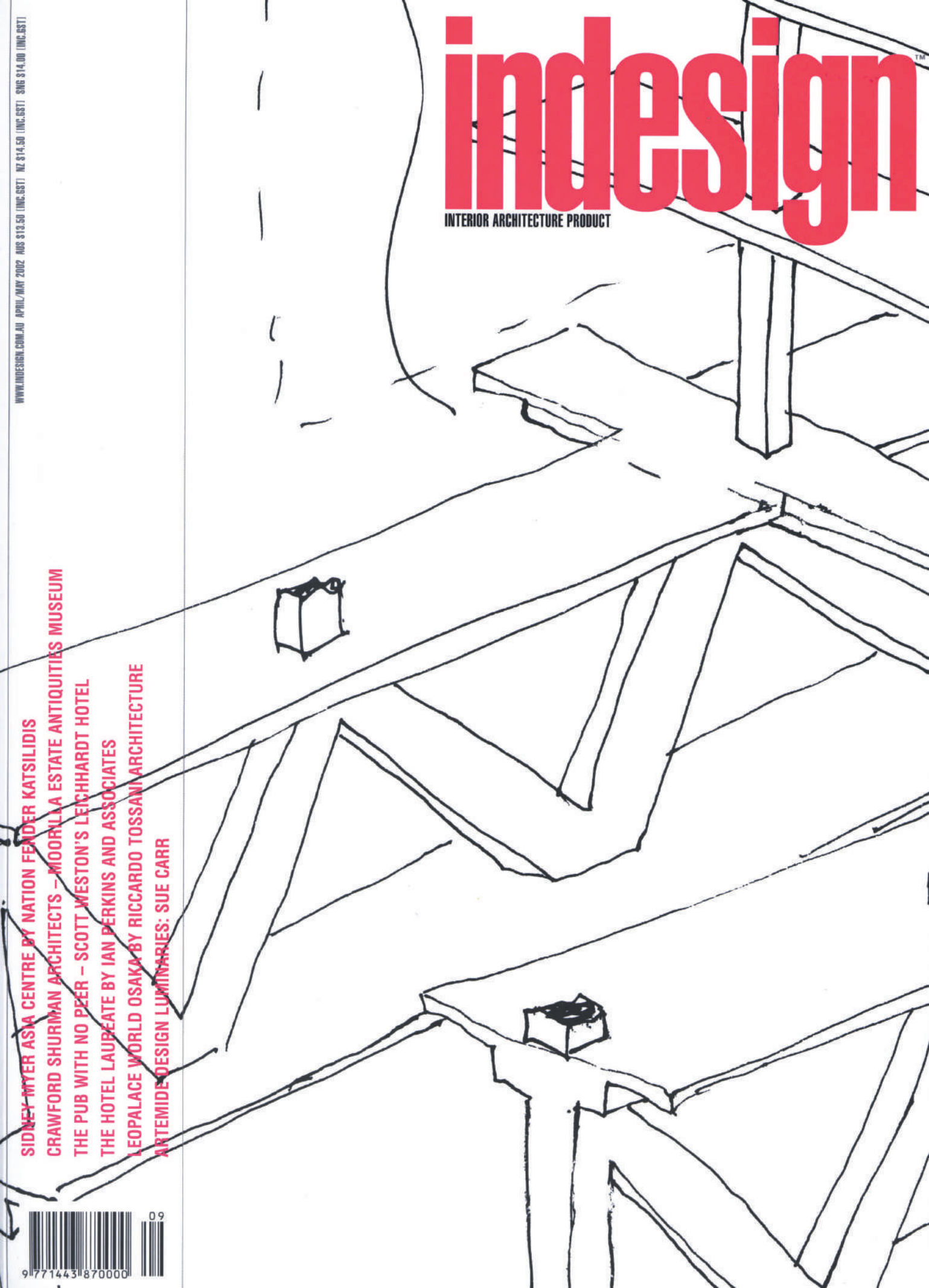


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THE HOTEL LAUREATE BY IAN PERKINS AND ASSOCIATES
LEOPALACE WORLD OSAKA BY RICCARDO TOSSANI ARCHITECTURE
ARTEMIDE DESIGN LUMINARIES: SUE CARR







