



**WORDS PENNY CRASWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY
TYRONE BRANIGAN**

**INTERIOR DESIGN FUTURES
& FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO
LOCATION SYDNEY | AUS
PROJECT GOOGLE**

The most highly anticipated workplace in Sydney last year was Google's new Australian headquarters in Pyrmont. A young, global internet company, Google is famed for their workplaces around the world – most notably Mountainview (San Francisco) and Zurich which have done the rounds as viral emails to those who can only dream of workplaces with delights such as slides, hammocks, all-day snacks and gaming.

When Google was ready to move to the new workplace building in Pyrmont, with stunning views of Sydney Harbour, they invited a few different design teams to pitch for the new office space, and futurespace/Ferguson Design Studio (FS/FDS) were the successful studio. At first, Google seemed disengaged by the design team's pitch but were won over thanks to a fun step-by-step guide created to help them understand the project process. Design Leader, Angela Ferguson explains: "It was a beginner's guide to having your office fit-out done – a cheesy guide with unsophisticated drawings, but they were amused by it. It wasn't too over the top or fancy; it was just down to earth and they liked that."

DEGW were hired to work on user engagement, strategic briefing and development of design strategies, while FS/FDS did the functional brief. Workplace – by architects Johnson Pilton Walker (JPW) and nettleontribe – is in an ideal position on the harbour and the arrow/triangle shape of the building allows for 360° views – the park to the North, the city and harbour to the East and Star City casino to the South-West. Light enters from windows around the perimeter of the building, but due to the deep floor plates (24 metres) does not reach the core of the building. However, this has been solved by situating the atrium and central stair in the core, meaning that no point is more than 12 metres from a window. And, making the most of the incredible views and the Sydney climate, a series of 'winter gardens' provide naturally-ventilated outdoor rooms that act as meeting rooms or working spaces.

GOOGLE'S SYDNEY INTERIORS LIVE UP TO THE GOOGLE LEGEND, OFFERING A CREATIVE, FUN

GOOGLE GOES

WORKPLACE THAT IS ALSO SUSTAINABLE AND DISTINCTLY AUSTRALIAN

AUSSIE



PREVIOUS PAGE Reception and waiting area/meeting rooms, including the boomerang Reception desk and living 'green wall' behind

ABOVE Staff appear upside-down in the 'Down Under' video conferencing room

ABOVE RIGHT Blackboard graphics with view into the Tech Stop (help desk) area

RIGHT 'Under the Sea' themed wintergarden meeting rooms

The Google Reception on Level 5 leads to multiple points of entry into the workspace – through to the small and larger meeting rooms and directly into the workstation areas. Special features that may be exceptional for normal workers but are standard in Google offices include a massage room (also on Level 5), gaming areas and wireless working throughout, an elaborate kitchen/cafeteria (the surf club, Level 6) and two micro-kitchens at either end of each floor offering a range of snacks. And, as well as these functional features, the project had to fit the culture of Google.

The Googlers – as they are known within the company – are split roughly into two groups: sales/marketing and engineering, and they each have very different cultures. Understanding this was key to developing the design for FS/FDS. "Some of the jokes that the engineers made, I couldn't understand at all," says Ferguson. "And they made obscure references to science fiction – they are quite proud of that geekiness."

Another key driver of the project – both for Google and for FS/FDS – was the environmental sustainability of the project. This was the first Google office worldwide to put sustainability at such a high priority and, while Google was keen to 'go green', there was a concern from the Googlers that this would interfere with the office's 'Googliness'. However, Karen Garrett from FS/FDS (who received a National Women in Construction (NAWIC) Award for her ESD work on this project) reassured the Google team that a 'high tech' company could also be sustainable and show environmental leadership – part of this was an education program to help the Googlers understand what's required to achieve a Green Star rating.

The ESD features had to integrate the interior into the base building – 'workplace' is so named because it is the first 6-star Green Star rated base building that is multi-tenanted (all others have been owner occupied so far). "The project presented issues never encountered before with regards to integration of base building works with the tenant's fit-out works," says Garrett. Some of the measures used to achieve sustainability in the project included: re-use of 90% of the furniture, green walls and vertical garden walls, carpet, paint and materials with low-VOC content, natural ventilation, natural light, energy efficiency, proximity to public transport, and use of FSC timber.

On top of the strategic briefing by DEG, the functional brief and the ESD challenges of the project, FS/FDS developed a series of themes for the space around the main theme of Australia; this Google was not going to look the same as any other Google on the planet. Within this theme, there was plenty to play around with and by identifying a number of themes, FS/FDS brought a sense of fun into the interior, using props, graphics and visual jokes as aids. As part of this, the Googlers were asked to participate: "We workshoped a whole lot of different ideas and came up with 20 design themes, with a story board for each theme, and then those themes were presented to the Googlers with sketches," says Ferguson. "We explained to them how that theme would work and got them excited about it and then they culled it down to the 11 that we've got now."

