

\$12.95 inc GST
JUNE | JULY 2010

F M

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

WIN
AN OFFICE
ACCESSORY PACK

'EXPERIENTIAL' DESIGN QANTAS: THE BRAND BEHIND THE BUILDING

SOLUTIONS FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

EDUCATION
NEW TRAINING
OPPORTUNITIES ON OFFER

FLOORING
A GREENER VIEW OF
VINYL FLOORING

LIGHTING
YOU CAN HAVE STYLE
AND PERFORMANCE





The concepts behind experiential design owe a great deal to philosophers of education such as John Dewey, who recognised that the effectiveness of learning could be enhanced through dynamic experience and activity, as opposed to passive classroom assimilation.

Skip a century and imagine this philosophy transposed to commercial environments, with building design focused on the vibrant interaction between people and structure – a strategy where architecture, marketing and business operations blend to encourage a predefined corporate image, branding and work ethic. This is a design system in which the people sketched on the architectural drawings are not merely decorative; they are elemental parts of the fitout.

In this article we will explore E2's contemporary design philosophy, as expressed in the recently completed Qantas Centre of Service Excellence, a \$12 million suburban learning and professional development facility in Sydney, which has been designed to define the Qantas experience for some 18,000 employees.

'EXPERIENTIAL' BEGINNINGS

While most architects associate great design with timelessness, posterity and future heritage, experiential architects are closer in temperament to artistic designers: the building and its spaces must fit each particular client perfectly... with room for possible modification and growth over the short-to-medium term.

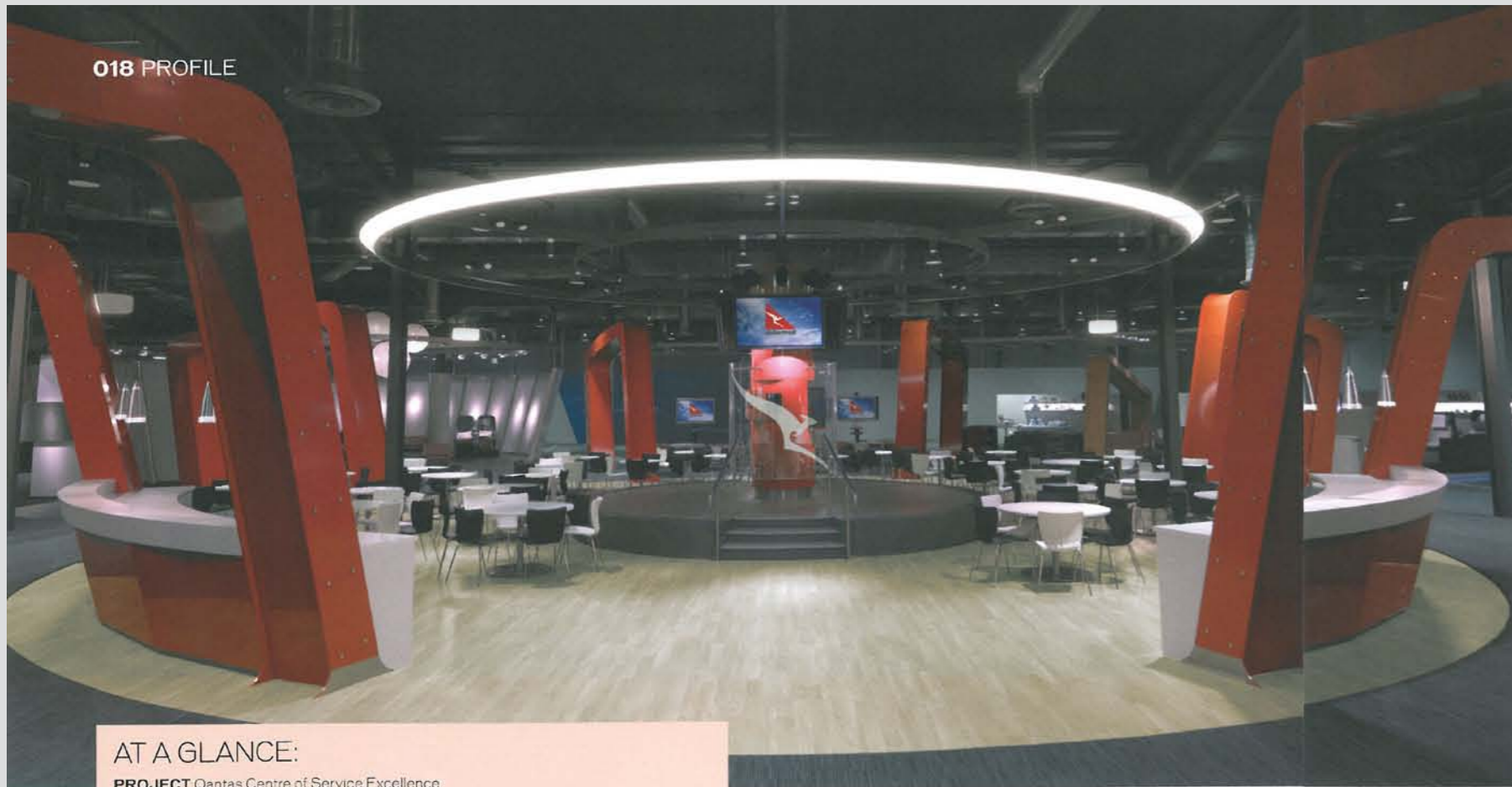
According to E2's managing director Robbie Robertson, he and E2 creative director Alex Ritchie started the company nearly three years ago, following close collaborations in Australia and overseas.