LEOPARD'S LAIR

ADELAIDE-BORN ARCHITECT RICCARDO TOSSANI TRAVELLED VIA ITALY TO THE U.S. FINALLY SETTLING IN TOKYO. HERE HE ESTABLISHED RICCARDO TOSSANI ARCHITECTURE, WITH A BROAD SPAN OF WORK FROM RESIDENTIAL, CORPORATE FIT-OUTS AND RESORTS TO COMMERCIAL PROJECTS - ALL WITH A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY FOCUS REMINISCENT OF THE RENAISSANCE IDEAL OF THE ARCHITECT. HERE, TOSSANI OUTLINES THE FACILITIES HE DESIGNED FOR LEOPALACE WORLD IN OSAKA AND DEFINES HIS PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY FROM ADELAIDE TO TOKYO





Developed in 1998 by Miyama Development International (MDI), the Leopalace World facilities serve the needs of young Japanese who are looking for suitable apartment accommodation around Japan, as well as providing lifestyle information such as theatre schedules, "what's on", travel and locality information. Information access and dissemination relies heavily on computer technology and the Internet. The youthful, technologically oriented nature of this user group was a significant consideration in the development of the design of the LW (Leopalace World) stores.

MDI develops the apartment buildings with investors from all over Japan, and manages over 200,000 apartments. In addition to providing information for prospective and current tenants, the LW stores typically contain meeting, presentation and hospitality facilities for VIP guests such as apartment building owners and prospective investors.

Having previously undertaken the fit-outs for Leopalace World facilities in Fukuoka and Shinjuku, Riccardo Tossani Architecture was asked to remodel a mid-rise office building to create LW Osaka. The first floor is an apartment leasing office and reception area for the building. A multi-media theatre space and leasing counter is on the second floor, with a café-area furniture exhibit space. The third floor is for VIP guests who are potential investors in the company. Facilities here include presentation rooms and a gallery, which contains models and images of buildings developed by MDI. The eighth floor is a conference facility and the ninth floor VIP dining rooms, employee refectory and kitchen.

BURIED IN AND SHROUDED BY A FEATURELESS BLACK CURTAIN WALL FAÇADE, THE FIRST FLOOR OF THIS INTERIORS PROJECT ATTEMPTS TO CONNECT WITH THE STREET BY THE PROJECTION OF BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT.

While varying in form and texture, all surfaces and materials of the ground floor interior are white. Only the giant faces of the photo portrait wall, and the dynamic multi-vision screen in the background, punctuate this ethereal space. Appearing to fly through the glass is a squadron of miniature leopards, a playful reminder of the corporate identity of this sales office.

An exterior structural column at the centre of the entrance is clad in bright yellow ceramic tiles. It becomes a monument visible from up and down the sidewalk, and the first hint that something unusual might be found within.

In direct contrast to the ground floor, the second level is predominantly a dark space within which a series of objects are theatrically located and illuminated. These include a leopard signature profile on a silver wall, standing like bait at the head of the stairs. Other illuminated objects include pedestals on which sit Apple Studio Display monitors, an attempt to humanise compelling technological objects.

The third floor VIP lounge is characterised by a system of projecting rosewood wall panels, some of which contain black and white portraits, while others are recessed as display shelves. A terrazzo reception cabinet sits as a sculptural volume in the room, the entry axis of which terminates in a semi-circular rosewood and white glass wall. The far end of the room is an exhibition space with models and images of corporate projects. Off another axis are two multi-media rooms.

On the eighth floor, a remodelled spiral stair, crowned with an Ingo Maurer light sculpture of exploding dishes, is the centrepiece of the reception area to the VIP dining rooms. Double doors lead to an event space and theatre that can be configured in a number of ways using fold-out doors.

The ninth floor VIP dining facility is a bright space in alternating bands of white-stained wood flooring and white terrazzo tiles. The terrazzo bands rise up as gallery walls, and frame furniture cabinets custom designed by RTA. Connecting to the lounge by a hidden passageway is a large kitchen, which serves the VIP dining room as well as the staff refectory.