"We workshoped a whole lot of different ideas and came up with 20 design themes"

ANGELA FERGUSON, FUTURES/SPACE/FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO



ABOVE LEFT Level 5 plan
ABOVE RIGHT Level 6 plan
BELOW The 'Beach' area provides overflow seating to the Surf Club Café
RIGHT 'Bathing Boxes' inspired by Brighton Beach in Melbourne form booths in the Surf Club Café

THEME 1 - DOWN UNDER

The Reception and main front-of-house area has the most distinctly Australian theme. The Reception desk is a series of boomerangs laid on top of one another. A graphic of an Aboriginal-inspired snake winds around the glass walls and floor, mapping out Australian Aboriginal place names and their translations, for example, Canberra is 'meeting place'. Behind Reception, a green wall evokes the Australian rainforest, while the company logo appears in rusted metal.

The 'Down Under' video conferencing room was inspired by a T-shirt which says 'Down Under' upside down - in this meeting room, the chairs and tables fixed to the ceiling are more visually powerful than the actual ones used the right way up. Meanwhile, a quirk of the video-conferencing system allows Googlers in other countries to view their colleagues upside-down during meetings.

THEME 2 - BLADE RUNNER

The tech stop area was themed with 'neon' lighting (which is actually LED lighting for environmental reasons), mimicking the neon lights of the city in the movie *Blade Runner*, while purple and green lighting snakes down from the ceiling to the workstation areas, highlighting the technology focus of this area.

THEME 3 - MAPS

One of the wintergarden outdoor meeting areas is the Google maps meeting room - dedicated to the fact that Google maps was conceived and developed in Australia. One of the Google maps staff worked with a graphic designer to paper the walls and ceiling in actual satellite images of the world, while the carpet on the floor features an image of a road with line markings down the middle.

THEMES 4-8 - VARIOUS

Various meeting rooms have themes as well - many of which have an Australian tie-in. One of the more open meeting zones in a corner with the best views of the harbour is the Parks + Picnics area where vertical gardens are space dividers and a tent provides a space to escape and work. The walls are covered in fake grass, with picnic rugs and lettering playing on the word park, for example, 'park yourself here' and 'beware nature strip'.

The Under the Sea theme features fish tanks combined with underwater graphics on the windows of one of the wintergarden meeting rooms with a scuba diver and fish, while liquid floor tiles and a blue palette add to the sense of being underwater.

The Rainforest theme has a huge graphic of a green parrot on the wall, combined with a table suspended by thick ropes to give this meeting room a jungle feel.

The Dummies and Algae theme features toilet seats on doors referencing the outside dunny, with Vitra's 'Algae' modular screen in green on the walls. In one of the meeting rooms, the table is made of a bath with glass top and rubber duckies included.

There is also a sports theme which sees meeting rooms striped in 'team' colours, with a winners dias and a cricket pitch meeting room complete with audience wallpaper and a running track micro-kitchen.





“My personal favourite is the treehouse (library) theme because it is very calm and sedate”

ANGELA FERGUSON, FUTURES SPACE/FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO

ABOVE The Library “Treehouse” area is wireless and provides a quiet, individual concentrative work space

THEME 9 – RETRO CHIC

The games room and conference facilities have a retro theme – with an eclectic and comfortable range of furnishings reminiscent of a university common room. Gaming is so important to the Googlers that they can monitor whether the Wii, table tennis table, pool table or guitar hero are in use via a live webcam that feeds through to each computer.

THEME 10 – SURF CLUB

The cafeteria on Level 6 has a surf club theme, with a row of private booths in candy stripe colours that reference the heritage bathing boxes used at Brighton Beach in Melbourne in the 1930s. A zone of beach chairs and umbrellas is clustered at another end of the kitchen, while graphics from floor to ceiling in the corridor outside show images of surf and sun.

THEME 11 – TREEHOUSE

The library is a retreat from the noise and energy of Google, where large cardboard ‘trees’ were custom designed by FS/FDS. The floor is at different heights, and furniture of all sorts is interchangeable and makes for a well-textured sanctuary.

The overall result throughout the Google interior is one of constant surprises around every corner. Even outside the themes, there are fun additions – along one corridor there is a visual pun combining a barcode and a city skyline in lines of blackboard upon the white wall. And everyone has their favourite. “Everyone has a different theme that they prefer,” says Ferguson. “My personal favourite is the treehouse (library) theme because it is very calm and sedate – an area for quiet reflection. But I think what the Googlers like best is the ability to be able to adapt the spaces to suit their needs, either via moving furniture or being able to use blackboards/whiteboards to make their own creative mark. Every time I come in here it’s different.”

