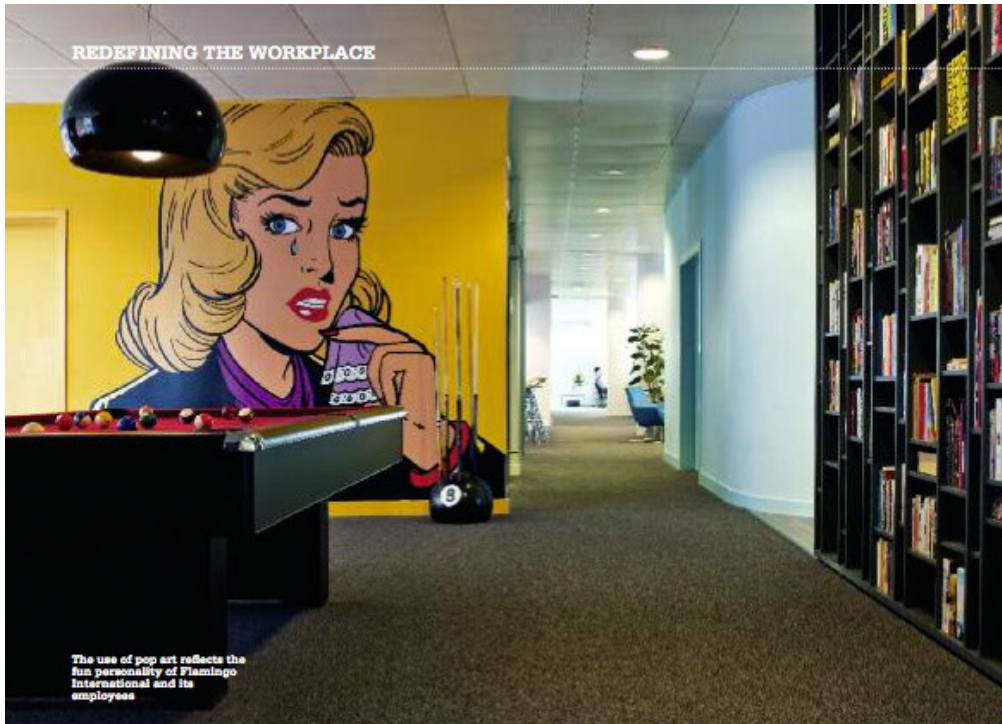


INTERIOR DESIGN TODAY

THE TRADE ONLY MAGAZINE FOR INTERIOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS JUL/AUG 2012 £5.95



Callender-Howorth-London-Interior-Designers-Interior-Design-Today1.jpg



Redefining the workplace

Mark Howorth discusses the challenges and opportunities presented in designing creative office spaces for clients

Interior Design Today spoke to Mark Howorth about his experiences of designing offices spaces and how the trend for culturally stimulating and exciting workplace design has led to a shift in the way designers approach office interior design.

Callender Howorth is a multi-discipline interior design and architecture practice based in London and Nice, France. Much of their work is produced for the UK and the South of France where the team work to create spaces that reflect the clients' wants and needs in dynamic and inventive ways.

A recent task for Callender Howorth saw the Flamingo International offices in London transform into a hub of creativity and vibrancy. When talking to Mark, I discovered that much of the eclecticism and innovation comes from within the company itself – a creative branding and international agency that prides itself on helping to discover the potential in the companies it works with. With this brief of

sorts set, it was up to Mark and the Callender Howorth team to realise the vision for the office space through clever design and out of the box office thinking.

It is really exciting to see companies such as Flamingo International, embracing the ideas behind promoting healthy working environments as it allows designers to express more creativity and employ their understanding of environment when working on office designs. For Mark and the team, the Flamingo project was one of three that they have completed for the company, the first designed 10 years ago and their fantastic relationship has continued on. We asked Mark some more in depth questions on why he thinks there has, in the past few years been a change in attitude towards office design.

Q Why do you think that office spaces have, for so long, been designed in clinical neutrals palettes and with little sense of the people occupying them?

If you think about how much time you spend in an office, it is incredible to think that only now are we embracing a new, freer way of working, with environments that encourage creativity and a relaxed atmosphere. There has certainly been a global shift in the way we now use office space and what we demand of it. People are now starting to realise that you can create these environments and that's its ok, a healthy to operate in bright, open and humorous spaces.

As a nation we are 'nesting' more than we did 5-10 years ago. Clients now crave a comfortable environment with a sense of fun

worked into the fabric of the company through cleverly considered design. Offices that you would have considered formal and 'serious' are embracing this trend and becoming more 'trendy' in their approach. Charities and the like are following suit and creating environments that balance corporate with fun elements. They are challenging preconceptions of these typical spaces and it is great to see. It is not just a passing trend, but a change in life and work style choices.

Q What makes office spaces so fascinating to design?

People are more in touch with themselves now and this means that we can reflect it in the interior scheme. Loose, fluid designs reflect the idea of sharing, sharing spaces and sharing information for a better work environment.

I love designing offices spaces. The opportunity to deal with board directors and focus groups and really get to the bottom of what the client wants for their company. It is really exciting to be able to reveal the personality of a company through the design. By talking and interacting with the client, you can get a good idea of what they want, even if it may seem like a challenge to begin with. You want to make people love the space so this provides a starting point for any project – create a space people will love to be in.

Q How do you approach office design/ what are your requirements from the client before you can begin?

Taking Flamingo as an example,



Chill out areas and spaces that provide a social aspect to the working environment are sure to succeed in the office

they have three offices and we at Callender Howorth have been working with them for the past 12 years so we understand their wants and requirements and are able to work flexibly around the company because we have seen them grow and understand their ethos. Understanding what is required of the space is crucial - do they entertain other clients? Hot desk? Is it open plan? Are boardrooms central to the companies working style? All of these things need to be considered and noted in the brief at the start of the process. From

then on it is the designers responsibility to encourage creative ideas and it is exciting for us to think 'how can we radically change the way they work for the better?'. At Flamingo we created a chill out area where employees can take time out and relax on the loungers that we have placed facing a view of the river - It gives people the opportunity to brainstorm in a relaxed environment - you almost feel as though you're not at work.

Q Who are the clients and what do they do?

Flamingo International is a leader in the field of quantitative research. Founded and run by Kirsty Fuller and Maggie Collier, the company uses focus group techniques for marketing, pulling companies together to gain an understanding of what they want to promote.

Q What was the brief for the project and what does the design say about the company?

Flamingo International is quite unique in its approach. They wanted a very chilled environment, they place a lot of importance on green living and so

the green theme was central as well as the idea of understanding what people want and the trends that are currently influencing lifestyle and work choices. Hot desking is something that Flamingo employees do on a regular basis so that, in an open plan environment was important.

Personalising the space was also integral to the overall design. The employees of Flamingo International are creative people so we wanted to reflect this. The office has a global company feel to it but in a fun and dynamic setting. It is forward-thinking, young, smart, trendy and reflects the presence of individuals who all make up the fabric of the company. We had the aim to always encourage creative thinking and to energise workers when they arrive in the morning and keep them going throughout the day. The pop art worked to do this to a certain extent, injecting colour into the scheme and giving the walls personality.

Q Finally, if you weren't a designer, what would you be doing?

Landscape gardening. I love to be outdoors so this would provide an ideal opportunity. ■



Mark and his team created lounging areas for brainstorming whilst taking in the view