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN RICCARDO TOSSANI,
ARCHITECTURE DESIGN TEAM RICCARDO TOSSANI ARAIA, ATSUKO ITODA, MOMOKO HIGUCHI, REIKO TERADA
GENERAL CONTRACTOR SUMITOMO CONSTRUCTION CO
GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION ATSUKO ITODA
GRAPHIC PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY SEICHI HATAKEYAMA
LIGHTING CONSULTANT KOIZUMI



PREVIOUS PAGES ON THE ALL-WHITE GROUND FLOOR OF LEOPALACE WORLD OSAKA, STRIKING GRAPHICS AND A DYNAMIC MULTI-VISION SCREEN PUNCTUATE THE ETHEREAL SPACE 01 CAFÉ AND MULTIVISION THEATRE WITH CUSTOM-DESIGNED LECTERN AND WORKSTATIONS AND SCULPTED STAIR IN BACKGROUND 02 BACKLIT RECEPTION COUNTER AND LAYERED MAGAZINE TABLE WITH SUPER-GRAPHIC BACKDROP 03 INTERNET BROWSING STATION AND ZOOMORPHIC UPLIGHTS UNDER A CEILING FEATURE MADE FROM TELEPHONE CABLES AND SOCKETS 04 MINIATURE LEOPARDS APPEAR TO FLY THROUGH THE GLASS OF THE STREETFRONT WINDOW, A PLAYFUL REMINDER OF THE CORPORATE IDENTITY OF THIS SALES OFFICE

In 1984 my plan was to leave Australia for only six months, not for any particular dislike of Adelaide, but rather to discover something about the noble profession of architecture that had gone missing in my daily practice. It is now 18 years that I have been away.

I was born and raised in Adelaide and received a Bachelors degree in Architecture (Honours) from the University of Adelaide on April 29, of 1981. I started my first architectural practice a few months earlier, in December of 1980, specialising in environmental design and thermal performance design.

My practice was based on the skills I had accumulated during 18 months of internship with Robert Marshall in Eltham, Victoria, during a year of absence preceding my final year at Adelaide University. Marshall was an innovative architect and controversial Mayor of the Shire of Eltham, and a protégé of Alistair Knox. Knox was an Eltham architect and author famous in the Sixties and Seventies for pioneering modern architecture using traditional materials such as mud brick and pisé construction. The skills I learned under Marshall were further honed during my final Honours year, primarily under the tutelage of professor Terry Williamson.

There was a great deal of interest in this kind of design in Adelaide at the time, and my office quickly expanded, with the addition of several staff and a partner (Peter Villis) in March of 1981. The subsequent several years of practice as Villis+Tossani Architects saw the design and completion of a number of private residences, townhouses, a retirement village and sundry commercial projects. It was during this time that I became less interested in the mundane nature of daily practice and its attendant management responsibilities, and far more interested in the nature of beauty in architecture and the issues of design at larger scales and in urban settings; in other words architecture in urban design. In January of 1984 I embarked on a study tour of Asia and Europe that was supposed to end in July.