"Since Alex and I started up E2 we have done 178 projects," Robertson explains. "We started off like most companies working out of my spare bedroom, but we had a very definite understanding about where we were and what we wanted to do, and that was about how to bring to life a brand within physical spaces, and how to use the five senses to encapsulate and bring to life what a brand means in an office environment, a retail environment, or an experience centre – and looking at it from not just a physical sense in terms of the materials we use, the furniture we use, but also the tone of voice and the way the graphics are implemented and the way

EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN TAKES OFF AT QANTAS

Across Australia a new style of 'experiential' architecture – where a building and its spaces are inseparable from the occupant's business branding and operations – is sweeping away traditional 'blank canvas' commercial spaces. JOHN POWER talks to Robbie Robertson and Clare Griffith, from pioneering experiential design consultancy E2, about the firm's recent work designing the Qantas Centre of Service Excellence in Sydney.





AT A GLANCE:

PROJECT Qantas Centre of Service Excellence

AREA 5000 square metres **SPACE** 126-seat auditorium

E2 DESIGN TEAM Alex Ritchie (creative director), Robbie Robertson, Rebecca Vulic, Thomas Kiang, David Grant, Cynthia Emon, Leanne Rule, Sinead Kelly, Rachel Cohen

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER MPA Construction Group

LIGHTING DESIGN Lighting Design Partnership

ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHICS DESIGN Frost Design

PROJECT MANAGER Alasdair Macdonald Architects

MAJOR FURNISHINGS SUPPLIER Work Arena.

technology is infused into the space. But, most importantly, it's about the people who work within the space; we can create a beautiful office, but people don't come in and just buy your product because they say, 'Oh, I love what you've done with the ceiling'; they will buy people and a lot of designers forget that it's the people who work within the space who bring it to life.

"Alex and I are both designers and architects by profession – Alex designed the Millennium Dome, he's worked with Disney. He's been 25 years in the business and has worked all over the world. I look at why people use space and how people use space, and he looks at and asks 'How do I create a space that is then used by people to create a really successful end result?' So we bring those two sides together. I have an MBA, so when we got together two and a half years ago, understanding the business metrics, we had three corporate goals: it's understanding business factors, human factors and product factors, and you bring all those three together to create the end solution. So, it's not just got to look good, it's got to sell, it's got to function; it's got to be somewhere people want to be in, so it's like inside-out architecture – you're creating a space where the product

can come to life or for the people who work in it, and then building a space around the product or people to create a space so they can actually deliver that."

