



1.
A SERIES OF CUSTOM-DESIGNED TIMBER ELEMENTS AND A FOLDED CANOPY ARTICULATE AND ORGANISE THE PLAN OF THIS SPACE.

1.

SECTION:
PROJECT
REVIEW

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HOPKINS + CLARK

OPTING FOR UNDERSTATEMENT AND A MUTED PALETTE, RICHARD KIRK ARCHITECT HAS CARVED OUT CALMING SPACES FOR THE CONSULTING ROOMS OF TWO BRISBANE SURGEONS.



2.

2. DARK SEUDE FABRIC AND DEEP NAVY CARPET ADD A LOW HORIZONTAL EMPHASIS AND HELP GROUND THE SPACE.



3.



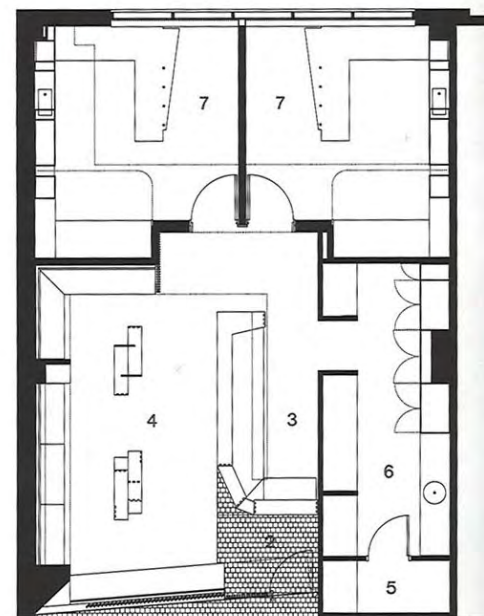
3. RICH CANADIAN ROCK MAPLE HAS BEEN USED FOR THE RECEPTION COUNTER, COFFEE TABLES AND OTHER JOINERY.



THERE ARE PLACES IN THE WORLD IN WHICH WE MIGHT FEEL REAL psychological and physical unease – unease not so much generated by the place itself, but by the occasion that the place encapsulates or frames. In the case of waiting to see a specialist about the momentous matter of surgery, feelings of anxiety are bound to be circling like sharks in the consciousness of the affected and their families. There are plenty of examples of specialists' waiting rooms where designing for distraction is the perceived modus operandi. A typical response is to overload the palette with bright colours and busy patterns, themes and murals, in the attempt to create a visual interference to negative thoughts, like a carpet that is so highly patterned that you never see a spill. This approach to interior design, while well-meaning, is arguably a glib answer to a deep question. In dealing mostly with the colouring and decoration of surfaces, it is an approach that avoids the architectural possibilities inherent in the problem of creating a comfortable, contemplative space. It is far more difficult to create a quality of experience of space and place that reveres the human and actualizes a sense of comfort, peace and ease using only the essential materials of the architect – the potential of physical space manipulated and customized in all of its three dimensions and the richness innate in material.



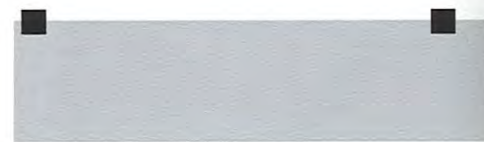
A HUMANE ELEGANCE, IN THOUGHT AND ACTION, DISTINGUISHES THE interior architecture for the practice of two consultant surgeons, by Richard Kirk and Andrew Drummond of Richard Kirk Architect. The practice is located in the specialist medical centre adjoining a newish, busy suburban hospital in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. The tenancy is situated on the top floor of the medical centre at the southern end of a north-south passage. It has one windowed wall to the outside, facing west, and one glazed wall to the interior corridor, facing east. As it is a top-floor tenancy the height of the available space from slab to underside of the roof structure is greater than the average. This is an advantage to which the architects have played. With the opportunity to develop sophistication and complexity in section, planning was rationally managed. The organization of reception, waiting area, consulting rooms and back office space is clear and direct while a more involved intention characterizes the development of the design in the vertical dimension.



ENABLED BY THE SITUATION OF THE TENANCY TO FEND OFF the compressive ubiquity of a suspended ceiling, the architects pursued an idea for "carving out" space, loosely derived from the notion of keyhole surgery that is an element of the specialists' practice. Based on this foundation, the design has incredible clarity because it speaks directly through the relationship of form to use. The interior space form is modelled to accommodate the human without unnecessary embellishment. "Carving out" creates spaces for waiting, lighting, storage and display. A secondary layer of interior architecture – in the elemental pieces of custom-made furniture – demonstrates a complementary use of form language, of the built-up rather than the carved-out, and creates places for work and human encounter.

THE ARCHITECTS HAVE EMPLOYED A GRACEFULLY CIRCUMSCRIBED PALETTE of colour and material, and the constituent body of the interior architecture is formed of plasterboard, rendered a murmur off white. The manner of the plasterboard's use suggests thickness, especially at the periphery, where the idea of carving out is most strongly felt. For joinery, one species – Canadian rock maple – has been used throughout. The solid, custom-made pieces – reception counter and workspace, coffee tables, and specialists' desks – reveal the richness of the dense, fine figure of the timber, especially in the contrast of face and end grains in finger-jointed connections.

