

WORDS **STEPHEN CRAFT**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **SHANNON  
MCGRATH**

ARCHITECT **CLARE COUSINS**  
ARCHITECTS  
LOCATION **MELBOURNE | AUS**  
PROJECT **MOOR STREET STUDIO**

# IN THE DETAIL

A BOLD COLOUR INJECTION AND THOUGHTFUL REVAMP PROVIDES  
AN AIRY BACKDROP FOR A COMPANY'S NEW MELBOURNE HEADQUARTERS



This distinctive building in Moor Street, Fitzroy, was designed by Ivan Rijavec in the early 2000's. Previously used as a communications office, the three-level building was virtually a shell when the current owners moved in. A few graphic wallpapered walls competed with Rijavec's industrial aesthetic. "It was really a matter of taking things away and going back to the original bones," says architect, Clare Cousins, who was engaged to re-fit the office space for the owners of Simson Cards.

The two upper levels remain virtually intact, including the heritage-listed signage 'Classweave' painted on the exposed brick wall. Some new plywood joinery was added, and the steel rails painted white. However, the showroom and meeting area on the first floor have been completely re-worked. Partitions were removed to allow Rijavec's angles and lines to be 'read'. And the kitchen, while in the same position, has been enlarged. "Previously it was barely a sink and a few cupboards," says John Simson, who operates the business with his life and business partner, Belinda.

While greeting cards, rather than architecture is the Simpson's business, both have a sharp eye when it comes to design. Even though they produce thousands of cards each day from their headquarters in Laverton and are the largest importer of cards to Australia, both can easily recognise when typography is slightly incorrect, be it spacing between words or in the words themselves. "John and I are 'detail' people. It's not just the spaces that are important. It comes down to door catches," says Belinda.

Although Cousins' brief was to open up the spaces, she has also made her own mark. Pivotal to the design is the pod-like meeting room on the first floor. One of the few enclosed spaces (not including bathrooms), the glass-walled office features an art installation by Rowena Martinich, a local artist who is known for her public art works. Martinich's fluorescent drips of paint on a Perspex wall animate the office. This work also allows natural light to penetrate. And to allow this work to also be appreciated at night, Cousins included LED lighting at the base. "At night, it functions as a public art work with strollers by engaging with this piece," says Cousins.

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STEPHEN CRAFTI

Cousins also added perforated ceiling panels, evocative of an overscaled pegboard. This reduces reverberation against the polished concrete floor, as well as being a feature in its own right. "One of the problems with the previous arrangement was concealing services. We had to come up with a solution to hide cables," says Cousins. As the brief was to create a gallery-like space for Simson Cards, the walls were painted pristine white, allowing the cards to be the focus. Like a contemporary gallery, there's also a bench-like seat, designed by Cousins. Made from concrete blocks, steel, and with a felt seat, it offers a chance to sit back and appreciate the spaces.

Cousins worked closely with Marino, a construction company, who like the Simson's, are stickler's for detail. "It was so pleasurable being able to take a break during the construction phase and know things would be dealt with," says Belinda, who sees the success of this project not only as the final design, but also the relationship with all parties involved. "You need that healthy relationship between client, architect and builder. Like us, no detail was left unnoticed," she adds.

Stephen Crafti is Indesign's Melbourne correspondent



**ABOVE** Level 3 loft with heritage 'Classweave' on exposed brick wall.  
**LEFT** Lower level office with staircase leading up to Level 3 loft office area.  
**FAR LEFT** Level 2 desking systems are an intelligent use of space under the Level 3 loft.  
**PREVIOUS PAGE** Frameless glass meeting room with commissioned Rowena Martinich painting

### MOOR STREET STUDIO AND RESIDENCE

**DESIGN TEAM** Clare Cousins, Oliver Duff, Dita Belluli  
**BUILDER** Marino Construction Management  
**BUILDING SURVEYOR** Fotia Group Building Surveyors, McKenzie Group Consulting  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Co-Struct Structural & Civil Engineers

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 6 months  
**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** 498m<sup>2</sup>

**CLARE COUSINS ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN**  
(61 3) 9329 2888 | clarecousins.com.au

**FURNITURE** In Meeting Room, artwork by Rowena Martinich. In Studio, table lamp by Ilse Crawford from Euroluce, floor jewellery from Volker Haug, lamp by Kasper Ronn and Jonas Bjerre-Poulsen from Great Dane, side table from Jordan, 'August' swivel chair from Temperature Design and 'Aeron' chair from Living Edge. In Residence, 'Albert' stool from Luke Furniture.

Generally throughout Kitchen, small items from Corporate Culture. In Living Room, artwork by David Bromley. In Bedroom, 'Kelly' stool from Jordan, artwork by Jes Simson. In Study, artwork by Rowena Martinich and coat stand from Corporate Culture.

**LIGHTING** Generally throughout, lighting from Volker Haug, MLight, JSB Lighting, HUB and Masson for Light. Custom made pendant light from Volker Haug, 'Grasshopper' floor lamp from Corporate Culture.

**FINISHES** Carpets from Godfrey Hirst, timber floors from Harper & Sandilands and Wood Products. Paint from Dulux. In Bathroom, tiles from Signorino Tiles, Rockstar Sealing and Classic Ceramics. In Kitchen, benchtops from Rutso, Britex and Stone Italiana. Concrete blockwork from Boral.

**FIXED & FITTED** Generally throughout, hardware, joinery and sanitary ware from Oliveri, Häfele, Wilson & Bradley, Designer Doorware, Britex, Mary Noall, Britex, Rogerseller, Reece, Veitch and JD Macdonald.

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