START WITH 'AN EMPTY SHELL'

As Clare Griffith, E2's client manager, explains, the Qantas Centre of Service Excellence project perfectly matched E2's design philosophy, aimed at creating a centre that showcased Qantas' corporate vision via an active, changing learning environment.

Interestingly, the training centre was initially conceived as a temporary space designed to last for just six weeks. But its scope as a perpetual asset for both 18,000 staff and key suppliers soon became overwhelming, and the brief quickly became a permanent learning centre with a long-term vision.

"The starting point, literally, was an empty shell," Griffith says. "We started with an old engineering maintenance works (30–40 years old, approx 4500 square metres) in Alexandria, where they had a building that they were not using. They asked us to create a training centre out of what was a derelict building – it had no air-conditioning – and we were given the task of bringing it to life in essentially a square box. We wanted to have no branding on the outside, so that if you drove past it would look like a normal factory building. They wanted [the training facility] to be offsite, some distance from the airport facilities, so people had to 'go there'; it's all about the journey of taking you out of your day-to-day environment. As you enter the door you walk up a ramp into the auditorium and you don't know what's behind the curtains. There is that whole sense of arrival and anticipation, and the sense of excitement as people are taken out of their everyday lives, away from their normal way of thinking,

and shown that providing a service is the key element in differentiating a company from its competitors."

PODS AND THEATRE

Robertson emphasises the overall design as a theatrical experience, characterised by several distinct zones, or pods, where attendees can immerse themselves in separate spaces such as First Class, Economy, Business Class, A380, etc. Fundamental considerations were authenticity (genuine seats, correct corporate livery, etc), a sense of fun and the ability to see the progression from one pod to another as a 'journey'.

Approximately 120 people a day visit the facility, including key partners, suppliers and frequent fliers.

"You arrive, there is a walkway with messages on it, and you sit down in a 200-seat auditorium and it's like being at the theatre," Robertson says. "Then there is a 20-minute welcome and video, the curtains open and attendees are asked to climb up on stage and down into a central atrium. Every training day is very structured – everyone is broken into teams and some go off to Economy while others go off to Business and somebody else to First Class. You can't hear them because there are acoustic panels to direct the noise, and you've got special theatrical lighting in each zone, so when you're in a zone the rest of the lighting dims down slightly so there is a sense of theatre within your zone, and in each zone there are all of the elements that make Economy what it is – you can play with the seats and touch the plates and table, so basically you stay and play.

With the A380 pods, it was important to understand how the A380 actually worked before it came to Australia.

"When we were designing it we had to ensure that we had a space they were proud of," he notes, bearing in mind that practicality must always underpin each design element. "It had to be heavy-duty because there are so many people coming through on a day-to-day basis, and it had to look just as good in years to come as it did the day it opened.

"Looking at the main design elements, we wanted to create zones within the environment that were able to bring the separate brands to life within that space. However, we wanted to engender a sense of excitement, so if you're sitting in Business Class and learning all about Business Class, you can see across at people having fun and joking over at the First Class area and thinking, 'I'm going there next'. So there is that sense of anticipation that they are all on the same journey; we didn't want to create traditional classroom environments full of closed doors and large walls. We also had a very tight budget and we wanted to make sure we maximised the interior design elements into the experience. So we didn't want to pay for walls that didn't have to be there, or for elements that weren't going to bring the brand to life. We wanted to be fast-paced, modern, eclectic, all the principles that went into the design of the actual First Class lounge. So when we developed the zone for First Class it had to feel like you were walking into the real First Class lounge, and that was all about light, sound, air, and most importantly the service of the people who actually meet you and greet you and

Maintaining Your Property is now EASIER with FM Innovations Property Lease Management



- ✓ Whether modest or large, manage all of your property portfolios within a single, easy to use program.
- ✓ WSM Property will automatically flag significant dates like lease renewals or inspections – so you won't forget!
- ✓ Maintain and extend all of your Lease Terms and Options with the Rent Review Capability
- ✓ Ensure that all of your mandatory property related operational licenses are kept up to date.
- ✓ WSM Property can integrate with your existing systems, is easy to migrate to and you will become operational very quickly.
- ✓ Enjoy ROI in as little as 12 months, ensuring peace of mind.

