarters' T2 Central concept and applied it to this store. "Essentially, we



Landini has used the Headquarters' T2 Central concept and applied it to the design of the T2B store in Sydney's Westfield.

Above—The design of T2B store in Sydney uses a similar design strategy to the reception at T2 Headquarters. Photo by Sharrin Rees

took that idea of a dark tea library and used it as a backdrop," says Landini. "This is not the place you'd take your granny or Auntie May for tea." The walls and ceiling are, of course, painted black and the contrasting concrete bar functions as a workstation, resulting in a stage-like setting. The mirror above heightens this sense of theatre.

As Landini turns his attentions to a T2B outlet for Melbourne Central and a T2 kiosk concept in Sydney's Queen Victoria Building, Shearer reflects on T2's new Headquarters. "It needed to be a place that people couldn't wait to get to in the morning," she says. "And it had to make everyone feel proud of themselves and of the brand. The T2 message is 'we love tea' and the building says that loud and clear." It would seem that Landini nailed the brief, but the designer remains characteristically humble. "With a lovely building like this you don't really have to do much," he says. "You just have to let the building breathe." 

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