



# NEW TRICKS WITH OLD BRICKS

A RE-RUN FOR A DOWN-AT-HEEL BEACH RD ADDRESS

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Work and breakout areas are bright and airy, despite the office space being set in a first floor space with restricted access to natural light. Materials such as weatherboards, concrete block and ply were used throughout.



A series of light boxes set into timber framing provides an adjustable display wall for Tourism Holdings - a constant reminder for staff of what they're actually there to do (sell holidays).

There have been some notable instances of this in many of our cities in recent times. Christchurch has a number of them in its SOL precinct; RTA Studio has worked wonders with the attractively clad retail and commercial structure on the corner of Karangahape and Newton Roads; and now, down on Auckland's Beach Road, Stack has created something out of pretty much nothing - taking fairly low-grade office stock and promoting it well up the order.

Stack's client, Tourism Holdings Ltd (THL), chose the Beach Road location for a number of reasons; importantly, the garage underneath (a former Beaurepaires workshop) houses some of its rental vehicles (the company is responsible for Kiwi Experience, Maui, Britz, and a slew of other holiday, travel- and adventure-related brands). The building also has good proximity to downtown Auckland's public transport options - yes naysayers, there are some options when it comes to public transport in Auckland. However, attractive it wasn't before the architects laid their hands on it. In fact, to preempt any groans of displeasure from staff, THL's head Quinton Hall decided that it might be best if no other staff should see it in its original state.

Compared to its old home in the Vero Centre, the

Beach Road address brings about a new style of work that coincides with new branding and new premises, says Hall. Gone are the suits and ties and stuffy cubicles, replaced with an open-plan studio for a more energetic and communicative workspace and more traditional glass cubical-style offices for those that require them.

At ground level THL is not particularly eye catching, with little more than a single white door and signage giving away its existence. Up the stairs live the executive team, management, web developers, designers and sales staff. Before alterations the semi-industrial site was dungeon-like; that is, little natural light penetrated into the low-ceilinged and deep internal spaces. Thankfully, says Rose Whitley, director at Stack, there was a large skylight above what is now the unmanned reception area.

Whitley says THL were "mindful of budget and looking for a fun and energetic space that was reflective of company culture and captured its adventurous spirit". Unsurprisingly, considering the nature of the company's business, kiwiana became a metaphor for the fit-out. However, kiwiana as a concept is a hard-row-to-hoe with any originality. In this instance the bones of the concept are derived from "life on the road" in and around New Zealand, yet





A light colour palette helps compensate for the lack of natural light in the café. Bright accents, and the warm hue of the built-in timber seating also help to lift the ambience of this space.



Certain references to kiwiana are noticeable throughout the interior: exposed wooden framing, for instance, and weatherboard feature walls and recycled doors and windows are some. Upholstery in the break-out nook is the same as that THL uses in some of its tourist rental vehicles.

before the metaphors/decoration could be applied, the space needed considerable lightening, and, to be fair, the essence of the concept runs right through the fit-out, best illustrated by the choice of materials and decisions over what to keep from the original structure.

One of the first issues was access to light. The low ceilings were removed from much of the space and light from windows front and back permeates through to this space. The new ceiling of plywood is attached to the existing structure, which was already insulated, and new skylights were punched through to bring additional natural light.

"Because natural light and window space is at a premium, a 'street' was created where a block of six offices share the light", says Whitley.

To the design metaphors: that street exercises a touch of humour, in the form of a dotted yellow line down the centre, which possibly means no parking, or no overtaking. Each office on the street has a classic villa or bungalow door painted a vivid colour. Recycled windows and weatherboard cladding are used to link several spaces in key areas. A glazed internal meeting room is decorated with a negative image of flax fronds, and timber framing, admittedly rather more elaborate than some typically found, creates a partial separation

from the reception, where lightbox inserts provide additional illumination and imagery. In the reception, a vinyl that resembles a weathered outdoor deck was used.

Says Whitley: "The timber framing reflects the idea of outdoor pergolas, or the familiar sight of timber-framed houses in construction. The existing building's steel-framed roof was strapped and lined with plywood sheets resembling sarking or ply sheet cladding of baches."

Other design techniques less to do with metaphor and more to do with practicality include the use of coloured panels in the studio. Applied to the stripped-back concrete block wall, these panels ease the acoustics of the space and provide a visual lift. Parts of the existing concrete floor were polished and carpet tiles were used in other areas to delineate other areas.