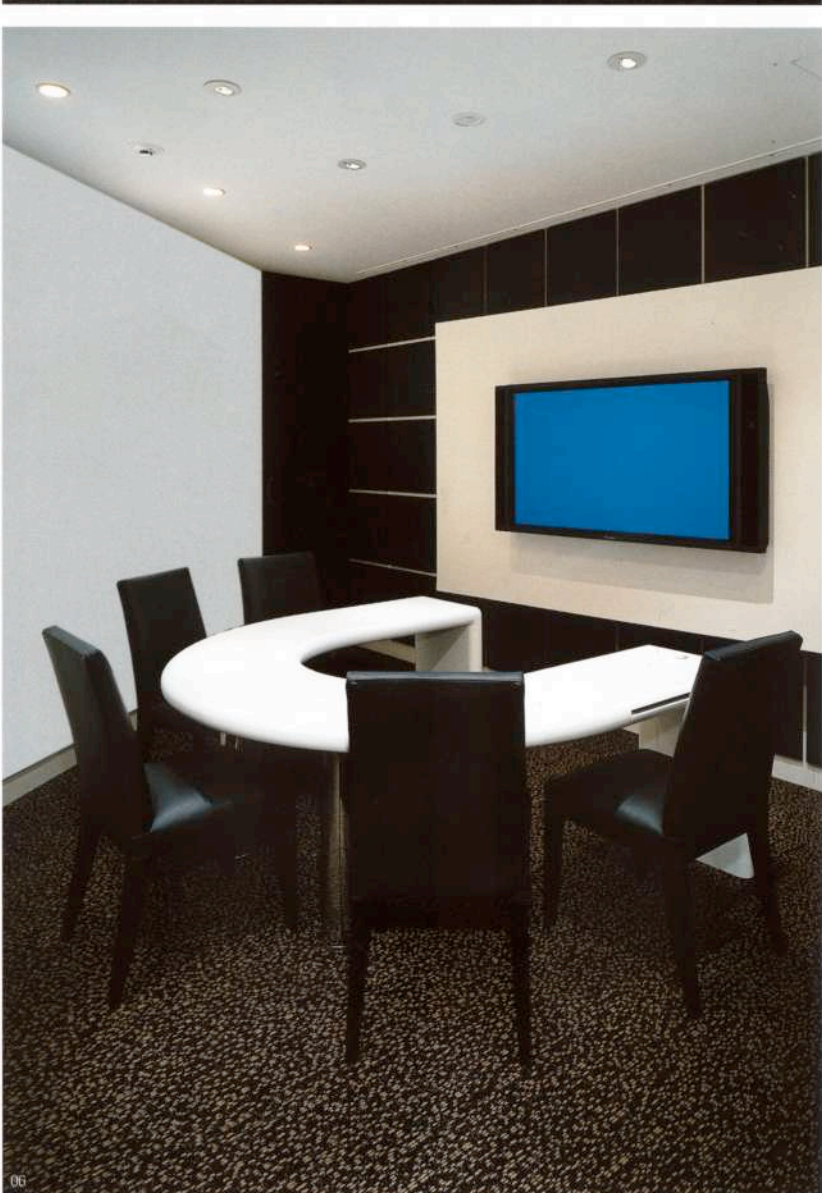
During my time abroad, particularly in China, I became fascinated by the confluence of design issues and design thinking at all scales – from the door knob to the city – as well as the Renaissance notion of the architect as the multi-talented artist whose creative fluency spans multiple disciplines. In September of 1984 I sold my Adelaide practice and took a position with Arco Progetti in Florence, Italy, a firm made up of several professors of architecture at the University of Florence. Each studio head was renowned for their architectural direction and political position, and while their collaboration proceeded in a colourful, Italian mode of organic democracy, they were in fact headed by Professor Paolo Sica. Sica was the designer of the Ponte Del' Indiano, the only new bridge to be built over the Arno within the city of Florence in several hundred years.

