



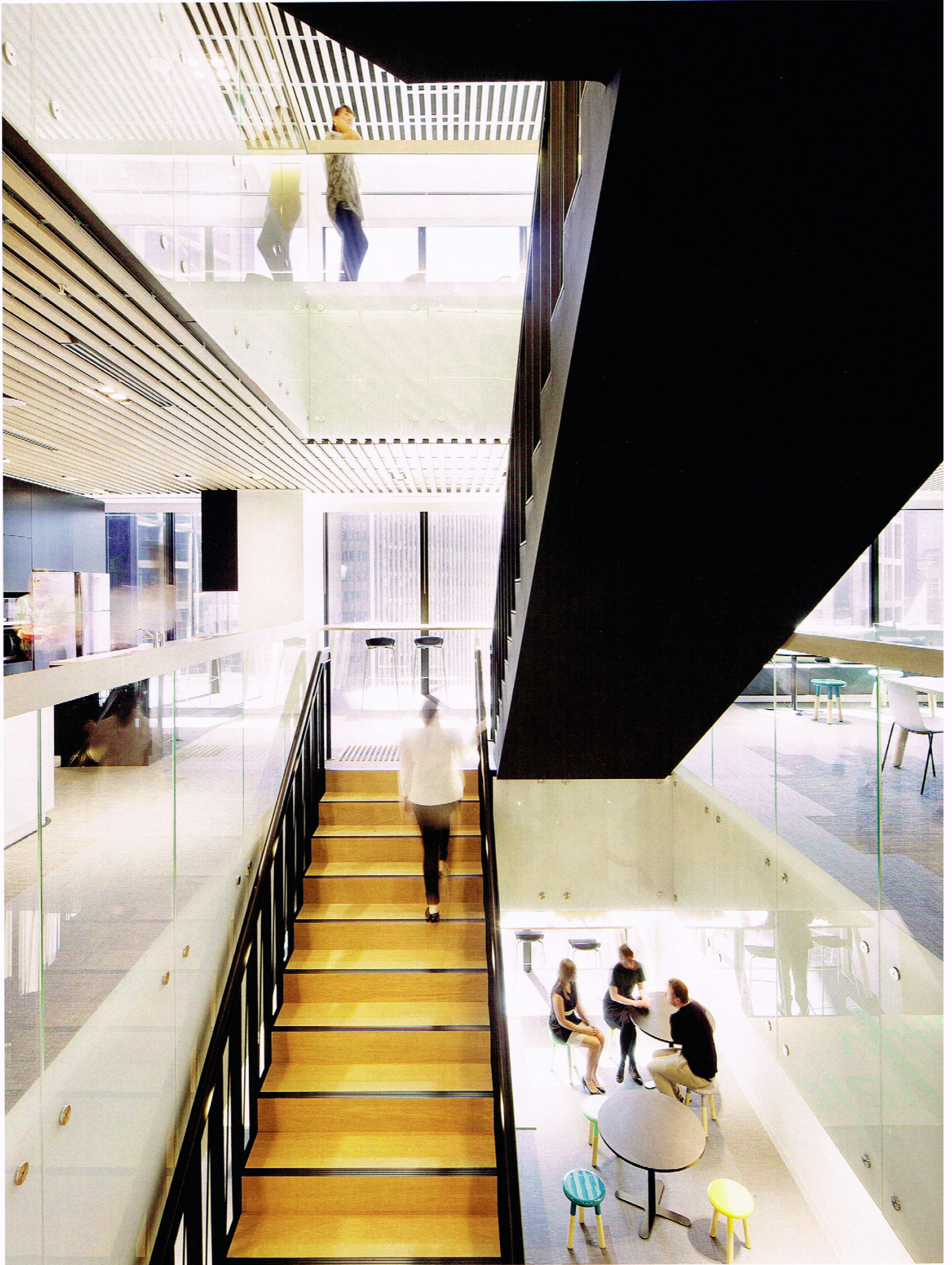
SUIT SUITE

THIS MELBOURNE LAW FIRM BRIEFED THEIR ARCHITECT TO CREATE A 'HAPPY' WORKPLACE THAT WOULD DISRUPT THE INDUSTRY NORMS.

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PHOTOGRAPHY SHANNON
MCGRATH

ARCHITECT WOODS BAGOT
LOCATION MELBOURNE | AUS
PROJECT HALL & WILCOX LAWYERS







PREVIOUS The reception area is a warm and inviting space sporting many Australian design furniture pieces and facilities that allow the reception area to double as a business centre for visiting contractors, clients and staff

FAR LEFT "We created a vertical connection with the stair to connect social spaces," comments Woods Bagot Associate Brett Simmonds

LEFT "The booths would have to be my favourite space," says Hall & Wilcox Lawyers CEO, Sumith Perera. "Many of my meetings don't have the client confidentiality restrictions, so I use any opportunity to have meetings in those spaces"

The winds of change are picking up in the law industry. Legal services is undergoing a major shift, disrupted from the comfort of traditional working models by clients looking for super efficient teams that can work in an agile and digitally-enabled manner. Looking to cement their foothold within this rapidly changing landscape, Hall & Wilcox Lawyers has recently undertaken a workplace revamp that has not only put a new face on the firm, but shifted the mindset of its staff – towards what they see as a very happy work-life medium.

Engaging architectural firm Woods Bagot, Hall & Wilcox took the bull by the horns, so to speak, by relocating their Melbourne headquarters to the Rialto Tower. "From our perspective, flexibility is important," says CEO Sumith Perera. "We were looking to demonstrate to our clients that we are forward-thinking, adopting great technology and being efficient in the way we do our work," he says.

