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MINIMALISM GETS COMPLICATED BY SUSAN OWENS CAN MELBOURNE STAY MELBOURNE? BY ANDREW CORNELL RAIA 2003: THE YEAR OF THE HOUSE BY DAVID MEAGER



MARTIN VAN DER WAL X2



Brand recognition...
 Left and above: Woods Bagot created a sense of transparency for Sydney IT and training company Amadeus. Below left: Cross Media Communication's fit-out for Philips. Below right: Prestige showroom for Toyota's premium car range, Lexus, by Landini Associates.



MARK WILSON X2



official function

BY ROCHELLE BURBURY ■

THE HUGE blazing red, orange and yellow 'fire' wall that dominates the floor of a financial institution; a multicoloured light installation in another venerable finance house; the huge words painted on the walls of a telecommunications company's CBD office. It's not interior design gone mad; rather the latest trend in brand communication: environmental branding in corporate offices.

A few years back, designers and their clients dropped to the fact that the average corporate office was, for the most part, a blank canvas: elegant perhaps, functional certainly, but insufficiently identified with the entity that occupied it. Ever since, architects, interior designers, and fit-out specialists have been working hand-in-hand with design consultancies as companies seek to carry their brand values through foyers, offices, meeting rooms, lifts, ceiling lighting, kitchens and, even, the water or coffee they serve.



COLIN HUSBAND

“The building you are in says an awful lot about you. It is the most physical manifestation of the brand’s equity,” says Mark Landini from Landini Associates. Landini has worked with Volvo – to create the Volvo Gallery – Shell, David Jones’s now-defunct Foodchain, and restaurants – the Awaba Café in Sydney’s Mosman, and the tearoom in that city’s Queen Victoria Building. He has also applied the concept to his own offices in inner-Sydney Surry Hills. In fact, the 600 square metre space accommodates just 24 staff, rather than the work space rule of 60. “That tells staff, I hope, that they’re important,” he says.

For starters, the effect of environmental branding on staff, the people who spend most time in that environment, is the key to its current vogue. “The best brands rely on empowering and motivating staff to deliver a particular [brand] experience,” says FutureBrand managing director Tim Riches.

“It can be particularly powerful in how people relate to each other in offices – how they view authority and the power structure,” Riches says. “The challenge is to go beyond general design considerations and take it to something special that represents the distinct attributes of your brand ... If you get it right, you can get significant value out of the investment.”

FutureBrand is currently working with law firm Freehills to create environmental branding throughout its offices. The company has also worked with BHP Billiton’s offices throughout the Asia-Pacific region and is working on the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games to apply brand attributes into its head office and on graphics in public spaces.

Stuart O’Brien from Moon Design says companies are just starting to realise just how important that reciprocal relationship between staff and a company’s brand can be.

THESE DAYS, THE OFFICE HAS TO PROJECT A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN SIMPLE FUNCTIONALITY OR THE COMFORTS OF THE CLUB. IT HAS TO ANNOUNCE EXACTLY WHAT A COMPANY IS ALL ABOUT – NOT LEAST TO ITS STAFF