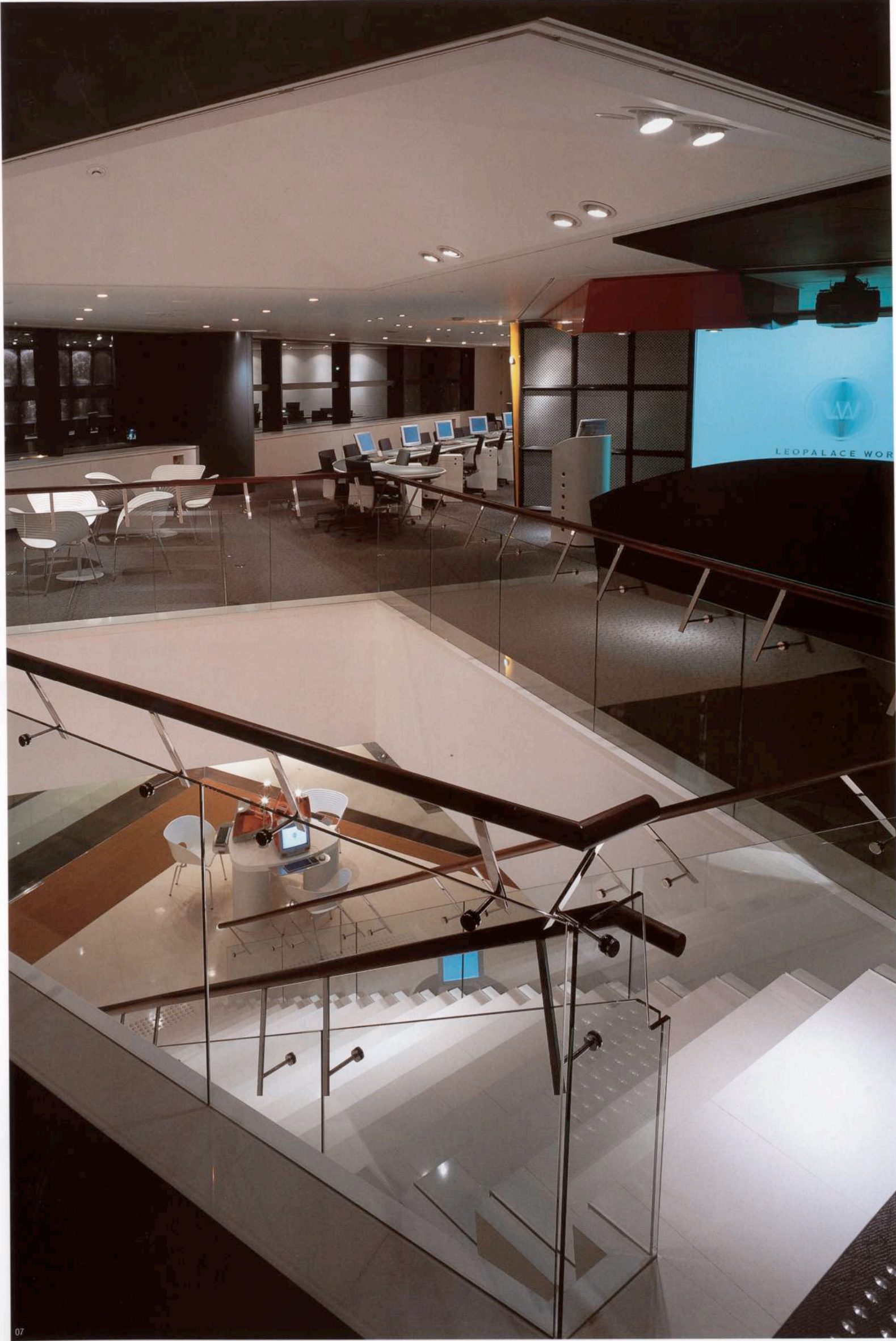
I BECAME FASCINATED BY THE RENAISSANCE NOTION OF THE ARCHITECT AS THE MULTI-TALENTED ARTIST WHOSE CREATIVE FLUENCY SPANS MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES

During my time with Arco Progetti I worked on projects as diverse as the remodelling of Tuscan farmhouses to the master planning of university campuses and new towns; collaborative projects with Carlo Aymonino, Norman Foster, Mario Botta, Richard Meier, Cesar Pelli and other prominent architects. It was here that my interests in multidisciplinary design blossomed. I decided to pursue the notion of architecture in urban design more intensively through post-graduate education – a decision with cost and benefit implications that I could not begin to imagine.

The Graduate School of Design at Harvard was then, and remains now, one of the best schools of architecture. After visiting other schools in Europe, the US and Canada I decided that the GSD would best suit my needs. Fortunately, Harvard felt likewise. The experience with Arco Progetti positioned me well amongst the considerable US and international competition for the 20 places annually offered in the Masters of Architecture in Urban Design degree program. The department at that time was headed by Professor Peter Rowe (who was originally from Melbourne). He is now the Dean of the GSD.

In 1987 I returned to Adelaide for the (North American) summer and worked for the City of Adelaide Department of Planning as an Urban Design Consultant. The Department was a laboratory for the exploration of a variety of design issues that define the character of our cities and the quality of urban environments, and it was here that I learnt to blur >>