This formed, in part, the brief to which Woods Bagot responded.

Woods Bagot Associate, Brett Simmonds, led the project, tapping in to Hall & Wilcox's unique brand values to form a design response that would not only make sense to the company's internal team, but also their clients. "One of the first things they said was, 'We're different from other firms and we want to be seen as different,'" Simmonds recounts. "'We're a happy firm and a happy team and that's important to our culture.'"

There was also the issue of a disconnected team in their previous location, with staff tucked away in different areas, separated by different floors accessed through separate lift banks.

Tackling both priorities simultaneously, Simmonds and team started by building a bridge: "We created a vertical connection with a central stair, to connect social spaces [that is, common areas] and encourage people to the use stairs. These social spaces are naturally noisier and more rambunctious, and create a buzz that travels down through the floors via the vertical column. This also enabled acoustic separation from the work areas."

Material palette and colour schemes count for much in this fit-out which Simmonds describes as "Japanese-Scando" – lots of blonde woods and minty tones. And while mint is certainly "fresh, fun and welcoming", there was a strong purpose behind the use of this popular pastel. "Hall & Wilcox have strong branding which we referenced throughout the fit-out," says Simmonds. "The logo and colours are quite appropriate for what we wanted to achieve."

This is strongly present in the reception area, where a bold, island-style greeting desk, expressed in natural timbers, welcomes staff and visitors. A number of services float around this central desk, including a business centre where visitors can recharge their personal devices and self-serve refreshments. Informal meeting spaces gravitate outwards from here, lining the outer perimeter of the reception area. "Law firms are generally more formal, and the reception area breaks that down completely," says Simmonds.

Behind the scenes, Woods Bagot worked with Calder Consulting to develop a strategy and brief that would enable them to make cultural shifts where it would most matter to the organisation. Moving away from a contained and static office model,



LEFT Woods Bagot have made it easy to step away from the desk and find a quiet corner for meeting and collaborating, or finding quiet focus

RIGHT "You can hear the buzz between floors," says Simmonds of the shared social spaces that cluster around the vertical stair

Woods Bagot looked to create an open-plan environment that would enable combinations of quiet, focused nooks and lively, engaging spaces.

Assigned work settings are located around the perimeter, with the central core being built out to contain functions with high acoustic requirements and resource spaces. "We used every part of the buffalo," says Simmonds, pointing out circulation corridors to the core doubling as access to storage and utilities. "We used every square inch of the floor plate."

Open timber partitions separate central desking in deference to the clients' clear aversion to call centre-style desking. Vertical racking elements gave Simmonds and team the opportunity to introduce height around the desks, as well as planting. "We also looked at all the functions a lawyer would have in their office and catered to functions around their desk space," notes Simmonds.

It's easy to peel off into a quiet room, or seek out physical isolation in a focused desk space. Workplace furniture is also reconfigurable, to open up numerous possibilities for engaging or retreating.

Breaking up the long tracts of desking, Simmonds and team have removed parts of the ceiling, shedding hints of warm lighting, and introducing an element of white noise from the mechanical services.

Hall & Wilcox were keen for their people to work more closely together, and to stimulate information sharing and informal mentoring between junior and senior lawyers. The move, says Perera, has been effective in facilitating that. "It wasn't an easy sell," he says, but it's been a revelation in new ways of working.



LEVEL 10 FLOOR PLAN

Share your thoughts on Hall & Wilcox Lawyers at indesignlive.com/hall-wilcox

*Alice Blackwood is Melbourne
Editor of InDesign.*

“We used every part of the buffalo... every square inch of the floorplate.”

BRETT SIMMONDS



HALL & WILCOX LAWYERS

ARCHITECT Woods Bagot
BUILDER Renascent
SERVICES ENGINEERS ECM
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Meinhardt Group
ACOUSTIC ENGINEER Renzo Tonin and Associates
BUILDING SURVEYOR Geoff Woolcock

TOTAL FLOOR AREA 4200 m²

WOODS BAGOT
 woodsbagot.com

FURNITURE
 Customised 'Rumba' workstations, BuzziBooth free standing booths, Enea Contract lotus chair, Zenith Partner pods and library table, custom PBS tables, ping pong table, Koskela Jon Goulder custom splay lounge chair, Thinking Works UR Folding Table, Stylecraft Reception table meeting room table, Jordan Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec reception chairs, Antonio Citterio pivot high stool,

Jasper Morrison dining chair, Vitra Universo Positivo turtle tables, 'spHaus' low table, Own World 'Caesar' Executive chair, Allermuir chair, Formway, Sean Dix Design 'Copine' Table, relocated life chair, Buzzispace 'BuzziCube 3D', Zenith Pedrali 'Malmo' stool, Kfive Custom marina fold table, Schiavello

LIGHTING
 'Parison' by Resident reception pendant, District 'Under the Bell'

by Muuto focus area pendant, 'RGB' by Lasvit breakout area pendant, Living Edge

FINISHES
 'Hekke' timber flooring, Tongue n Groove Goats hair carpet, Gibbon Group 'Tarmac' base build carpet, Shaw Contract Carpets Feature carpet tile, Interface 'illuminate' break area woven vinyl, The Andrews Group Kitchen flooring, Altro Feature rug, RC&D Wall cladding,

Snaptex, finished in Kvadrat, InStyle Blue splashback kitchen tiles, Woven Image 'Wash n Wear' eco choice paint finishes, Dulux Break room ceiling, Woodform 'Cleaned' meeting room ceiling, Knauf Kitchen laminate, Laminex.

FIXED & FITTED
 Trove Lockers, CSM

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