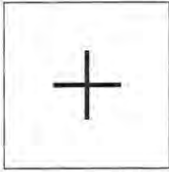
A LOW HORIZONTAL EMPHASIS IS PROVIDED THROUGH THE GRAPHIC USE of darker colour in the black suede upholstery of the seating cushions and in the deep navy carpet. The space is grounded this way and granted a base from which the play of modelled volume can confidently emerge. In this interior landscape of the horizontal, one strong vertical is



KEY

- 1 Access corridor
 - 2 Entry
 - 3 Reception
 - 4 Waiting room
 - 5 Services
 - 6 Kitchen
 - 7 Consulting room
4. THE CONSULTING ROOMS SUGGEST DIGNIFIED CALM WITH ALL EQUIPMENT CONCEALED IN JOINERY UNITS.

5. ANGLED MAPLE BATTENS CREATE A PRIVACY SCREEN ALONG THE GLAZED WALL TO THE PASSAGEWAY.



stridently marked: the black painted and laminate profile of a tall shelving element, an "ode to the waiting-room magazine" [in the words of the architect], which engages with a structural pier in the south wall. An articulated canopy reaches around the edge of the waiting area, emphasizing the sub-zones within the whole: three distinct pockets of luxurious and very comfortable seating are created in the thickness of the periphery, with varying degrees of reclusion, and the space of the reception desk is sheltered. This canopy element also conceals the lighting and services.

THE SPACE-CARVING IDEA REGISTERS MOST STRONGLY IN THE south-east corner of the tenancy, where the full thickness of the constructed edge is revealed in a deep chamfer that slices open a view out through the glazed end wall of the corridor to the distant buildings of Brisbane's CBD. The directionality of this appropriated view is emphasized by the angled maple battens of a privacy screen designed to negate the "fishbowl" factor of the glazed wall to the passageway.

THE CONSULTING ROOMS HAVE A DIGNIFIED COMPORMENT. They are not boxes within which various machines and objects are scattered about. Here, the tools and materials of examination are deftly concealed as the interior gently supports the encounter between doctor and patient. The sense of quiet created within these rooms is slightly disrupted by the use of stainless steel – a material that more often refers to clinical hygiene than it does to comfort – to line the tall, hand-basin recess.

IN THIS TINY GESAMTKUNSTWERK, WHICH RENOUNCES DISTRACTION and celebrates the experiential quality of calm, the architects have worked carefully and thoughtfully to create a humane space of comfort and ease, in which feelings of anxiety may be ameliorated by the elegant arrangement of space, material and light.

+ PROJECT

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+ CLIENT

George Hopkins & David Clark

+ DESIGNER

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+ PROJECT TEAM

Richard Kirk
Andrew Drummond

+ TIME FRAME

Design & documentation:
3 months
Construction: 2 months

+ ENGINEER

Alexander Brown & Cambridge

+ BUILDER

Rintoul Pty Ltd (OLD)

+ PRODUCTS

WALLS & CEILINGS

Plasterboard, Dulux Wash
& Wear 101 Flat, Dulux Wash
& Wear 101 Low Sheen;

Brimsply Ply Wall Lining
SOFT FURNISHINGS

Comax modular seat and back
cushions [fabric: Instyle Insuede]

FLOORS

Entry: 100 mm x 100 mm
Winkelman's floor tiles [colour:
White]; Carpet: Tuftmaster

Luminary [colour: Midnite Hour];
Timber: Solid Canadian Rock Maple

SCREEN

Dressed timber battens; steel frame

WINDOWS

G. James

INTERNAL BLINDS

Helioscreen ceiling-mounted
roller blinds

DOORS

Dorma; Lockwood; Madinoz

KITCHEN

Clarke Epure stainless steel
round bowl; Hansa Hansamix
kitchen mixer [finish: chrome]

LIGHTING

Thorn fluorescent lamps;
Thorn low-voltage "J" range
track-mounted spotlight;
Thorn round "LV" recessed
adjustable downlight halogen
kit including luminaire, Clipsal
switches [flush metal plate series]

DESIGNER STATEMENT

This is a small fitout for two surgeons within the Holy Spirit Northside Hospital. The surgeons specialize in keyhole surgery and it was this procedure that suggested the idea of the section as the organizational strategy for the interior.

The idea is that the space is carved out of a solid element [white plasterboard] as the "as found element". This cutting/slicing continues through the development of the section. The folding elements conceal the services and lighting from view and produce a series of volumes and scales in a very small space. The ceiling height is difficult to define and provides a sense of volume in the centre and containment at the edges. This folding space is occupied by a series of timber elements used to furnish, articulate and organize the plan.

The sculptural element with a black surface [as though it had just been cut] emphasizes the idea of the cut/slice, and functions as a magazine rack – the ubiquitous icon of the waiting room – complete with editions issued well before our time.

It was critical that the space did not have a retail aesthetic, which had been adopted by other similar fitouts. The waiting space, with the seats forming a part of the edge, creates a comfortable environment for patients to wait in and also have a sense of ownership of the territory they occupy.

In this project it was important to deal with the fundamentals of occupation of the space. Shape planning – a common interiors planning device – was avoided to allow the section, and in a sense the variety of spaces in a single volume, to describe use and occupation.

Richard Kirk Architect