FREE DEMO
Direct to your desktop!

www.fminnovations.com.au

FM Innovations Software Suite:

Works and Asset Management
Space Management
Room Event Management

Visitor Management
Sustainability Management
Vehicle Management

Contact FM Innovations:

Ph: 03 9600 1646 Fax: 03 9600 2333
Email: sales@fminnovations.com.au
www.fminnovations.com.au





true to life about what the customer experiences so attendees could experience what it's like to be a customer."

Robertson says there was no sugar-coating of the actual experience.

"We created a space that Qantas could run and manage themselves, and it was really important for us to hand over the keys and know the client could then manage with a modular approach. For instance, if the facility manager needs to change panels, they're just simple graphics panels that can be changed easily. We provided Qantas with all the measurements and specifications for them to manage everything themselves. All ongoing changes are done in-house; they actually nominated a service excellence manager and she worked with us throughout the last six or seven months of the project, and every week when we had our meeting with the service management team and with the MPA builders, she was there because she wanted to know how the space worked, and where she had to go to change a light or understand where to go if she needed to upgrade something."

HANDOVER BIBLE

Robertson says E2 gave Qantas a 'bible' of furniture schedules, fitout details, names, and photos of all materials and products and each piece of furniture.

"We were the lead designers so we were really proud that we wanted to make a handover that was successful in every way, not just from a design perspective, not just from a training perspective, but also from a facilities management perspective."

The end result was on time and on budget and we handed over the keys exactly when we said we would."

FUTURE TRENDS

As the above comments demonstrate, experiential architecture is based on an appreciation of buildings as functional, living spaces aligned to specific purposes. In commercial settings, spaces are as personal and customised as a designer jacket – meant to convey a powerful message to clients while also representing a corporate individuality.

While some architectural purists may yearn for buildings that will outlive one occupant or owner, decrying modular designs that change according to the whims of fashion, the truth is that few modern structures are constructed to become future heritage buildings. On the contrary contemporary designs are increasingly reflective of specific needs and functions – and times.

The consequence for facility managers is a requirement to play a stronger role in the day-to-day marriage of 'building and business', working more and more closely with directors to ensure every fitout, every update, every reconfiguration, is synchronised with the daily growth of the business. **FM**

Photography: Tyrone Branigan

More information

E2 www.e-2.com.au

Qantas www.qantas.com.au



help you through the journey of embarking on that physical journey of your flight.

"We put the people first. We had to create an environment that put all the staff on the stage and allowed them to learn. And at the end they had to be able to congregate in a central space, have a laugh and actually do something quite social."

MODULAR FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Importantly, from a facility management point of view, the complex had to be able to be updatable. "It had to be modular," Robertson explains, "because all the brands continually change – Qantas might wish to change its First Class product, or change the domestic 'best for business' product, or upgrade the look and feel of the business cabin, and so we had to ensure that we were providing a modular approach and a backdrop that was able to change out and still look like it was part of the overall design."

"The essence of the space is to understand the experience. We took visual cues that are very Qantas, like the arches, and we implemented those so the space felt and looked like Qantas... but it was also an environment that could be updated," he says.

"For this we worked very closely with the property department to use a lot of their existing suppliers, so we made use of existing relationships for consistency of look and feel, so whether dealing with the airport environment or the airplane environment, we were using existing furniture elements and products that were already being used by Qantas."

"We worked very closely with Qantas to make sure that what you were experiencing in the Qantas First Class lounge at the training facility were the exact chairs that were being used in the First Class lounge. This environment was about being



Master of Property

Studying Property at the Melbourne School of Design focuses on real world projects which range across the full property and development cycle, and prepares students for the realities of professional life.

This professionally-recognised program provides advanced study in:

- Development and management of property
- Property valuation and analysis
- Professional practice in a property context

Study full-time or part-time to accelerate your career in property.

www.msd.unimelb.edu.au/property



msd

Melbourne
School of Design