Flexibility was key to the design and on the day I visit, there are plenty of additions to the design by the Googlers themselves, from pictures and toys in the working areas to the choice of the furniture configuration. Even the choice of workstation, Haworth’s ‘All-Ways’, was chosen for its flexibility.

Google is a young company – incorporated in 1998 by two Stanford university graduates – and it now employs thousands of staff in over 60 locations across the world. The Sydney arm has grown exponentially in the last five years. They are young and casual with a contemporary approach to work practices, catering to the needs of their young workforce. With this in mind, the Google Sydney office is a perfect combination of flexibility, fun and green design, with a theme of Australia to situate it in our corner of the globe.

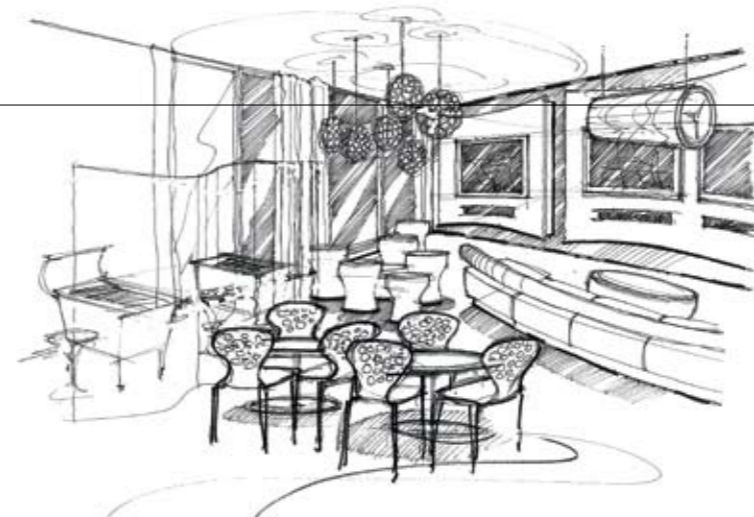
Penny Craswell is Deputy Editor of InDesign.

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ANGELA FERGUSON, FUTURESAPCE/FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO



GOOGLE

DESIGN futurespace & Ferguson Design Studio
PROJECT DIRECTOR Stephen Minnett
DESIGN DIRECTOR Angela Ferguson
PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR Neil Walters
ESD LEADER Karen Garrett
PROJECT DESIGNER Maggie McFadyen
BASE BUILDING BUILDER Buildcorp
BASE BUILDING ARCHITECT (DESIGN) Johnson Pilton Walker (JPW)
BASE BUILDING ARCHITECT (DOCUMENTATION) nettletontribe
FIT-OUT Contractor Built
STRATEGIC CONSULTANTS DEG W
SERVICES ENGINEER Lincoln Scott
LIGHTING DESIGNER Vision Design
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Fix Communications
KITCHEN DESIGNER The Mack Group
WORKSTATIONS Haworth

TIME TO COMPLETE 15 months
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 7,000m² over 2 floors

FUTURESAPCE
 (61 2) 8917 4555 futurespace.com.au

FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO
 (61 2) 8917 4500
 fergusondesignstudio.com.au

FURNITURE In Level 5 Reception and meeting rooms, Moroso 'Bloomy' chairs from Hub Furniture, Multipla 'Bliss' chairs and Segis 'Delta' armchairs from KFive, 'Sign Stool 450' by Trent Jansen, 'Pandy' coffee table by Pierre and Charlotte, boardroom 'Sled' table from Corporate Culture, tyre swing by Aussie Swings, and tents from Kangaroo Tent City. Furniture fixed to ceiling, existing from client. In Level 5 games room,

pool table also existing from client. In Level 5 Wintergarden, 'Billboard' beanbags from Haul, and Ross Didier 'Elfin' stools from Corporate Culture. In Level 5 Sea, Kartell 'Panier' table from Space Furniture. In Level 5 Rainforest, Moroso 'Ripple' chairs from Hub Furniture, Kenneth Cobonpue 'Yoda' chair from Ke-Zu, hanging chair from Interstudio, 'Multipla' Beechwood chairs from KFive, and Objectt 'Amazonas' tables from Corporate Culture. In Level 5 Park, 'Tom' stools by Schiavello, Fatboy 'Marimekko' beanbag from Hub Furniture, Extremis 'DoNuts' tables from Corporate Culture, and 'Tamworth' table from Forpark Australia. In Level 6 café, 'Adirondack' chairs from Ocean Country Furniture, Hay 'Don't Leave Me' table from Corporate Culture, and Mimosa umbrella from Bunnings Hardware. In Level 6 Treehouse, Hay for Komplot 'Nobody' chairs from Corporate Culture, Segis 'Ml' lounges from KFive, 'Cuban' chairs by Jordan, 'Island' modular sofa from Corporate Culture, Noguchi coffee table from Format, and Abstracta 'Airflake' screen from KFive. In Level 6 Techtalk area, Herman Miller 'Caper Staking' chairs from Living Edge. In Level 6 Sport area, Eames moulded plastic side chairs from Living Edge, Birch Multiply table from Corporate Culture, and round stainless steel table from Café Culture. In Level 6 Algae area, 'Swell' stools by Korban/Flaubert, Vitra 'Algue' screens from Format. In Level 6 outside areas, Segis 'Pacifi' chairs from KFive, White Beech bench style table and small square tables from Porch. Vertical garden walls by Schiavello. Generally throughout, rugs from Designer Rugs, shelving from Dexion Office, task chairs by Haworth, existing Herman Miller 'M Chairs', available from Living Edge, meeting tables from Work Arena. All other

