



FLOWER POWER

A TINY RETAIL SITE IN A CENTRAL MELBOURNE SHOPPING CENTRE HAS BECOME THE BEAUTIFULLY RESOLVED HOME OF A CITY FLORIST

WORDS MARG HEARN
PHOTOGRAPHY LISBETH GROSSMANN

DESIGNER CLARE COUSINS
ARCHITECTURE
LOCATION MELBOURNE | AUS
PROJECT PICKET

LEFT Clare Cousins Architecture also designed the branding for Picket
BELOW The tiny florist spills out into Melbourne Central during operating hours

Clare Cousins, Director of Clare Cousins Architecture, recently completed the design of Picket, a tiny, 11 square-metre florist in the Melbourne Central shopping centre at the intersection of the city's Swanston and La Trobe Streets. "It was the challenge of creating a unique retail environment in the tiny bolt-hole space on a \$50,000 budget, coupled with a prime Swanston Street position, that drew us to the project," she says

The tiny site, tucked beneath the escalators on the centre's ground floor, opens to the additional benefit of 20 square metres of under-cover forecourt, which serves to attract passersby. To capitalise, the tiny space has been adapted to create a market-style ambience.

As it featured as part of a larger redevelopment unfolding within Melbourne Central, and the dimensions of the project were not fixed from the beginning, the shop's design demanded some flexibility. This meant the florist's functional needs preceded exploration of visual possibilities for the site's unusual wedge-like geometry.

To maximise the feeling of space within the tiny shop, a limited number of simple yet distinctive design elements have been applied, incorporating pickets, trolleys and column treatment.

A key strategy in Picket's design was to custom-design movable fixtures fitted with castors, allowing the retailer variation in the location of its point of sale and arrangement of flowers. Their construction from off-the-shelf, galvanised air-conditioning ductwork of different heights, fixed to galvanised wrapped plinths, is suggestive of organ pipes.

Space-efficient vertical displays in simple custom-made, powder-coated metal boxes help to rationalise the visual merchandising of plants while also working to conceal the myriad pots necessary to a florist.

Narrow pickets turned upside down have been used as a wall treatment to conceal doors and cope with unusual undulating walls forms.

The idea of deploying pickets in this way was borne of a preference for using natural textures to contrast

with the perceived "hardness and fastness" of the CBD surrounds. They also hint at a domestic garden, a suburban reference. The precinct's bluestone flooring and panelled ceiling were carried through into the store to preserve the picket walls as its main feature.

A cavity under the escalator to the shop's rear accommodates easy roll in and out of trolleys at open and close of trade, and provides a ready-made space for a sink, refrigeration and overnight storage of flowers.

Cousins' fondness for colour shows in the yellow-washed pickets with exposed natural timber knots. And, an interest in curves and softness of lines is played out in the jute wrapping of the chunky structural column which can be read as a link to the work of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.

In essence, Picket is a space that effuses, "a sense of fun and joy," Cousins says. It is a space intent on paving the way for a successful retailing solution.

Marg Hearn is a freelance writer on architecture and design, based in Melbourne.



PICKET

DESIGNER Clare Cousins Architecture
PROJECT TEAM Clare Cousins, Dita Beluji, Renae Brown
SHOPFITTER Four Seasons Shopfitting

BUDGET \$50,000
TIME TO COMPLETE 4 weeks
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 11m² (shop)
20m² (outdoor space used during trade)

CLARE COUSINS ARCHITECTURE
(61 3) 9329 2888 clarecousins.com.au

FINISHES Flooring is Bluestone pavers. Wall cladding is 'Tudor' profile pine fence pickets from Bowens, with custom yellow stain from Dulux. Column cladding is 24mm sisal rope from Ascot Splicing. Counter is clad in BB Hoop Pine plywood. Flower displays are custom-made using galvanised Eziduct straight duct lengths. Paint from Dulux.

Ascot Splicing (61 3) 9375 2172 ascotsplicing.com.au
Bowens (61 3) 9796 3003 bowens.com.au
Dulux 13 23 77 dulux.com.au
Eziduct (61 3) 9791 8477 eziduct.com.au