PREVIOUS PAGES/05 LEASING COUNTER AND WAITING AREA WITH 'TOM VAC' CHAIRS 06 IN A PRESENTATION ROOM A HORSESHOE TABLE FEATURES A HIDDEN DRAWER CONTAINING PLASMA SCREEN AND KEYBOARD CONTROLS 07 THEATRE AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS WITH OPENING CROWNED BY A STEEL AND ROSEWOOD PERIMETER HANDRAIL THESE PAGES/08 SCULPTURAL VOLUMES IN THE VIP LOUNGE PORTRAIT GALLERY WITH TERRAZZO RECEPTION CABINET WITH CONCERGE DESK BEYOND 09 EIGHTH FLOOR EVENT SPACE RECEPTION AND STYLISED CORPORATE LOGO 10 PRIVATE DINING ROOM WITH BACKLIT CURTAINS 11 VIP SALON WITH CUSTOM ROSEWOOD TABLES AND 'MEDIA' CHAIRS

>> the distinctions between positive and negative space in the contemplation of design.

The following year, I graduated from the GSD at the top of my class, earning a Masters of Architecture in Urban Design, with Distinction, and received the "Award for Greatest Overall Achievement in the Class of 1988 for Leadership and Excellence in Academic Studies". I had found my creative and intellectual baton and ran with it all the way to Los Angeles.

There I worked with Johnson Fain Pereira (now Johnson Fain Partners), a firm highly recommended to me by my advisors at the GSD. JFP had just completed the Fox Tower at Century City (the building featured so prominently in the movie *Die Hard*), a number of campus and city master plans and were designing a variety of types of projects from wineries (Opus One for Robert Mondavi) to resort towns. JFP practiced just the kind of blend of design disciplines I was looking for, and offered an opportunity to expose myself to the experimental environment of LA during one of the most interesting periods in late Post Modernism.

During the subsequent nine years with JFP, I rose in position and responsibility, established their Guam (South Pacific) office and worked on a variety of projects across the US, Asia and the Pacific. These projects helped develop my skills as a designer at all scales and my fluency with a range of disciplines, and to pursue my persistent Renaissance ideal of the architect as the universal designer.

In 1997, I had an opportunity to set up a practice in Tokyo. Here was a chance to establish a practice able to pursue a variety of design problems, from doorknobs to master planned communities, in a manner more of my inclination and in a cultural environment that had always fascinated me. My fiancée at the time, Atsuko Itoda, a Japanese designer who that year became my wife and partner, also allowed me an entrée into the foggy world of client relations and marketing in Japan's enigmatic professional and social setting.

Practice in Japan is contemporaneously fascinating and frustrating. While it is at times excruciatingly difficult to understand the needs and aspirations of Japanese clients, the relatively fewer legal restrictions, more cooperative construction culture and broad minded clientele combine to provide a permissive environment where ideas can flourish and work can be executed with remarkable exactness.

In 1997, technology, in the form of computers and telecommunications, was finding its way into every aspect of Japanese life. The paradox between a culture steeped in tradition and a society inundated with machine-based aesthetics is fascinating to me.

Running the practice also involves trying to accommodate the very different needs and expectations of Japanese and foreign (American, French, Irish, Columbian) staff in a setting that invariably involves long hours of work and impossible deadlines. The cooperative nature of Japanese construction companies, together with the non-litigious traditional relationships between all parties concerned, allows us to take risks and focus our energies on creative design rather than covering our backs with endless documentation.

What little time I have to myself I spend exploring Tokyo and Japan. There are always new restaurants and boutiques in this city, many of which are derivative of current styles but occasionally exude real originality. I am also interested in functional art, and enjoy furniture exhibitions. When I can, I

THROUGH MY WORK, PARTICULARLY WITH THE LW PROJECTS, I BEGAN TO EXPLORE WAYS TO INCORPORATE AND HUMANISE ALL-PERVASIVE ELECTRONIC TOOLS

design and commission the building of my own prototypes. And I like to ride motorcycles. The Italian marque Ducati especially, one of the most fascinating examples of functional art, for both racing and touring. They are a substitute for my real passion, which is flying aeroplanes, and which I enjoyed for years while living in the US.

I stopped riding motorcycles competitively last year, following a near-death experience that left me with two broken legs. Next spring I plan to resume touring Japan's majestic scenery, where one can still find unspoiled villages and towns tucked away in remote mountain valleys. When not looking for trouble on the roads I like to read, eat and do what most Tokyoites do: visit interesting clubs and restaurants and revel in conversation.

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