furniture existing from client, chairs re-upholstered in fabric from Instyle Contract Textiles, Kvadrat Maharam, Loop Textiles, Mokum, Sustainable Living Fabrics and Woven Image.

LIGHTING 'Dorothy' traffic cone lamp from DesignByThem, 'Outback' and 'Short Soup' pendants by Yellow Goat, 'Bolla' natural rattan floor lamps from Anibou. Compact fluorescent lamp pendant with pull cord is custom from Euroluce. 'May Day' floor lamp and 'Miss K' ceiling mounted light also from Euroluce. 'La La' floor lamp by Helen Kontouris for Kundalini, available at Light2. 'Pantalla' suspended light and 'Tripode' floor lamps by Santa & Cole from ECC Lighting. 'Regolit' suspended light from Ikea. 'Nudie' feature pendants from ISM. 'Tolomeo Tavolo' mini task lights from Artemide. Uplights throughout from Lumascape. Recessed downlights throughout from Zumtobel and Eagle Lighting. Fluorescent lights throughout from Austube, Pierlite, Targetti, XAL and Zumtobel. LED lights from Light Project.

FINISHES Stucco feature paint from Di Emme Creative Solutions, blackboard paint by Resene, and all other paint throughout are Oikos Paints from Designer Paint Company. Eco Panel pin-boards from Woven Image, Masonite pegboard from Gunnernsens, and Forbo Bulletin Boards from Duroloid. Whiteboards from CFS. Florence Broadhurst feature wallpaper from Signature Prints, Tres Tintas 'Mil Caras' and 'Letras I tipos' feature wallpaper from Funkis. Fringed feature curtain around Level 5 informal meeting area, Ado International Range fringing from Simple Studio. Other feature curtains also from Simple Studio.

Carpet tiles throughout from Ontera Modular Carpets, InterfaceFLOR and Signature Floor Coverings. Chestnut Sisal feature carpet from Natural Floorcovering Centres, Netcorp 'Poppyseed' feature carpet from Godfrey Hirst, Edwardstown Carpets 'Lamp Black' feature carpet from Above Left, all other carpet throughout from Signature Floor Coverings. Rubber flooring by Regupol. Raised vinyl flooring from Tasman Access Floors, all other vinyl flooring from Euroluce. Timber flooring throughout is BT Bamboo Flooring from Eco Flooring Systems. Ceramic tile flooring in Level 6 Kitchen from Commercial Kitchen Tiles, and feature floor tiles from Academy Tiles. Perforated metal feature panels in ceiling from Armstrong, other feature ceiling panels from Décor Systems. Level 5 Reception counter top from Samstone, other stone from Marblo and Baresque. Element powder coated MDF joinery from Gunnernsens, and Eco-Certified Southern Blue Gum joinery from Briggs Veneer. EuroMir silver mirror joinery laminate from All Plastics, other joinery laminate throughout from Halifax Vogel Group and The Laminex Group. Glazing film throughout from All Protection Tinting. Blockout blinds in Level 5 Training and Techstop rooms from Harvey Blinds. Fabric wall panelling on Level 5 from Kvadrat Maharam, and Nyllex 'TurMaster' feature wall fabric from Melded Fabrics.

FIXED & FITTED In kitchens, sinks and tapware from Harvey Norman Commercial, ventilation grilles by Häfele, and all other appliances existing. In Reception, water fountain from Aqua Cooler. In Mothers' room and first aid room, sinks and taps from Reece, soap dispensers from RBA.



ABOVE Wintergarden 'Maps' room with new lighting and re-used furniture
FAR LEFT A meeting room in the 'Bunnies and Algae' themed zone uses a bathtub as a meeting table
LEFT A suspended table and parrot graphic in the 'Rainforest' room give a tropical feel
ABOVE RIGHT Initial concept sketch of a 'Sci Fi' theme for the games room

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