



Central dynamic

The communal workspace at the heart of this office space can be transformed seamlessly into a variety of meeting rooms



Office fit-outs have evolved over the years, becoming more flexible to accommodate changes in working life. At the furthest extreme is the advent of 'hotdesking', however, an alternative approach is the creation of versatile communal spaces, adaptable to the needs of few or many.

With the fit-out of this office, architect Philippa Randall created a communal centre in the space sitting under an existing mezzanine floor.

"Originally, the building was in two tenancies which we locked together. The client wanted to do something fun, but everything also had to tie

together. One request was for support areas and meeting rooms that permitted all scales of gatherings. By extending the mezzanine floor slightly, an area underneath was created that was ideal for this particular purpose."

This communal centre – conceived as a yolk, and identified as such with a gold painted exterior – can be divided into three meeting rooms. By folding back the translucent-glass doors, however, the space can be opened up – fulfilling the client's brief for a presentation area for 50 seated or 200 standing. As a contrast to the gold exterior, the interior was painted a neutral white.

Above: Glass panels, covered with blue film to represent the client's corporate colour, mark the working reception area. To the left of the glass entry doors is one of the office's many versatile meeting areas.



Top and above: Under the mezzanine floor sits a communal area which can be opened into one large room, or separated into three smaller ones. Small groups of tables and chairs throughout the office provide plenty of options for staff and client meetings.

Aside from the glass doors, Randall used other devices to demarcate this central zone.

“Curtains down both sides of the space block light, which is essential for successful presentations. We also used a change in carpet to delineate the communal space from the rest of the studio.”

Staff workstations, placed near the windows down each side of the building, receive the benefits of natural light. These spaces were kept hard-edged, designed to offset the many timber beams which help give this heritage-listed building its character.

The studio also features alternative meeting

spaces, such as external terraces, outdoor covered decks and informal open plan areas, that take advantage of the warehouse architecture and the harbourside location.

At the studio’s entrance, a long reception desk helps to order space.

“The reception desk keeps the public side of the office distinct from the working space. It is fitted with blue glass, representing the client’s corporate colour, installed in layers to create different hues and height levels. This works to shield office equipment, such as the photocopier,” says Randall.



This page: Curtains running down each side of the central space block light from the exterior windows on each side, creating a better environment for projection-based seminars. When closed, the translucent-glass folding doors allow the space to be made entirely private.

Location: Ark Group offices,
Walsh Bay, Sydney, NSW

Architect: Philippa Randall,
AACA, RAIA, Philippa Randall
Architects (Rushcutters Bay,
NSW)

Construction company:
Elliot Projects

Window and door joinery:
CDS; Häfele

Carpet: Tretford Silver Birch

Wallcoverings: MDF panelling
with painted finish and glazed
partitions

Paints: Dulux Extreme White
and Golden Banner

Workstations: RJ Workspace

**Photography by Brett
Boardman**



This page: The central space
was conceived as the office's
yolk, and is distinguished as
such with golden paint.

Facing page: Formerly a
waterfront warehouse, the
now heritage-listed building
features a number of large
timber beams.