Let's be honest: the use of good 'ol kiwi-inspired imagery and motifs throughout interior fit-outs is not exactly new. Cast your eye over past issues of *ProDesign* and you'll see that it's been rife on glass walls, inside lifts, outside lifts, on lampshades, in lampshades, on fabric, furniture and cladding.

It's not everyone's bag, but here, in this instance, it's fun and functional - and quite appropriate. And that's ok with me.



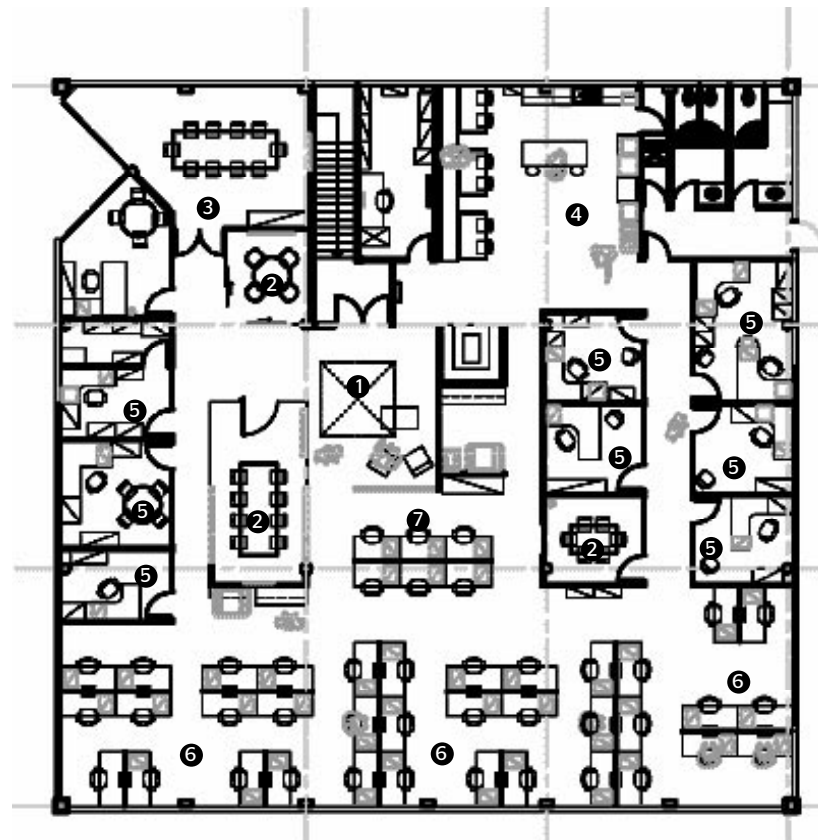


### Selected credits

**Client** Tourism Holdings Limited (THL)  
**Designer and project manager** Stack  
**Fit-out contractor** Cape Interior Construction  
**Door joinery** Cape Interior Construction  
**Glasswork** Metroglass  
**Window film** Art on Glass  
**Architectural hardware** Lockwood; Dorma; Katalog  
**Window treatments** New Zealand Window Shades  
**Paint** Resene; Dulux  
**Flooring** Interface; Project Floors; Polished Concrete Ltd  
**Lighting** Calder Interiors; Rexel; Adsel  
**Workstation desks, chairs, cabinet** Workstations from Vidak; task chairs from Montage  
**Boardroom tables and chairs** Cemac  
**Lobby furniture** Corporate Culture; Pyramid Interiors  
**Café furniture** Titan tables and chairs from UFL; barstools from Simon James; static shelving from Lundia  
**Other furniture** Noughts & Crosses stools from Damen  
**Textiles** Vivid  
**AV design and supply** Adsel  
**Ceilings** Apex Ceilings; PSP Acrylic Panels  
**Feature wall** Your Space; Pizzazz; Autex; James Hardie  
**Kitchen** Your Space Developments; Methven taps; Mercer sink; PSP feature ceiling tiles; Laminex Group finishes; tiles from Tile Warehouse; hardware from Katalog  
**Graphic design elements** Pizzazz

### Floorplan

- 1 Foyer
- 2 Meeting rooms
- 3 Board room
- 4 Kitchen and café
- 5 Offices
- 6 Open-plan studio
- 7 Hot desks



A number of small meeting rooms are natural complement to an open-plan, studio-style workspace arrangement.

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