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INTERIOR DESIGN SIREN
 DESIGN GROUP
 LOCATION SYDNEY | AUS
 PROJECT MARQUE LAWYERS

AVANT-GARDE ADVOCATES

THE BOLD ASPIRATIONS OF MARQUE LAWYERS ARE EVIDENT IN THEIR NEW OFFICE BY SIREN DESIGN GROUP

For some, the term 'legal office' conjures up images of wood panelling and leather bound libraries, with whisper-quiet hallways and hierarchical planning that proudly displays lawyers and clients, while hiding vital support staff and the photocopier. But when Michael Bradley and nine of his colleagues departed from a national law firm to set up their own practice, they wanted to set a new benchmark in the way they interacted with their clients.

"We see ourselves as revolutionaries," Bradley says. "We are standing consciously outside of the mainstream. We engage with our clients differently," he adds. "We don't charge by the hour – instead we've set up retainers – so we aim to build long-standing relationships with our clients, with a flexible approach to price. It means we don't hide our personalities to carry out our work."

This radical approach is obvious at Marque's new office by Siren Design Group in a heritage building on Sydney's George Street. Just beyond the lift doors, a leather-bound portal frames the office entry. There's no receptionist – nearby administration staff share responsibility for greeting clients and visitors, and a courier box streamlines the dispatch and delivery of packages – and the mood is deliberately domestic, with the 'lounge room' and 'kitchen' to the right and the 'backyard' to the left.



OPPOSITE Instead of a traditional reception, the office has a casual foyer

ABOVE The foyer opens into a deliberately domestic break-out space



“Openness and transparency were core elements of the brief”

MICHAEL BRADLEY, MARQUE LAWYERS

Instead of interior walls, low profile dividers separate the open-plan workstations – which accommodate everyone from support staff to partners – so it’s possible to view almost the entire office from the foyer. “Openness and transparency were core elements of the brief because we wanted to break down the barriers between public and private spaces,” Bradley explains. “We wanted to create a family home vibe, rather than a traditional legal office.”

For Siren Design Group CEO, Mia Feasey, who helped Bradley find the tenancy, achieving the right balance in the fit-out was a challenge. “When we saw this space, we all agreed it could work. It has good light, open space and it’s a great location,” she says. “Michael wanted a welcoming living room-style office, but it had to be professional and hard-wearing as well.”

“It wasn’t easy to incorporate features that would delineate different zones without enclosing the space,” Feasey recalls. “One of the ways we did that was to apply different floor treatments in the various ‘rooms’, and to raise and lower the ceiling levels.”

The only enclosed spaces – the boardroom and two meeting rooms – feature timber-framed glass walls that share dramatic views over Martin Place. Curtains can be drawn for privacy but Bradley says they are used infrequently. “It’s very rare that our clients need visual and aural privacy; those characteristics are usually demanded by lawyers themselves,” he says.

The ‘backyard’ – with hedging, potted plants and outdoor furniture – boasts dress circle views, making it an ideal spot to gather for coffee or lunch. However, like in many homes, the kitchen has a greater gravitational pull, according to Bradley. “The life of the firm happens in the kitchen,” he says. “We wanted it to be the hub of the office, so we installed different levels of seating so it could be used in different ways. There are also many options for an intimate meeting or to work on your own, yet the design promotes a high level of interaction between staff members.

“Everyone loves the new office,” Bradley says. “It’s a really enjoyable place to work, and it functions beautifully. We’ve also had very positive feedback from our clients, who comment that it doesn’t look like a law firm, which they like. They particularly appreciate the fact that they can see all of us: it demonstrates real transparency.”

Working in an office where everyone feels equally at home is just one of the ways these rebels are transforming the practice of law.

Rachael Bernstone is a freelance writer based in Sydney.

